

ACCAN welcomes new Minister for Communications

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) welcomes the appointment of the Hon Paul Fletcher to the position of Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts in the newly announced Coalition Cabinet.

“The next three years will bring a number of important milestones, challenges and opportunities for telecommunications in Australia,” said ACCAN CEO, Teresa Corbin. “From the roll-out of 5G, to the anticipated completion of the NBN network, we look forward to working with Minister Fletcher during this exciting time to achieve better outcomes for consumers.”

The continuation of the Consumer Safeguards Review will undoubtedly be a high priority for the new Minister. While consultations for Part B: Reliability of Services closed in January, there has yet to be a report released that outlines the way forward.

“Australians have a right to reliable home broadband. However, without a clear framework that identifies timeframes for connections, fault repairs and compensation, consumers are left confused as to what protections they have when things go wrong.”

ACCAN is also pleased to have the opportunity to work on regional communications with the Minister who originally established the highly successful Mobile Black Spot Program. As a member of the Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC), ACCAN looks forward to the implementation of the Morrison government’s response to the 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review, and delivery of programs funded in the April Federal Budget.

“Access to reliable communications is life-changing in our rural and regional communities. We are hopeful that the continuation of the Mobile Black Spot Program and implementation of the Regional Connectivity Program will help to close the digital divide between country and urban communities.”

A pressing priority is the need for Australians to have access to affordable broadband and voice services, and ACCAN looks forward to engaging with Minister Fletcher on the role of government to support this outcome.

“With 2020 fast approaching, there are over a million households who are at risk of not making the switch over to the NBN. The Minister and his team need to understand the negative consequences that this will have on everyday Australians who need access to affordable broadband for school, work, and to use government services,” continued Ms Corbin. “The future viability of the NBN also relies on these households being connected.”

ACCAN thanks the outgoing Minister, Senator Mitch Fifield for among many achievements, starting the Consumer Safeguards Review and improved consumer protections. The introduction of Standards, such as the Complaints-Handling Standard exemplifies his commitment to protecting communications consumers.

ACCAN would also like to recognise the significant work that Senator Bridget McKenzie achieved in ensuring that regional communications were seen as a high priority matter for the government.