



Media Release

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Continuing rise in telco complaints shows need for urgent reforms

ACCAN is alarmed that complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) have increased by 28.7 percent in the six months to December 2017, compared to the same time the previous year. The peak Australian telecommunications consumer body says the TIO's latest statistics reinforce the need for urgent industry action to put customers first.

"Continuing high numbers of complaints shine a spotlight on weak consumer protections that have existed in telecommunications for some time. This is upheld by the fact complaint number increases are across the board in mobile, fixed line phones and broadband services", said ACCAN CEO, Ms. Teresa Corbin.

"Arguments about whether complaints are the responsibility of the wholesale provider (NBN) or retail service providers do not help consumers resolve these problems quickly. ACCAN strongly supports the new raft of ACMA rules that are badly needed - particularly the new complaint handling standard and complaints reporting rules.

These will ensure more transparency about the number of complaints to retailers, not just those that are escalated to the Ombudsman'. Ms Corbin said, "we urge the industry to positively embrace these initiatives. The new reporting regime and greater regulatory oversight of complaints handling has the potential to build more trust in the telco industry as a whole."

While ACCAN strongly supports the new measures, the consumer body considers further changes are needed.

'In addition to the new retail measures the government is currently working on, we've been calling for reform at a wholesale level, that guarantees timeframes for connections, fault repairs and appointment keeping by nbn, as well as reliability performance measures' said Ms Corbin. 'retailers can't deliver good customer service without end to end network guarantees. The right rules have to apply at all levels of the delivery chain'.

ACCAN welcomes Minister Fifield's announcement of the long awaited Terms of Reference for a Consumer Safeguards Review but urges the government to act without delay.

"Telecommunications is an essential service; we can't survive without our phone and internet services and we need to make sure the right consumer protection is in place across all levels of the industry to reflect our dependency on them", says Ms. Corbin.

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