# Our interview with the new TIO, Judi Jones

We interviewed the new [Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman](https://www.tio.com.au/) (TIO), Judi Jones, for our [Winter Magazine](http://accan.org.au/consumer-resources/accan-magazine) to find out more about her past work experience and the future direction of the TIO.

## Congratulations on your appointment as the new TIO. You’ve worked in dispute resolution for quite some time now, what attracted you to this field of work?

My early career was in law. I then spent time at home with my children, and working with community groups. I then studied dispute resolution and realised I had found my natural home. After completing post graduate study, I taught mediation and negotiation at Massey University. And eventually was asked to establish NZ’s Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner Scheme (the equivalent of the energy Ombudsman schemes here).

The Ombudsman role is both interesting and challenging. It requires you to lead an organisation, deal with disputes, and have strong and effective relationships with members and consumers while remaining firmly independent.

The Ombudsman is an essential part of the consumer protection framework. I am proud to have joined an organisation that has delivered the external dispute resolution scheme for the telcos in Australia for more than 20 years.

The TIO is an independent service that’s free for residential and small business consumers and our role is to facilitate the conversation between the consumer and the service provider to help them sort things out. It’s an important job and I have always understood how that work benefits both consumers and providers.

## What similarities do you see between Australia and New Zealand in terms of how complaints are handled?

I have discovered there are significant similarities – both in internal and external dispute resolution. In NZ as in Australia, the provider has the first opportunity to resolve the complaint. In terms of what consumers want, it is not always about money. In both countries, consumers want the matter fixed, and also want the system improved so the same thing does not happen again.

## What does the future hold for the TIO?

It’s an exciting time at the TIO. We are developing a new strategy that will really focus on our core work of helping consumers and service providers resolve complaints and to help service providers improve on their performance. I’m looking forward to making sure we continue providing a service that is efficient and effective, while remaining independent.

## You have a reputation for being tough in New Zealand –industry reps there called you Judge Judi. Are you going to be tough with the telco industry here?

### Ha! I’m not sure that tough is the right word. I’m very clear and I think an Ombudsman needs to be so that they can deliver an independent and objective view and service. I’m not about being tough with industry but, rather, working with it so that telcos know what consumers are telling us, and try to improve their customers’ experiences. And I am also clear with consumers, and with staff – we have a responsibility to all our stakeholders to provide an independent and effective service.