

Member Guidance – Reasonable steps to inform consumers and occupiers of IDR and EDR

January 2025

Recommendations

This submission recommends that:

- > The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (**TIO**) undertake consultation on the Member Guidance once the reviewing of the Telecommunications (Consumer Complaints Handling) Industry Standard 2018 (**Complaints Handling Standard**) has been finalised.
- > The TIO develop an additional section of the Member Guidance that specifically outlines reasonable steps members should take to signpost Internal Dispute Resolution (**IDR**) and External Dispute Resolution (**EDR**) services while handling a complaint.

About this submission

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (**ACCAN**) thanks the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (**TIO**) for the opportunity to comment on its Member Guidance – Reasonable steps to inform consumers and occupiers of IDR and EDR (**Member Guidance**).

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**Australian Communications
Consumer Action Network**

Australian Communications Consumer Action Network

ACCAN is the peak national consumer advocacy organisation for communications working to achieve trusted, accessible, inclusive, affordable and available communications and digital services for all Australians.

Introduction

ACCAN considers the Member Guidance is important to instruct TIO members on their obligations under the TIO Scheme. We note that the upcoming review of the Telecommunications (Consumer Complaints Handling) Industry Standard 2018 (**Complaints Handling Standard**) may significantly change the TIO's Member Guidance on Clause 6.2 of the TIO's Terms of Reference. Taking this into account, ACCAN recommends that the TIO undertake consultation on the Member Guidance after the review of the Complaints Handling Standard is complete to avoid duplicating the effort undertaken in reviewing its Member Guidance.

Please see ACCAN's responses to the discussion paper below and in the attached commentary to the Member Guidance.

Responses to consultation questions

- 1. Does the proposed document successfully reflect the change 6.2 to the TIO's ToR? If not, please outline what amendments should be made to address this?**

In ACCAN's view the document successfully reflects the changes to the ToR.

- 2. Does the proposed document successfully outline and clarify what reasonable steps a member should take to reasonably signpost IDR and EDR in line with the TIO's ToR? If not, what amendments should be made to achieve this purpose?**

ACCAN considers that the Member Guidance could offer greater specificity to successfully outline the reasonable steps a member can take to signpost IDR and EDR.

For example, the reasonable steps drafted under key stage 1 'Good practice before receiving a complaint' rely on the term 'appropriate' to describe the avenues, mechanisms and training members are expected to take to ensure they can effectively signpost IDR and EDR to consumers. As the term 'appropriate' can be broadly interpreted, ACCAN supports redrafting points 1-3 to ensure members' structures are set up to facilitate positive consumer outcomes.

As such, ACCAN recommends redrafting stage 1, and the Member Guidance more broadly, to provide greater specificity to the actionable steps a member can take to ensure they adequately signpost IDR and EDR to consumers consistent with best practice.

- 3. Does the proposed document provide sufficient guidance to members so that they can ensure they fulfil their obligations in relation to 6.2 of the TIO's ToR? If not, what amendments should be made to achieve this objective?**

In ACCAN's view, the document could provide further guidance to members through expanding stage 3 'At the point of a member receiving a complaint'. ACCAN supports expanding the reasonable steps at stage 3 to include (changes in **bold**):

- 4. All member staff can easily classify, manage, resolve and identify complaints in line with the Complaints Handling Standard.*

5. *At the time of taking a complaint, members proactively provide the consumer with their complaints handling process document.*
6. *At the time of taking a complaint, members clearly explain the complaints handling process and the maximum timeframes they must abide by under the Complaints Handling Standard.*
7. *At the time of taking a verbal complaint, explaining TIO's EDR service and giving details of TIO's website and telephone number if the complaint is not resolved.*
8. *At the time of confirming receipt of a written complaint, explaining the TIO's EDR services and giving details of the TIO's website and telephone number if the complaint is not resolved.*

Further, the guidance regarding signposting IDR and EDR while handling a complaint under 'Completion or closure of a complaint' point 3 is limited and ACCAN supports including an expanded list of reasonable steps a member can take during this stage.

ACCAN recommends the TIO develop an additional section of the Member Guidance that specifically outlines reasonable steps members should take to signpost IDR and EDR services while handling a complaint. While handling complaints, ACCAN considers members must clearly inform consumers in all correspondence on how consumers may escalate complaints internally and provide details of when and how consumers may contact the TIO.

Conclusion

ACCAN supports the TIO developing guidance to help members understand their obligations to signpost IDR and EDR services. Members openly signposting EDR options to consumers is an important opportunity to generate member trust in the telecommunications industry.

We thank the TIO for the opportunity to comment on the draft Member Guidance. Should you wish to discuss any of the issues raised in this submission further, please do not hesitate to contact Rebekah Palmer, Communications and Policy Officer, at rebekah.palmer@accan.org.au.

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is Australia's peak communication consumer organisation. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Commonwealth of Australia under section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997. This funding is recovered from charges on telecommunications carriers. ACCAN is committed to reconciliation that acknowledges Australia's past and values the unique culture and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. [Read our RAP.](#)
