

Media Contact: Alec Bennetts | 0409 966 931 | media@accan.org.au

Media Release

11 July 2024

ACCAN awards three new communications consumer grants

Australia's peak communications consumer advocacy group, the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN), has today announced 3 projects that it will fund through the 2024 Round of its Independent Grants Program.

The ACCAN Independent Grants Program funds projects to enable research on telecommunications issues, represent telecommunications consumers, or create educational tools which empower consumers to understand telecommunications products and services and make decisions in their own interests.

The operation of ACCAN's Independent Grant Program is made possible by funding provided by the Commonwealth of Australia under section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997.

Sixty nine applicants from a variety of community, university, and research organisations applied for funding under the latest round of ACCAN's Grants Program.

ACCAN CEO Carol Bennett congratulated the successful applicants and said that ACCAN was looking forward to supporting them during the course of their projects.

"Grants projects inform ACCAN's work and contribute to the broader evidence base for consumers, regulators and service providers in the telecommunications market," Ms Bennett said.

"Covering issues including access to digital skills, technology-facilitated abuse, and the establishment of a National Device Bank, this year's grantees will make a real difference to the experience of Australian consumers."

"We look forward to working with the successful applicants as they undertake these exciting projects," Ms Bennett concluded.

The successful projects are listed below. For more information on the below projects, visit the [current Grants page](#).

2024 Grants Projects

WorkVentures

Enabling First Nations digital citizens through a National Device Bank

Expected completion: 2026

Funded: 2024

Amount: \$85,000

Appropriate device access remains a pervasive challenge for many Australians, with First Nations Australians among the most digitally excluded. Meanwhile, annually the Australian public and corporate sector refreshes c.2 million devices, with most being sold on international markets or recycled. This project supports the establishment of a National Device Bank ('NDB') model through a targeted First Nations proof of concept. A NDB seeks to distribute refurbished technology, donated by companies and government agencies, for free to digitally excluded communities. A NDB was also recommended by the First Nations Digital Inclusion Alliance Group ('FNDIAG'), supporting Target 17 of Closing the Gap.

RMIT University

Developing design strategies and policies to protect women and gender-diverse people from technology-facilitated abuse on social media

Expected completion: 2026

Funded: 2024

Amount: \$78,045

Online Safety Codes require social media platforms to build safety features that empower users to protect themselves from technology-facilitated abuse. However, 42% of Australians agree that existing safety features are inadequate, leaving women and gender-diverse users most vulnerable. ACCAN's submission to the Codes recommend involving end-consumers early on to produce consumer-centric outcomes. This project investigates how women and gender-diverse users engage with safety features on social media, to identify their strengths/limitations. Following "Safety by Design" principles, the researchers will collaborate with users, designers and policymakers, to produce consumer-centric recommendations to proactively design online safety mechanisms that address vulnerable consumers' safety expectations.

RMIT University

Social infrastructure for digital skills development

Expected completion: 2026

Funded: 2024

Amount: \$38,404

This project progresses research funded by ACCAN (2021) which analysed digital inequalities amongst public housing residents. That project revealed the pivotal role neighbourhood centres play

in digital skill acquisition and troubleshooting for people who face barriers to being digitally included. This project analyses work and learning practices of neighbourhood centre staff and students and will create insights into 1) best practice in personalised digital skill training 2) barriers to digital access that inform need for skill acquisition and troubleshooting. Findings will assist neighbourhood centres to optimise their teaching and assist telecommunications companies to address barriers that impede access.

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](#)
