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## Media Release

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### **ACMA investigation into Telstra reveals significant breach of community trust**

Consumers would be forgiven for feeling angry and betrayed after an ACMA investigation revealed Telstra made available to the public details of 140,000 telco customers who had requested unlisted numbers (also known as *silent* numbers), in breach of carrier licence conditions.

Consumers have the right to ask their provider to make their phone number unlisted. Calls from unlisted phones do not show up on the phones of recipients. The number also doesn't appear in phone directories.

The option to have a number that isn't listed in a directory and that isn't visible to call recipients is vital for consumers who are concerned about their privacy.

ACCAN CEO Carol Bennett said that Telstra's actions constituted a breach of community trust, and criticised the inadequacy of deterrence actions available to the regulator.

"There are very good reasons why people elect to have a silent number. Regardless of the reason, they should be able to expect privacy in that choice," Ms Bennett said.

"Silent numbers have been raised as an issue from a privacy and a safety standpoint by ACCAN and its members, particularly women's services organisations, due to its use by their clients."

"This issue typifies an enforcement and consumer protections system that isn't fit for purpose. The ACMA should have a modern regulatory toolkit at its disposal, and be empowered to apply strong and immediate penalties commensurate with the seriousness of misconduct."

Rebecca Glenn is the CEO of the Centre for Women's Economic Safety (CWES), an organisation that assists women experiencing economic abuse in the context of domestic and family violence (DFV). She was unequivocal in denouncing Telstra's treatment of consumer privacy and the potential impacts.

Ms Glenn said that the ACMA investigation into Telstra revealed "a horrifying breach of privacy with financial safety implications on top of other potentially devastating consequences."

"Given the only remedy appears to be to change numbers, this creates a significant burden on victim-survivors to contact providers of financial and essential services with updated details.

“The telco sector needs to get serious about its responses to domestic and family violence. Clearly, current consumer protections in the telco sector have insufficient deterrence power to drive better behaviour.”

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***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](#)***

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