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Media Release

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Consumers welcome legislation to stem the tide of SMS scams

Telco consumers fed up with SMS scams will soon be able to more easily distinguish between legitimate and fraudulent texts, thanks to new proposed legislation.

ACCAN welcomes the introduction of legislation to establish an SMS Sender ID Register by the Minister for Communications Michelle Rowland in Parliament today.

ACCAN has frequently heard from consumers that they are weary of constantly receiving scam and spam text messages. SMS is now the most reported method used by scammers to deceive consumers, causing \$26.9 million in consumer losses in 2023.¹

An SMS Sender ID Register will help consumers more easily determine whether a text message is a scam or legitimate notification from businesses, service providers and government.

The Register will play a pivotal role in reducing the amount of scam contacts and losses experienced by Australians. ACCAN calls upon the government to ensure the Register is mandatory and underpinned by a robust compliance framework.

International experience of the effectiveness of mandatory Registers is compelling. After establishing a mandatory SMS Sender ID Register, Singapore saw a 64% decline in scam SMS messages.² As made clear by the Minister today, 89% of responses to the Register consultation process favoured a mandatory Register.³

ACCAN Acting CEO Dr Gareth Downing said that the introduction of an SMS Sender ID Register is a crucial step to improving outcomes for telecommunications consumers impacted by scams.

¹ National Anti-Scam Centre. 2024. NASC Quarterly Update May 2024. Available at: <https://www.accc.gov.au/about-us/publications/serial-publications/national-anti-scam-centre-quarterly-update/national-anti-scam-centre-quarterly-update-may-2024>; ACCC. 2024. Targeting scams report on 2023 scams activity. Pg. 14. Available at: <https://www.accc.gov.au/system/files/targeting-scams-report-activity-2023.pdf>

² CHOICE. 2023. Bank impersonation fraud: What you need to know to avoid being scammed. Available at: <https://www.choice.com.au/consumers-and-data/protecting-your-data/data-privacy-and-safety/articles/bank-impersonation-scams>

³ Minister Rowland, Minister Jones. 2024. New legislation to crack down on SMS scams. Available at: <https://minister.infrastructure.gov.au/rowland/media-release/new-legislation-crack-down-sms-scams>

“The introduction of legislation to establish an SMS Sender ID Register is welcome news for communications consumers, and an important step in combatting SMS scams,” Dr Downing said.

“We encourage government to go a step further, taking heed of overwhelming feedback during the consultation process to make the Register mandatory to enhance its effectiveness.”

“The Register will facilitate greater confidence between the senders and recipients of SMS communications - benefiting consumers, small businesses and service providers.”

“ACCAN looks forward to working with the Minister, other legislators, industry and consumers as the process to establish a Register continues.”

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.
