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Media Release

21 September

Telco complaints decrease on average but mobile coverage still a concern

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) has welcomed an overall fall in complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO). However, considerable increases to complaints about poor mobile coverage and mobile service dropouts (up 9.9% and 6.3% respectively) have concerned the peak body for communications consumers.

Complaints data published today in the TIO's 2021-22 Annual Report shows that there were 79,534 complaints received in the last financial year; a decrease of 33.4% compared to the 2020-21 report. This is the lowest volume of complaints received by the TIO in over three years and the largest percentage reduction in over a decade.

"While it's positive to see that the overall level of complaints has fallen, we can't lose sight of the fact that the proportion of mobile complaints experienced by the TIO rose to 39.7 per cent in 2022; the highest proportion in five years." said ACCAN CEO Andrew Williams.

"Reliable and affordable phone and internet services have never been more essential for people in Australia. With much of the country still working from home and with many businesses such as banks and government agencies transitioning to online only it is vital that all Australians can access these services."

Complaints involving fault and connection issues continue to make up almost half (49.6%) of the total complaints received. This represents a slight increase from last year, driven by an increase in complaints about mobile services.

"It's clear that Australian telco's have made significant improvements to a range of services in the last twelve months, which is very pleasing to see; but there is still work to do, especially in respect to mobile services.

All Australians deserve access to reliable mobile services, not only to connect socially, but also to undertake many of life's essential activities. The disruption that occurs through poor connectivity cannot be underestimated," said Mr Williams.

Other notable trends in the TIO's 2021-2022 Annual Report include the decrease in complaints against the nation's largest telco, Telstra, coming in at just 43.7% in the last financial year. Furthermore, the TIO identified 10,988 complaints from small businesses, a decrease of 44.2% on the last report

"We thank the TIO for their ongoing efforts to provide fair, independent, and accessible dispute resolution services. We look forward to continuing to work with the TIO and the telcos to advocate for communications services that are trusted, inclusive, and available for all."

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.
