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## Media Release

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### **Regional telco review heaps further pressure on consumer code**

Peak communications consumer body ACCAN has welcomed the findings of the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee (RTIRC) 2024 report, particularly the call for action on stronger consumer protections under the Telecommunications Consumer Protections (TCP) Code and universal service reform in 2025.

The report was released a day before the latest draft of the updated TCP Code was released for public consultation.

The findings of the RTIRC have heaped even more pressure on the TCP Code, which is already widely acknowledged as being light touch, voluntary and failing to protect consumers from some of the most egregious practices. The most recent example includes the ACCC's unconscionable conduct case against Optus for mis-selling products and services to vulnerable consumers.

"As the RTIRC review makes clear, the fragmented and largely voluntary nature of our consumer protections framework too often falls short of delivering clear and robust safeguards for Australians," ACCAN CEO Carol Bennett said.

The 2024 RTIRC review saw a four-fold increase in community participation compared to the previous review and issued 14 key recommendations. These address critical issues such as mobile coverage and affordability, emerging technologies, universal service obligation, digital inclusion for First Nations consumers and improving digital literacy in regional areas.

The RTIRC also highlighted the urgent need to modernise the Universal Service Obligation (USO) to meet contemporary digital needs.

"The Committee rightly found that the USO, which currently guarantees access to basic telephone services, must be expanded to reflect the realities of the digital age," Ms. Bennett said.

"With an election on the horizon, ACCAN urges the Government to prioritise delivering for regional consumers by acting on the report's key findings. These recommendations have been developed through close collaboration with local communities and organisations, and it's vital they are not sidelined."

"ACCAN looks forward to working with stakeholders, including the Government, ACMA, consumer organisations and Communications Alliance, to ensure proposed reforms deliver meaningful improvements for all Australians, particularly through changes to consumer protections," Ms Bennett concluded.

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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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