

## Media release

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### Record telco complaints: 671 people per day call Ombudsman for help

Telco complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) have soared 9% in the last quarter taking them above their record highs in 2009 and marking a new low for Australian customers, peak communications consumer body ACCAN said today.

ACCAN says that the TIO received an average of 671 calls per day in the last six months, with a 20% increase in complaints about mobile phone services and calls on the Australian Communications and Media Authority to act to ensure customers are treated fairly by their telcos.

"Why should a customer have to resort to the Ombudsman in order to get Telstra, Optus, Vodafone – and all of the other players recording multi-million dollar profits – to resolve customer service and complaint handling problems? There's no other industry that has failed its customers so comprehensively over such an extended period of time," ACCAN CEO Teresa Corbin said today.

"We're calling on the ACMA to introduce a complaint-handling standard to bring this industry into line. Today's record number of complaints, the latest in a line of historically high figures, is further evidence that the industry cannot be allowed to continue to regulate itself."

Complaints about Vodafone's customer service and complaint handling have almost doubled for the six month period ending December. The figures come to light on the same day that Vodafone has posted a \$73.4 million profit.

"Vodafone's profit announcement today will come as a slap in the face to all the Vodafone customers who were forced to go to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman to get their issues resolved last year," said ACCAN CEO Teresa Corbin today.

"This is just the tip of the iceberg because these figures only go up to December and we know the vast majority of Vodafone customers didn't start speaking up until January," said Corbin.

ACCAN says now is a crucial time for the telco industry, with the ACMA due to report on its "Reconnecting the Customer" inquiry into poor customer service by telcos, sparked by a large rise in complaints in 2009 and early 2010.

In October 2009, Communications Minister Stephen Conroy described rising complaints figures as an "absolute shocker" and promised to legislate to "crack down" on telcos if there wasn't a significant improvement in complaint statistics.

**Media contact:** Elise Davidson **M:** 0409 966 931 **TTY:** 02 9281 5322

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#### About ACCAN

ACCAN (Australian Communications Consumer Action Network) is Australia's peak communications consumer organisation. ACCAN's goal is available, accessible and affordable communications that enhances the lives of consumers. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Australian government.