

Media release

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Advice for customers affected by latest Telstra privacy breach

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) says while it is appropriate that Privacy Commissioner Timothy Pilgrim has launched an investigation into the latest Telstra privacy breach, customers with concerns should consider making their own complaint.

ACCAN says customers with concerns should contact Telstra via its hotline on 133 933. If they want to make a complaint, it's important they use the word "complaint" when speaking to the customer service representative.

If customers are unsatisfied with Telstra's response they can make a complaint as an individual to the Office of the Privacy Commissioner.

"Telstra are telling their customers that it has had an 'internal systems outage' but we think this explanation only tells part of the story. Telstra has had a major privacy breach of one of its customer databases, including 70,000 usernames and passwords for BigPond accounts," ACCAN Chief Executive Teresa Corbin said this afternoon.

"This latest security breach by Telstra is simply not good enough and we, like Telstra customers, look forward to a detailed explanation as to why one of its customer service databases was available on a public web page."

The breach, which was made public on Friday afternoon, resulted in thousands of customers having their BigPond email and self-service facilities disabled until late Saturday.

ACCAN is calling on the Privacy Commissioner to expand its own-motion inquiry to consider the security of Telstra customers' personal information right across the business.

"It's only a matter of months since the Privacy Commissioner completed his last inquiry into Telstra. We believe there are now grounds to question the adequacy of the protection of customer information across all platforms," said Ms Corbin.

"The last investigation into Telstra by the Privacy Commissioner identified a privacy breach related to a mail out but dismissed it as a one-off human error. We think the magnitude of this breach is much more serious and should result in a wider investigation by the OAIC using independent IT security analysts."

"This is as much a test for the Privacy Commissioner as it is for Telstra. Customers want to know they can trust companies to keep their personal data secure. We've seen a growing number of these types of breaches this year alone and organisations must be held to account."

Link to consumer tip sheet: Privacy Complaints: Who Can You Turn To?

Link to Telstra hot line details: <http://exchange.telstra.com.au/2011/12/10/public-announcement/>

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About ACCAN

ACCAN (Australian Communications Consumer Action Network) is Australia's new 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.