



Media Release

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ACCAN welcomes moves by Telstra on silent-line fee exemption

Peak consumer group ACCAN says it is pleased with the announcement by Telstra today that it intends to waive a \$2.93 monthly silent line fee for people who are under a protection order or at risk of violence.

ACCAN has worked with Telstra to bring about this change after concerns that the impact of the fee on people who are already vulnerable were raised by ACCAN's member organisations, including the Australian Privacy Foundation and Women's Legal Services.

"Telstra has listened to us and is committed to having a fair policy in place in the next couple of months," ACCAN chief executive officer Teresa Corbin said today. "This announcement is a move in the right direction, although we would like to see this exemption extended to include other groups, such as low-income earners and pensioners."

Telstra's largest fixed-line competitor, Optus, does not charge a fee for having a silent line but other Telstra resellers do (see table on page 2).

"There needs to be a close look at the fee arrangements between Telstra and other fixed-line resellers, like iiNet, Internode and iPrimus, so those providers are able to offer the exemption to their customers as well," said Ms Corbin. "We look forward to continuing our discussions with Telstra so that we're not in the current situation where some people feel like they can't afford the privacy they want or – in some cases – actually need for safety reasons."

ACCAN has been advocating for change on this issue for over 12 months, which was drawn into the spotlight ten days ago by the 25,000-strong members of the Facebook group Destroy the Joint (DTJ). A member of DTJ raised the issue after being denied and then subsequently granted a fee exemption due to their personal situation.

"This is a fantastic win for consumers and ACCAN is proud of playing an instrumental role in bringing about this important change. We still think there's work to be done on this issue but we will continue to work with all parties to make sure that privacy is affordable for those who need it," said Corbin.

ACCAN says a 2008 [Australian Law Reform Commission report](#) recommended that the charge be dropped.

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The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is Australia's peak communications 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.

Telco	Fee	Notes
Telstra	\$2.93/month	Sponsored Access Program applies a zero-rate to crisis accommodation.
Optus	Free	Applies to home and mobile. Activated through "My account" for mobiles. ^[1] Number is removed from White Pages and Directory Assistance.
Internode	\$4/month	Fee appears to apply whether a silent number or just address suppression is requested. ^[2]
iPrimus	\$3.50/month	Price listed at ^[3] . Previously charged at \$2.93/month; changed from Oct 2012. ^[4]
iiNet	\$2.93/month	Removes name, number and address from directory assistance and White Pages. ^[5]
Spintel	\$2.95/month	^[1] Click for details
ACN	\$2.93/month	Price is \$2.66 + \$0.27 GST/month ^[2]

This media release is online at www.accan.org.au

[1]

[http://optus.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/54/kw/accounts%20and%20billing/related/1#Subscribe to Silent Line via My Account](http://optus.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/54/kw/accounts%20and%20billing/related/1#Subscribe_to_Silent_Line_via_My_Account)

[2] http://www.internode.on.net/residential/phone_and_voip/nodeline_home_phone/features/

[3] <http://www.iprimus.com.au/PrimusWeb/HomeSolutions/HomePhone/>

[4] <http://www.iprimus.com.au/PrimusWeb/HomeSolutions/HomePhone/ValueAddedServices.htm>

[5] <http://www.iinet.net.au/phone/home/features/>

[1] <http://www.spin.net.au/products/phone>

[2] http://www.acnpacific.com.au/_files/f/1875/Fixed-Wire-Service&Features-Pricing.pdf