



# ACCAN Quarterly Progress Report

**Period: 1 December 2021 – 28 February 2022**

## 1 Overview

*Executive summary of activity in the quarter for publication on ACCAN website.*

The heavy submission load continued this quarter, with ACCAN again making 16 submissions to government, regulator and industry consultations over the reporting period. This included our Pre-Budget Submission to Treasury outlining priority issues impacting communications consumers in each of our policy priority areas.

Staff worked closely with ACCAN's Indigenous Steering Committee to respond to the House of Representatives Standing Committee inquiry into how the corporate sector establishes models of best practice to foster better engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers. The Chair of ACCAN's Indigenous Steering Committee, Dr Heron Loban, and ACCAN's Director of Policy, Una Lawrence, were invited to appear at a public hearing to provide more information to the Standing Committee about the experiences of First Nations communications consumers.

ACCAN's previous work has had significant impact this quarter. Of particular note is the impact of our submission and other advocacy relating to the Regional Telecommunications Review. Many of ACCAN's recommendations were mirrored in the final report, including a recommendation that NBN Co implement a product for low-income consumers and income support recipients across all technologies in regional, rural and remote areas. ACCAN has been advocating for a concessional broadband product for low-income consumers since 2019.

Further, ACCAN's impact has been reflected in improvements to number quarantining and give-back processes in the draft Local Number Portability Code. Our feedback has also been reflected in the ACCC's new guidance for creditors and debt collectors.

ACCAN's new *Paying to Pay* research has completed stage 1, investigating consumer harms and the methods people use to pay their telco bills. Results so far indicate that the telco sector lacks transparency and consistency when it comes to the payment methods offered to customers, as well as large discrepancies between providers in associated fees.

All grants projects are progressing well, with a number of projects at or near completion.

ACCAN published 7 news stories during the reporting period. These included media releases about the 2021 Regional Telecommunications Review, ACCAN's comments on Telstra's penalty for customer privacy failures, our submission to the National Indigenous Australians' Agency (NIAA)'s Indigenous Digital Inclusion Plan Discussion Paper, and news about our success in securing a grant from the auDA Foundation. Additionally, we published consumer education

for buying tech during the holiday season, reporting disinformation and misinformation on digital platforms, and preparing for emergencies when telecommunications go down.

ACCAN's total membership is 201. Organisational Members is now at 106 plus 95 individual members.

ACCAN staff participated in 51 different outreach, consumer engagement and member events and consultation discussions. Due to the lockdowns across much of Australia, all engagements were conducted remotely. Despite these challenges, the ACCAN policy team has continued to work closely with members and consumer groups to ensure our policy work is representative. Dates for the four ACCAN Advisory Forums have been confirmed for the next quarter.

ACCAN represented consumers at 13 committee meetings throughout the period, engaged with government and regulatory bodies on 24 different occasions and industry bodies on 23 occasions. ACCAN met with industry through the formal quarterly meeting framework as well as supplementary meetings as required. ACCAN representation on formal committees continues to be extensive and during this period we were actively working on 8 of the 32 committees on which we represent consumers.

There were no Board meetings held during this period, however one is scheduled for 16 March 2022.

ACCAN has been awarded a grant from the auDA Foundation to develop a suite of multi-format, multi-channel and accessible education materials to assist small businesses protect their domain name security. Our aim is to educate small businesses about the importance of protecting their domain name security, with specific focus on improving awareness and confidence regarding the acquisition and management of domain names.

This quarter, ACCAN generated 65 media hits across national print, online, TV and radio. This is an average of 21 items per month.

Additionally, ACCAN responded to five media enquiries. These covered a range of topics including the 2021 Regional Telecommunications Review, and mobile black spots.

ACCAN proactively provided comments to the media on a range of other major issues including Telstra's \$2.5m penalty for customer privacy and public safety failures, the findings of the 2021 Regional Telecommunications Review, and being named as a successful recipient in the auDA Foundation 2021 Grants Program.

The tone of ACCAN's media coverage this quarter was good. This quarter's media activity received an average quality score of 4.90 out of 6.00. This "good" rating reflects the quality of coverage achieved, with relatively strong consumer messaging and a moderate share of voice.