



# ACCAN Quarterly Progress Report

**Period: 1 June 2023 – 31 August 2023**

## 1 Overview

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

There was a slight increase in submission work compared to the previous quarter, with ACCAN making 23 submissions to stakeholder consultations. Additionally, ACCAN's policy team has been busy with both proactive and reactive policy work over the reporting period.

This quarter our submissions relating to *growing consumer confidence* included responses on the ACCC's Digital Platform Services Inquiry – March 2024 report, the Government's ACMA powers to combat disinformation and misinformation and the Digital Transformation Agency's Initial Data and Digital Government Strategy. Our submissions related to a *fairer telco market* included Communications Alliance's Telecommunications Consumer Protections (TCP) Code Review and the Government's Consultation on the Draft Direction to the ACMA on the financial hardship industry standard.

The impact of ACCAN's policy work continues to be reflected in multiple areas. ACCAN's response to the Inquiry into the *Treasury Laws Amendment (Consumer Data Right) Bill 2022* was reflected in the provisions of the Senate Committee, several ACCAN recommendations to the ACMA compliance priorities 2023-24 consultation were adopted, and ACCAN's recommendation to remake the Captioning Quality Standard were adopted by the ACMA. ACCAN's impact was further evidenced with the Minister for Communications announcing an intention to direct the ACMA to establish an industry standard for financial hardship, reflecting a longstanding ACCAN policy position that financial hardship protections be directly regulated.

After a year's hiatus, we have now begun a new round of projects funded under the Independent Grants Program. The 7 projects cover a range of topics such as smartphone sharing, defining communications in the consumer interest, and First Nations digital inclusion in Western Sydney. Commencement meetings with grantees has been a priority for much of the period and all projects are now well underway.

ACCAN's commissioned research program has also had some exciting developments this quarter, with UTS' report on enforcement outcomes in the telco sector now complete.

ACCAN published 6 news stories on our website and social media networks during the period. These included media releases about the direct regulation of financial hardship, consumer safeguards within the TCP Code, and our Grants Program. In addition to media releases, we released an explainer-style blog post about spectrum in Australia, a full-text speech delivered by CEO Andrew Williams, and notices relating to Board positions. ACCAN's social media messaging spanned a wide range of topics, with a key focus on highlighting our outreach initiatives and showcasing the upcoming Consumer Congress.

During this period, ACCAN responded to a total of 25 media enquiries, with topics including the TIO Systemic Issues report, further ACMA penalties to organisations breaching the Spam Act, ACMA warnings to telcos for breaches of the TCP Code financial hardship provisions, ongoing complaints from consumers about Telstra continuing to contact deceased customers, the TPG email handover, industry self-regulation, and outages and connectivity issues in remote areas.

ACCAN proactively provided comments to the media on a range of other important issues including the ACMA position paper on telecommunications safeguards, the direct regulation of financial hardship and the successful projects funded by ACCAN's Grants Program.

ACCAN staff participated in a wide range of consumer, stakeholder and industry engagement forums during the reporting period. Highlights included the 2023 NetThing conference and the Asia Pacific Internet Governance Forum in Brisbane where digital inclusion was highly topical. ACCAN staff participated in a panel discussion on dealing with consumer hardship in the energy and telco sectors at the ACCC Consumer Congress in Melbourne. Given the current cost of living environment, similar issues were also addressed at the TASCOS conference in Hobart.

ACCAN's Board met twice during the reporting period: 15 June and 16 August. The Board approved ACCAN's 2023-24 budget at the June meeting and the Auditor's report for 2022-23 at the August meeting. The Auditor's report will be tabled to ACCAN members at the 2023 Annual General Meeting (AGM). One additional life member was nominated by the Board at the August meeting for consideration by members at the AGM.