



ACCAN Quarterly Progress Report

Period: 1 September – 30 November 2023

1 Overview

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

This quarter ACCAN made 15 submissions to stakeholder consultations relating to its policy priority area of Reliable, Resilient and Robust Infrastructure. ACCAN is pleased to also see progress in this area through its work with the Australian National University's Tech Policy Design Centre, alongside broader discussions designed to drive improved reliability.

Members from the ACCAN policy team met with community organisations across the country on opportunities to improve consumer protections through direct regulation, revisions to the Telecommunications Consumer Protections (TCP) Code and undertook engagement on our domestic and family violence policy position. ACCAN's submissions to the TCP Code Review and Australian Bureau of Statistics Census consultation were favourably cited in the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group's initial report.

Preparations for the 2024 Round of the Independent Grants Program are advanced. The Grants Guidelines are expected to be forwarded to the Department for its approval, mid-December. The Round is due to open on January 30th, 2024.

Under our commissioned research program, UTS has provided an advance copy of their draft Enforcement report to the ACMA who have since provided feedback. This feedback will be incorporated as appropriate, with a public launch scheduled for early 2024.

ACCAN published 8 news stories this quarter, including media releases about TIO telco consumer complaints data, the finalisation of the NBN SAU Variation, ACCAN's position on direct regulation to protect consumers facing domestic and family violence, and the retirement of ACCAN CEO Andrew Williams. We also published a best-practice guide to accessibility, a primer on the 2024 USO review, and a refreshed guide to consumer compensation in the wake of telco outages.

The highlight of the reporting period was ACCAN's Consumer Congress, held in Sydney on 12 and 13 September. Conducted over two days, the Congress focussed on working collaboratively, dedicating Day 1 to consumer stakeholder forums, focusing on themes identified by ACCAN's 2023 advisory forums. Delegates also had the opportunity to hear from guest speakers on current policy themes, plus pre-recorded messages from the Minister and Shadow Minister. Feedback from delegates was overwhelmingly positive, with the stakeholder workshops on Day 1 noted as a highlight.

ACCAN staff participated in 97 different outreach, consumer engagement, and member events, as well as consultation discussions on topics such as: the TCP Code Review, the ACMA's consultation on Financial Hardship direct regulation and affordability. Further, ACCAN again collaborated with Google to deliver a range of online education materials and video content to coincide with Scams Awareness Week

ACCAN staff travelled to a number of interstate events to engage with members including the Financial Counsellors' WA Conference in Perth, the National Farmers' Federation in Canberra and First Nations Media Australia Conference in Canberra. ACCAN's CEO also attended the first in-person meeting of the National Anti-Scams Centre Advisory Board.

ACCAN's AGM was held on 12 October. Holly Raiche's second term expired at the meeting. There were four vacant positions to be filled at the AGM and four members nominated. The two previously co-opted Board Members, Delia Rickard PSM and Dr Scott Hollier were appointed, along with two new Members, David Havyatt and Bobbie Blackson. The new Board came together for the first time on 8 November for a full-day workshop to start the process of formulating ACCAN's 2024-27 strategic plan. At its first meeting on 9 November, the new Board re-elected Professor Julian Thomas as ACCAN's Chairperson, and Victoria Rubensohn AM was elected as Deputy Chairperson.

Staffing-wise, ACCAN's Director of Inclusion, Dr Wayne Hawkins, retired on 17 November after 13 years at ACCAN. ACCAN's CEO, Andrew Williams, advised the Board this quarter that he intends stepping down from the role in March 2024, for personal reasons.

During the quarter, ACCAN generated 248 media hits across national print, online, TV and radio, and responded to a total of 40 media enquiries. A dominant item was the Optus outage, both during the incident and in the weeks following. ACCAN was interviewed on over 20 occasions on this, with many of these interviews syndicated or reported upon more widely. Other topics of note included the ACMA actions for breaches of the Spam Act, the Universal Service Obligation, right to repair, the Financial Hardship Standard, and scams (ranging from bank phone scams to Black Friday scams).