

ACCAN Quarterly Progress Report



Period: 1 March – 31 May 2023

1 Overview

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

This quarter saw a material increase in ACCAN's submission work, with the policy team responding effectively while also progressing proactive policy work. Submissions covered affordability, reliability, better infrastructure and growing consumer confidence, amongst others.

The proposed variation to the NBN Special Access Undertaking (SAU) remained a focus, noting its significant impact on consumer outcomes. During the quarter, ACCAN undertook extensive engagement with stakeholders on measuring digital inclusion through the census to support evidence-based policies to support regional, rural and remote consumers, First Nations consumers and people with disability.

Engagement with the community sector has informed ACCAN's draft policy positions on consumer protection, engagement with the Minister's Consumer Roundtable and the TCP Code review. Other advocacy has enabled us to raise issues relating to scams, accessibility and closing the digital gap. Industry continues to seek ACCAN's views and insights, as evidenced by the material revisions to the NBN SAU.

Our profile as a source of expert policy advice on communications consumers was also reflected in ACCAN being invited to provide further evidence to the Parliamentary Inquiry on Co-investment in Multicarrier Regional Mobile Infrastructure. The recent ACCC draft decision on the SAU, and the Senate Economics Legislation Committee report on the Treasury Laws Amendment (Consumer Data Right) Bill 2022 both cited ACCAN policy submissions extensively.

The Grants Team's focus was the assessment of 2023 Round applications to the Independent Grants Program. Assessment is now in its final stages with recommendations expected to be completed early in June.

ACCAN's commissioned research program has successfully been awarded a partnership with the University of Sydney on a new collaboration on *Disability and Digital Citizenship*. This project will enable ACCAN and its Inclusion Consumer Consultation Forum (formerly DAF) to develop a National Disability Digital Inclusion Plan. This plan will provide the policy and advocacy framework needed to inform the activities and associated outcomes for the [Australian Government's Disability Strategy 2021-2031](#).

ACCAN published blog posts this quarter regarding the 2023/24 closure of the 3G network as well as an anticipated rise in costs for telco consumers. The latter urged consumers to shop around for a better deal and outlined the range of options available, including switching to smaller telcos.

Social media messaging this quarter looked at a range of topics including Privacy Awareness Week, scams, ACCAN's Communications Consumer Congress and National Reconciliation Week.

Media opportunities for ACCAN included interviews on Telstra's price increases, the Apple repair program, the best NBN plans in 2023 and the RRRCC in Canberra to discuss the importance of reliable connectivity services. These interviews were published or broadcast by ABC news, The Guardian, Forbes Advisor magazine and The Land.

ACCAN staff participated in a wide range of consumer, stakeholder and industry engagement forums during the reporting period. Pleasingly, many engagements were undertaken face to face, with several ACCAN staff travelling interstate for the first time in over two years. This has provided a great opportunity to re-engage with members and have in-person discussions with prospective members. Highlights for the period include ACCAN's involvement in the Regional Rural and Remote Communications Coalition delegation to Parliament in late March, participating in the COSBOA Small Business Summit in Melbourne, the WACOSS conference in Perth, and the Financial Counselling Australia Conference in Canberra.

The Board meeting on 16 March included a detailed discussion on the NBN Special Access Undertaking with particular emphasis on its strategic implications for ACCAN. Further, the ACCAN Board unanimously passed a resolution to support the First Nations Voice to Parliament, following a briefing from Dr Scott Winch. Kath Silleri joined by videoconference to discuss a range of topical issues. As always, the Board found this to be highly beneficial and expressed their appreciation.

ACCAN's Senior Economic Adviser, Megan Ward, finished with the organisation in April to take up a senior policy role with NSW government. Recruitment for a replacement is ongoing. Media and Communications Adviser, Sean Brogan, resigned in May, finishing on 2 June 2023. Recruitment for his replacement has commenced.

ACCAN was advised early in the reporting period of Minister Rowland's decision to approve ongoing funding for the Accessible Telecoms program through to 2025. The Deed was executed in early April and at the time of writing ACCAN is finalising recruitment of relevant additional staff to deliver the agreed service. ACCAN thanks the Department for its efforts in achieving this outcome.