

Quarter 2, FY20-21

The summary below outlines ACCAN's activities from 1 September – 30 November 2020.

During the reporting period the ACCAN team has continued to engage with issues of great significance to telecommunications consumers. The ongoing restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic continued to influence ACCAN's operations, however it did not have any adverse impact on stakeholder engagement. A positive outcome of the year has been the rapid adaption to online working which has resulted in more stakeholders being available to participate in ACCAN consultation forums. Overall proficiency with managing online communications forums has improved markedly during the year and it's likely this will become the normal operating mode in the future.

A consistent theme throughout 2020 has been the need for ACCAN to address issues across all aspects of the organisation's consumer policy positions: Increased reliability; No Australian Left Offline – affordable telecommunications for all; a fairer telco market; Growing consumer confidence, Better infrastructure, and Improved accessibility.

Significant activity during the period has included:

- 14 submissions to government and industry consultations.
- Commencement of the Virtual ACCANect video presentations as a replacement for the annual conference.
- In collaboration with NBN Co, convened Affordable Broadband virtual roundtables with consumers in Queensland.
- Being awarded grant funding to provide content for the Government's Regional Tech Hub program in partnership with the National Farmers Federation.
- Progressed ongoing funding options for Accessible Telecommunications.

The impact of ACCAN's work during the period is reflected in many of ACCAN's recommendations to the Government's Mobile Black Spot Program guidelines being adopted. Similarly, all of ACCAN's Acceshub recommendations have been adopted, and ACCAN's policy positions outlined in the response to Consumer Safeguards Part C have been widely supported.

The 2020 grant projects are progressing well. All grantees have had initial meetings with the Grants Team where the context, expectations and aims of the program are explained. Several have also had separate meetings to discuss accessibility of planned outputs.

Preparations are now underway for the 2021 grants program with the application period opening in early 2021. This will be the final round within the current ACCAN contract, with projects having a maximum duration of 11 months (1 July 2021 – 30 May 2022).

From 1 September – 30 November 2020, ACCAN published two news stories.

ACCAN's total membership is 206. Organisational Membership is now at 109 organisations and 97 individuals. This reflects a small increase from the previous report, and it is pleasing to note that membership engagement remains strong.

ACCAN staff participated in 73 different outreach, consumer engagement, member events, and consultation discussions during the period. With travel restrictions remaining in place throughout, all of these engagements were conducted remotely with no detriment to participant engagement. The ACCAN policy team has continued to work closely with members and consumer groups to ensure our policy work is representative.

ACCAN represented consumers at 18 committee meetings throughout the period, engaged with government and regulatory bodies on 30 different occasions and industry bodies on 35 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 15 of the 33 committees on which we represent consumers.

The ACCAN/NBN stakeholder roundtable series concluded in October with highly productive workshops with Queensland and NSW/ACT consumers. A national webinar is being planned for December to follow up with all consumers who have participated throughout the year; 199 have participated (excluding NBN and ACCAN staff) across the six workshops. We facilitated the inaugural ACCAN & ADIA - Staying Connected during COVID-19 & Beyond Community Sector Summit with assistance from NBN during which NBN CEO, Stephen Rue, engaged with over 40 community sector leaders.

The AGM was held on 24 September and, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, was conducted by videoconference. Victoria Rubensohn AM completed her second term as Director at this meeting. Two additional life members, Gunela Astbrink and Nigel Waters and the proposed changes to ACCAN's Constitution were endorsed by the members at this meeting. Members also paused to reflect on the passing of one of ACCAN's inaugural life members, Sue Salthouse.

ACCAN, in partnership with the National Farmers Federation (NFF) was appointed to deliver the Government's Digital Tech Hub project during the reporting period. ACCAN will be responsible for content development.

ACCAN staff have continued working remotely throughout the period, with no loss of productivity.

This quarter, ACCAN generated 183 media hits across national print, online, TV and radio; an average of 61 items per month.

During this period, ACCAN responded to a total of seven media enquiries. These covered a range of topics including MVNOs, choosing a mobile plan, the TIO's annual report findings, the announced nbn fibre upgrade, and nbn Sky Muster satellite services in regional Australia.

ACCAN proactively provided comments to the media on a range of other major issues including: the extension of nbn's Education Assistance Package, ACMA nbn service standards breaches, ACCAN's *Still Waiting* research, ACCAN's *Indigenous Communications Review*, and Telstra's breaches of Australian Consumer Law in remote Indigenous communities.