Quarter 2, FY16-17

The summary below outlines ACCAN's activities from 1 September 2016 to 30 November 2016.

The ACCAN policy team has continued to have a very heavy workload over the last three months, with nine submissions to government and industry inquiries during the period. Some of these were major pieces of work, such as the ACCC Mobile Roaming Inquiry, which involved intense consultation with consumers and independent experts. In addition our response to the ACCC Communications Market Study consultation was a significant team effort, and will be a valuable future resource for the consumer movement in the communications area.

Our advocacy has continued to advance our policy prioirities, by focusing on the areas of affordable communications, improved consumer decision making, and improved accessibility, as well as improved consumer safeguards, and privacy and security. It is pleasing to see ACCAN's influence continue during the quarter, with the Interim Report on the ACL Review including a number of references to our earlier submission, and the adoption of our recommendations by Communications Alliance in the revised draft of the Connect Outstanding Code.

All Grants Scheme projects are tracking well against the set milestones. Launch events for the final report from the Improving the Communication of Privacy Information for Consumers and Affordable Access projects were held at the ACCAN National Conference. Furthermore, consumer resources prepared by the Accessing Video on Demand were also launched just prior to the ACCAN conference in both Perth (8 September) and Sydney (13 September). A number of grant recipients, past and present, attended the ACCAN Conference. The What Standards? project from an earlier round launched the report and production guidelines at the national Auslan interpreters conference with demonstrations of videos being produced with Victorian emergency services. Monash Univesity's research into proxy internet use Going Online on Behalf of Others was launched 5 September, with a report and consumer tip sheet.

The ACCAN research project assessing consumer comprehension of telecommunications agreements was completed with the report Confident but Confounded released at the ACCAN Conference. The two new research projects commenced in the last quarter were completed. The ADSL Availability Project accurately identifies geographic areas across Australia without adequate access to broadband services and the geospatial map created in this project was made public shortly after the ACCAN conference and briefings were held with service providers prior to its release. The assessment of the effectiveness of the Centrelink Telephone Allowance and the impact of the telecommunications 'poverty premium' was also completed. The findings were highlighted in the report, Connectivity Costs, which was released. The final report from Infoxchange on Social Housing and Broadband on broadband availability in social housing was completed and launched at an Infoxchange National Year of Digital Inclusion (NYDI) event in November.

All previous grant recipients were surveyed in order to identify the impact their projects had had in readiness for the s593 Review (ACCAN). A separate impact assessment was also commissioned to support ACCAN's submission to the review. This assessment found that the scheme has had considerable impact.

From September – November, ACCAN published four online news stories. These articles covered a range of topics and highlighted consumer issues and advice. During the quarter the ACCAN Sky Muster consumer guide was updated and a new consumer resource, Get Connected, was launched. The GetConnected site received significant online traffic.

ACCAN participated in regular meetings with key stakeholders in the September – November quarter with several high level meetings including the Regional Minister of Communications and Telstra's

CEO. ACCAN held its Disability Advisory Forum and an additional ad hoc Regional Rural and Remote Advisory Forum. The latter forum has resulted in the formation of a Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition led by the National Farmers Federation, to advocate for five key outcomes to improve regional communications.

The 2016 ACCAN National Conference took place with a vibrant and informative program on 14-15 September in Sydney. New branding with the name 'ACCANect' was adopted to build on the reputation this event has created as a must attend for all stakeholders working in the communications consumer policy area. The conference had excellent support with over 220 registrations and a number of industry sponsors. Numerous stakeholder meetings across small business, Indigenous and rural and remote consumer groups were co-ordinated and attended during the reporting period as this is the peak period for ACCAN member events and AGMs.

Between 1 September – 30 November, 2016, ACCAN generated 206 media mentions across national print, online, TV and radio, with an average of 69 items per month. The majority of ACCAN's coverage for the quarter (69 per cent) was in online coverage. Print articles made up 22 per cent of the coverage while radio accounted for eight per cent. Five media releases were issued covering better communications for poorly served areas, ACCAN's policy priorities, affordability and rural and regional communications. Over the quarter, ACCAN responded to 30 media enquiries on topics including mobile premium services, mobile black spots, non-nbn networks in apartment buildings and 2G network switch-offs. This resulted in 65 pieces of media coverage across 30 publications/programs.

The launch of the Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition also achieved substantial media coverage. More than 40 media hits were recorded across radio print and online publications.

ACCAN made a submission to the Department's review of the s593 of the Telecommunications Act (ACCAN).