

Quarter 2, FY19-20

The summary below outlines ACCAN's activities from 1 September – 30 November 2019.

During the quarter ACCAN revised its policy priorities for the 2019-2020 year, in consultation with our members, advisory forums and the ACCAN team. The six priority areas are: Increased reliability; No Australian Left Offline – affordable telecommunications for all; A fairer telco market; Growing consumer confidence; Better Infrastructure; and Improved affordability.

ACCAN made 18 submissions across the range of our policy priorities in the period 1 September – 30 November 2019 and also made representation on providing greater protection to vulnerable consumers. We have identified four areas where ACCAN has had an impact on outcomes for consumers, including consultation on the Integrated Public Number Database, participation in ACMA's Scam Technology Project, recommending changes to accessibility features for the Telephone Equipment Industry Code, and providing input to the NBN consultation paper for concessional broadband for consumers on limited incomes. We have also provided comments to the Disabled People's International and G3ICT Research Committee, and the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts for the 5G Inquiry.

Issues have focused on the following ACCAN priority areas:

Affordable telecommunications for all: telecommunications affordability has remained a major focus of our work, with our engagement with NBN Co's second pricing consultation, and the ACCC's consultation on NBN access pricing, as well as the ACCC's Mobile Terminating Access Service Inquiry.

Increased reliability: the need for reliability measures to support the services consumers need has informed our engagement with and submission to the ACCC's NBN Wholesale Service Standards Final Decision, as well as our work on the IPND Code review by Communications Alliance, and our submission to the Department on the Regional Connectivity Program. The need for reliability was also a major factor informing our concern at NBN Co's proposal to withdraw Battery-Back Up and UNI-V services for premises using FTTP.

A fairer telco market: our submission to the ACMA consultation on changes to International Mobile Roaming Regulations, and our ongoing work with financial counsellors, community lawyers and the telco industry on authorisation of consumer representatives by telcos, have both fallen under this policy priority.

Growing consumer confidence: our work under this priority has focused on the development of the Consumer Data Right in our contributions to the OAIC's CDR Privacy Safeguard Guidelines consultation, the CDR Privacy Impact Assessment conducted by Maddocks Lawyers, and to the Department of Home Affairs consultation on the 2020 Cyber Security Strategy. We also submitted to the Australian Treasury consultation on the implementation of the recommendations of the ACCC Digital Platforms Inquiry Final Report.

Better infrastructure: this priority area is reflected in our submission to the Department's consultation on the design of the Regional Connectivity Program, and our comments to Infrastructure Australia's Infrastructure Audit 2019.

Improved accessibility: this quarter our accessibility work has closely monitored the transition to a new NRS provider.

ACCAN's Grants Program is progressing well. Two new members of the Independent Grants Panel were appointed during the quarter: Dr Fiona Martin and Dr William Tibben will join Mr Len Bytheway on the Panel through June 2022. A 'reserve panellist', Dr Robbie Fordyce was also appointed to allow for greater flexibility where required. The majority of the 2019 Round projects are progressing to schedule. Preparations for the 2020 Round are also progressing, with stakeholder consultation for priority topics now underway.

From 1 September - 30 November 2019, ACCAN published one news story. ACCAN generated 174 media hits across national print, online, TV and radio. This is an average of 58 items per month. ACCAN's media coverage was marginally more reactive than proactive this quarter at 57.47% of media hits. This can be mainly attributed to a widely syndicated news story that ran across the ABC. The revised priorities of the Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC) was syndicated across ABC radio 71 times.

This quarter, ACCAN responded to a total of 10 media enquiries. These covered a range of topics including the ACCC's Internet Activity Report, AGL's takeover of Southern Phone, and 190 numbers.

ACCAN proactively provided comments to the media on a range of other major issues including: NBN wholesale pricing changes, ACCC NBN wholesale service standards inquiry, lowering phone costs, TIO complaints, ACMA complaints, mobile number porting and ACCANect 2019.

ACCAN's total membership is 213. Organisational Membership is now at 110 organisations and 103 individuals. This reflects a slight decrease from the previous report. ACCAN is continually working towards being representative of Australian communications consumers and the organisations that represent their interests.

ACCANect 2019 – Communications Consumers - the Next 10 years – was held in Sydney on 11-12th September and attracted 170 attendees, 33 speakers and 8 industry sponsors. ACCAN received very positive feedback after the event. All presentations and some videos and transcripts are available on the ACCAN website.

ACCAN continued its wide ranging representation on formal committees during the period, representing consumers on 13 occasions. ACCAN also engaged with regulatory bodies on 25 occasions and industry bodies on 25 occasions. ACCAN has attended and coordinated events in most states and territories during the period, and has engaged on 36 occasions with our members and consumer groups, and participated in member events.

The ACCAN AGM was held on 12th September, the highlight of which was the induction of ACCAN's inaugural life members. The Board met on 13th November for an induction and training day and on 14th November for a formal Board meeting. Deirdre O'Donnell and Chris Dodds were endorsed for another year in their roles as ACCAN Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson respectively.

ACCAN's CEO attended the International Standards Organisation Consumer Policy Committee (COPOLCO) meeting in Geneva from 18th-22nd November as Head of the Standards. This was followed by high level meetings with a range of consumer advocacy organisations in London from 18th-23rd November.