

Quarter 4, FY14-15

The summary below outlines ACCAN's activities from 1 March to 31 May 2015.

Consumer Representation and Research

ACCAN submitted eight formal submissions to government and industry consultations from March to May. These submissions focus on issues such as the NBN, digital television regulation, accessibility information for telephone equipment, the website blocking bill and the proposed TPG-iiNet merger. ACCAN participated in the government's Deregulation Stakeholder Forum facilitated by the Parliamentary Secretary, Paul Fletcher. We presented at the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications [Inquiry into the use of s.313\(3\)](#) of the Telecommunications Act by government agencies to disrupt the operation of illegal online services.

During the quarter, we were pleased to hear that Vodafone will introduce free calls to 1800 numbers for its mobile customers, meaning that the majority of Australians won't be charged for these calls from 1 July 2015. We engaged with Deaf Australia as Jeenee Mobile launched text and data only plans popular in the Deaf community. This is a significant win for this community who in the past have had to pay for voice services that they don't use.

Our Rethinking the Universal Services Obligation Forum in March stimulated public discussion and thinking about the future of universal access services. This dialogue was continued at the Communications Day Conference in April and the Satellite Forum in May.

Independent Grants Program

The selection of new projects for 2015 has commenced and the Independent Grants Panel has made its recommendations for funding to the ACCAN Board. A 2014 project has worked constructively with the telecommunications industry to propose a better means of authenticating Deafblind consumers when dealing with customer service.

Consumer Education

ACCAN continues to work to educate consumers on telecommunications issues that affect them. During the quarter we communicated key messages about data retention, excess mobile data charges, Audio Description, the Copyright Notice Scheme and speculative invoicing. ACCAN's Facebook page was launched in March and provides another platform for the organisation to educate and engage with consumers.

ACCAN's Digital Ready online training system was extended by the release of an eBook and the creation of a LinkedIn Group.

Stakeholder Engagement

ACCAN's membership is at 220 (109 organisations and 111 individuals) representing a small, steady increase. We have had regular liaison with representatives from Telstra, nbn, Optus, Vodafone, Communications Alliance, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO), the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), TUSMA, Bureau Communications Research and other relevant stakeholders.

Our consumer representation on committees continues and we joined another newly formed forum including the heads of consumer organisations and the ombudsmen which will meet regularly in the future.

ACCAN presented at the CommsDay Summit, the National Consumer Congress, SACOSS affordability conference, Queensland Community Legal Centres conference and the Financial Counsellors Australia Conference. Staff members have attended stakeholder and member events including: the Connecting Up Conference, Australian Satellite Forum, the Rewind Fast Forward Conference, U3A Conference and the Grantmaking in Australia Conference.

Industry engagement continues to grow with a meeting with a team of Yatango staff at our office and a visit to Jeenee Mobile in Parramatta. There were also meetings with Telstra, Vodafone, Amaysim and the Communications Alliance quarterly briefing and we will be supporting their Internet of Things Think Tank. ACCAN was Telstra's guest at the Sydney Institute Annual Dinner Lecture. We were also pleased to participate in the Department's Bureau of Communications Research lunch with peak industry bodies.

A focus of our work over this period has been outreach and community engagement. This has included meetings with rural community groups, indigenous organisations, CALD community representatives and service delivery organisations, and older people. We also met with the CEO of Screenrights Australia, the new Energy and Water Ombudsman in NSW and the recently appointed CEO of the newly formed body Energy Consumers Australia. ACCAN also began preparations for the first meetings under our new Consumer Consultation Framework with invitations sent for the Members Advisory Forum and the Small Business Advisory Forum.

Media

Between 1 March and 31 May 2015 ACCAN generated 308 media mentions across national print, online, TV and radio, with an average of 103 items per month. Ten media releases were issued during the quarter and ACCAN provided comments on affordability and youth, data sharing, audio description, SMS termination charges and digital legacy management.

ACCAN constructively contributed to the discussion of many issues of importance to consumers throughout the quarter. Some of the most significant were Virgin Mobile's introduction of mobile data roll-over, the change to make registrations on the Do Not Call Register indefinite, copyright infringement, website blocking, streaming services and the Dallas Buyers Club case. Our media comments and media releases reflect the significant trends and issues experienced by consumers throughout the quarter.