

Quarter 4, FY21-22

The summary below outlines ACCAN's activities from 1 March – 31 May 2022

Following an extensive executive search process, ACCAN's Acting CEO, Andrew Williams, was appointed as the permanent CEO on 25 March. Further, ACCAN's renewed funding Deed was executed on 7 April, extending ACCAN's contract with the Department through to mid-2027.

Notwithstanding a slight reduction in submission work compared to the previous quarter, ACCAN's policy team has been busy with both proactive and reactive policy work these past few months.

This quarter our submissions relating to Growing Consumer Confidence included responses on the Reducing Scam Calls and Scam Short Messages Industry Code, Treasury's CDR Rules and Standards Design paper for the Telco sector, and the ACCC's Digital Platforms Services September 2022 interim report inquiry. In our response to the latter consultation, ACCAN reiterated the need for a well-funded consumer representative voice in the digital platforms space.

This quarter we also responded to the ACCC's review of the corporate control percentage. In our submission we argued that consumers would benefit if all infrastructure providers, not just licensed carriers, were subject to the Facilities Access Regime. The telcos have taken quite different positions on the proposed corporate control percentage, and so it is likely that ACCAN will discuss our position at length at our upcoming meetings with industry and regulatory stakeholders.

The impact of ACCAN's policy work has been observed in a few ways this quarter. Firstly, all major parties announced election commitments to address the affordability of communications services, which has been a focus area for ACCAN for quite some time. The Coalition also pledged that existing cybersecurity standards for Internet of Things devices would be made mandatory by the Federal Government, which is a recommendation ACCAN and others have made to various consultations.

This quarter sees the completion of all 2021 Round projects. Three of the remaining four 2020 Round projects are also now complete. , The Grants team is now working with grantees on finalising acquittals and the publication of outputs.

ACCAN has also been able to complete an additional omnibus survey this quarter. This nationally representative survey tested ACCAN's policy priority areas and took a snapshot of Australian consumers' perspectives on several key issues for ACCAN's work: affordability; free to air TV; public wi-fi and digital platforms.

ACCAN published 8 news stories during the reporting period. These included media releases about the 2022-23 Federal Budget and the appointment of Andrew Williams as CEO. Additionally, we published consumer education for potential rule changes for payphones, Advanced Mobile Location (AML) capability for 000 calls, a summary of the 2022 election policies, and spotting scam and spam text messages.

ACCAN's total membership is 202. Organisational Membership is now at 106 organisations and 96 individuals.

ACCAN staff participated in 59 different outreach, consumer engagement events and member events and consultation discussions. Despite the easing of COVID restrictions across the country, the majority of engagements were conducted remotely; the convenience and success of this method is likely to ensure that this will remain the preferred way of operating moving forward. The ACCAN policy team has continued to work closely with members and consumer groups to ensure our policy work is representative. All annual advisory forums were also held during the period.

ACCAN represented consumers at 16 committee meetings throughout the period, engaged with government and regulatory bodies on 29 different occasions and industry bodies on 21 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 10 of the 32 committees on which we represent consumers.

The Board met by teleconference on 16 March 2022.

The Accessible Telecoms program was extended through to 30 June 2022 by means of an interim funding agreement with one of the providers, to enable time for further discussions on a sustainable funding model to be conducted with industry.

ACCAN generated 145 media hits across national print, online, TV and radio. This is an average of 48 items per month.

During this period, ACCAN responded to a total of 9 media enquiries. These covered a range of topics including mobile outages in flood-affected communities, scam SMS messages, 2022 election policies, and the Regional Telecommunications Review.

ACCAN proactively provided comments to the media on a range of other major issues including: the Consumer Data Right regime and the appointment of Andrew Williams as ACCAN CEO.

The tone of ACCAN's media coverage this quarter rated as 'good', with media activity receiving an average quality score of 4.60 out of 6.00. This rating reflects the quality of coverage achieved, with relatively strong consumer messaging and a moderate share of voice.