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## **Day 1, Wednesday 14th September**

9:00-9:30am: Welcome and Opening Address

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JULIE McCROSSIN: Well, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. My name's Julie McCrossin, and it's my enormous pleasure to welcome you to the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, ACCAN, 2016 National Conference. Welcome to the people who are coming in now. Could I begin by just asking you to put your mobiles or other devices onto silent? Because the entire day is about connection and getting people connected, I'm hoping that you will constantly communicate with the outside world while maintaining an extraordinary level of concentration on the amazing array of excellent speakers with top briefings and information for you. But there is, up on the screen, #ACCANect, the hashtag for the conference, and of course, @ACCAN\_AU is the Twitter handle for our organisation today. Please tweet and everything else madly all day. I just have a few housekeeping things to do, then I'll commence the conference. We have quite a few people caught up in traffic, but we'll begin on time because we have such an extraordinary array of people. We're going to be keeping to time all day. Practicalities – the bathrooms are out to the right. All the food during the day will be to the left. If you're in the first group to head out, could you push – walk through right to the end so we don't get congestion in a narrow defile? Because our morning and afternoon teas are quite brief, so we'll need to keep moving. I'd also like to mention that there is a board over there with trees on it and leaves, and it's an ideas board. During the day, if there's an idea you'd like to emphasise and support by writing it on a sticky label and popping it up there, or there's just an issue you'd like to raise about connecting people and keeping them connected, equipping them to be connected, we'd just love you to put it up there. It's an opportunity for the ACCAN team to follow it up. I'd also like to point out our points of connection. Oh, yes, I forgot to say – if phones go off while I'm working, I crash-tackle you, confiscate it, and give it to a child protection worker in the western division.

(LAUGHTER)

So if you could keep them off, that would be great. But I'd like to acknowledge that we have Auslan interpreters, we have live captioning, and they say I can say "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" and it will appear...

(LAUGHTER)

This is the level of skill when you're really trying to connect consumers. And of course, we have a hearing loop. We will be using the microphones all day, and we'll see when we come to Q&A that I'll run amongst you with the microphone with surprising speed for a woman of my age.

Our purpose today is to give you expert briefings on key current issues, and to offer you opportunities to network with each other and to build relationships to improve connections for consumers of all kinds across the country. And we've got an amazing array of formats for you. It's going to be highly interactive, with very few standard presentations, and all manner of panels and TED Talks. While we'll have a full day for you, I'm confident it will be animated and interested. And of course, there's the lure of the lucky-door prize. Essentially how I ensure we start each session on time after a break is that, at exactly the scheduled time, I pull a lucky-door prize. I've been provided with things that are so sophisticated, they've actually not relied upon me to convey to you what it is – they've given you little things here – win one of three sets of wireless sports

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earphones valued at \$239 each. So, feast your eyes on this! But one of these will be handed out at exactly the starting time after each break, and what happens if you're not here?

Redraw. A second chance at life. You can see I used to work in the RSLs, and I'm very comfortable in this communication environment.

(LAUGHTER)

Of course, we will wrap up at 5:15 with canapés and drinks. That's a promise to you. I think I've done everything I need to do. I think I just wanted to show you one quick thing. Could I have my picture, Christian? This is my little escape house, after a serious illness, I said, "If not now, when?" If your eyesight's good enough, at the top right, there's a bit of technology. That is an nbn connection. If I could just have the next slide... That's what it looked like a week ago. I want to convey to you, this is genuine isolation out Wellington way, if that means anything to you – Wellington, NSW. On the way to Dubbo. That's the Bell River in flood, and that's exciting in itself. I live in Annandale. I could walk there in about 40 minutes. Very, very slow. No offence, Telstra, I love you. There – lightning speed. The nbn is a thrilling piece of infrastructure. I'm told it's better and bigger than the Snowy Mountains scheme. When I was a kid at primary school, we were told that it was the best thing ever. I just want to say, when you're really connected fast, it's a very beautiful thing. It's almost as good as sexual experiences. We're a mature group, I'm able to say that. I'd just like to say, to be out there in the middle of Woop Woop and have speeds like the Koreans – that's probably not true, but that's what it feels like – I feel Korean when I'm in Wellington, NSW! That's what we're here to give every Australian. Ladies and gentlemen, let me introduce Johanna Plante, the chair of ACCAN. Please make her welcome.

(APPLAUSE)

JOHANNA PLANTE: Thank you, Julie. Good morning, and welcome to you all. I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Gadigal people, and the elders past and present. Sadly, we have apologies from the minister and shadow minister who, owing to the change, of course, in parliamentary schedules, can't physically be here with us today. But the good news is that they'll each be joining us virtually, with video messages. On behalf of ACCAN, I would like to formally welcome you all to our seventh annual conference, ACCANect: Equipping consumers to stay connected. I'm having a bit of trouble with that word, but I'll try to get it right each time! The focus of this year's conference is on empowering consumers to get and stay connected to the phone and broadband services they need. We believe ACCANect provides a great opportunity for community groups, small business owners, consumers, industry, and government to come together and share ideas on what consumers need to get the right communications services, and what they need to stay connected. Never before have telecommunications services been as essential for all consumers as they are today. Such services are becoming increasingly critical to accessing employment, education, entertainment, and a plethora of government and non-government services. Over the next two days, ACCANect will provide attendees and speakers with a unique opportunity to get up to speed on what's available now, and what's over the horizon. As Australia's peak communications consumer representative body, ACCAN plays a key role in facilitating consumer access to the communications services they need. We're the conduit between government, industry and consumers, representing to government and industry the diverse needs and concerns of all consumer sectors. And core to our success in doing so are the positive, productive relationships we've established with government, regulators, industry, our members, and everyday consumers. Since our last conference, we've launched a range of new and exciting consumer resources to assist consumers get and stay connected. Our new website launched in May this year is fully accessible, mobile-friendly and much more user-friendly. It has two separate sections, with one entirely dedicated to consumer information such as tip sheets, blogs and guides, and the second focused on ACCAN's work, including media releases, submissions and research publications. We're delighted that feedback about the website from our stakeholders has been overwhelmingly positive. But even this has been well and truly topped by the amazing response we've had to our Top Tips for Phone and Internet pack that was launched earlier this year. The Top Ticks pack contains five different brochures, covering a breadth of consumer communications issues, such as how to use less data on your smartphone, what affects broadband quality, and what to do if you have a complaint. The brochures are highly visible, with simple messaging that makes them accessible to everyone. To date, more than 1,500 copies of the Top Tips packs have been distributed far and wide. Earlier this year, in response to calls from regional consumers for better information about service availability in rural and remote areas, ACCAN launched our Sky Muster consumer guide, coinciding with the availability of the nbn satellite services. This guide contains detailed

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information on what consumers can expect from satellite services, how to switch providers, and the things to consider in choosing a plan. It's available online, as well as in hard copy.

Over the next two days, we'll get an update on some of the latest research into consumer communication issues that ACCAN has been working on. Today, we'll hear from Dr Greg Ogle, senior policy and research analyst at SACOSS, on upcoming research into the very important issue of affordability of communications services. Tomorrow, there will be a presentation from Dr Paul Harrison on the research he's done into consumer decision-making. There'll also be a presentation about ACCAN's recently completed research into ADSL availability and what alternative services are available to consumers who can't get ADSL access. Before I finish this introduction, I've got one more very important task to do. And one that I take great pleasure in doing. This conference wouldn't be happening here today without the wonderful contribution of two groups of people. First and foremost, our generous sponsors – Telstra, Google, amaysim, Optus, Australian Communication Exchange, Vodafone, AusRegistry, the National Relay Service, the ACMA, Maddocks lawyers, Macquarie Telecom Group, Media Access Australia, Ericsson Broadcast, and auDA. I sincerely thank you all for your goodwill and generosity in making this event possible. The second group I'd like to acknowledge is the ACCAN management and staff, who've worked tirelessly over many months to make this event happen. Everyone at ACCAN has been actively involved in doing their bit, but I'd like to especially highlight the outstanding contributions of Yuriko, Kate and Paula in turning this conference into a reality. And finally, thank you all for supporting ACCANect. I'm confident you'll find the next two days insightful, stimulating, thought-provoking and thoroughly enjoyable. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

JULIE McCROSSIN: Thank you very much. Before we begin the conference proper, it's my great pleasure to welcome Uncle Chicka Madden from the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council to give us a welcome to country. Would you please make him welcome?

(APPLAUSE)

UNCLE CHICKA MADDEN: Thank you. Good morning, folks. My name is Charles Madden, but known around the city as Chicka. That's a nickname I got many, many years ago going to Redfern Public School, which is now NCIE, the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence. Folks, I'm from Gadigal land. Aboriginal land. That's the land we're on at the moment. For many, many years, I've been involved with different Aboriginal organisations in and around the city. I've been a director with the Aboriginal Medical Service at Redfern for over 40 years. Also, a director with the Redfern Aboriginal Housing Company, Aboriginal Hostels Australia, and the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, where I am still a very active member. Folks, I'd like to take this opportunity this morning to extend a warm and sincere welcome to any of my Aboriginal brothers and sisters, non-Aboriginal brothers and sisters, who may have travelled here onto Gadigal land. If you have any brothers and sisters from the Torres Strait or further across the seas, welcome. Welcome to Gadigal land. The Gadigal clan is one of 29 that makes up the Eora nation. The Eora nation is bordered by three distinctive landmarks. We have the Hawkesbury River to the north, Nepean to the west, and the Georges River to the south. Those three rivers form the boundaries of the Eora nation. Folks, if you've travelled across this great city of ours today, the state, or this great country, welcome. Welcome to Gadigal land. Enjoy your stay. Have a safe and trouble-free trip home. Once again, welcome, welcome, welcome. Thank you. Enjoy the morning. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

JULIE McCROSSIN: Thank you very much. Thank you. Well, as Johanna said, unfortunately the Minister for Communications, Mitch Fifield, is not able to be with us in person due to changes in parliamentary scheduling, but I think, in a conference, it's all about connecting. It's great to see him in some form of technical way. It somehow seems more appropriate to the subject matter. This is that exciting moment at a conference when I'm going to say he's the minister and we're all excited to see – "Will he actually appear on the screen?" I used to work at the ABC, where of course there's never any technical problems.

(LAUGHTER)

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The person laughing the hardest in the room is someone who used to work there as well. I'd like to introduce you to Holly, if I may. Holly, come out. We're going to meet members of the group today, randomly for interest. Holly has been lurking in the room since I got here at 7:30, and she appears to know everything. Would you introduce yourself to the group?

HOLLY RAICHE: Ah, I'm Holly Raiche, and I'm deputy chair of ACCAN.

JULIE McCROSSIN: You're my brains trust today. In a nutshell, what's your connection to what this is about today? You've got a passion for it. What's your connection?

HOLLY RAICHE: Ah...

JULIE McCROSSIN: Speak up. Volume matters.

HOLLY RAICHE: Lots of connection. I still teach communications law at an under-graduate and graduate level. I'm deputy chair. I've also been on the panel for auDA, and the list goes on.

JULIE McCROSSIN: What's the biggest achievement that thrills you the most about getting consumers connected and equipped to be connected? One or two achievements – what's good?

HOLLY RAICHE: I think the nbn – just looking at your connection in Wellington, and you think finally we're saying, "We've all got to connect." And having a policy and a company to do it, I realise there's lots of politics around it, but at the end of the day, we should all be connected.

JULIE McCROSSIN: They come up a dirt road, and then there's a problem and they come back up the dirt road and fix it. I know we're going to do complaints later but, oddly enough, I don't have a complaint! What's the biggest outstanding challenge you're hoping they'll address over the next couple of days – something that requires all our brains?

HOLLY RAICHE: I think addressing the connection and connectivity understanding what the nbn can and will do, and then the role that the service providers have on top of that to connect us, because nbn actually is just infrastructure. And on top of that, they're retail service providers. Sorry to use jargon. They need to connect with us, and we need to have a seamless process that means we're all connected. It's a difficult kind of concept to understand, but...

JULIE McCROSSIN: There's a human dimension, is that what you're saying?

HOLLY RAICHE: We do need to understand what's happening, yes. Absolutely.

JULIE McCROSSIN: Thank you, brains trust. It's probably not the last time we'll hear from her. Please give her the clap of encouragement.

(APPLAUSE)

And so now, it's my great pleasure to welcome the Minister for Communications, Mitch Fifield!

(VIDEO)

JULIE McCROSSIN: I'm proposing a round of applause, even though he's physically not present.

(APPLAUSE)

Now, I'm sorry, that's what I call a very limp round of applause.

(LAUGHTER)

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What you're faced with, with that minister, is a man who has just done a really good video talk. Would you agree? It was gentle. It was coherent. There was no indication he was reading an autocue, and yet he must have been. This is a skill that many lack, even in the professional media. So I'm going to ask you again – please thank the minister.

(APPLAUSE)