

**Wednesday, 10th July 2019**

**Telco complaints demonstrate need for right to reliability**

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) has called for greater reliability safeguards after data from the ACMA shows unreliable telco services are driving hundreds of thousands of complaints.

In a [report released this morning,](https://www.acma.gov.au/theACMA/telecommunications-complaints-handling?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Telecommunications%20complaints%20handling%20report%20Researchacma&utm_content=Telecommunications%20complaints%20handling%20report%20Researchacma+CID_1b95c407cedbac66207effc42166564f&utm_source=SendEmailCampaigns&utm_term=Telecommunications%20complaints%20handling%20report) the ACMA revealed that 448,470 complaints were filed by unhappy telco consumers in the quarter to December 2018. Taking into account the number of telco services in operation across the country, this equals 108 complaints per 10,000 services – a 10.2 per cent increase since the previous quarter.

“The collection and release of this data by the AMCA is a big step forward in addressing telco accountability,” said ACCAN CEO Teresa Corbin. “The ACMA’s work will provide an important additional insight into the issues facing telco consumers.”

As the consumer voice for Australian phone and internet users, ACCAN was disappointed to see that faults to telco services were among the highest causes of complaints. The ACMA’s data also shows that it took telcos a median time of six days to solve complaints when they arose.

“When people buy a product or service, they rightly expect it to work as promised. It’s simply unacceptable for the millions of Australians who are connected to essential communications services to be left waiting for days on end without the service they have paid for,” said Ms Corbin. “Consumers should have a right to reliability.”

ACCAN has previously highlighted the need for reliability consumer protections to be extended to include fixed-line broadband services from all telecommunications retail service providers. In response toPart B of the *Consumer Safeguards Review*, ACCAN also proposed that connection and repair times for fixed-line services should be at least the same as the existing Customer Service Guarantee and should be defined in terms of days, rather than working days.

Of particular concern to ACCAN is the high level of complaints that were reported in the ACMA data for NBN voice-only services (commonly known as landline phone services). Although the number of landline users in Australia has been declining, they remain an important communication link for many in our communities, especially older Australians and those in rural and remote areas.

“NBN voice-only customers had the greatest ratio of complaints per services in operation, according to the ACMA’s data. We know that some Australians are still solely reliant on their home phones, so faults with these services would leave them vulnerable and unable to communicate.”

The ACMA’s release of telco complaints data follows [new record-keeping rules](https://www.acma.gov.au/Industry/Telco/Infrastructure/The-NBN-and-industry/new-complaints-handling-rules-1) introduced in July 2018.

In future, the organisation would like to see further transparency with telcos named along with their relevant complaints data. This is necessary to drive improvements across all telcos.

“While we’re pleased to see more complaints data made public, consumers deserve the right to make informed decisions about their telco provider. By naming the telcos in this data, it would allow consumers to consider telcos’ complaint-handling records when shopping around for a phone or internet provider.”

This transparent approach was recommended in the Government’s response to *Consumer Safeguards Part A: Complaints handling and consumer redress*, however it is yet to be implemented.