

## Media release

For immediate release Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2010

### Major Telstra privacy breach affects 220,000 customers – OPC must act

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) says it is extremely concerned that a major Telstra mail-out bungle has resulted in a breach of privacy of some 220,000 customers including 23,500 silent-line customers and is calling on the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (OPC) to commence a major investigation into the issue.

A statement released by Telstra today says it is contacting affected customers by phone and by mail to notify them that letters sent to consumer and some business customers incorrectly contained the customer name, telephone plan and phone number of other Telstra customers.

ACCAN says the OPC must conduct a thorough investigation into the privacy breach, and if necessary, make a determination that requires Telstra to make compensation payments to those adversely affected, with particular regard for those with silent-line numbers.

“The potential for harm when personal details are disclosed is high and a privacy breach of this magnitude is deeply concerning. While Telstra appears to be taking swift action on this matter they must continue to invest great effort into ensuring every customer affected has the problem resolved to their complete satisfaction,” said ACCAN Chief Executive Teresa Corbin.

“We all place great trust in the organisations we do business with that they will protect our personal data. The OPC must commence an investigation into what went wrong, the impact of this error on customers and how it can be remedied for those adversely affected.

“This incident should also prompt other businesses to review their own internal procedures and the safety of their customers’ personal information to ensure that this sort of event isn’t repeated.”

ACCAN says customers with concerns should contact the special hotline Telstra has set up on 1800 307 987 to see if they have been affected. If customers are unsatisfied with the remedies offered by Telstra, which include the issuing of a new phone number for silent-line customers, ACCAN says they should contact the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (OPC) on 1300 363 992.

In September ACCAN launched a report called [Privacy Complaints: In Search of the Right Path](#), which specifically looked at communications-related privacy complaints such as these. ACCAN says it is pleased to see that the OPC, Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), and Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) are taking a coordinated approach to dealing with this issue and says it looks forward to greater cooperation between the bodies in the future.

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Link to consumer tip sheet: [Privacy Complaints: Who Can You Turn To?](#)

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#### About ACCAN

ACCAN (Australian Communications Consumer Action Network) is Australia’s new peak communications consumer organisation. ACCAN’s goal is available, accessible and affordable communications that enhances the lives of consumers. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Australian government.