

Media release

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Millions of unhappy customers with telco problems and complaints

New Galaxy research commissioned by ACCAN has found one in two telco customers have experienced a problem with their phone or internet service provider in the past year, with technical problems, customer service and complaint handling topping the list of complaints.

Although two-thirds of people said they tried to have their complaint resolved by calling their provider, one in three were dissatisfied with the outcome.

The study found just 4% of these customers (or 230,000 people) took their complaint to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, an independent body that ACCAN says has a good track record of working with consumers and industry to review and resolve complaints.¹

“This research tells us that there are 2.3 million Australians who are unhappy with the way their telco handled a problem they experienced with their phone or internet service in the past year,” said ACCAN Director of Policy & Campaigns Elissa Freeman.

“The 230,000 or so complaints that make it to the TIO each year represent just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the number of people with unresolved complaints.”

ACCAN is calling on the regulator, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), to introduce a complaints-handling standard for the industry, as part of the major telco customer service inquiry, *Reconnecting the Customer*, which is currently underway in response to the increasing number of complaints to the TIO in recent years.

“In broad terms, we already know that telco customer service and complaint handling across this industry has a very bad reputation,” said Ms Freeman. “This data would suggest that internal complaints figures are very, very high, and that this is resulting in some very unhappy customers.”

“War stories about customer service or complaint handling problems with telcos and ISPs are just too common,” said Ms Freeman. “What ACCAN is aiming to do is to explain the process you need to go through to get your complaint resolved with the minimum amount of time and hassle, and remind consumers that the TIO is there to help.”

ACCAN has today released a tip sheet for consumers that details the steps they need to take to have their complaints resolved and contact details for telcos' complaints departments.

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¹ This correlates with the most recently available TIO data, which recorded 230,065 complaints in 2008-09.

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 enhance the lives of consumers. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Australian government.