

Media release

For immediate release Tuesday 11th October 2011

Regulator commits to Fair Calls for mobile users

Peak communications consumer advocacy body ACCAN is celebrating a major step forward in its [campaign for fair calls](#) following an announcement today that the telco regulator, the Australian Communications & Media Authority (ACMA) will put an end to the high cost of 1800 and 13 calls from mobiles.

The ACMA has plans to alter what's known as the "Numbering Plan" so that calls from mobile phones to 1800 numbers will be free and 13 numbers will be a low fixed charge as they are from land lines and pay phones.

ACCAN says at present these calls are charged rates of up to \$1.78 per minute from mobiles, with the business or organisation at the other end also paying telcos for the cost of the calls.

"This is a very significant step forward towards fair calls for mobile users," said ACCAN Director of Policy Elissa Freeman. "Calls to 13 and 1800 numbers are often essential, for example contacting your energy provider, the tax office, Centrelink, roadside assistance and crisis lines, to name just a few of the 291,000 FreeCall or Local Rate numbers.

"Fourteen per cent of people don't have a land line and right now always have to pay high per-minute charges for a free call. With people moving away from fixed-line services to rely on mobiles, it makes perfect sense that this regulation keeps up with the way Australians are using their phones in 2011.

"Our campaign partners tell us that it's people on the lowest incomes who are most adversely affected by these high charges as they are less likely to have access to a landline and more likely to use pre-paid mobile credit."

ACCAN lodged a complaint with the ACMA regarding this issue in conjunction with the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) and Financial Counselling Australia (FCA) in September last year.

Earlier this year, it launched its cheeky Fair Calls For All campaign led by superhero '[Number Woman](#)', to bring greater attention to the issue in the face of a "business as usual" approach taken by the industry.

"Consumers have been telling us for some time that they want fair call prices. We don't believe it's fair that you should have businesses paying for the cost of receiving so-called "free calls" calls from customers and then customers paying at the other end".

"We've heard many horror stories: from people paying \$40-\$50 on a mobile call to their insurer, from children running out of credit due to per-minute costs to the 1800 Kids Helpline, people spending \$13 to arrange a Red Cross blood donation and welfare recipients missing out on benefits because they can't afford to wait on hold to speak to Centrelink."

"This is decisive and forward-thinking action being taken by the regulator today and we look forward to working with them and the telco industry on the implementation details. Hopefully fair calls for mobile users are not too far off."

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About ACCAN

ACCAN (Australian Communications Consumer Action Network) is Australia's 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.