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# TIO complaints decreasing but problem areas still exist

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network ([ACCAN](http://www.accan.org.au/)) is pleased to see the downward trend of complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) continue with a drop of 10.5 per cent shown in the [2014-15 Annual Report](http://annualreport.tio.com.au/). However, the number of new complaints recorded (124,417) is still a significant number with some key problem areas emerging in the Report that need to be improved.

One of the positive trends seen in the past year is the decrease in mobile coverage complaints which fell by 49.2 per cent. Mobile coverage issues affect many consumers, particularly those in rural and remote areas. The drop in complaints in this area is positive especially as more consumers move toward being mobile-only. Recent [ACMA research](http://www.acma.gov.au/theACMA/engage-blogs/engage-blogs/Research-snapshots/Australians-get-mobile) found that 29 per cent of Australians had only a mobile phone and no fixed line telephone at home.

“In previous years, mobile coverage complaints to the TIO have been quite high so a drop of almost 50 per cent means there have been some improvements from the telcos,” said ACCAN CEO, Teresa Corbin. “The drop in complaints around excess data charges is also quite promising as these charges often result in bill shock for consumers.”

The problem areas identified in the 2014-15 Annual Report are the rise in fixed-line complaints and the rise in NBN-related complaints. NBN related complaints rose by nearly 70 per cent and a large number of these were related to missed appointments and connections.

“The number of subscribers on the NBN has grown substantially but nbn and the retail service providers (RSPs) need to ensure consumers aren’t worse off during the switch-over,” added Ms Corbin.

ACCAN’s research highlights that complaints reported to the TIO are just the tip of the iceberg and the need for telcos to work on improving products, customer service and complaint handling. A [Galaxy survey](http://www.accan.org.au/news-items/media-releases/1072-complaint-fatigue-release) commissioned earlier this year found that complaint fatigue is still high amongst consumers with the real complaint levels remaining high despite a drop in complaints reported to the TIO.

Of those surveyed, 38 per cent who had an issue with their phone or internet service complained to their provider and were dissatisfied with the response. However, only nine per cent of these consumers escalated their complaint to the TIO, suggesting that while phone and internet providers are dealing with complaints better they have not addressed the root causes of underlying high complaints levels.

“ACCAN is calling on the telcos and RSPs to publish their complaint data so that problem areas can be better identified and consumer complaints can be avoided," said Ms Corbin. “This also benefits the industry, as it allows showcasing of low complaint levels by the star performers.”

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