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*Media Release*

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## **ACCAN warns industry not to drop its game**

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network ([ACCAN](#)) is putting industry on notice that it will be closely watching the impact of revisions made to the [Telecommunications Consumer Protections \(TCP\) Code](#). The Code [registered with the ACMA](#) replaces the existing Code from today.

“The TCP Code provides significant consumer protections. ACCAN will be keeping a close eye on how the industry performs under the revised Code,” said ACCAN CEO, Teresa Corbin. “We want to see the debate shift from just being about deregulation to the more nuanced ‘better regulation.’ If we don’t then consumers will begin to suffer due to reductions in community safeguards.

“In a backward step, changes introduced today mean telcos will no longer be obliged to publish important information on their websites, such as coverage maps, international roaming information and contact details for financial hardship staff,” said Ms Corbin. “It’s now up to the telco how they provide this information, and we are concerned that this will particularly harm consumers who face accessibility barriers, and are reliant on web-based information. It may affect consumers’ ability to make informed purchasing decisions.”

The consumer benefit of providing clear information was the number one conclusion of the ACMA’s ‘Reconnecting the Customer Inquiry’ in 2011 which led to the current Code. Having clear information online, on a website that is accessible, allows consumer to take the time to understand information free from a pressured sales pitch.

While consumer protections under the Australian Consumer Law and *Disability Discrimination Act* still apply, ACCAN maintains that the Code has been an effective tool in driving good industry practice.

“The previous version of the Code only finished being rolled out in 2014. Since the Code was introduced over three years ago, Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) complaints have fallen by 36 per cent to the lowest point in seven years,” added Ms Corbin. “With complaint numbers continuing to drop, clearly it’s not the right time to be reducing the obligations to provide clear accessible information.”

ACCAN has secured a win for consumers in the revised Code by ensuring that rules preventing telcos from using confusing terms like ‘cap’, ‘free’ and ‘unlimited’ in advertising remain in the Code. We have also worked to keep rules which impact on complaint handling, debt collection and financial hardship practices within the Code.

The industry consultation on Chapter 9 of the TCP Code, which relates to compliance obligations under the Code and the role of the compliance monitoring body Communications Compliance, is still ongoing. ACCAN is participating in

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*The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is Australia’s peak communications consumer organisation. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Commonwealth of Australia under section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997. This funding is recovered from charges on telecommunications carriers.*

this process to ensure that an effective compliance regime will continue to guide industry and drive down complaints.

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