

New complaints data shows customer service issues continue for telcos

New complaints data released today suggests that telcos need a customer service shake-up as consumers continue to deal with no or delayed action from telecommunications providers, according to the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN).

Nearly a third (31 per cent) of complaints escalated to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) by between January and March 2020 related to issues with no or delayed action from telecommunications providers. An additional 11 per cent of complaints had a resolution agreed to by the telco and consumers, but not met.

“While we acknowledge that the natural disasters of summer 2019-2020 placed extraordinary demands upon the telecommunications networks, this has been an ongoing issue for consumers for a long time,” said ACCAN CEO Teresa Corbin.

“If there are legitimate reasons for a delay in fixing a consumer’s phone or internet problem, it’s important that telcos are communicating this openly and often so that their customers can understand what the problem is, and when they can expect it to be addressed.”

The TIO Quarter 3 Complaints report also shows that 5,441 consumers lodged complaints about not having a working phone or internet service between January and March 2020. This is a nearly 70 per cent increase from the previous quarter.

“We saw the devastating impact that the bushfires had on our communities during the summer of 2019-2020, and for many this included losing access to a range of communications services from landline phones to internet connections,” said Ms Corbin.

“We hope to see this number fall dramatically in the next report as telcos and NBN Co work to connect consumers who lost access to their telco services during these natural disasters.”

The [Federal Government has also recently announcement a \\$37.1 million investment](#) to strengthen telecommunications resilience in bushfire and disaster prone areas so that communities can stay connected during emergencies.

Small businesses reported similar issues as residential consumers to the TIO during the Q3 period, with complaints increasing 8 per cent from the previous quarter. Small businesses made up 15 per cent of complaints to the TIO between January and March 2020, with issues including no or delayed action by provider, service and equipment fees, and no phone or internet service driving the most complaints.

Ms Corbin reiterated that every consumer has the right to make a complaint and be heard by their telco.

ACCAN’s guide to making a complaint and other telco tips can be found at accan.org.au/tips.