



Hot issues

ACCAN Federal Election wrap up

With the Federal Election campaign now over, ACCAN congratulates Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield and Senator the Hon Fiona Nash who continue in their roles as Minister for Communications and Minister for Regional Communications respectively for the Turnbull Government. The Federal Member for Greenway, the Hon Michelle Rowland MP and the Federal Member for Throsby – Stephen Jones take up the roles of Shadow Minister for Communications and Shadow Minister for Regional Communications respectively.

We are pleased that during their campaigns both the Coalition and Labor made announcements of an additional \$60 million in funding for a third round of the [Mobile Black Spots Programme](#). This is vital as mobile coverage and competition in rural areas continues to be a key issue for many consumers.

In the lead up to the election, ACCAN called for the parties to focus on five communications consumer priorities and we asked them a [series of questions](#) based on these priorities. We covered [announcements](#) from the Coalition, Labor and the Australian Greens on NBN policy, digital literacy and accessibility. While we didn't receive specific answers to our questions, some of these were answered by the announcements from the parties during the campaign.

We will continue to work with all political parties to raise the profile of our [communications consumer priorities](#).

We believe that the evidence base for action on affordability is growing stronger and we expect to release the full results of an ACCAN –SACOSS survey showing that many Centrelink beneficiaries struggle to get and stay connected to telecommunications services. [Preliminary results](#) from this survey were released in the lead up to the Election. These survey results formed the basis of our call to review the adequacy of the Centrelink Telephone Allowance - a quarterly allowance designed to help consumers on income support payments to stay connected to telecommunications services.

ACCAN renewed its call for [readable captioning in online videos](#) posted on YouTube and Facebook so that consumers who are Deaf or hard of hearing and those who rely on captioning can have equal access to this content. We sent letters to the major political parties outlining the issue and providing links to instructions on how to add or fix online captions. Another of our consumer priorities was to call for expanded captioning requirements on free-to-air TV.

During the campaign, we called for [amendments to the Broadcast Services Act](#) to introduce audio description on free-to-air TV. It was positive to see the Australian Greens call for [audio description](#) to be made permanent on ABC iView and their commitment to developing an action plan for audio description more broadly. We asserted that audio description should be available on free-to-air TV so the maximum number of consumers who are blind or vision impaired can access the service.

We raised the profile of the issue of Independent Broadband Performance Monitoring in the mainstream media with articles published by [Fairfax](#) and [News Corp](#). The ACCC is currently calling on consumers to have their say about [broadband speed claims](#).

Finally, we brought attention to the review of the Customer Service Guarantee (CSG) highlighting that fixed-line broadband services [should be included](#) to bring the guarantee in line with current technology. In the lead up to the Election campaign the profile of this issue was increased through media articles published by [The Land](#) and [News Corp](#) calling for fixed-line broadband services to be included under the guarantee.

This issue will be addressed by the upcoming review of consumer safeguards foreshadowed in the government response to the recommendations of the Regional Telecommunications Review last year. We are also participating in the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into the [Universal Service Obligation](#) which is of great importance to all our constituents.

We look forward to continue working with you all on these vital issues to get better outcomes for all communications consumers.