

ACCAN media release

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"Engagement and participation of consumers is crucial for effective policy"

Why do consumers feel that regulators are uninterested in their views and why do regulators think that consumers are indifferent to the facts? These questions will be explored when leading government and academic figures gather in Sydney on 4 November, to discuss consumer engagement and effective policy making in an interactive seminar held by ACCAN, the Australia's peak communications consumer organisation.

The Responsive Regulation and Policy Seminar will feature Peter Kell, Deputy Chair, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Chris Chapman, Chair of the Australian Communications and Media Authority, Abul Rizvi, Deputy Secretary, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and Robert Fitzgerald, Commissioner, Productivity Commission.

Allan Asher, CEO of ACCAN said consumer engagement and participation was crucial to get effective policy that is responsive to the needs of Australian consumers.

"A sector like telecommunications has a number of escalating complaints which point to the failure of competitive market systems to deliver value, affordability and accessibility of services.

"Consumers want regulators who are prepared to intervene when the market fails, through the provision of better information, complaints handling, and enforcement against recalcitrant market participants," Mr Asher said.

Consumers are invited to submit their questions to the speakers on ACCAN's website www.accan.org.au prior to the seminar, which will be put to them at the event.

Mr Asher said consumer views needed to be taken into account in a changing communications landscape.

"As Australia is defining and shaping its National Broadband Network and examining issues like the privacy of personal data and informed consent, the need for policy that genuinely incorporates the perspectives of consumers is imperative.

"In the seminar we will be asking policy makers and regulators about how they make decisions and how consumers to constructively engage with them to maximise their impact," Mr Asher said.

The seminar will be recorded and webcast on ACCAN's website. See seminar program below.

About ACCAN

ACCAN (Australian Communications Consumer Action Network) is Australia's new peak communications consumer organisation. ACCAN's purpose is to improve consumer advocacy, undertake research and analysis from a consumer perspective and make the market work for communications consumers. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Australian government.

**Australian Communications
Consumer Action Network**

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Responsive Regulation and Policy Seminar

2-6 pm Wednesday 4th November, 2009

at

Oxford I&I Conference Room, Sebel Surry Hills, 28 Albion St, Surry Hills, NSW

Seminar Program

2:00pm Welcome to Country and Introductory Comments by Allan Asher, Chief Executive Officer of Australian Communications Consumer Action Network

Session 1: Understanding how regulators work

2:10pm Peter Kell, Deputy Chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission responding to a series of specific questions posed by ACCAN.

2:20pm Delia Rickard, Australian Securities and Investments Commission responding to a series of specific questions posed by ACCAN.

2:30pm Chris Chapman Chair, Australian Communications and Media Authority responding to a series of specific questions posed by ACCAN.

2:40pm Conversation with the regulators, An interactive discussion between consumers and regulators moderated by Allan Asher.

3:30pm Short Break- Tea and coffee provided

Session 2: Evidence-based policy development

3:45pm Introduction to Session 2 Evidence based policy development by Allan Asher

3:50pm Robert Fitzgerald, Commissioner, Productivity Commission presentation on evidence based policy making in light of the Productivity Commission report on consumer protection in Australia.

4:10pm Abul Rizvi, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy on Evidence Based Policy Making

4:20pm Interactive panel discussion led by moderator Allan Asher with a view to reaching a consensus on how consumer representatives can meet the threshold set by policy makers for action, featuring:

Gerard Goggin (Professor of Digital Communication and Deputy Director of the Journalism and Media Research Centre UNSW, ACCAN Board)

Sue Salthouse (Vice President of Women with Disabilities, ACCAN Board)

Mark Armstrong (Director of Network Insights Institute)

Paul Harrison (Senior Lecturer, Deakin University)

5:00pm	Networking drinks and refreshments
6.00pm	End of Seminar