

## The future of consumer focused communication services

Telecommunication services have and are rapidly evolving. ACCAN believes the enhancements to quality of life and economic opportunities from being connected should be available to all consumers.

In looking at the future of communication services in Australia it is time for a new focus on consumer needs. The focus to date has centred too much on developments in the telecommunications market and infrastructure rollout. A consumer focus reveals a number of policy gaps that must be addressed now. These are discussed in ACCAN's new policy position, [The Connected Consumer](#).

Communication services are an enabler for consumers to perform a variety of functions, rather than deliver value by themselves. Therefore they should be judged on how well they are utilised for the capabilities that they deliver. Unfortunately, market forces do not always result in optimal outcomes for consumers. In applying a connectability approach and examining issues in the market, in collaboration with our members, ACCAN has identified a number of gaps in the current policy framework. A number of protections and obligations that currently exist for consumers need to be re-examined.

ACCAN's policy position discusses in detail the six key principles for connected consumers:

- 1. Available** essential telecommunication services for all.  
Consumers increasingly need guaranteed access to data and voice services.
- 2. Affordable** telecommunication services and targeted measures for low income consumers.  
Financial barriers which hinder the optimal take up of services or prevent low income consumers from access to services should be addressed.
- 3. Service standards** applicable on essential services.  
Quality standards should apply to essential services. Consumers should have access to information on services to compare providers.
- 4. Accessible** essential services.  
Services must be fully accessible to people of all abilities.
- 5. Ensure all consumers can engage and benefit from online services.**  
Service delivery bodies should support consumer engagement through their content and design of programs and support to obtain the required telecommunication plans and devices to access services.
- 6. Increased digital literacy and empowerment.**  
Consumers need to be sufficiently skilled and confident to engage online and participate in the transition to digital information and service delivery.