
Submission

10 May 2024

Select Committee on Adopting Artificial Intelligence (AI)
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Re: Select Committee on Adopting Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (**ACCAN**) thanks the Committee Secretariat for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Select Committee on Adopting Artificial Intelligence (AI) (**the Committee**).

ACCAN is the peak body that represents consumers on communications issues including telecommunications, broadband, and emerging new services. ACCAN provides a strong unified voice to industry and government as consumers work towards communications services that are trusted, inclusive and available for all.

The consumer sector requires greater support to engage with AI and other emerging technologies that will impact consumers. At present there is no consumer group funded to engage with AI and emerging technologies on behalf of consumers. As AI and other emerging technologies become embedded in our societies and markets there are growing risks of harms. Consumers will be exposed to business decisions made by AI as well as interacting with AI directly, for example, chatbots and recommendation systems.

To date the consumer sector has engaged with AI and related areas with its existing, limited resources. For example, ACCAN has released research on chatbots used in telecommunications customer service.¹ Other organisations have also contributed to the debate including CHOICE on facial recognition in stores and Consumer Policy Research Centre on privacy and personal data.² However, these efforts by consumer groups have been fragmented and do not match the rate of growth and adoption of AI and its attendant importance for consumers.

ACCAN is pleased to see capability building in government through programs including the National AI Centre. ACCAN urges the Committee to recommend ongoing funding for consumer groups to meet the policy demands of AI and emerging technologies. A well-resourced consumer sector can

¹ Jeannie Paterson, 'Questioning the Chatbot: Scrutinising the Performance of Telco Customer Service Chatbots in Terms of Service, Transparency, Safety, Privacy and Security', *Australian Communications Consumer Action Network* (2021) <<https://accan.org.au/grants/grants-projects/1890-questioning-the-chatbot>>.

² James Blakkarly, 'Kmart, Bunnings and The Good Guys Using Facial Recognition Technology in Stores', *CHOICE* (12 July 2022) <<https://www.choice.com.au/consumers-and-data/data-collection-and-use/how-your-data-is-used/articles/kmart-bunnings-and-the-good-guys-using-facial-recognition-technology-in-store>>; Consumer Policy Research Centre, 'Not a Fair Trade' (29 March 2023) <<https://cprc.org.au/report/not-a-fair-trade-consumer-views-on-how-businesses-use-their-data/>>.

help reduce policy uncertainty and foster consumer confidence in digital technology and the emerging digital economy.

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide comments to the inquiry. Should you wish to discuss any of the issues raised in this submission further, please do not hesitate to contact me at samuel.kininmonth@accan.org.au.

Yours sincerely,

Samuel Kininmonth
Senior Policy Adviser

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is Australia's peak communication 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. ACCAN is committed to reconciliation that acknowledges Australia's past and values the unique culture and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. [Read our RAP.](#)
