

Ms Margaret Fleming
Program Manager
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4th August 2009

Dear Margaret,

ACCAN wishes to respond to the call for public comments on the *C625:2005 Information on Accessibility Features for Telephone Equipment* and the *G627:2005 Operational Matrices for Reporting on Accessibility Features for Telephone Equipment*.

About ACCAN

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

Introductory comments

I recognise that Gunela Astbrink has been a member of the Working Committee representing TEDICORE and is now representing ACCAN on the Working Committee.

Gunela has received responses from disability organisations requesting ACCAN to provide comments on their behalf.

It is clear that one of the most contentious areas of the draft revised Guidelines relates to features for people with hearing impairments. This is not unexpected given the considerable debate in the Working Committee about such features.

We are aware of the concerns of Deafness Forum of Australia with regard to the absence of some key features. While a number of these have been considered in the Working Committee, others raised by Deafness Forum should be carefully examined.

It is recognised that in some cases, there is limited uniformity in measurements by equipment suppliers to provide the appropriate information. However, because

features for people with hearing impairments is such a vital area, there needs to be a mechanism for the gradual introduction of these types of measurements.

ACCAN strongly advocates for the setting up and monitoring of such a process through the Mobile Manufacturers Forum (MMF) over the next year. This will mean that when the Guidelines are scheduled for revision in 2010, new features can be added that will specifically benefit people with hearing impairments.

Code specific comments

The following comments relate to the Code.

Under the heading *Why Current Regulatory Arrangements were inadequate*, change present tense to past tense in the first two sentences.

The non-inclusion of information about systems integral terminals as a requirement continues to be a strong concern as many people with disabilities want to ensure that their workplace is accessible to them. The Working Committee should re-examine this issue especially in light of international trends towards including accessibility criteria in public procurement policy. One of the key reasons for accessibility in public procurement is to ensure that government employees with disabilities have the same opportunities to accessing office equipment that an employee has without a disability.

Under *Section 3.2 Information Provision to Consumers*, the note in the box under 3.2.2 states: "If ES provides product information on their website on CE as specified in this Code, then the information about Accessibility Features should be made available for that CE on that website or via a link to the MMF GARI as applicable." This should be made into a Code provision rather than a Note and the word "should" replaced with the word "must".

This issue was discussed in the Working Committee but it is clear from responses by people with disabilities in attempting to obtain information both from some equipment suppliers and CSPs about particular features, there is still a considerable lack of knowledge by industry about what is currently available relating to accessibility even within their own product range.

Further, any reference to a publicly available contact point should include wording that "this contact point has undergone disability awareness training."

It is recognised that some equipment suppliers and CSPs may not have the resources to identify or conduct such training. However, for the successful implementation of the Code, this information needs to be readily available. Therefore, a Forum should be hosted by Communications Alliance addressing the requirements under the Code as well as outlining the importance of provision of information on the accessibility features to people with disabilities.

There should be presentations by people with disabilities including an experiential session where, for example, participants can try on various spectacles emulating a range of vision impairments.

Attendance at such a Forum would indicate that the publicly available contact point has undergone disability awareness training. For those organisations unable to have a representative participate in the Forum, material developed for the Forum can be made available for industry stakeholders. This would include more detailed descriptions of each accessibility feature and its benefit to people with disabilities. The material should be prefaced by an overview of different types of disabilities and what barriers each type of disability may have to the use of telephone equipment.

The reference to the *C628:2007 Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code* that is applicable to CSPs should be stated clearly in the Code C625:2005, ie

4.2 Provision of information

(g) Customers with disabilities: inform a Customer with a disability of any Telecommunications Product available from the Supplier which addresses the Customer's particular requirements and how to effectively use the Telecommunications Product;

The appropriate place for inclusion is Section *1.4 Objectives*. Therefore, add "(c) Meet the requirements of 4.2 (g) in the *C628:2007 Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code*."

Furthermore, add under *3.1.1 Information Provision to Customers*, add "and Customers are required to provide information to Consumers under 4.2 (g) of the *C628:2007 Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code*."

ACCAN looks forward to the above comments being thoroughly discussed by the Working Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Allan Asher
Chief Executive Officer

