



Australian Government

Department of Communications and the Arts

Funding of telecommunications consumer representation grants—Annual report 2018–19

December 2019



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Contents

Purpose of Section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997	4
Funding provided for 2018–19.....	4
Assessment of ACCAN’s general performance.....	4
Independent Grants Program	5
Table 1: IGP projects funded in 2018–19	5
Financial accounts.....	6



Purpose of Section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997

Section 593 of the *Telecommunications Act 1997* (Telco Act) allows for the Minister for Communications (Minister) to make grants of financial assistance to:

- consumer bodies for purposes in connection with the representation of the interests of consumers in relation to telecommunications issues, and
- persons or bodies for purposes in connection with research into social, economic, environmental or technological implications of developments relating to telecommunications.

Funding provided for 2018–19

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) was the only recipient of funding under section 593 of the Telco Act in 2018–19. This funding amounted to \$2,296,000 (GST exclusive) and was provided under contract between ACCAN and the Department of Communications and the Arts (the Funding Agreement).

Each quarterly payment to ACCAN under the Funding Agreement is subject to quarterly assessment of the six Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and related activities, set out in the Funding Agreement.

The funding provided to ACCAN under section 593 of the Telco Act is recovered from the annual carrier licence charge imposed on eligible carrier licences under the *Telecommunications (Carrier Licence Charges) Act 1997*.

Assessment of ACCAN's general performance

Quarterly progress reports provided to the Department in 2018–19 demonstrated that ACCAN satisfactorily met each of its KPIs and Funding Agreement milestones.

ACCAN has published an [Annual Report](#) on its website showing that in 2018–19, ACCAN:

- represented consumer interests on 32 government, industry and regulatory committees
- made 26 submissions to government, regulatory and other inquiries, all of which are available at [the ACCAN website](#)
- raised consumer awareness, including publishing 13 new telecommunication consumer publications, achieving 1,447 media mentions, and attracting 151,116 website visits
- hosted its annual conference, *ACCANect: Confidence in the Connected World*, which was attended by 196 delegates;
- commissioned research projects relating to customer service experience in the telecommunications industry, sales incentive practices, and uptake of internet service in households with rental properties
- issued 28 media releases on telecommunications consumer issues including broadband affordability, regional telecommunications access, and service reliability.

ACCAN held three annual advisory forums during the period 2018–19, including the Indigenous Advisory Forum, the Members Advisory Forum and the Small Business Advisory Forum.

ACCAN reported a decrease in membership to 111 organisational and 102 individual members in 2018–19, compared to 113 organisational and 110 individual members in 2017–18. Organisational membership included disability advocacy groups, remote and rural consumer bodies, indigenous organisations, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups, and others from across Australia.



Independent Grants Program

ACCAN administers a competitive Independent Grants Program (IGP) in accordance with its Funding Agreement.

In 2017, ACCAN combined the 2017 and 2018 annual IGP rounds in order to allow projects to be delivered over a two-year period. As a consequence of this arrangement, no new grant payments were awarded in the 2018–19 financial year.

The completed projects relate to data and privacy, digital inclusion, making communications services more accessible for consumers living with a disability, quality and reliability of internet and telecommunications services in Australia, and regional connectivity.

Table 1: IGP projects funded in 2018–19

Recipient	Grant amount (ex. GST)	Payments made in 2017–18	Payments made in 2018–19
Hutt St Centre— <i>‘Assisting people living with complexity to use smart phones to connect with their community’</i>	\$5,000	\$2,500	\$2,500
B4BA— <i>‘Analysis of B4BA Survey, case studies and case study analysis into assessing the availability, quality, reliability, and affordability of internet and telecommunications services in Australia—an evidence-based approach’</i>	\$51,005	\$15,302	\$35,704
Queensland University of Technology, School of Justice— <i>‘Domestic violence and communication technology’</i>	\$53,246	\$10,649	\$42,597
University of Technology Sydney, Faculty of Law— <i>‘Designing Responsive Regulation: Consumer and public participation in converged communications industry rule-making’</i>	\$50,603	\$10,121	\$30,362 ¹
James Cook University, Cairns Institute— <i>‘Connectivity and digital inclusion in Far North Queensland agricultural communities’</i>	\$36,000	\$7,200	\$28,800
University of Technology Sydney, School of Communication— <i>‘Consumer rights to personal data’</i>	\$55,302	\$11,060	\$44,242
University of Melbourne, Melbourne Social Equity Institute— <i>‘Thanks a bundle: Making telecommunications services more accessible for people with decision-making impairments’</i>	\$69,428	\$34,714	\$34,714

¹ Final instalment of \$10,121 will be paid in the financial year 2019–20 upon completion of the project.



Recipient	Grant amount (ex. GST)	Payments made in 2017–18	Payments made in 2018–19
Deakin University, Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation— <i>'Risks, Impacts and Accountability in the Consumer Spyware Industry'</i>	\$60,728	\$12,146	\$36,436 ²
Curtin University, Department of Internet Studies— <i>'Audio Description in Australia: An Online Resource'</i>	\$32,000	\$16,000	\$16,000
Total	\$413,312	\$119,692	\$271,355

During the 2018–19 financial year, ACCAN short-listed eight projects in preparation for the upcoming multi-year grants round commencing in the 2019–20 financial year.

Financial accounts

There were no significant changes in the nature of ACCAN's activities during the financial year.

The independent auditor of ACCAN's financial accounts found that the accounts were prepared in accordance with the *Corporations Act 2001* and:

- gave a true and fair view of ACCAN's financial position as at 30 June 2019 and its performance for the year ended on that date; and
- complied with Australian Accounting Standards—Reduced Disclosure Requirements, the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, and *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013*, and the *Corporations Regulations 2001*.

² Final instalment of \$12,146 will be paid in the financial year 2019–20 upon completion of the project.

