



Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Communications

Funding of telecommunications consumer representation grants

Annual Report 2022–23

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Purpose of Section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997

Section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997 (Telco Act) provides 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 2022–23

In 2022–23, funding under section 593 of the Telco Act was provided only to the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN). This funding was provided under contract between ACCAN and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (the Funding Agreement). ACCAN was provided with \$2,435,000 (GST-exclusive) for the 2022–23 financial year. The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts administers the section 593 grants.

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 2022–23 demonstrated that ACCAN satisfactorily met each of its KPIs and Funding Agreement milestones. ACCAN's 2022–23 Annual Report showed that over the financial year ACCAN:

- represented consumer interests on 34 government, industry and regulatory committees;
- made 65 submissions to government, regulatory and other inquiries, most of which are available at www.accan.org.au/submissions;
- raised consumer awareness, with regular blogs, and updated consumer resources, contributed to 80 media pieces, and attracting nearly 160,000 website visits;
- saw its social media audience continue to grow, with over 6,000 followers across X, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram;
- commissioned research covering consumer concerns, affordability, digital platforms, telecommunications reliability, free to air broadcasting and streaming convergence, and the use of direct debit billing in telecommunications.
- issued 19 media releases on telecommunications consumer issues including financial hardship matters, the importance of a telecommunications comparison tool, the introduction of a retail registration scheme, and the campaign to combat scams.

ACCAN reported 99 organisational members in 2022–2023. Organisational membership is comprised of groups from disability advocacy, remote and rural consumers, indigenous organisations, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups, and others from across Australia.

ACCAN’s advisory forums were once again held virtually, expanding ACCAN’s accessibility and engagement with advisory forum participants. The four advisory forums include the Members’ Advisory Forum, Disability Advisory Forum, Small Business Advisory Forum, and Indigenous Advisory Forum.

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 at 30 June 2023 and its performance for the year ended on that date; and
- complied with Australian Accounting Standards—Simplified Disclosures, and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Regulation 2022*.

Independent Grants Program

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

Due to the timing of ACCAN’s funding agreement extension, no new projects were initiated in 2022–23, with funds for the Independent Grants Program rolled into 2023–24.

One project funding recipient under the 2020 grants round required extra time to complete their project after 30 June 2022 (recipients are typically given two years to complete projects). The final milestone payment was paid in the 2022–23 financial year.

Table 1: Past grants round projects funded in 2022–23

Recipient	Grant amount (ex GST)	Payments made in 2022 23
RMIT – Codesigning participatory strategies with older adults to reduce perceived risk and promote digital inclusion	\$98,637	\$19,000