



Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Funding of telecommunications consumer representation grants

Annual Report 2023-24

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Director – Creative Services

Communication Branch

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

GPO Box 594

Canberra ACT 2601

Australia

Email: publishing@infrastructure.gov.au

Website: www.infrastructure.gov.au

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Purpose of Section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997

Section 593 of the *Telecommunications Act 1997* (Telecommunications Act) provides for the Minister for Communications 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 2023-24

In 2023-24, funding under section 593 of the Telecommunications 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 \$2,624,000 (excluding GST) for the 2023-24 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 Telecommunications 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 2023-24 demonstrated that ACCAN satisfactorily met each of its KPIs and Funding Agreement milestones. ACCAN's 2023-24 Annual Report showed that over the financial year ACCAN:

- represented consumer interests on 28 government, industry and regulatory committees;
- made 67 submissions to government, regulatory and other inquiries, most of which are available at www.accan.org.au/submissions;
- raised consumer awareness, with regular blog posts and updated consumer resources, contributed to 75 media pieces, and attracting approximately 201,000 website visits;
- consolidated its social media audience, with over 5,500 followers across X, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram;
- commissioned research covering consumer concerns, accessibility of online content, digital literacy, first nations digital inclusion, cyber security, affordability and automated decision making.
- issued 13 media releases on telecommunications consumer issues including financial hardship matters, the need for domestic and family violence protections, consumer complaints, the shutdown of 3G networks, new NBN regulations and various notable reports and research.

ACCAN reported 99 organisational members in 2023-24. 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 Steering Committee.

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 2024 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.

Three new projects received funding through the IGP in the 2023-24 Financial Year.

Table 1: New grants round projects funded in 2023-24

Recipient	Grant amount (ex GST)
WorkVentures – Enabling First Nations digital citizens through a National Device Bank	\$85,000
RMIT – Developing design strategies and policies to protect woman and gender-diverse people from technology-facilitated abuse on social media	\$78,045
RMIT – Social infrastructure for digital skills development	\$38,404

An additional seven ongoing projects also received funding through the IGP in the 2023-24 Financial Year.

Table 2: Ongoing grants round projects funded in 2023-24

Recipient	Grant amount (ex GST)	Amount paid in 2023-24 FY (ex GST)
Griffith University – Smartphone sharing with intimate partners: Implications for telecommunications consumer cybersecurity	\$48,478	\$26,478
Western Sydney University – First Nations Digital Inclusion in Western Sydney	\$92,000	\$52,500
Deakin University – Defining Communication in a Digital Era: What Best Protects Diverse Consumers?	\$75,000	\$45,000
Centre for Accessibility Australia – Plan cancellations for all: Supporting consumers with disability in identifying accessible support processes by Telco providers	\$74,466	\$54,466

Recipient	Grant amount (ex GST)	Amount paid in 2023-24 FY (ex GST)
Digital Literacy Foundation - Hawkesbury Digital Mentoring Program	\$90,000	\$70,000
Deaf Australia – Fortifying “What standards? The need for evidence-based Auslan translation standards and production guidelines”	\$100,000	\$40,000
South Australian Council on Intellectual Disability – Co-designing accessible online safety resources for people with intellectual disability	\$89,173	\$89,173