



MEDIA RELEASE

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New 'one-stop' telecommunications consumer protections code to greatly assist telecommunications consumers

The Australian Communications and Media Authority has registered a new Telecommunications Consumer Protections Industry Code, developed by Communications Alliance, that consolidates consumer protections contained in six existing codes.

'In developing the Telecommunications Consumer Protections Industry Code, Communications Alliance and industry have taken a significant step forward in addressing and resolving some of the growing complexities confronted by consumers in the telecommunications space,' said Chris Chapman, ACMA Chairman.

'The code should assist in a greater understanding for consumers and make compliance simpler for industry in this increasingly converged market.'

The new code covers the following consumer protection matters previously covered by separate codes –

- advertising;
- point-of-sale information;
- fair consumer contracts;
- billing;
- credit management;
- customer transfer; and
- complaints handling.

ACMA has deregistered these six separate codes and registration of the new consolidated code means it is the single one with which industry has to comply.

'The development of the code was a major undertaking in response to calls from consumer groups for an easily readable code that enshrines multiple protection measures within a single document,' said Anne Hurley, Communications Alliance Chief Executive Officer.

'The focus of the exercise was to ensure that residential and small business markets have optimum consumer protection rules across a range of areas with uniform definitions expressed in simple language. Consolidating the consumer protection rules into a single document should enhance consumer protection because it will simplify code compliance and ensure consistency of interpretation,' she said.

Backgrounder

Communications Alliance

Communications Alliance was formed to provide a unified voice for the Australian communications industry and to lead it into the next generation of converging networks, technologies and services. For more information go to www.commsalliance.com.au

ACMA

The Australian Communications and Media Authority is responsible for the regulation of broadcasting, the internet, radiocommunications and telecommunications. For more information, go to www.acma.gov.au

The new code

The Telecommunications Consumer Protections Industry Code (C628:2007) replaces six currently registered codes dealing with consumer protection:

- Customer Information on Prices, Terms and Conditions Industry Code (ACIF C521:2004)
- Credit Management Industry Code (ACIF C541:2006)
- Billing Industry Code (ACIF C542:2003)
- Customer Transfer Industry Code (ACIF C546:2006)
- Complaint Handling Industry Code (ACIF C547:2004)
- Consumer Contracts Industry Code (ACIF C620:2005)

Non-binding rules and examples (guidelines) previously contained in the six registered codes are not part of the code proposed for registration. Instead, these has been supplemented and moved to *Telecommunications Consumer Protections Industry Guideline (G631:2007)*.

Individual complaints about issues arising from the code should continue to be directed to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman.

Legislative framework

Part 6 of the *Telecommunications Act 1997* sets out arrangements for the development, registration and enforceability of industry codes. This gives effect to Parliament's intention that organisations representing sections of the telecommunications industry should develop codes of practice applying to the telecommunications activities of participants in their particular section.

Industry bodies can develop codes of their own volition, or they may be requested by ACMA to do so. ACMA may register an industry code. Following which it can direct any participant in the telecommunications industry to comply with the code. Before registering a code, ACMA must be satisfied that the industry body has consulted the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, the Privacy Commissioner where codes deal with privacy issues, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and a representative consumer body. ACMA must also be satisfied that the code reflects Parliament's intention that public interest -

particularly community safeguards – be addressed in a way that does not impose undue financial and administrative burdens on the telecommunications industry.

A copy of the code is available at the Communications Alliance website, <http://www.commsalliance.com.au>

Media contacts

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