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The Manager
Telecommunications Regulation and Performance
Australian Communications and Media Authority

PO Box 78
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By submission: <https://www.acma.gov.au/consultations/2025-07/proposed-changes-complaints-record-keeping-rules>

RE: Proposed Changes to the Complaints Record Keeping Rules

The Internet Association of Australia Ltd (**IAA**) thanks the Australian Communications and Media Authority (**ACMA**) for the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the proposed changes to the *Telecommunications (Consumer Complaints) Record-Keeping Rules 2018* (**Complaints RKR**).

IAA is a member-based association representing Australia's Internet community. Our membership is largely comprised of small to medium sized Internet service providers that are subject to the Complaints RKR as retail and/or carriage service providers. This response is thus primarily in representation of these members, as well as in the public interest to ensure a thriving telecommunications sector.

From the outset, we express our support for a robust complaints handling framework in the telecommunications sector, which we recognise to be important to ensure consumer satisfaction and ongoing improvements within the sector. We therefore also recognise this includes appropriate record keeping regulations to allow the ACMA to effectively monitor and assess how industry is handling complaints. Furthermore, we understand that with the recent changes to the *Telecommunications (Consumer Complaints Handling) Industry Standard 2018* (**Complaints Handling Standard**), amendments to the Complaints RKR should be made accordingly.

However, we also express that any regulatory reform should consider the cost of compliance, as well as ensure there are no unintended adverse consequences to ensure new regulation is adopted meaningfully to fulfil its objectives. We therefore provide the below feedback.

Definitions

We express our appreciation that the proposed changes to the Complaints RKR in relation to definitions used throughout the instrument will align with other relevant instruments such as the Complaints Handling Standard, and the *Telecommunications (Customer Communications for Outages) Industry Standard 2024* (**CCO Standard**). This harmonisation is important to reduce confusion given the many regulatory instruments that pertain to the telecommunications sector.

However, we consider it confusing that the definitions in the Complaints RKR are inconsistent in its approach as certain terms are fully defined, while other terms are only defined in reference to other legislation. For example, the definition for ‘complaints’ is being proposed to be amended to largely mirror the definition used in the Complaints Handling Standard (excluding the additional note, which we assume is due to the term ‘service outage report’ not relevant to the Complaints RKR). However, ‘network outage’ and ‘network outage complaint’ is only defined in reference to the Complaints Handling Standard.

Thus, for the purposes of clarity, we request that all terms are given full, self-contained definitions to reduce uncertainty and the risk of interpretive implementation of regulation.

ACMA Publications

We support the ACMA’s proposal to treat network outage complaints as distinct from general complaints. As was expressed in our response to the ACMA’s consultation on changes to the Complaints Handling Standard to introduce ‘network outage complaints’, the definition of a ‘network outage complaint’ is broad, and does not require an actual complaint, as that term may be more generally understood in layman terms, and is rather more akin to being a ‘service outage report’ where a ‘network outage’ is occurring. As such, it is appropriate that ‘network outage complaints’ is being considered separately as it would otherwise distort and skew analysis of complaints trends within the telecommunications sector.

To that end, we seek further confirmation from the ACMA that it will also publish its public reporting on complaints data to clearly distinguish between general complaints and network outage complaints. We consider this to be important in relation to complaint numbers and trends being an indicator of consumer satisfaction and the health of the telecommunications sector overall. However, we believe it to be especially important in relation to the data the ACMA publishes in relation to individual telecommunications providers.

We understand the ACMA currently produces data on the ‘complaints per 10,000 services’ per provider, without further information on the type of complaints received. This list can influence consumer choice as a potential indicator of a provider’s quality of service including customer service. Thus, to include ‘network outage complaints’ in the total number of ‘complaints per 10,000 services’ that a provider received within a quarter would be very unfair for both the provider, and the consumer. Retail service providers and carriage service providers often have very limited control over a network outage, including whether a network outage occurs or how soon it is resolved, and yet will be the entity receiving ‘network outage complaints’. This number will not necessarily be an indication of the quality of the provider’s services. It is thus important that consumers receive the full picture, to make informed decisions and to ensure retail or carriage service providers are not being disproportionately disadvantaged due to issues outside of their control.

We therefore recommend that the ACMA distinguishes between general complaints and network outage complaints in any public reports about communications data.

In addition, we request that the ACMA develop materials that assist consumers to understand the difference between the two types of complaints, including explanation of the relationship between an underlying carrier and the retail and/or carriage service provider in relation to network outages.

Commencement Timeframe

In addition, we request that the changes to the Complaints RKRs come into place from the April to June 2026 reporting quarter, rather than the proposed timeframe of the January to March 2026 quarter.

We note that these changes are being proposed alongside various other regulatory reform, all of which require considerable changes to systems and processes for entities. In order to ensure operations are thoroughly reviewed, amended, and staff trained accordingly, we believe a longer preparation period is necessary. Given that the proposed timeframe for the amendments to be introduced is by the end of September, we do not consider one reporting quarter sufficient time for providers to change their systems, during a time where many other compliance activities are also being implemented.

Once again, IAA appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on the proposed changes to the *Telecommunications (Consumer Complaints) Record-Keeping Rules 2018*. As telecommunications becomes increasingly important for everyday life, it is important that the regulatory settings ensure not only a robust framework to deal with network outages, but also a supporting complaints handling framework in relation to such outages. We reiterate our recognition that record keeping and reporting rules are an important element within that complaints ecosystem. To that end, we look forward to continuing to work with the ACMA, industry, and consumers to ensure the Complaints RKR are amended appropriately and industry is given the opportunity to comply meaningfully, to best serve the consumers, and the overall sector.

ABOUT THE INTERNET ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

The Internet Association of Australia (IAA) is a not-for-profit member-based association representing the Internet community. Founded in 1995, as the Western Australian Internet Association (WAIA), the Association changed its name in early 2016 to better reflect our national membership and growth.

Our members comprise industry professionals, corporations, and affiliate organisations. IAA provides a range of services and resources for members and supports the development of the Internet industry both within Australia and internationally. Providing technical services as well as social and professional development events, IAA aims to provide services and resources that our members need.

IAA is also a licenced telecommunications carrier and provides the IX-Australia service to Corporate and Affiliate members on a not-for-profit basis. It is the longest running carrier neutral Internet Exchange in Australia. Spanning seven states and territories, IAA operates over 30 points of presence and operates the New Zealand Internet Exchange on behalf of NZIX Inc in New Zealand.

Yours faithfully,
Internet Association of Australia