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To Paul Nicholas
National Interests Section
Australian Communications and Media Authority

By submission: [ACMA Consultation Hub](#)

RE: Proposed public register of telecommunications outages

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 public register of telecommunications outages (**Register**).

IAA is a member-based association representing Australia's Internet community. Our membership is largely comprised of small to medium sized Internet service providers (**ISPs**), some of whom also provide other telecommunications services. Our members are subject to the *Telecommunications (Customer Communications for Outages) Industry Standard 2024 (CCO Standard)* and would also be subject to the proposed obligations in relation to the Register set out in the draft *Telecommunications (Customer Communications for Outages) Industry Standard Variation 2026 (No. 1) (Exposure Draft)*. We therefore provide this response in representation of our members, as well as for the broader public good of the Internet industry and sector.

We have been actively engaged in the development and implementation of the CCO Standard, being involved in prior consultations including amendments to the CCO Standard, as well as assisting members in their compliance efforts through guidance material. From the outset, we express our support for the objectives in improving transparency and accountability for network outages, especially where outages affect consumers' ability to reach Triple Zero. To that end, we are interested in the establishment of the Register framework that is fit for purpose and will genuinely benefit both consumers and the industry.

CENTRALISED PUBLIC REGISTERED ADMINISTERED BY THE ACMA

Firstly, we take this opportunity to emphasise our recommendation for a centralised, public registered administered by the ACMA. We understand that this is outside the scope of the ACMA's consultation, and the *Telecommunications (Customer Communication for Outages Industry Standard Amendment) Direction 2025 (2025 Direction)* which has directed the ACMA to introduce rules for carriers to establish Registers for their own networks. However, as we iterated in our response to the draft 2025 Direction, it is our firm view that a centralised public register is the most effective and efficient way to meet the objectives, and the ACMA, as the industry regulatory administering other registers relevant to the telecommunications industry, is the most appropriate body to administer such a register.

We note that the ACMA is already a 'relevant stakeholder' whom carriers must notify, and update in cases of a major outage or significant local outage under section 10 of the CCO Standard. Thus, we

consider with minimal adjustments, such as aligning the content to be notified to the ACMA with the content specified in the 2025 Direction, it can publicise the information on a centralised outage register. We reiterate this would be the most suitable way to achieve the objectives, ensuring standardisation, accessibility, accuracy and data extractability, while simultaneously reducing regulatory burdens for industry. Moreover, this is in the best interest of consumers who could be directed to the ACMA’s website, rather than having to navigate websites of various carriers and carriage service providers. A centralised register will similarly make it easier for organisations to review and audit outage information.

We therefore strongly recommend that the ACMA engage with the Minister for Communications to consider amending the Direction to direct the ACMA to establish a centralised public outage register administered by the ACMA.

We also offer our responses to the consultation questions below.

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

Question 2: Are there any additional matters aligned to the objectives that should be included in the draft instrument, including whether the flexibility to treat different classes of carriers or CSPs differently or exempt certain classes should be applied? Please explain your position and, provide evidence and suggested wording where relevant.

Question 3: Should the obligation for CSPs to display a link to the outage register apply only to CSPs who are not carriers (as currently drafted to reflect the outages register direction), or should it also apply to carriers that act as CSPs to ensure transparency for consumers? We are interested in whether this might be a gap and what approach would best meet the objectives of the outages register direction.

We consider that the drafting of the Register requirements is too broad, and captures carriers and carriage service providers regardless of whether or not they are reasonably capable of causing a major outage or significant local outage, due to their scale and network control.

We consider that downstream carriers should be treated similarly to carriage service providers, and should only be required to supply links to the Registers maintained by the responsible carrier for consistency. Requiring carriers who act as carriage service providers and without relevant network control and/or visibility to maintain Registers is likely to increase the risk of misinformation therefore causing increased confusion for consumers during times of stress, result in reduced transparency about telecommunications network relationships and could also therefore be counterintuitive for researchers seeking to use the Registers to assess and compare network performance across Australia, with downstream carriers being unfairly assessed for networks they have no control over. We therefore recommend that only responsible carriers be required to establish and maintain Registers, and downstream carriers and carriage service providers only be required to provide links to the Register maintained by the responsible carrier(s).

In addition, overall, the CCO Standard should not apply to carriers and carriage service providers that cannot meet the numerical and geographical scale set out in the CCO Standard should not be required to establish a Register. This exemption should therefore apply to carriers and carriage service providers that:

- supply fewer than:
 - 1,000 SIOs in regional Australia; and
 - 250 SIOs in remote Australia; and

- does not operate a carriage service network covering an entire State or Territory.

We note that the notification and communication requirements under Part 2 of the CCO Standard will not have any practical effect for many small telecommunications providers in Australia who do not have enough customers, and therefore do not operate enough SIOs for the thresholds set under the definitions to apply. However, despite this, the proposed Part 4 of the CCO Standard would apply, still requiring these smaller, under-resourced providers to establish a Register. We further note that similarly, obligations to publish and maintain written procedures under Part 3 unnecessarily apply.

We understand that the ACMA is seeking feedback on the overall operations of the CCO Standard and discuss recommendations to ensure the CCO Standard is applied appropriately below under our response to question 14.

TIMING FOR REGISTER PUBLICATION AND CONTENT REQUIREMENTS

Question 4: Do you consider the timing requirements for updates to the outage register (including periodic review) to be clear and workable? If not, please explain why and suggest improvements.

Question 6: Should the content requirements for outage registers and notifications under section 13 of the CCO be aligned to reduce duplication and improve consistency and usability? If so, would a single form or data structure (such as that proposed at Schedule 1 but with additional fields) achieve this? If not, please suggest an alignment format that would be most practical that is also aligned with the objectives of the outages register direction.

We support the alignment of the timing requirements for updates to the Register with that of the notification requirements under Part 2 of the CCO Standard. However, we are concerned about the potential duplication of notification requirements whereby carriers would have to provide updates on multiple webpages. We note that outages are stressful periods, for both consumers and industry, and requiring entities to make updates via multiple, parallel channels increases the risk of mistakes being made, even where carriers and carriage service providers are acting in good faith.

The establishment of a Register that is subject to prescribed update intervals and content requirements addresses these duplication risks. We therefore consider that once a Register is established and actively maintained, there is no need to require responsible carriers to replicate the same update information elsewhere on their website. Rather, directing consumers to the Register for all public updates allows consumers to rely on a singly authoritative source, thereby reducing confusion and the risk of misinformation.

Accordingly, we recommend that the CCO Standard be amended to specify that, where the original source of notice or communications under sections 8, 9, or 9A was provided via the responsible carrier's website, subsequent updates made by updates to the Register on that website are sufficient to satisfy the requirement under section 14(5) that updates be provided in the same manner that the notice or communication was made.

To that end, we also support the alignment of the content requirements for the Register and notifications under section 13 of the CCO Standard by expanding the data structure proposed under the Schedule 1 - Form. This alignment would also further support the Register operating as the primary and authoritative update mechanism during an outage, addressing the ACMA's concerns regarding duplication while improving consistency and clarity during stressful outage incidents.

EXTRACTABILITY

Question 8: Noting that information in the outage register needs to be extractable, should the CCO standard specify a minimum structured format (for example, a downloadable file or machine-readable format such as CSV), or allow flexibility for carriers to choose their own approach? What benefits or challenges would each option create?

We recommend that the extractability requirements remain flexible and that the CCO Standard does not impose any technical specifications. We consider technology- neutrality to be important to ensure the long-term effectiveness of regulation. In addition, we note the disproportionate costs likely to result from prescribing technical formats for smaller telecommunications entities as this is likely to require entities to re-develop their systems or manually enter data to their Register.

COMMENCEMENT

Question 10: What is the earliest practical date industry could have the amendments fully implemented and the outages register operational, ahead of the mandated timelines?

We emphasise that the mandated timeline for the operation of the Register by 30 June 2026 is already a very tight timeframe, which will be difficult for many telecommunications entities to comply with, but especially so for smaller entities. We understand that many of the larger entities have frameworks in place due to their establishment of the mobile outage register under the *Telecommunications Service Provider (Network Outages Register) Determination 2025*.

However, we note the long tail of small carriers and carriage service providers in the telecommunications industry, who lack the resources to build the necessary systems and automations to ensure the efficient operation of the Register. Especially in the context of the current drafting of the Exposure Draft, whereby the obligations would apply even to entities that cannot practicably cause a major outage or significant local outage as discussed above, we consider it would be unfair to impose a shorter timeframe.

We further note the suite of other compliance obligations which are due to commence, including other consumer safeguard regulations administered by the ACMA such as the obligations under the *Telecommunications (Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Consumer Protections) Industry Standard 2025* whereby smaller organisations are currently working to meet their compliance obligations by the mandated 1 April commencement date.

At the very least, in the event that the ACMA specifies an earlier commencement date for the Register to be operational, we recommend that this earlier commencement date is only specified for larger telecommunications entities with over 30,000 SIOs. However, we note that even at this threshold, entities who are just to gain larger market share and meeting the 30,000 SIOs threshold commonly used in telecommunications regulations are struggling with the pace of regulatory reform, and we strongly recommend that the ACMA does not seek to bring forward the commencement date for the Register requirements.

BROADER OPERATION OF THE CCO STANDARD

Question 13: Should the CCO standard be extended to include communications with customers about planned outages, noting that these can cause impacts to triple zero connection? Please provide reasons.

We do not consider the CCO Standard to be the appropriate mechanism via which communications about planned outages should be required. In principle, we appreciate and support the rationale

behind this consideration, given the potential impact of a planned outage on an end-user's ability to contact Triple Zero. However, we note that the CCO Standard applies to a much larger cohort of telecommunications providers, many of whom have very limited or no relevance to the Triple Zero network, such as internet service providers. Furthermore, the potential issue of planned outages as a result of network maintenance and upgrades affecting connection to Triple Zero is being mitigated via other means, including provisions relating to testing and monitoring network ability to call Triple Zero during network maintenance and updates under clause 4.6 of the industry code, *C536:2020 EMERGENCY CALL SERVICE REQUIREMENTS Incorporating Variation No.1/2025*.

We additionally note that it is already common practice for providers to notify consumers of planned outages on their networks. However, we are concerned about the regulatory burden this would place on smaller providers in the industry. At the very least, we consider that any expansion to planned outages should be minimal and light-touch, and should not require carriers and carriage service providers to provide notifications through as many channels as required under the current rules regulating unplanned outages.

Expanding the CCO Standard to capture planned outages, and the inclusion of planned outage information on the Register may also result in greater confusion for consumers who are seeking to use the Register to compare the reliability of different networks but are unable to distinguish between unplanned and planned outages.

We therefore propose that the expansion of the CCO Standard to planned outages should not occur until further, targeted and comprehensive discussions on the operation of the notification rules.

Question 14: Are there any other issues or gaps relating to the operation of the CCO standard you consider should be examined in the 2026 review (for example, opportunities to reduce duplication, improve consistency or strengthen accessibility)? Please explain your views and provide evidence where relevant.

Limiting application of the CCO Standard based on numerical and geographical footprint

As noted above in response to questions 2 and 3, we are concerned that the CCO Standard and the proposed Exposure Draft have been drafted in a manner that unnecessarily captures telecommunications entities that should be exempt. Part 3 and proposed Part 4 would require even carriers and carriage service providers who cannot cause a major outage or significant local outage to publish and maintain written procedures and Register despite the fact their network and customer footprint are not large enough to meet the thresholds of a major outage or significant local outage. We recommend that carriers and carriage service providers who cannot meet the numerical and geographical thresholds set out under the definition of 'major outage' or 'significant local outage' as defined in the CCO Standard should be exempt.

We therefore recommend amendments to section 4(a) of the CCO Standard, as follows (amendments in bold text):

*(a) applies to the section of the telecommunications industry consisting of carriers whose telecommunications networks are used to supply relevant carriage services to end-users, and carriage service providers that supply relevant carriage services to end-users, other than a carrier or carriage service provider **with:***

- (i) **fewer than 100,000 services in operation;***
- (ii) **fewer than 1,000 services in operation in regional Australia; and***
- (iii) **fewer than 250 services in remote Australia;***

Definition of end-user

We are also concerned that the drafting of the CCO Standard is too broad in that it applies to all end-users, without further clarification that end-users should be limited to residential consumers, and small businesses. As 'end-user' remains undefined in the CCO Standard, this also captures the end-users of enterprise customers of a telecommunications service. We consider this to go beyond the regulatory intent of ensuring consumer safeguards. Moreover, we are concerned this creates duplicative requirements whereby service level agreements stipulate contractual obligations in relation to outages between telecommunications entities and their enterprise customers. We therefore recommend that end-user is defined to appropriately demarcate enterprise customers.

Once again, IAA appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the proposed public register of telecommunications outages as set out in the *Telecommunications (Customer Communications for Outages) Industry Standard Variation 2026 (No. 1)*. We reiterate our commitment to improving transparency for consumers during times of outage incidents, and recognise the importance of maintaining appropriate communications due these stressful periods. We look forward to continue working with the ACMA, industry, consumers and other relevant stakeholders to ensure the establishment of a fit-for-purpose public register framework that will keep consumers informed and industry accountable in an efficient and practical manner.

ABOUT THE INTERNET ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

The Internet Association of Australia Ltd (**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 regularly engages with government and regulatory bodies on policy matters affecting the Internet industry. In particular, our advocacy efforts represent the small to medium sized internet service providers in Australia who are often disproportionately disadvantaged by law reform affecting the telecommunications sector. Our public policy work is guided by the following principles:

We stand for an internet for the common good

We stand for an open internet platform

We stand for measured, effective and practical regulation

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.