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Industry support doubles for small telco call for practical regulation

Support for the Internet Association of Australia's (IAA) open letter to the Minister for Communications and Sport, the Hon. Anika Wells, has more than doubled since it was published on 26 October 2026. It now has over 20 signatories, the group representing a likely combined 200,000+ services in operation (SIOs).

The letter, which launched with 9 small and medium carriers and carriage service providers, calls for telecommunications regulation that is proportionate and practical, and that does not make it harder for small providers to operate.

The supporters range from sole trader or small team ISPs, through to publicly listed telcos. The range of supporters spanning the breadth of industry reflects how widely the concerns are felt.

"The response from Members and the broader industry has been massive," said Narelle Clark, CEO. "This is not a niche concern. Telcos of varying sizes are telling us the same thing: they support strong consumer protections, but the cumulative cost and complexity of regulation is threatening the viability of a healthy and competitive market."

IAA Members are particularly concerned about the likely cost of compliance, and resulting consequences of the proposed *Telecommunications (Consumer Protections) Industry Standard 2026* (TCP Standard). With draft provisions indicating telcos will need to make significant changes to their billing and IT systems without specifying what, if any, implementation timeframes will be provided, small providers are concerned whether they will get a reasonable opportunity to comply, raising that these sorts of wide-scale changes are expected to take up to 12 months, likely even longer.

"Members have also described being caught between two unworkable options. Large, tier-1 providers may have the scale and margin to absorb new compliance costs, but small providers do not. At the same time, they can't simply pass those costs on to customers, because larger competitors are cutting prices, and raising prices risks losing customers altogether," said Clark.

IAA reports that some telcos are actively considering leaving the telecommunications market due to regulation that assumes every telco controls its own network. The proposed regulation fails to reflect the reality of the sector or a smaller provider's operations and what it can reasonably do. Providers are

increasingly concerned about their exposure to liability and large penalties for things outside of their control.

While the IAA highlighted the current focus on the TCP Standard as a fundamental piece of regulatory reform that would require providers to make sweeping changes across their operations, the letter is calling for a measured approach to telco regulation overall.

“A key issue is the volume and speed at which new regulation is being introduced for the sector. A small provider with less than 5 staff, is being expected to make changes across all aspects of its business in short timeframes, simultaneously to meet different regulatory requirements, and often, to address issues it’s not well placed to solve,” said Clark. “If that provider is forced out of the market, and is therefore no longer able to provide Internet to a regional community, whose interests does that serve?”

Narelle will also be appearing at the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee’s public hearing today on its inquiry into the Online Safety Amendment (Digital Duty of Care) Bill 2026 (DDOC Bill).

“The DDOC Bill is another example of regulation that, as currently drafted, isn’t fit-for-purpose. It proposes to introduce online safety obligations on ISPs despite the fact that as providers of internet access, they simply don’t have the same level of control over what gets shared on top of their network.”

IAA’s response to the Inquiry recommends the removal of internet carriage services from the scope of ‘online services’ captured under the proposed digital duty of care framework, and highlighted deficiencies in the consultation process surrounding the Exposure Draft earlier this year.

“These are all important pieces of regulation and we support the intent to make the Internet a safer place, we’re not disputing that. It’s a matter of making sure the legislation and the policy settings can support that and without proper coordinated reform and meaningful consultation, we’ll end up with regulation that is completely impractical, and simply cannot deliver the intended outcomes.”

What the letter asks for

- **Coordinated reform**, via a regulatory grid that assesses the cumulative impact of new obligations before they are introduced.
- **Meaningful consultation** with smaller providers, alongside the major telcos.
- **Simpler requirements**, consolidating overlapping consumer protection rules.
- **Proportionate obligations**, reflecting a provider’s size, services, and responsibilities.
- **Practical support,** including approved templates, training resources, and realistic implementation timeframes.

The full letter is available on the IAA website. IAA invites other telecommunications providers who share these concerns to sign on by emailing policy@internet.asn.au.

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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.

For more information about the Internet Association of Australia see www.internet.asn.au or the New Zealand Internet Exchange see www.ix.nz.