



EMBARGOED UNTIL 11AM AEDT MONDAY 29 OCTOBER 2012

Mobile phone complaints rise against overall decrease in telco complaints during 2011-12

Consumers made 193,702 new telco complaints in 2011-12, a decrease of two per cent on the previous year, according to the 2012 Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) Annual Report, published today.

Complaints about mobile phones increased by nine per cent to 122,834 from 112,376 in 2010-11.

Ombudsman Simon Cohen reported positive signs about improvement in the telco industry late in the 2011-12 financial year. "There has been a clear trend, since April 2012, of reduced complaints, with the last quarter of 2011-12 being our quietest for almost two years," Mr Cohen said. "This is a positive sign that reflects the focus by a number of telcos on improving their customer service."

Mr Cohen said two out of three complaints made to the TIO were about mobile phones, reflecting the rising use of smart phones. Poor coverage, billing disputes and the quality of information given to consumers at the point of sale were common issues in these complaints.

The TIO Annual Report highlighted ongoing billing and credit issues related to mobile services as a particular concern. Complaints about bill accuracy and usage charges, and disputes about financial overcommitment, all increased substantially during 2011-12. This includes the following specific issues:

- financial overcommitment due to inadequate spend management tools (15,752 issues – double the number of the previous year)
- disputes over the total amount of a bill (13,943 issues – 33 per cent increase)
- disputed internet usage charges (10,556 issues – 150 per cent increase)
- disputed roaming charges (4,186 issues – 69 per cent increase).

"Complaints about unexpectedly high bills and unnecessary financial overcommitment point to the urgent need for strong spend management rules, including those that are included in the new Telecommunications Consumer Protection Code," Mr Cohen said. "While these rules do not apply until 2013, or in certain cases 2014, it is a positive sign that some service providers have already taken steps to introduce better consumer notifications about high usage."

The annual report also shows a rise in complaints about credit default listings. Complaints about consumers being credit default listed while their debt was in dispute increased 18 per cent from 3,700 to 4,370. There was also a 16 per cent increase in complaints about consumers being credit default listed without proper notification, up from 3,220 to 3,730.

"I am very concerned about the increase in the number of complaints where credit default listings are disputed," Mr Cohen said "Credit listings can have very significant impacts on people - affecting applications for credit, including for housing and personal loans. Any credit default listing should only occur after the correct procedures have been followed."

<p>Media invitation: Ombudsman Simon Cohen will launch the TIO's Annual Report, <i>Preparing for the Future</i> on Monday 29 October 2012 10am for 10.15am, Level 3, 595 Collins Street, Melbourne</p>	<p>Please confirm your attendance on (03) 8600 8701</p> <p>The media launch will be webcast live. To register for the webcast, go to http://viostre.am/TIO/2012</p> <p>The annual report: www.tio.com.au/annualreport</p>
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This year the TIO has reported complaint data on a state-by-state basis and identified the Top 10 national postcodes. The Top 10 postcodes per state are available on www.tio.com.au/annualreport

Complaints by state

State	Number of complaints	Complaints (per 1,000 pop)*
Victoria	56,785	10.6
South Australia	15,936	9.9
ACT	3,203	8.9
New South Wales	60,398	8.7
Queensland	34,077	7.8
Western Australia	15,832	7
Tasmania	2,883	5.8
Northern Territory	1,169	5.5

Top 10 complaint postcodes in Australia

Postcode	Location(s)	Complaints (per 1,000 population)	Top complaint issues
3000	Melbourne City	24.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexpectedly high bill/adequacy of spend management tools • Disputed usage charges, total bill
3008	Docklands	22.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coverage • Disputed usage charges, total bill
5000	Adelaide City	21.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point of sale advice • Disputed usage charges, total bill
2150	Parramatta	21.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit default notification • Coverage
2000	Sydney City	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexpectedly high bill/adequacy of spend management tools • Point of sale advice
2015	Alexandria	19.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coverage • Unexpectedly high bill/adequacy of spend management tools
2045	Haberfield	19.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit default without proper notification • Credit default listed while debt in dispute
3754	Doreen	19.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coverage • Disputed usage charges, total bill
3182	St Kilda	19.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coverage • Unexpectedly high bill/adequacy of spend management tools
3061	Campbellfield	18.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coverage • Point of sale advice

Contact: Mirjana Jovetic, TIO Communications Manager, on (03) 8600 8378 or 0428 023 536