

13 January 2023

Universal Services Branch
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

By email to usb@communications.gov.au

Dear Universal Services Branch,

Submission – Review of rules about reasonable requests for Universal Standard Obligation standard telephone services

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your draft *Telecommunication Universal Obligation (Standard Telephone Service – Requirements and Circumstances) Determination 2022 (Updated Determination)*.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman welcomes the proposed amendments set out in the Updated Determination.

In previous submissions, we highlighted the role of the Universal Service Obligation (USO) in supporting reasonable and equitable access to standard telephone services for all Australian consumers. The USO is particularly important for consumers living in rural, regional and remote areas, where alternative voice telecommunications services may not be available, and it may be less viable for providers to supply standard telephone services. We continue to support the USO as a valuable consumer safeguard.

We support the proposed Updated Determination, which will continue to provide a structured framework for consumers to enforce their entitlement to standard telephone services under the USO. We are pleased to see the Updated Determination continues to include a pathway for consumers to complain to our office if a primary universal service provider refuses to supply a standard telephone service.

We look forward to seeing the final form of the Department's new rules about reasonable requests for standard telephone services, and to commenting on any future developments relating to the USO.

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Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman