I am a former Chair of ACCAN, and former director of the Communications Law Centre, UTS which twice received funding for research, once from the ACCAN Grants Scheme and once from ACCAN.

I appreciate the opportunity to make a submission to this Review, which I respectfully make on my own behalf.

ACCAN consults regularly both formally and informally with consumer groups representing general consumers and those with particular interests and needs. It engages frequently and widely, commensurate with its resources, with a broad range of stakeholders. In doing so, ACCAN effectively represents consumers in relation to telecommunications and also cost effectively provides industry with very valuable business intelligence.

ACCAN has the necessary knowledge, experience, relationships and expertise to represent general telecommunications consumers as well as those with special interests and needs. Due to the substantial range of issues that affect both these groups it is more effective and efficient for one consumer representative body to cover both of these areas.

Telecommunications consumer representation requires a dedicated body because of the many fast changing, highly specialised technical, legal, economic and social issues of concern.

A consumer representative body such as ACCAN, which maintains day to day, extensive, long lasting and deep links with consumers and consumer groups is best placed to research, discover and understand consumers’ interests and concerns.

I am aware from my dealings with academics, industry executives and public servants that the ACCAN Independent Grants Program funded research is well regarded as being of good quality. The research reports and papers have been generally informative, well received and influential and they are authoritative resources which are frequently referred to by stakeholders and academics. The IGP is widely known for its practical impact for consumers, industry and policy makers. I believe that the ability for the IGP to fund larger projects from time to time would be beneficial.

Continued funding for research grants by a consumer representative group such as ACCAN is a practical way to inform and improve telecommunications policy, law and services in Australia because such a group is best placed to have its finger on the pulse of issues which are of immediate concern to consumers as well as anticipating developments of future concern. In addition, in light of the pace of change in the sector and the many challenges it poses, it would be in the interests of consumers and industry for ACCAN to be funded to provide consumer education programmes.

Signature: Michael Fraser AM, FAICD

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