

# Editorial

**O**N THE MORNING OF 3 APRIL 1973, Motorola engineer Marty Cooper walked out of a press conference underway at the Hilton Hotel in New York holding a large plastic box.

Taking a journalist with him, Mr Cooper stepped on to the Avenue of the Americas and, standing next to the hotel, proceeded to create history by making the first phone call from a handheld mobile device.

Just 36 years after that historic call, mobile phones have become so ubiquitous that there are now more handsets in Australia than people, with most of us unable to imagine life without one.

While mobile phones and other portable devices have revolutionised modern communications, bringing countless benefits to millions of people, they have also become a major source of frustration for a large number of users.

According to figures from the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, around 16 000 complaints are received every month about mobile phones. Issues range from warranties and customer service through to expensive or unwanted premium content and contracts that confuse or mislead those who sign them.

Clearly, many users are not happy with the way they are being treated by companies supplying telecommunications and related services.

In this edition of *ACCC Update* we look at some of the common problems being reported to the ACCC and other regulators, and the steps being taken to stamp out some of the poor practices on display.

The ACCC has embarked on a campaign to make services fairer for phone owners by cracking down on unscrupulous operators.

At the same time it is trying to educate users of some of the potential pitfalls and teach them how to protect their wallets from those seeking to exploit them through myriad competitions, offers or enticements.

The ACCC has initiated a number of successful court cases in recent months and, with increasing public warnings, the industry can be in no doubt it has been put on notice.

To their credit, a number of companies have acted to better protect their customers from harm by third-party providers, but there is still much work to be done.

With technology continuing to present new challenges as well as opportunities for those who use it, consumers have a responsibility to keep themselves informed of the risks of being exploited or misled.

Likewise, the ACCC will continue to push hard against those businesses that seek to use technology to disadvantage consumers.

By making a commitment to deal with the numerous issues facing the telecommunications industry, we can all play a role in ensuring the technology works for, not against, those who use it.

Just as Mr Cooper designed it to do.

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission  
23 Marcus Clarke Street, Canberra,  
Australian Capital Territory, 2601

Cartoons by Pat Campbell

© Commonwealth of Australia 2009

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced without prior written permission from the Commonwealth available through the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to the Director Publishing, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, PO Box 3131, Canberra ACT 2601 or by email to publishing.unit@acc.gov.au.

ISSN 1443-0681

ACCC 07/09\_29404

Print Post approved PP255003/04404

www.accc.gov.au