

Customer Service Guarantee amendments drafted

ACMA recently sought public comment on draft amendments to the *Telecommunications (Customer Service Guarantee) Standard 2000 (No.2)* (the CSG Standard). The amendments are designed to improve the consumer safeguards for provision of basic telephone services and give effect to improved compensation payments for consumers.

By clarifying the grounds on which carriage service providers can claim exemptions for extreme weather conditions,

the draft amendments will reduce the ability of service providers to unnecessarily claim exemption in the case of predictable weather events. They will also increase the level of compensation payable by 21 per cent and provide definitions on what constitutes a 'reasonable offer' and 'sufficient information' for customers where an interim or alternative service is provided.

The CSG Standard is a legislative requirement for service providers providing

fixed telephone services to residential and small business consumers (five services or fewer), which is designed to provide incentives for industry performance relating to fixed telephone connections and repair times. It sets out maximum timeframes for service connection and repair, and the keeping of appointments, unless there are circumstances beyond the control of a service provider, such as extreme weather conditions or natural disasters.

Compensation is payable for breaches of the CSG and ACMA monitors service provider performance against the CSG Standard.

Submissions on the draft variation closed on 6 October 2006 and the varied CSG Standard will apply from 31 October 2006. The draft amendments to the CSG Standard are on the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au (go to Latest > For Comment > Current issues for comment).

Do Not Call scheme—ACMA takes next steps

The development of the national Do Not Call Register continues to move forward, with two significant steps towards the launch, which will be no later than May 2007. The Do Not Call Register will allow individuals with Australian fixed line and mobile numbers to list their numbers. It will be illegal for any non-exempt telemarketer in Australia or overseas to contact a number listed in the register.

In early October, ACMA released the request for tender for the development and operation of a national Do Not Call Register. The tender invited submissions from suitably qualified and experienced organisations, or consortiums, to both develop and manage the register.

The Do Not Call Register operator will be responsible for:

- building, commissioning, keeping, operating and administering the register
- promoting and raising awareness of the register and
- handling complaints and enquiries about the register's operation.

The closing date for tender submissions is 2.00 pm on 2 November 2006. ACMA expects to announce the successful tenderer early in 2007.

Following the announcement of a register operator, ACMA will continue to have a role both overseeing the register's operation and investigating breaches of the Do Not Call Register legislation.

A second step in the Do Not Call scheme was the August release of a discussion paper about the development of an industry standard for telemarketing. The discussion paper invited comments on points including the hours in

which telemarketing calls can be made, provision of contact information, termination of calls and calling line identification.

More than 30 submissions were received from dedicated telemarketing firms, large businesses, industry associations and authorities, charities and individuals.

Copies of all non-confidential submissions are on ACMA's website at www.acma.gov.au/donotcall. The submissions, in association with the views of the states and territories, will help guide the development of the standard.

ACMA anticipates releasing a draft standard for public comment in November 2006

and determining the final standard in January 2007. The standard will commence at the same time as the Do Not Call Register. As part of ACMA's role in educating and informing industry, communication materials about the final standard will be distributed from early next year.

For more information about the Do Not Call Register and telemarketing standard go to the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au/donotcall. To register for information about the Do Not Call Register Scheme, contact ACMA by email to donotcalltaskforce@acma.gov.au.