

YOUR RIGHTS · AUGUST 2026

Australia Stopped Asking Telcos Nicely

For twenty years the rules about how telcos treat customers were written by telcos. In March 2026 the regulator announced it is taking the pen.

The telco industry no longer gets to write its own customer rules. On 27 March 2026 the ACMA announced it will replace the industry-developed **Telecommunications Consumer Protections (TCP) Code** with an **industry standard** made directly under **section 125 of the Telecommunications Act 1997**, to move protections “into direct regulation so that expectations are consistent, obligations are clear and are backed by stronger and more immediately available enforcement powers for the regulator”. The **2019 TCP Code stays in force until the new standard commences**; consultation must run **at least 30 days** under section 132. Two things every business owner should take away.

The short version

The phrase	What it concedes about now	What changes
<i>“expectations are consistent”</i>	Providers currently interpret the same rules differently, so identical situations get different treatment depending on who you are with	One drafting, applied to everyone, written by the body that will enforce it
<i>“obligations are clear”</i>	The current language is ambiguous enough to argue about, which is what happens when rules are negotiated among the parties they bind	Drafted to be enforced, and therefore drafted to be unambiguous
<i>“more immediately available enforcement powers”</i>	Consequences currently arrive too slowly to change behaviour	A shorter path from breach to consequence

■ Also worth knowing

The complaint that fails	The complaint that works	
Opening	“Your service has been appalling and I have wasted hours on this.”	“On 14 July, in a call with your sales team, I was told the connection fee would be waived. It was charged on the 2 August invoice.”
Evidence	Recollection of several conversations, no dates	Dates, the invoice number, and a note written the same day as the original call
The ask	Implied, that someone should do something about it	“I am asking for the \$X charge to be reversed on the next invoice.”
Channel	Six calls to support, no reference number	A formal complaint, reference number obtained in writing
Escalation	Gave up, or escalated with nothing to show	TIO, with a one-page timeline attached
Outcome	Absorbed the charge, changed provider a year later out of resentment	Reversed, usually without needing the ombudsman at all

Where we stand on being regulated more directly, since it is fair to ask

In favour, and not out of virtue. A provider that operates its own network and its own Australian support desk has very little exposure to clearer obligations, because the obligations largely describe what it already does. The businesses with something to lose from unambiguous, quickly enforced rules are the ones whose current practices depend on the rules being vague and slow. That is not a claim about our character, it is just the shape of the incentive, and you should assume every provider you talk to is subject to it.

■ Questions the full guide answers

- ☐ Do telco consumer protections really cover businesses, or just households?
- ☐ What is the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman and can my business use it?
- ☐ What exactly did the ACMA announce on 27 March 2026?
- ☐ Are my protections weaker until the new standard commences?
- ☐ What are the ACMA's 2026–27 enforcement priorities and which affect my business?
- ☐ Why is the ACMA suing Optus and what should I conclude from it?
- ☐ How do I use published regulatory information when choosing a provider?

This is the summary. The guide has the detail.

Every point above is worked through in full on our site, with the Australian context, the numbers and the exceptions. If you would rather talk it through, call 1300 663 222 or visit vocphone.com/about/contact-us.