

## Launch of TIO's connect.resolve campaign

### Address by Ombudsman Deirdre O'Donnell

I should like to begin by acknowledging all of our stakeholders who have attended today's launch:

- The Minister, Stephen Conroy
- Mr John Rohan – Chairman of the TIO Board
- In her absence, Ms Virginia Hickey, Chair of the TIO Council, and members of TIO Council
- Representatives from member companies – Telstra, Optus, Virgin, Primus, Dodo, Hutchison – I offer a very warm welcome
- ACMA, represented by Ms Jennifer McNeill, part-time member of the Authority
- the ACCC, represented by Mr Michael Cosgrave
- representatives from the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy
- Representatives from peak consumer groups
- Communications Alliance, through its CEO Ms Anne Hurley

Ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to the launch of the connect.resolve campaign, and sincere thanks to the Minister for agreeing to launch the campaign.

Importantly – thank you to all of our key stakeholders who are here today.

The centre of this initiative is people - telecommunications consumers, from whom we received 149,000 complaints last year, and from whom we continue to hear in increasing numbers every week. 30 per cent of complaints to us are about customer-service related issues, and this is the focus of our campaign.

As you will see from the materials, our campaign uses voices from the thousands of calls we have received over the past year.

Those voices demonstrate most clearly the issues we are concerned about, and are the rationale for this campaign. They show – more powerfully than statistics ever could – the issues that cause frustration and ultimately lack of confidence that they are being heard and their issues addressed.

At this point, we are actually going to allow one of those voices to speak. This short recording encapsulates the customer service issues we wish to highlight through our campaign.

This will run for just under a minute, and a transcription of the call is in your materials should you wish to read it.

## RECORDING

The second key plank of connect.resolve is collaboration. In my discussions with members, regulators, policy makers and key consumer and industry groups over recent weeks, I have received positive feedback and an acknowledgement that this issue the TIO has highlighted is one that needs to be addressed.

Business solutions will be the province of individual companies. I am aware that there are very good customer-focused business practices and procedures out there, and this campaign allows such practices to be recognised and applauded.

The benefits of good customer service, especially in the current economic climate, should reap rewards in increased customer loyalty, greater customer satisfaction and, most importantly to the businesses themselves, in customers recommending their service provider to others.

Conversely, as we all know, bad news and bad experiences gain wide coverage and harm reputations.

I am hopeful that the spotlight on customer service that will occur through this campaign will allow the good news stories to be recognised appropriately as well.

The third plank of this campaign is confidence. It is my hope that the perception that the telecommunications industry does not take customer service seriously will start to be addressed through connect.resolve.

The detailed analysis the TIO will undertake over the six months of the campaign, and the feedback we will provide to our largest members, is intended to assist them understand what their customers are saying to the TIO, and then to decide what appropriate action to take.

The TIO is committed to being part of a process that can help lead to greater confidence in the industry.

We will provide our biggest members each month of the campaign with our data on customer service and complaint handling complaints. We will provide not just data but also the voices of their customers through our case studies.

We will provide advice about best practice complaint handling, along with training and guidance on request - grounded in our experience as complaint handlers ourselves. We will continue to dialogue with our members and make sure we use their feedback to help improve the customer intelligence we provide them with.

At the end of the campaign we will issue a public report. Our hope is that this will reflect improvements in customer experiences over the life of the campaign and a commensurate decrease in the complaints received by the TIO.

We will collaborate with industry associations. Where initiatives are launched by the industry, the TIO stands ready to assist and participate.

And we will work with all our other stakeholders present here today or who have expressed support for our objectives.

The name of the campaign is our call to action – that telecommunications service providers connect with their customers (through being easy to access) and resolve their concerns fairly and efficiently (through good internal dispute resolution processes).

I would like to close by thanking those of the TIO team and our expert advisers who have assisted with the preparation of the campaign strategy and the package of materials.

I look forward to reporting on the outcomes of the campaign once it has concluded.

And I look forward to customer service being clearly on the agenda of the telecommunications sector, and the results of this focus being reflected in customer experience.

Thank you for coming today and demonstrating your support by your presence.

Deirdre O'Donnell  
**Ombudsman**  
**TIO Ltd**

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