



Thursday, 14 April 2005

TIO calls for thorough and accurate advice on broadband services

Internet service providers should be doing more to assist consumers make the right choice when they sign up for a broadband service.

Ombudsman John Pinnock said although broadband had been around for some time, there were many misconceptions about the services on offer.

Complaints to the TIO by ADSL consumers about incorrect advice increased by more than a third in the March 2005 quarter (280 complaints), compared with the December 2004 quarter (198 complaints).

"I believe that it is up to ISPs to ensure that customers receive thorough and accurate advice when signing up for a broadband service," Mr Pinnock says in the quarterly *TIO Talks* newsletter.

TIO Talks also highlights a significant increase in complaints about premium-rate SMS services and Mr Pinnock urged consumers, particularly young people, to be careful when ordering these products.

Mr Pinnock said that his office had received 560 complaints in the March quarter about the billing of premium-rate SMS.

This compares with just over 100 complaints in the December quarter 2004 and just under 90 in the September quarter 2004.

Most commonly complaints have related to products such as horoscopes, jokes, ring-tones and chat services. They are characterised by numbers with the prefix 188, and are billed at rates much higher than a standard SMS message.

"A common source of complaint relates to the billing for repeat messages from some of these services," Mr Pinnock said. "Often people will order one service, which can be free, and then receive regular, sometimes daily, premium-rate messages which they are unable to stop either by approaching the third-party provider or going through their mobile provider.

"We have actually seen some of the advertising for some of these services in the course of our investigations, and have concerns that they fail to comply with industry codes which require minimum standards for advertising material. This is particularly concerning as the nature of these products is often attractive to young people who may take the advertisements on face value."

It is the TIO's position that mobile carriers and resellers who include charges for these services on their customer's bills have the responsibility for resolving complaints by those customers.

ends

For further information, please contact Phillip Money on (03) 8600 8738 or 0403 601 532.

"providing independent, just, informal, speedy resolution of complaints."