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Telecommunications customers unaware of right to complain

Dissatisfied customers are often not told by their telephone or internet service provider that they can take their complaint to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman.

Ombudsman John Pinnock said that as part of telecommunications industry self-regulation, providers were required to tell customers with unresolved complaints that they may pursue the matter with his office.

Consumers or small businesses should first attempt to resolve complaints with their provider before approaching the Ombudsman's office.

"Only about 16 per cent of people who complain to us have been informed about us by their provider," Mr Pinnock said.

"The rest find out about us from other sources. If the industry was serious about improving service to its customers then I would expect them to inform people of all their avenues of complaint resolution."

Mr Pinnock said the industry was extremely reluctant to include a message about his office on the bottom of customer accounts.

"Electricity, water and insurance providers commonly give details of industry complaint resolution schemes on their bills or on premium notices.

"But the Australian telecommunication industry's response has largely been one of denial. And that position is reinforced by an inadequate industry compliance regime."

Mr Pinnock said that he would continue to highlight the issue until the industry changed its behaviour.

"The telecommunications industry's own code of conduct says it must let customers know that they may complain to the TIO, but what's lacking is the resolve of providers to carry through with their good intentions."

Under the Australian Communications Industry Forum's *Complaint Handling Code* customers have the right to:

- speak to a supervisor upon request
- escalate a complaint internally
- be told about the TIO by their provider if their complaint is not resolved.

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

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