



Telecommunications  
Industry Ombudsman

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2017-2018



The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, culture and community. We pay our respects to elders past, present and future.

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## Chair's message

I am pleased to report the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman has continued to deliver fair, independent, and accessible dispute resolution for Australian consumers and the telecommunications industry. This was confirmed by the independent review conducted in 2017, which concluded "The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman is one of Australia's best known and arguably most influential Ombudsman schemes. Over many years it has built a high level of awareness and credibility and contributed to better consumer outcomes in a critical sector that continues to grow in importance for all Australians."

The independent reviewers made a number of recommendations for improvement, almost all of which were accepted by the Ombudsman, who is making good progress towards implementing those recommendations.

The Board and the Ombudsman have also continued to focus on progressing the four strategic goals, and the Ombudsman has provided information on that progress in this report. This has included focusing on delivering excellent service to residential consumers, small businesses, and phone and internet providers, and a commitment to contributing to improvements in the telecommunications sector. The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman does this while delivering against the Government's Benchmarks for Industry-based Customer Dispute Resolution by being independent, accessible, accountable, fair, efficient, and effective.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman operates in an environment where complaint numbers fluctuate regularly, and demands and expectations are high. The Board is conscious of the need to constantly adjust resourcing to demand, and was pleased to note the reduction in complaint demand over the latter part of this year.

The Board has been reviewing the way the industry funds the work of the scheme, and was pleased to bring this work to a conclusion with members voting at a general meeting in May 2018 to support a new funding model. The Ombudsman and her staff prepared to implement the new model from 1 July 2018. This was a significant programme of works both internally and externally, making changes to a number of systems and delivering change management programs for staff and providers.

The announcement of the Government's Telecommunications Consumer Safeguards Review offered us the opportunity to demonstrate the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's unique role and benefits to Government and stakeholders.

The Review rightly outlined the importance of complaint handling for everyone. As experts in external dispute resolution and in the management of phone and internet complaints over 25 years, we were pleased to make an evidence-based submission to contribute to improvements to complaint handling and redress. In February, the Board farewelled Board Member David Epstein. We thank David for his considerable service, commitment and advice. In his place, we welcomed Andrew Sheridan to the Board. Andrew Sheridan joined the Board as a director with industry experience, and is Vice President, Regulatory and Public Affairs at Optus.

In closing, I thank my fellow directors for their focus and support of the work of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman. I also thank the Ombudsman and her staff for delivering our strategy and meeting the challenges of the year.

Patricia Faulkner AO,  
Chair

## Ombudsman's message

I am pleased to report that the number of complaints about telecommunications services in Australia appear to be turning the corner, with complaints trending down in the latter part of the year. While there is still work to do, the downward trend is good news for Australian residential consumers and small businesses, and for the telecommunications sector.

The recent downward trend correlates with a number of actions from government, industry, regulators, and my office – all of which were designed to improve consumers' experience and reduce complaints. These included the ACCC's work on speed claims (including speed monitoring and enforceable undertakings), the Minister's roundtable with nbn co and retail providers, retail providers' increased focus on prevention and resolution of complaints, the ACMA's complaint handling standard and record-keeping rules, nbn co's pricing changes, and from the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman – preparations to introduce a new funding model and complaint handling process.

I have consistently said the increase in complaints to my office over the last two years has not solely been driven by the rollout of the National Broadband Network. Complaints had increased in all service types, and it is pleasing to see complaints have started to decline across the board. For all service types, it appears consumers' experience is now more likely to meet their expectations.

However, there is no room for complacency. Providers need to continue to improve their complaint handling processes to reduce the number of complaints consumers refer to my office. And providers also need to continue their work to identify and fix the root causes of complaints. We have continued to play our part, meeting regularly with providers to raise service and quality issues, discuss complaint trends and our approach to common complaints, and we are continuing to develop our systemic issues work so we can contribute even more strongly to reducing complaints and improving telecommunications services.

In preparing to implement the new funding model, we took the opportunity to revise our complaint handling process. Our new Responsive Complaints Service (commencing on 1 July 2018) is more flexible, is designed to get to the heart of each complaint more quickly, and focuses on resolution.

In November 2017, we welcomed the recommendations from the Independent Review conducted by cameron.ralph.khoury. The reviewers recognised the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's role and success in contributing to better consumer outcomes in the telecommunications industry. The reviewers noted there is a high level of support for the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman from most stakeholder groups and recognised the various challenges of operating as a high volume complaint resolution service in a complex and fast moving industry.

The reviewers also assessed the performance of the scheme against the Government's Benchmarks for Industry-Based Customer Dispute Resolution (the Government Benchmarks). As set out in the Government Benchmarks, the work of an industry based Ombudsman service is broader than simply resolving complaints. The primary recommendation from the Independent Review was that we ensure we deliver on those broader requirements, and recognise the importance of our role in supporting the regulatory framework. In implementing some of the more specific recommendations, we have strengthened our work on systemic issues, increased our capacity in analysing and using our data, and continued to draw on our complaint handling experience to contribute to policy development and industry improvement.



Our work would not be possible without the assistance of others. I thank the phone and internet providers who work with us and their customers to resolve complaints. I also thank consumer and small business organisations who refer people to us and work to ensure our service is known. I thank the Board, especially the Chair, Patricia Faulkner, for their support, challenge, and strategic direction. And finally to our staff – thank you, as always. I appreciate your hard work, focus, responsiveness, and commitment to making a difference for Australian residential consumers and small businesses and to the telecommunications industry.

The change and complexity in the telecommunications industry means the role of the Ombudsman continues to be a vital part of essential phone and internet services and the consumer safeguards framework. We remain committed to delivering a best practice complaints handling service for the telecommunications industry, and to continuing our work with all stakeholders to reduce complaints and contribute to improving telecommunications services in Australia.

Judi Jones,  
Ombudsman



# The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman Board of Directors

To ensure our independence, the Board is chaired by an independent Director and contains a balanced mix of Directors with industry and consumer experience, and two additional independent Directors.

The Board governs the business affairs and property of Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman Ltd in accordance with the Company Constitution, Terms of Reference, and corporate law.

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## INDEPENDENT CHAIR

Patricia Faulkner AO - BA, Dip Ed, MBA, FIPAA

## DIRECTORS WITH CONSUMER EXPERIENCE

Paul Harrison PhD, GAICD, MAM  
Catriona Lowe LLB  
Gordon Renouf BA, LLB

## DIRECTORS WITH INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

John Lindsay GAICD, MACS  
Jules Scarlett BA, LLB (Hons)  
Andrew Sheridan CA, MA (Hons)

## INDEPENDENT DIRECTORS WITH COMMERCIAL GOVERNANCE EXPERIENCE

Geoff Nicholson BEc, MBA, FCA, GAICD, CSEP

## INDEPENDENT DIRECTOR WITH NOT-FOR-PROFIT GOVERNANCE EXPERIENCE

Professor The Hon. Michael Lavarch AO, LLB

## BOARD ACTIVITIES IN 2017/18

There were six formal Board meetings in 2017/18 (excluding meetings of Board committees).

In this year, Board activities included approval of the annual budget and new funding model, recruitment of Board vacancies, monitoring of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's three-year strategy, and review and approval of changes to Board and Committee Charters. The Directors also conducted a full day strategy session titled Vision 2020, designed to examine the role and scope of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman from 2020.



# The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman provides a free and independent external dispute resolution service for residential consumers and small businesses who have an unresolved complaint about their phone or internet service in Australia.

## ABOUT THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OMBUDSMAN

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman Ltd was established in 1993, and is a company limited by guarantee. *The Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999* requires telecommunications providers to be members of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman and to comply with the decisions of the Ombudsman.

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Telecommunications service providers are businesses or individuals who are carriers or provide carriage services.

Carriers – persons who own a telecommunications network unit to supply carriage services to the public. The carrier must be licensed through the Australian Communications and Media Authority.

Carriage service providers (CSP) – those who supply standard telephone services, public mobile telecommunications services, or carriage services that enable end-users to access the internet, including carriage service intermediaries who arrange for the supply of such services.

## SCOPE OF SERVICE

Dispute resolution services include:

- Dealing with individual and systemic complaints
- Promoting fair and effective resolution of complaints
- Providing information and analysis to community, government and members

## THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY SECTOR

### Department of Communications and the Arts

The Department of Communications and the Arts advises Government on issues relating to communications and the arts. It supports Government to promote economic growth and social benefits by helping all Australians realise the opportunities of digital technologies and communications services. [www.communications.gov.au](http://www.communications.gov.au)

### Australian Communications and Media Authority

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is a statutory authority within the federal government portfolio of Communications and the Arts. The ACMA is Australia's regulator for broadcasting, the internet, radio communications and telecommunications. [www.acma.gov.au](http://www.acma.gov.au)

### Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) is an independent Commonwealth statutory authority whose role is to enforce the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* and a range of additional legislation, promoting competition, fair trading and regulating national infrastructure for the benefit of all Australians. [www.accc.gov.au](http://www.accc.gov.au)

### Communications Alliance

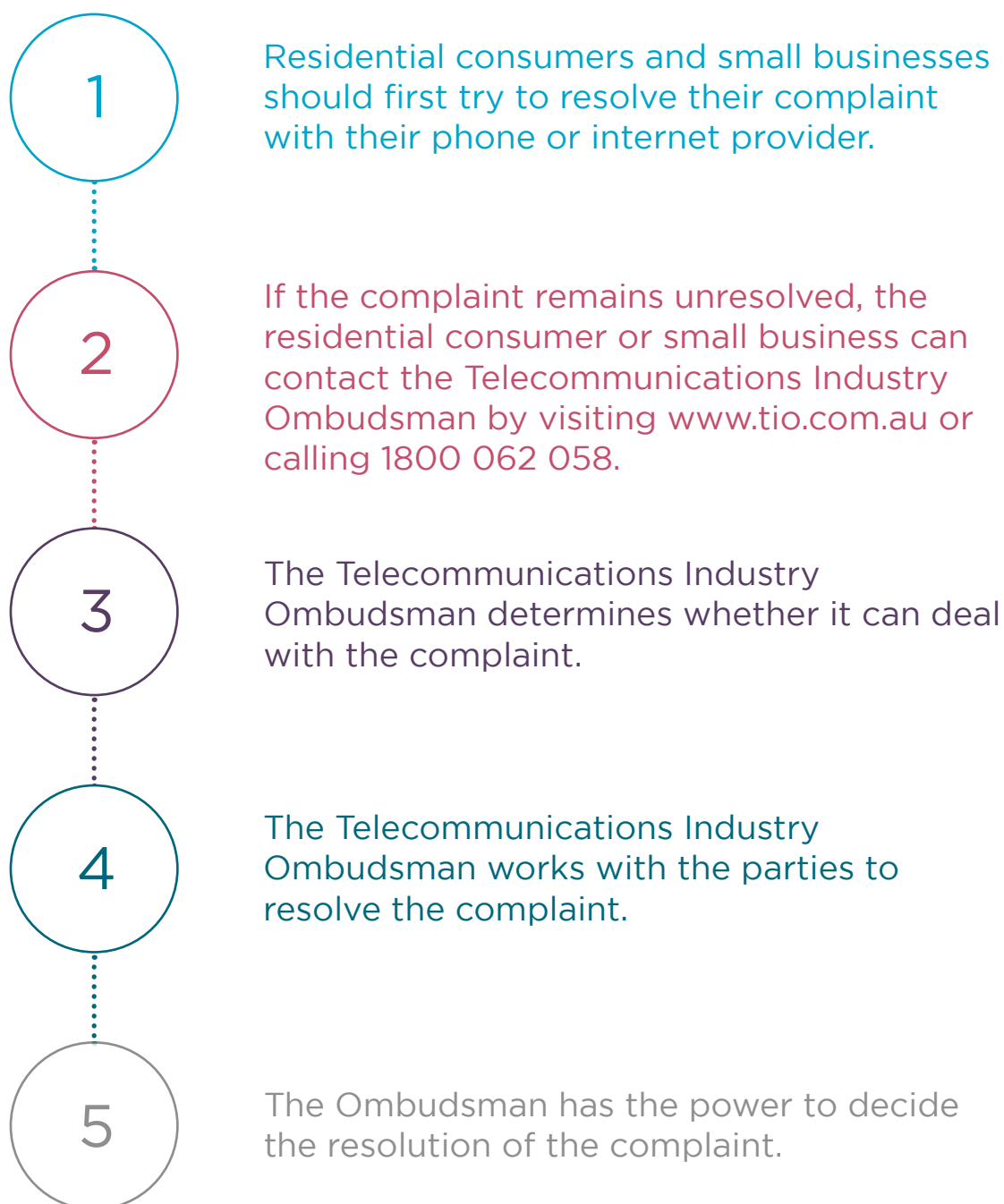
Communications Alliance is the peak body for the Australian communications industry. [www.commsalliance.com.au](http://www.commsalliance.com.au)

### Australian Communications Consumer Action Network

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network is Australia's peak communications consumer organisation representing individuals, small businesses and not-for-profit groups as consumers of communications products and services. [www.accan.org.au](http://www.accan.org.au)



## How to make a complaint







**Strategy and strategic goals**



## Our Purpose

To provide a fair, independent and accessible dispute resolution service for consumers and the telecommunications industry that complies with Benchmarks for Industry-based Customer Dispute Resolution.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's purpose is clear – fairness, independence in everything it does and openness and transparency with residential consumers, small businesses, and phone and internet providers.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's goals were developed using the Government's six Benchmarks for Industry-based Customer Dispute Resolution – accessibility, independence, fairness, accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness. This means an approach that is practical and responsive, and follows industry best practice and excellence in dispute resolution and complaint handling.

### FOUR GOALS LEAD THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OMBUDSMAN'S WORK

- 1 Providing an efficient and effective dispute resolution service, without compromising integrity
- 2 Collaborating, informing, and educating stakeholders - to reduce complaints and improve telecommunication services
- 3 Being known, respected and accessible
- 4 Building a resilient and sustainable organisation and infrastructure

# 1. Providing an efficient and effective dispute resolution service, without compromising integrity

Focusing on efficiency and effectiveness as well as maintaining and demonstrating independence and integrity is a priority in our dispute resolution work.

All parties – residential consumers and small businesses, and phone and internet providers – expect us to use our resources wisely, and to focus on resolving complaints effectively and fairly.

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## 2017/18 HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

**167,831**  
complaints processed and referred to providers

**17,236**  
conciliations commenced

**146,958 (87.6 %)**  
complaints from residential consumers

**20,433 (12.2 %)**  
complaints from small businesses

**88%**  
of online complaints were processed the same day<sup>1</sup>

**77%**  
cases unresolved after referral closed within 60 days – target 75%

**94%**  
cases unresolved after referral closed within 120 days – target 95%

1. Monday – Thursday. Measured as 24 hours, not business days as cases lodged after COB Friday have no opportunity of being actioned until the next work day

**52**  
possible systemic issues were notified to providers

**30**  
systemic matters resulted in the provider agreeing to or making changes to its system, process or practice

## OUTCOMES OF CONCILIATION AND INVESTIGATIONS

**\$429.60**  
the median value of the financial outcome for those complaints with a financial outcome

**24.8%**  
of cases had only a financial outcome

**23.1%**  
of cases had only a non-financial outcome

**46.1%**  
of cases had both a financial and non-financial outcome





2,466

complaints from the Australian Capital Territory

52,989

complaints from New South Wales

1,042

complaints from the Northern Territory

32,820

complaints from Queensland

12,667

complaints from South Australia

2,986

complaints from Tasmania

47,620

complaints from Victoria

15,075

complaints from Western Australia

States and territories presented in alphabetical order.  
A small number of complaints do not have postcode data,  
and are not included in the state totals.

## Anita Chopra\*

### Phone and internet services in a new home

In March, Anita\* from Fremantle, Western Australia, arranged for Silver Telco\* to transfer her internet service to a new address.

When Anita moved to her new property two weeks later, there was a problem setting up the connection. After a month of back and forth conversations, Silver Telco told Anita they could not provide internet services and offered to cancel her services without cost. However, one month later, Anita received a bill for a cancellation fee of \$320 along with a direct debit of \$24 from her bank account for the month.

Anita called Silver Telco to discuss her case. They informed her there were no notes on their system about waiving cancellation fees. They said they needed to investigate and would call Anita back.

Anita got in touch with the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman and spoke to Jay\*, an Enquiry Officer. They spoke about Anita's frustration in dealing with Silver Telco and the additional time Silver Telco wanted to investigate her complaint. Jay explained that it was important Silver Telco had an opportunity to consider the direct debit and bill issues.

Jay listened to Anita's issue and confirmed with her Silver Telco was following the process expected of a provider in this instance.

Jay explained that if Anita waited for Silver Telco's call and was not satisfied with the resolution, she could call the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman back and they would progress the complaint within the 10 day resolution timeframe.

\*Names of individuals, organisations, and companies have been changed.



## 2. Collaborating, informing and educating stakeholders to reduce complaints and improve telecommunications services

A key objective of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman continues to be providing feedback to reduce complaints and to improve telecommunications services.

We provide regular reports to phone and internet providers about their complaints. Information and analysis is also provided to Government and regulators, highlighting trends and systemic issues to inform policy development

### HIGHLIGHTS

2017/18 highlights include:

#### The annual report

A comprehensive overview of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's work, including phone and internet complaints over twelve months.

#### Six month update

A report providing a high level summary of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's work in the first six months of the financial year.

#### Monthly reporting

An overview on data over a calendar month to key government, telecommunications and consumer bodies including regulators ACMA and ACCC, Communications Alliance, Communications Compliance and ACCAN. This reporting focuses on the volume of new complaints and the issues raised.

#### Member reporting and daily complaint handling data

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman provides members with a variety of reporting, on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. This reporting is available to members through a secure online portal.

Daily reporting summarises each member's new complaints for the previous day, and highlights cases of an urgent nature due to medical or safety risks. Weekly reporting provides information on open cases that are not resolved after referral to the provider.

### Member engagement

The Member Services team worked with over 1,600 phone and internet providers who are members of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman. This year, 189 service providers joined and 118 left.

### Mnews

An e-newsletter with information about complaint handling and upcoming events and publications is distributed monthly to over 3,500 recipients within phone and internet service providers.

### Member information and training

New and existing members have access to an online training portal on dispute resolution best practice as well as information on how the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman deals with complaints.

### Member survey

The Member Services team conducts an annual engagement needs survey to help develop communication channels and opportunities between phone and internet providers and the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman.





## Fifteen submissions

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman contributed fifteen submissions in response to a range of consultation processes, including legislative inquiries, policy development and regulatory reform processes.

We provided significant input to the Department of Communications and Arts' proposals to reform regulation around the rights of telecommunication carriers to install infrastructure on land they do not own. The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman has specific jurisdiction to deal with objections from land owners and land occupiers to carriers' proposals to install infrastructure deemed to be low impact on their land.

Following the regulatory changes the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman published updated Guidelines on the Installation and Maintenance of Low-Impact Facilities. The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman also provided submissions to consultation processes, including;

- the inquiry into legislative reforms to introduce a Statutory Infrastructure Provider regime
- the Federal Treasury's proposed reforms to the Australian Consumer Law on consumer guarantees and paper billing
- the ACMA's development of new rules for telecommunications service provider complaints handling and record-keeping, and to improve the experience of consumers migrating to a service delivered over the National Broadband Network
- four submissions to Communications Alliance consultations on a range of codes and guidelines on topics relating to Mobile Premium Services, Priority Assistance, Life Threatening and Unwelcome Communications, and Customer Requested Barring.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman also responded to five formal requests for information from Government or regulatory agencies.

## Key relationships

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman liaises regularly with the Department for Communications and the Arts, ACCC, and ACMA, sharing information about trends in complaints, systemic issues, and compliance matters.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman also liaises with the Minister for Communications and the Arts, the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, Communications Alliance, and the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman.

When providers fail to comply with the requirements of the scheme, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman refers these matters to the ACMA, who has the power to enforce compliance. In 2017/18, three providers were referred to the ACMA for not complying with an Ombudsman decision. A further nine providers were referred for not becoming members. Of the nine providers referred to the ACMA, six subsequently became members, one was granted an exemption, with two still under investigation by the ACMA.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman is a member of the Australia and New Zealand Ombudsman Association (ANZOA), the peak body for Ombudsman in Australia and New Zealand with 22 members. Through the Ombudsman's membership, staff are able to participate in interest groups, sharing best practice, challenges, and opportunities to improve complaint handling practices. The Ombudsman, Judi Jones, is the chair of ANZOA.

Last year, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman also welcomed the Victorian government's It's Ok to Walk Away campaign, empowering Koori consumers to identify high pressure sales tactics within their community.

## Member Forums

The Ombudsman and Board hosted a series of Member Forums across the country. Forums were held in Adelaide, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, and offered an opportunity to hear directly from phone and internet providers on the issues and challenges they face. Additionally, the first national online forums were held with members, allowing providers to participate across Australia.

## Vulnerable consumers

Understanding the needs of vulnerable residential consumers is key for the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman in delivering accessible services to all communities.

Groups in lower socio-economic communities are much less likely to access services, including making a complaint about their phone and internet service, even though they often need help the most.

This year, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's research and awareness program focused on these groups through promotional activities and partnerships with frontline professionals in Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Queensland, and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

A lead feature in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is the Our Telco Rights Toolkit. This is a unique set of materials and resources for professionals working within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, outlining the telecommunications sector, telecommunication services and how to make a complaint.

The Toolkit will be translated into more Aboriginal languages in the coming year, and its delivery will widen across states and territories.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman partnered with Financial Counsellors in Western Australia to identify challenges faced by clients of financial counsellors in the state. The results were published in a special report, "Understanding Financial Difficulty in Western Australia."

We jointly surveyed financial counsellors and money workers on their experiences of working with their clients over the previous two years. The survey results found a picture of financial difficulty that has increased significantly.

Financial Counsellors reported seeing numerous problems such as increasing job insecurity and health issues. 86% of WA Financial Counsellors said they saw an increase in problems because of unemployment over the last two years. 91% of Financial Counsellors said over the last two years they helped people with phone or internet issues which in turn were affecting their financial security.

## Peter Craig\*

### Supporting phone and internet providers

In February Peter Craig\*, a small business owner who manufactures and sells mobile phone cases, changed his business model to offer mobile phone voice and data services.

Peter contacted a larger telco wholesaler to organise the new services. Both companies exchanged contracts and Peter relaunched his new business, Indigo Telco\*, two months later. Peter advertised through local newspapers and social media. Within a month, Peter had a small customer base of 30 customers connected to his new mobile services.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's Member Services team became aware of Indigo Telco's new business. It found Indigo Telco had not registered as a member. Subsection 128(1) of the *Telecommunications Consumer Protection and Service Standards (TCPSS) Act 1999* says 'Each carrier and each eligible carriage service provider must, in association with other carriers and other eligible carriage service providers, enter into a scheme providing for a Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman.'

Member Services contacted Peter to discuss Indigo Telco's requirement to become a member of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman. Peter was aware of this requirement when starting his new business but decided as he had a small number of customers he did not need to comply with the TCPSS Act. Member Services sent Peter information about the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman and the TCPSS Act, along with a membership form.

Member Services also informed the ACMA about Peter's telecommunications business so that it could provide Peter with information about the TCP Code, its Complaint Handling Standards and other compliance requirements.

Peter completed the membership form and within a week became a member of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman.

Member Services sent Indigo Telco confirmation of membership within two days, along with further information about the complaint process and obligations for telecommunications providers. Member Services also subscribed Indigo Telco to its monthly MNews publication for all its members, and advised of upcoming training and induction programs offered by the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman.

\*Names of individuals, organisations, and companies have been changed.



### 3. Being known, respected and accessible

A commitment to productive and constructive relationships with residential consumers and small businesses, telecommunications companies, representative bodies and government, ensures the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman reaches its stakeholders appropriately and effectively.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman uses a combination of integrated channels to create awareness of its role and, its independence and accessibility to all communities. Complaint data provides a valuable insight into the telecommunications sector and the experience of consumers in Australia and informs the development of policies and regulation of the telecommunications sector.



#### HIGHLIGHTS

2017/18 highlights include:

#### Understanding stakeholders

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman undertook a comprehensive survey of Australians in each state and territory to understand their experience of their phone and internet services.

The aim of the survey was to complement the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's complaints data. The survey also offered the opportunity to broaden the understanding of the issues experienced by nearly 3,000 Australians across all demographic groups about their phone and internet services, and the challenges telecommunications providers experience in delivering services.

The survey told us one in two Australians had experienced an issue with their phone or internet service in the preceding 12 months, and 21 per cent of residential consumers had more than one phone or internet issue over the last year.

Almost 60 per cent of small businesses identified a phone or internet issue affecting their business. More than half of Australians who reported an issue considered their phone or internet service problem as serious or very serious.

One in four phone or internet issues experienced by residential consumers were not resolved after four months. Consumers said they want to deal with a trustworthy and competent organisation in resolving their complaint.



83% of Financial Counsellors said being unable to pay a bill is the most common cause of phone or internet related financial difficulty. 65% of Financial Counsellors identified clients misunderstanding their contract as a factor in causing problems. 44% of Financial Counsellors identified a bad relationship with a phone or internet provider as a factor causing problems. 40% of Financial Counsellors identified companies overselling products to consumers as contributing to financial problems, and 32% of Financial Counsellors identified language or cultural barriers as reasons why their clients have phone and internet issues causing financial difficulty.

In addressing the financial difficulty, Financial Counsellors identified financial education (89%) as the main way to help consumers. This was followed by tighter regulation of loans and financial products (77%), and helping people find employment (74%). Further ways included training and apprenticeships, access to mental healthcare, better IT skills and better parole and rehabilitation services.

The survey was completed between 19 February, 2018 and 5 March, 2018. 137 lawyers, social workers, financial counsellors, NGO workers and professionals in similar fields, completed the survey.

## Lowanna Jackson\*

### Loss of services

Lowanna is in her 90s and lives alone. She has a home phone service with Yellow Telco\*.

One day, Lowanna's phone stopped working. Her son Spencer\* helped Lowanna to report the fault to Yellow Telco. Yellow Telco sent a technician to Lowanna's home the next day.

Yellow Telco called Spencer and said they did not know when they could fix his mother's home phone. They offered Lowanna a mobile phone. Spencer explained that this would not work because Lowanna lives in an area with no mobile coverage. Yellow Telco said they would send a different interim phone within 24 hours, but 24 hours passed and the phone was not delivered.

Spencer was concerned about his mother's safety, and for four days Lowanna had been unable to use her home phone.

Spencer called the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman and spoke to Jordan. Jordan assessed Lowanna's complaint as urgent. Jordan also explained to Spencer that the delay in fixing the service could mean that Lowanna was eligible for Customer Service Guarantee compensation.

Jordan sent the complaint to Yellow Telco's resolution team asking that they address Lowanna's need for an appropriate interim phone within two days.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's Triage Officer Jenny\* called Spencer two days later to ensure that Lowanna was no longer at risk. Spencer said the day after he contacted the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, Yellow Telco called and said they would send Lowanna a satellite phone, which Lowanna received 24 hours later.

\*Names of individuals, organisations, and companies have been changed.



## 4. Building a resilient and sustainable organisation and infrastructure



To deliver on its purpose and achieve its goals, it is vital to have an organisation that is efficient, adaptive to challenges and well-managed. The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman wants to attract the best people, invest in their training and development, and see their success in the services it provides. The organisation constantly assesses and improves its operational processes and systems for efficiency and responsiveness to a fast-changing telecommunications sector.

### HIGHLIGHTS

2017/18 highlights include:

#### Independent Review

The Independent Review into the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman was completed in December 2017. The review is required to take place every five years, administered and delivered by an independent person or organisation. The 2017 review was conducted by [cameron.ralph.khoury](#) and 22 submissions were received from industry, consumer advocates, regulators, and individual consumers.

The reviewers made 29 recommendations including strengthening the Ombudsman's work investigating systemic issues.

The review acknowledged the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman has built a high level of awareness, accessibility and credibility with residential consumers, small businesses and phone and internet providers, as well as with government and agencies within the telecommunications sector.

## Achieving Our Goals

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman introduced its first staff engagement campaign, bringing together its strategy and strategic measures. The three-year internal campaign communicated with staff the number of ways we are working to achieve our goals and how to build on this success.

## Training and development

The delivery of staff training and development across eleven key areas including dispute resolution, mental health in the workplace and innovation.

The Graduate Certificate in Dispute Resolution (Industry) continues to be offered to dispute resolution staff. This includes modules on Codes of Practice and Regulatory Guidelines, Negotiation and Conciliation, and Contracts in the Telecommunications Sector.

## Leadership development

Building on the previous year's introduction, leadership development programs were widened for new and emerging leaders. Core leadership topics were also introduced including change management, team development and leadership success.

## Gender equality

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman is committed to gender equality in the workplace.

In financial year 2017/18, 37% of management roles were held by women, 33% of board positions were held by women (double the national rate), and the overall workforce was comprised of 53% women and 47% men. Six of the nine leadership team members were women, including the Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman.

33% of promotions within the organisation were awarded to women.

Up to 90% of staff had access to paid parental leave and access to paid parental leave as a secondary carer.

## Wellbeing

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman is committed to a positive, supportive and inclusive workplace culture.

Last year, staff supported The Biggest Morning Tea, RSPCA Cupcake Day and White Ribbon Day. Men's Health Week helped shine a light on men's health issues and R U Ok Day recognised issues surrounding mental health.

Staff are entitled to 16 weeks of employer funded paid parental leave (maternity or adoption), higher than the national average of 10 weeks. The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman also funds paid parental leave for partners (one week plus additional 10 weeks if they are the primary carer) and provides equal access to flexible work options for men and women.

## Valuing diversity

Recognising diverse cultures and communities is fundamental to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman as an independent and accessible external dispute resolution service. In the last year, cultural events and traditions have been acknowledged. This included Diversity Week, Harmony Day, Reconciliation Action Week and NAIDOC Week.

The cross-organisation Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group has drafted the organisation's first Reconciliation Action Plan, which will be launched at the end of 2018.

# White Ribbon Day 2017

## Staff and wellbeing

By acknowledging White Ribbon Day, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman was able to play a role in supporting staff and demonstrating a role in supporting consumers affected by family and domestic violence.

A High Tea to Make a Difference was held at the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's office, as well as recognising White Ribbon Day as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

Staff engagement focused on the messages of changing the attitudes and behaviours that lead to violence and ask communities to stand up, speak out, and act to prevent men's violence against women.

Staff were invited to collect resources, purchase a white ribbon, and pledge support by taking the White Ribbon Day Oath.



## Kevin Collins\*

### Phone upgrades

Kevin went to his local store to renew his mobile contract. Green Telco\* suggested that Kevin get a new phone, the Orion Plus.

Kevin felt uncertain about the new purchase and explained he had difficulty understanding new technology. Green Telco insisted he needed a new phone and assured him that the Orion Plus would be easy to use. Kevin eventually agreed.

For two months, Kevin tried to use the Orion Plus but could not operate it. Kevin felt he had been misled and pressured by Green Telco to get the new phone. After many calls Green Telco agreed to replace the Orion Plus with a Pramin 5.

The new phone did not arrive. Kevin called Green Telco several times to find out what was going on. Green Telco said there were no system notes about replacing his phone with the Pramin 5. Kevin tried to explain the situation but Green Telco said that if Kevin wanted to stop his Orion Plus plan and get a new phone, he would need to pay the termination fee.

Kevin spoke to Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman Enquiry Officer Li\*. Kevin was upset and had trouble explaining the problem. He said he felt like he had been bullied.

Li worked with Kevin to summarise the complaint and then sent it to Green Telco's senior resolution department. Three weeks later, Kevin and Green Telco resolved the complaint. Kevin sent back the Orion Plus and Green Telco sent Kevin a Pramin 5 phone on a new plan.

\*Names of individuals, organisations, and companies have been changed.

## An Liu\*

### Excess data charges

An Liu\* runs a construction business in Adelaide which has mobile services with Pink Telco\*.

An received a bill with \$3,200 in excess data charges. She didn't believe she had actually exceeded her data limit, and had not received any SMS warnings about her data usage.

An thought that under her agreement with Pink Telco, her mobile would be barred if data charges reached \$200, and she raised this issue with Pink Telco. Incorrect mobile data charges also appeared on An's next bill.

Pink Telco kept telling An the charges were valid and she would have to pay the bill to avoid her services being restricted.

An spoke to Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman Enquiry Officer, Alex\*, about her complaint. Alex explained that many providers allow customers to purchase data packages when they are near the data limit and that industry codes require Pink Telco to send data usage notifications to help avoid bill shock.

Alex summarised An's interactions with Pink Telco and sent a written record of An's complaint to Pink Telco's internal complaints department, giving Pink Telco ten days to resolve the complaint. On the tenth day, Pink Telco agreed that the data charges were billed incorrectly and waived the excess charges.

\*Names of individuals, organisations, and companies have been changed.

# Lynn Bowles\*

## Billing complaint

Lynn is 78 years old, lives alone and has very little knowledge of technology.

Lynn noticed that her name was not spelt correctly on her home phone bill. She went into her local Violet Telco\* store to have this fixed. In store, Violet Telco convinced Lynn to sign up for a new NBN package while she was there. Lynn took the paperwork home and became worried that she did not understand what she had agreed to.

The next day, Lynn spoke to her friend, Barbara\*. Barbara looked at the paperwork and explained to Lynn the details of the NBN package and what it cost. Lynn became upset as she did not want this package. She visited the Violet Telco store the next day to discuss the issue.

Violet Telco said that a cooling off period did not apply to the agreement with Lynn and she had to go ahead with the contract.

That evening, Barbara and Lynn submitted a complaint form on the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's website. Taylor\*, a Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman Enquiry Officer, received the complaint and wrote a referral letter to Violet Telco's complaints team the same day.

One month later, Barbara emailed the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman and said Violet Telco had cancelled Lynn's NBN package without cost and put her on a more suitable plan.

\*Names of individuals, organisations, and companies have been changed.



## Chi Phan\*

### Debt collection

Chi renewed his mobile contract with Navy Telco\*. Initially, Chi had no trouble paying his bills, but seven months into the contract he was hospitalised for severe mental health issues. Chi knew his bills were piling up but did not have the capacity to communicate with Navy Telco to deal with it.

A few months later, Chi was contacted by three debt collection agencies about an outstanding debt with Navy Telco for \$1,200. Chi used an advocate to discuss his circumstances with Navy Telco. About a month later, Chi was told the debt had been waived.

Two years later, a new debt collection agency started emailing Chi about the \$1,200 Navy Telco debt. Chi called Navy Telco several times about this over a two week period. Navy Telco maintained that the debt was valid. Chi was confused and worried about his credit record.

A few days later, Chi worked with a local Financial Counsellor, who called the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman and spoke with Charlie\*, an Enquiry Officer.

Charlie created a chronology of events and summarised Chi's complaint. Charlie explained to Chi that Navy Telco should not take any further action that could affect his credit record while the complaint is with the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman.

Charlie sent Chi's complaint with the information he had collated to Navy Telco's internal complaints team. A week later, Navy Telco waived the \$1,200 debt.

\*Names of individuals, organisations, and companies have been changed.





— **Complaints**



# How complaints are recorded

From 1 July 2017, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman changed the categorisation of service types and issues about complaints received from residential consumers and small businesses.

The new categorisation has improved data collection, provided opportunities for better analysis of complaints, and improved reporting to the telecommunications industry, government, consumer groups, and the public.

## SERVICE TYPES

Depending on the services involved, a complaint is recorded in one of five service types. These are:

1. Landline phone service
2. Mobile phone service
3. Internet service
4. Multiple services
5. Property

The multiple services category was introduced to record a complaint which involves more than one type of service. For example, a complaint about a delay connecting both a landline and internet service.

Property was introduced to record complaints from a land owner or occupier about damage to a property, or a telecommunications carrier wanting access to inspect land or to install or maintain infrastructure.

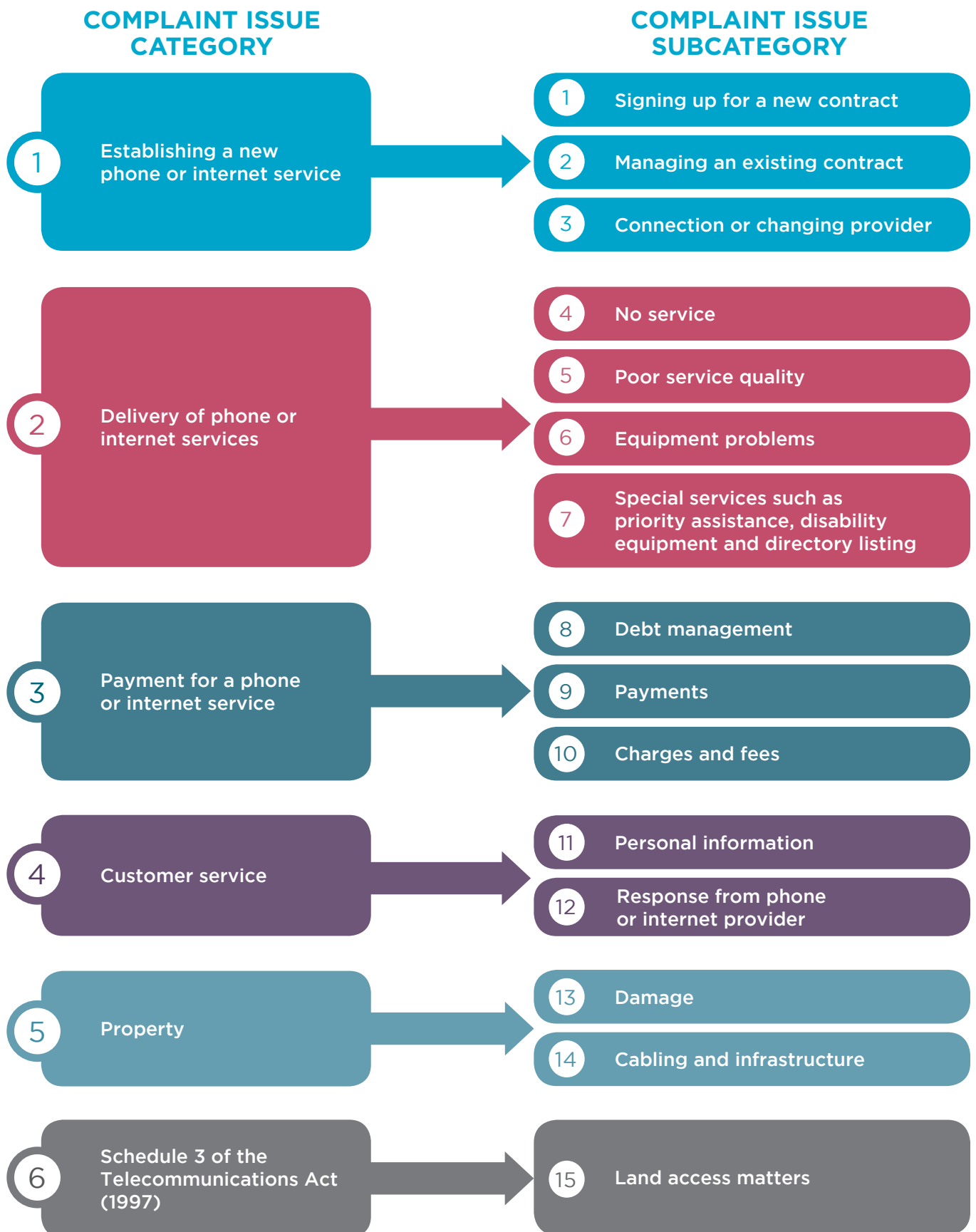
## RECORDING COMPLAINT ISSUES

Complaints are recorded based on six broad categories that follow the lifecycle of a residential consumer or small businesses' relationship with their phone or internet provider. These categories are:

1. Establishing a phone or internet service
2. Delivery of phone or internet services
3. Payment for a phone or internet service
4. Customer service
5. Property damage, cabling and infrastructure
6. Schedule 3 of the *Telecommunications Act (1997)* - land access matters







# Complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman

Complaints about landline phone, mobile phone and internet services all increased in 2017/18.

## 167,831

total complaints received in 2017/18.<sup>1</sup>

## 6.2%

increase in complaints

## 146,958

complaints from residential consumers, 87.6% of all complaints

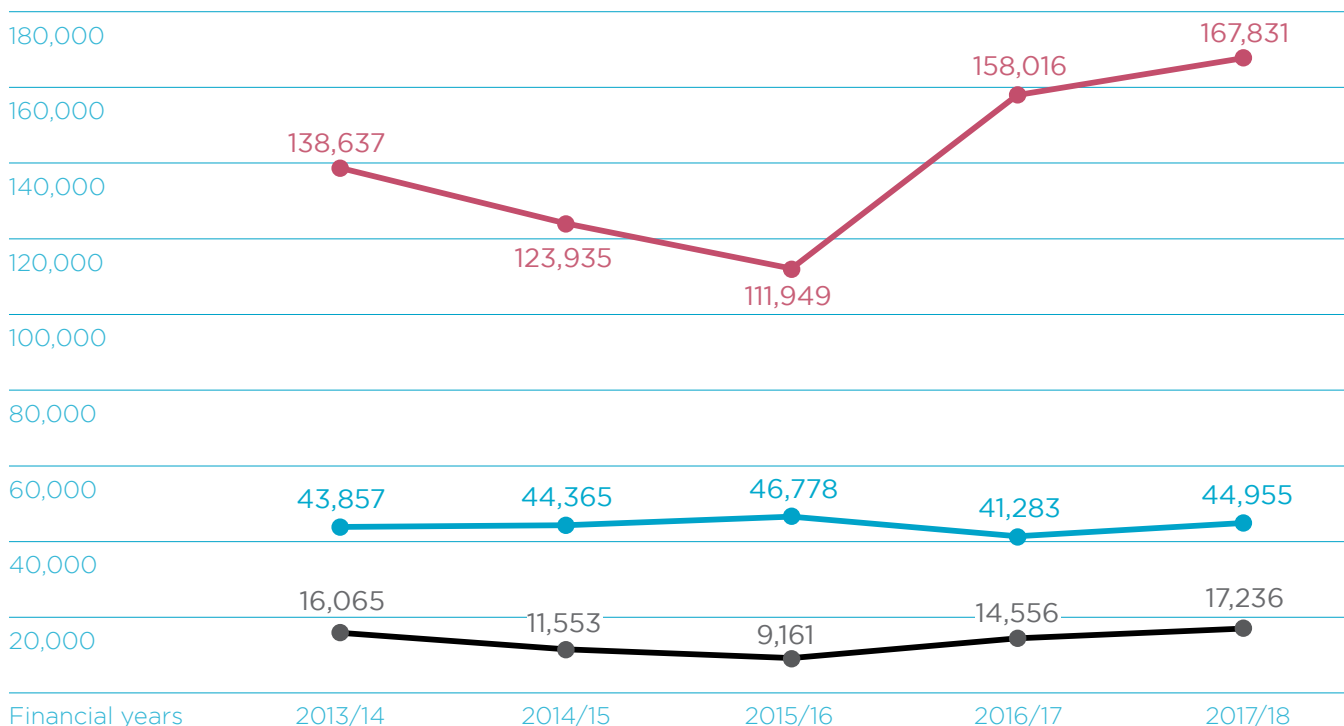
## 20,433

complaints from small businesses, 12.2% of all complaints

### COMPLAINT NUMBERS

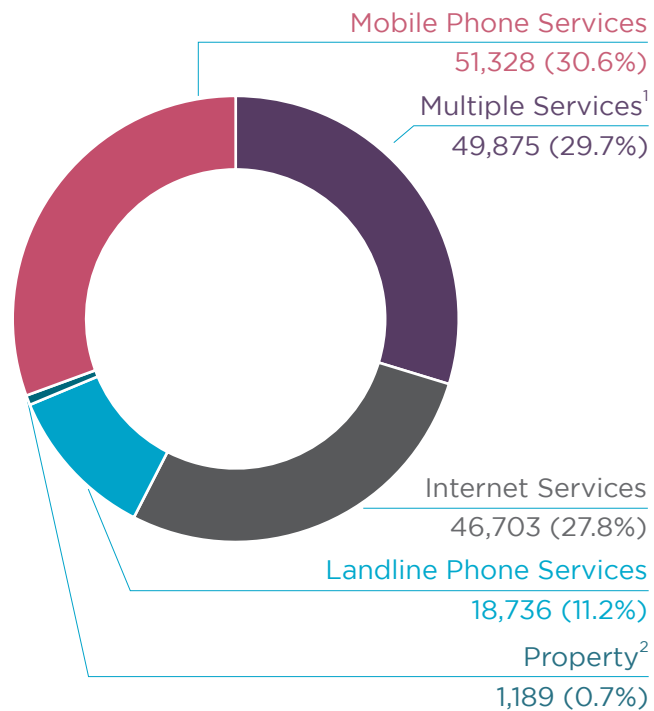
Complaints, enquiries  
and conciliations

● Enquiries  
● Complaints  
● Conciliations



1. Complaints that have been cancelled within the financial year are not included in this report.

## WHAT SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT - 2017/18



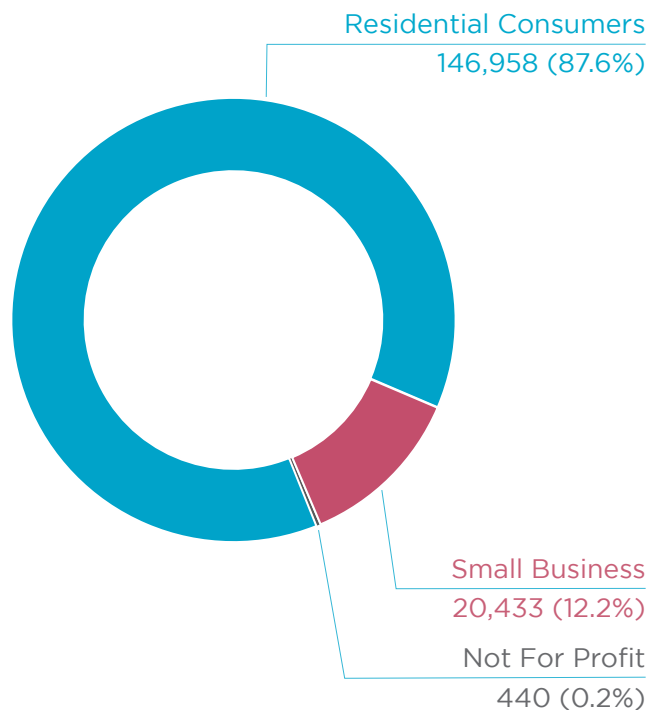
## WHAT SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT BY QUARTER - 2017/18

Complaints



1. A complaint which relates to more than one service.  
2. A complaint involving access or damage to property.

### WHO COMPLAINED TO THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OMBUDSMAN



### TOP COMPLAINT ISSUES

Complaint issue category	Issue <sup>2</sup>	% complaints with issue <sup>1</sup>
1. Establishing a service	Delay establishing a service	12.8%
	Misleading conduct making a contract	5.3%
	Variation to contract by provider	2.4%
2. Service delivery	No service	12.5%
	Intermittent service/drop outs	10.1%
	Slow data speed	8.4%
3. Payment for a service	Service and equipment fees	25.5%
	Termination fee	5.7%
	Excess data charges	4.8%
4. Customer service	No or delayed action	34.1%
	Missed appointment	3.2%
	Resolution agreed but not met	2.3%
5. Property	Damage by provider	0.3%
	Location of equipment	0.3%
	Hazardous, non-compliant or temporary infrastructure	0.2%

1. Complaints may include more than one issue.

2. Top 3 issues in each complaint issue category.



# Establishing a Connection, Changing Provider and Service Quality

## 48%

of complaints had a connection, changing provider or service quality issue<sup>1</sup>

## 25,047

complaints about a connection or changing provider - this includes complaints about delays establishing a connection, unauthorised transfers, and problems with telephone numbers.

## 57,289

complaints about service quality<sup>2</sup> - this includes complaints about lack of service, intermittent service or drop outs, slow data speed, and poor mobile phone coverage.

The consumer experience of an ongoing service, or changing their service, can be examined using the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman issue keywords, which are used for recording complaints.

When complaints include issues about connections or service quality, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman identifies the network (NBN, other fixed or mobile) over which the service is delivered.

The fact that the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman receives a complaint does not necessarily mean a provider or the network itself is at fault. It means that a complaint will begin the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman complaint resolution process.

The relative proportion of complaints about services over the three network types below does not necessarily reflect market share.

Network	Complaints about a connection or changing provider	% of all connection and changing provider complaints
Services delivered over the National Broadband Network	14,589	58.2%
Services delivered over other networks <sup>3</sup>	7,591	30.3%
Services delivered over mobile networks <sup>4</sup>	2,867	11.4%

1. Other issues include payment for a phone or internet service, customer service complaints and property complaints, such as access to land to install or maintain infrastructure. Complaints can have more than one issue. 1,843 complaints had a connection and service quality issue and are represented in both figures.

2. This annual report reflects the changed recording of issues introduced from 1 July 2017. These changes mean it is not possible to compare complaint issues with previous reports.

3. Other networks include fixed line and wireless networks owned by carriers other than nbn co.

4. Mobile complaints include all complaints about mobile services, except when they are combined with complaints about another service.

	Complaints about service quality	% of all complaints about service quality
Services delivered over the National Broadband Network	27,008	47.1%
Services delivered over other networks <sup>3</sup>	23,777	41.5%
Services delivered over mobile networks <sup>4</sup>	6,504	11.4%

Residential consumers' and small businesses' experience connecting to or receiving a service delivered over the National Broadband Network is influenced by a range of factors. This can include the actions of the internet service provider, wholesalers, and the company undertaking the rollout, nbn co, and also factors within consumers' premises.

Apart from complaints in the Property service category, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman registers complaints against the party with whom the consumer has the contractual relationship, which is generally the retail service provider.

As an increasing number of services are delivered over the National Broadband Network, the number of complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman about services delivered over that network as a proportion of all internet and landline complaints will continue to increase. Once the rollout is completed, delivery of internet and landline services over the National Broadband Network will become the norm.

During 2017/18, the rollout of the National Broadband Network passed the halfway mark, with 4,035,870 premises activated on the network at the end of June 2018.

	Connection or changing provider complaints about services delivered over the NBN <sup>5</sup>	Premises added to the network <sup>6</sup>	Complaints per thousand premises added to the network
July - Dec 2017	8,711	942,804	9.2
Jan - June 2018	5,878	649,933	9.0

	Service quality complaints about services delivered over the NBN <sup>5</sup>	Total premises on the network <sup>6</sup>	Complaints per thousand premises on the network
July - Dec 2017	14,000	3,385,937	4.1
Jan - June 2018	13,008	4,035,870	3.2

3. Other networks include fixed line and wireless networks owned by carriers other than nbn co.

4. Mobile complaints include all complaints about mobile services, except when they are combined with complaints about another service.

5. Complaints that have been cancelled within the financial year are not included in this report. If a complaint has been reassigned from NBN to another network within the financial year, it will no longer appear in NBN statistics. As a result, the first half numbers are slightly lower than those published in the 6 monthly report.

6. The "Premises added to the Network" and "Total Premises on the Network" data was sourced from nbn co 'Weekly Progress Report' dated 20.09.2018 and published on nbnco.com.au

## Case Outcomes

When the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman closes a conciliation or investigation, outcomes are recorded. These can have a financial or non-financial remedy for the residential consumer or small business.

18,088 cases were closed in 2017/18, compared to 16,482 in 2016/17. This represented a 9.7% increase in closed conciliations or investigations on the previous year.

The most common financial outcome for consumers in 2017/18 was a debt or fee reduction or waiver, followed by a billing adjustment.

The median value in financial outcomes was \$429.60, and the most common non-financial outcome for residential consumers or small businesses was an explanation or assistance, followed by cancellation or change to a contract, service or plan.

While the median financial outcome is relatively modest, often knowing the bill was right or the explanation provided by the provider was correct can provide significant value to both parties.

### DISTRIBUTION OF CONCILIATION AND INVESTIGATION CASE OUTCOMES 2017/18

24.8% of cases had only a financial outcome

23.1% of cases had only a non-financial outcome

2.2% had no compensation or non-financial outcome

3.7% were unknown

46.1% of cases had both a financial and non-financial outcome



## Systemic Issues

80

possible systemic issues investigated

52

possible systemic issues were notified to providers

30

systemic issues resulted in the provider agreeing to or making changes to its system, process or practice

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's systemic investigation power allows the organisation to identify issues with the telecommunications industry's regular systems, processes or practices and issues that may cause detriment to residential consumers and small businesses. By investigating issues, raising awareness and working with telecommunications providers to make recommended changes, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman drives improvements in the delivery of telecommunications services and better outcomes for consumers and the telecommunications industry.

In financial year 2017/18 the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman dealt with 212,786 enquiries and complaints from residential consumers and small businesses. As a high volume complaint resolution service, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman is well placed to identify and report on systemic issues residential consumers and small businesses face with their phone and internet services.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman is committed to providing reporting on systemic insights to improve industry practices and reduce consumer complaints. Systemic Insight reports are intended to raise awareness of industry wide issues and publish recommendations for action.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman considered and investigated 80 possible systemic issues. It notified providers about 52 possible systemic issues, and 30 systemic matters resulted in the provider agreeing to or making changes to its system, process or practice.

19 different providers implemented changes to address the systemic issue raised by the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman. The types of changes implemented by providers included:

- improving procedures in the areas of network coverage troubleshooting, credit management and account holder verification
- correcting a customer service hotline error which had potential privacy consequences
- monitoring and providing staff training on misleading sales conduct, and
- updating standard form consumer contracts to make terms fairer.

This example illustrates how the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman undertakes industry-wide systemic issues investigations. After noticing a pattern of telephone number loss during National Broadband Network migration, we wrote to 23 retail NBN service providers to better understand the circumstances behind the complaints and what providers believe to be the underlying causes. The results of this survey allowed the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman to prepare a systemic insights paper with recommendations for retail service providers to reduce the incidence of number loss. The paper was published in July 2018.





## Teal Telco

### Mobile Coverage

At the end of 2017, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman Systemic Investigations team was alerted to a potential issue by customers of Teal Telco\*.

Analysis of Teal Telco's complaints revealed a significant number of consumers were told their mobile coverage issues would be resolved by upgrade works, however customers never saw any improvement on their service.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman was concerned Teal Telco agents were providing inaccurate or misleading information about works to improve coverage. The Systemic Investigation team raised these issues directly with Teal Telco and began addressing the concerns. This included auditing Teal Telco's coverage checker tool used by front line agents, undertaking quality assurance and improvements to front line agents' procedures.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman and Teal Telco also looked at reducing the number of mobile complaints Teal Telco received more generally. The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman provided complainant feedback on early termination fees for fixed term contracts when moving to premises. This focused on where Teal Telco no longer provided adequate mobile coverage. In response to this feedback, Teal Telco removed early termination fees in these circumstances, and allowed its Debt Collection team to offer more flexible payment arrangements for outstanding charges.

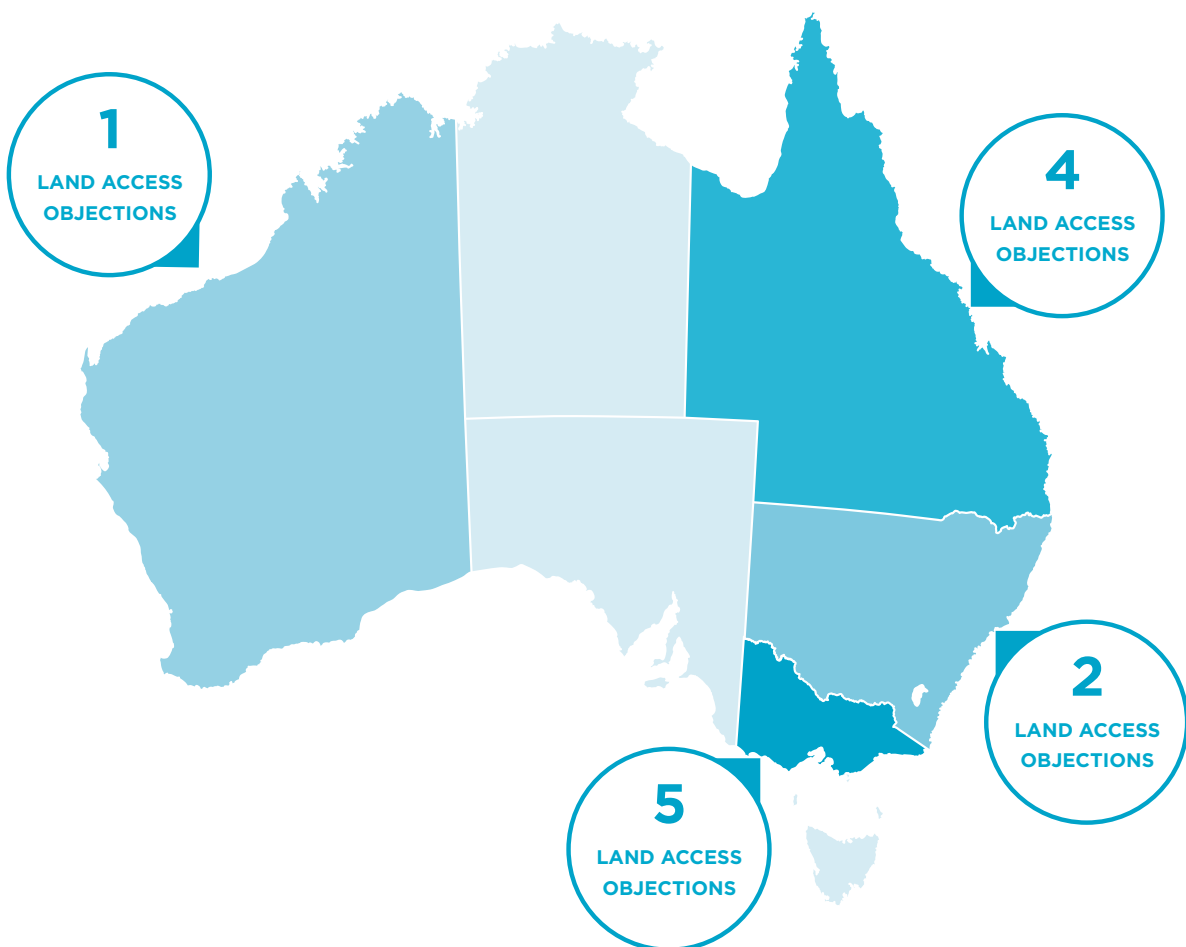
\*Names of individuals, organisations, and companies have been changed.

# Land Access Objections

*Under the Telecommunications Act 1997*, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman deals with objections from landowners or occupiers about the proposed inspection, maintenance or placement of “low impact facilities” such as antennas or cabling on their land.

Senior Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman staff with knowledge of the legislation work on these cases, and on cases about land damage by a carrier when installing or maintaining telecommunications equipment. The Ombudsman makes the decisions on land access objections.

This year the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman received 12 new land access objections compared to 16 the previous year. There were two objections in New South Wales, five in Victoria, four in Queensland, and one in Western Australia.



## Residential Consumer

146,957

total complaints received in 2017/18

5.9%

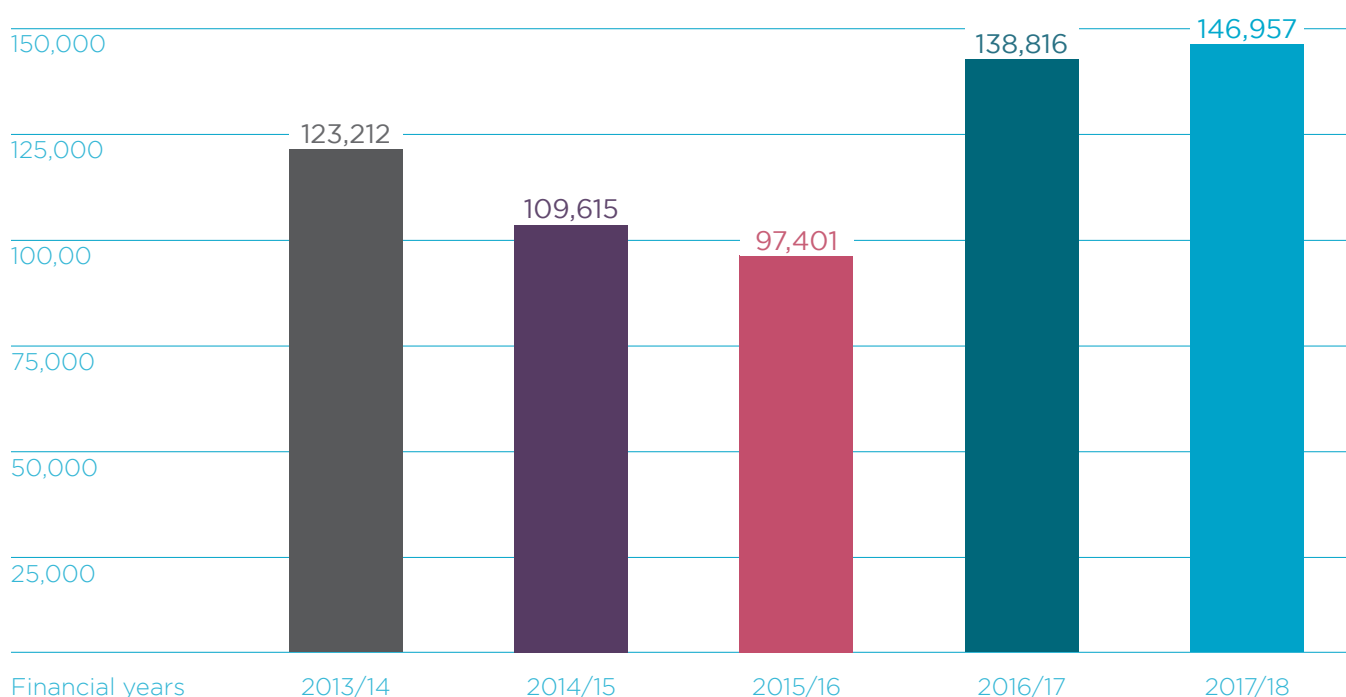
increase in complaints

87.6%

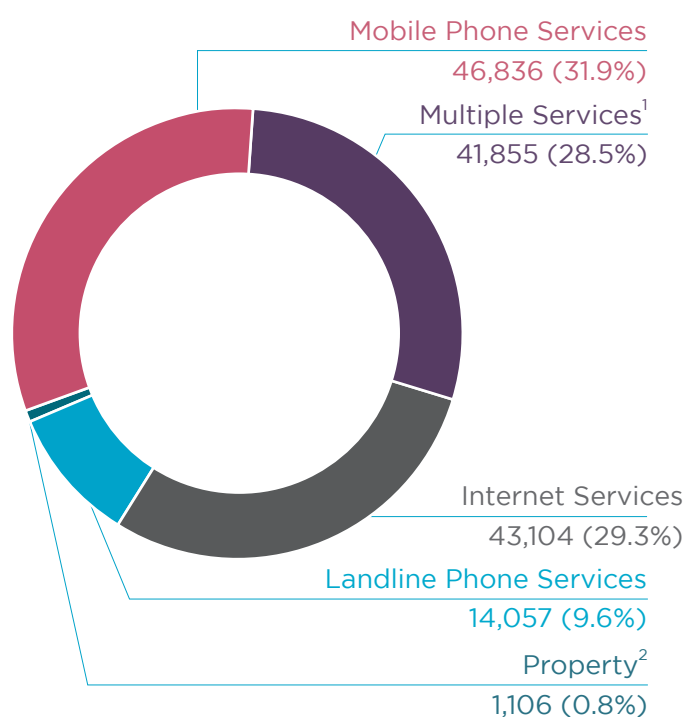
of total complaints

### COMPLAINT NUMBERS

Complaints



## WHAT SERVICES RESIDENTIAL CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT



## TOP COMPLAINT ISSUES FOR RESIDENTIAL CONSUMERS

Complaint Issue Category	Issue <sup>4</sup>	% complaints with issue <sup>3</sup>
1. Establishing a service	Delay establishing a service	12.4%
	Misleading conduct making a contract	5.3%
	Variation to contract by provider	2.5%
2. Service delivery	No service	12.0%
	Intermittent service/drop outs	10.2%
	Slow data speed	8.9%
3. Payment for a service	Service and equipment fees	25.5%
	Termination fee	5.8%
	Excess data charges	4.9%
4. Customer service	No or delayed action	33.8%
	Missed appointment	3.2%
	Resolution agreed but not met	2.4%
5. Property	Damage by provider	0.3%
	Location of equipment	0.3%
	Hazardous, non-compliant or temporary infrastructure	0.2%

1. A complaint which relates to more than one service.

2. A complaint involving access or damage to property

3. Complaints may include more than one issue.

4. Top 3 issues in each complaint issue category.



## Small Business

20,433

total complaints received in 2017/18

8.7%

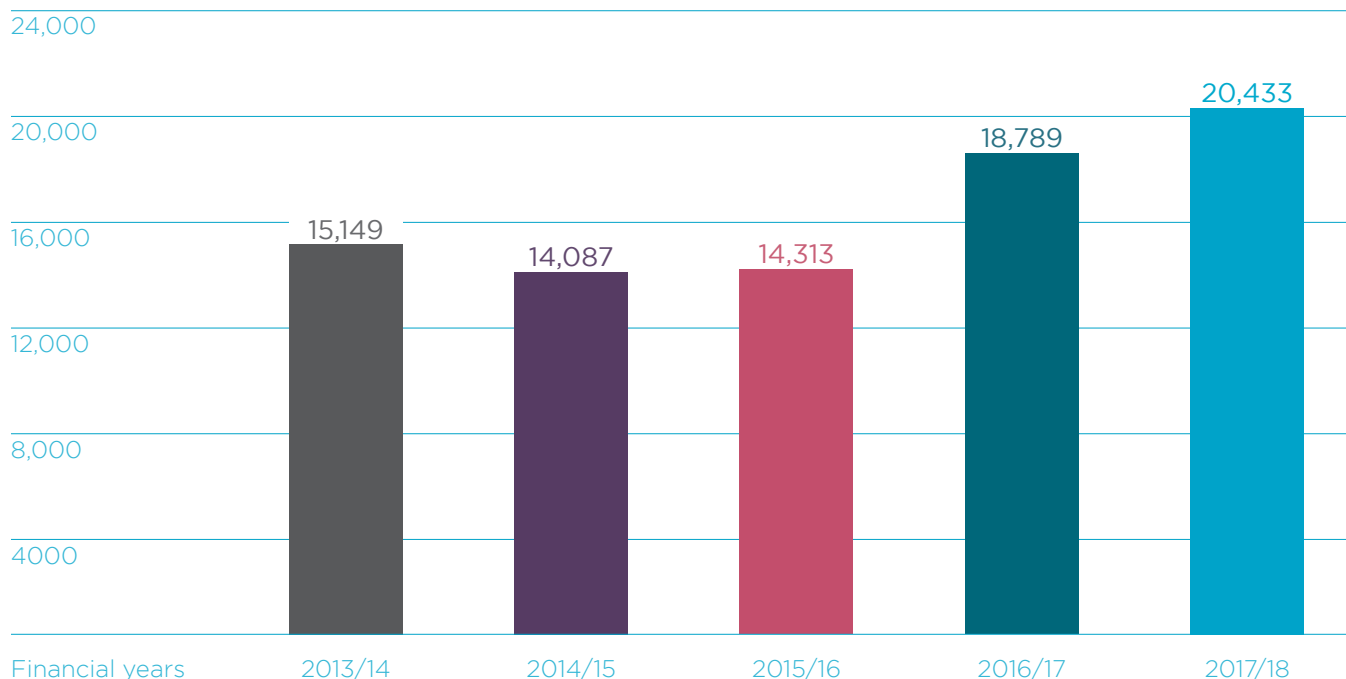
increase in complaints

12.2%

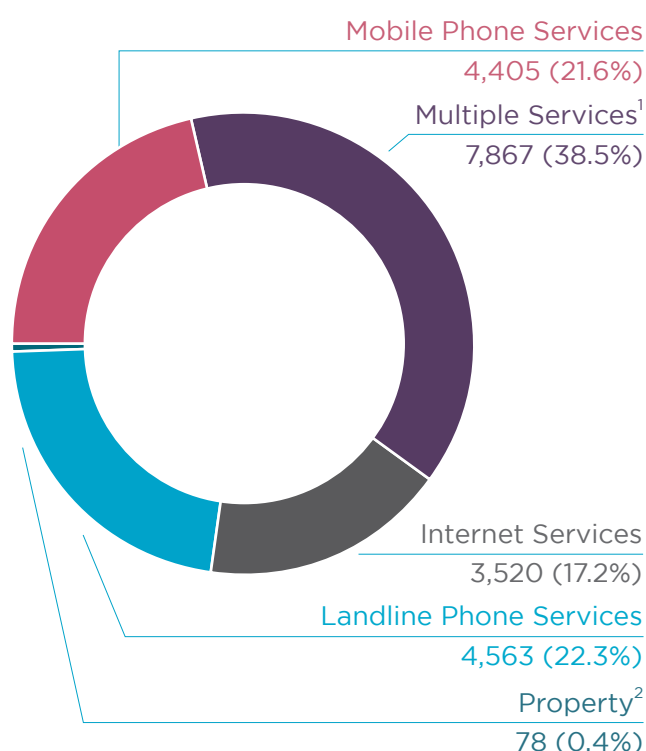
of total complaints

### COMPLAINT NUMBERS

Complaints



## WHAT SERVICES SMALL BUSINESSES COMPLAINED ABOUT



## TOP COMPLAINT ISSUES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Complaint Issue Category	Issue <sup>4</sup>	% complaints with issue <sup>3</sup>
1. Establishing a service	Delay establishing a service	15.5%
	Misleading conduct making a contract	5.2%
	Variation to contract by provider	3.2%
2. Service delivery	No service	16.2%
	Intermittent service/drop outs	9.3%
	Slow data speed	4.6%
3. Payment for a service	Service and equipment fees	25.2%
	Termination fee	5.2%
	Excess data charges	4.1%
4. Customer service	No or delayed action	35.9%
	Missed appointment	3.1%
	Resolution agreed but not met	2.3%
5. Property	Damage by provider	0.1%
	Hazardous, non-compliant or temporary infrastructure	0.1%
	Location of equipment	0.1%

1. A complaint which relates to more than one service.

2. A complaint involving access or damage to property

3. Complaints may include more than one issue.

4. Top 3 issues in each complaint issue category.

## Australian Capital Territory

2,466\*

total complaints received in the  
financial year 2017/18

-5.6%

decrease in complaints compared to  
financial year 2016/17

1.5%

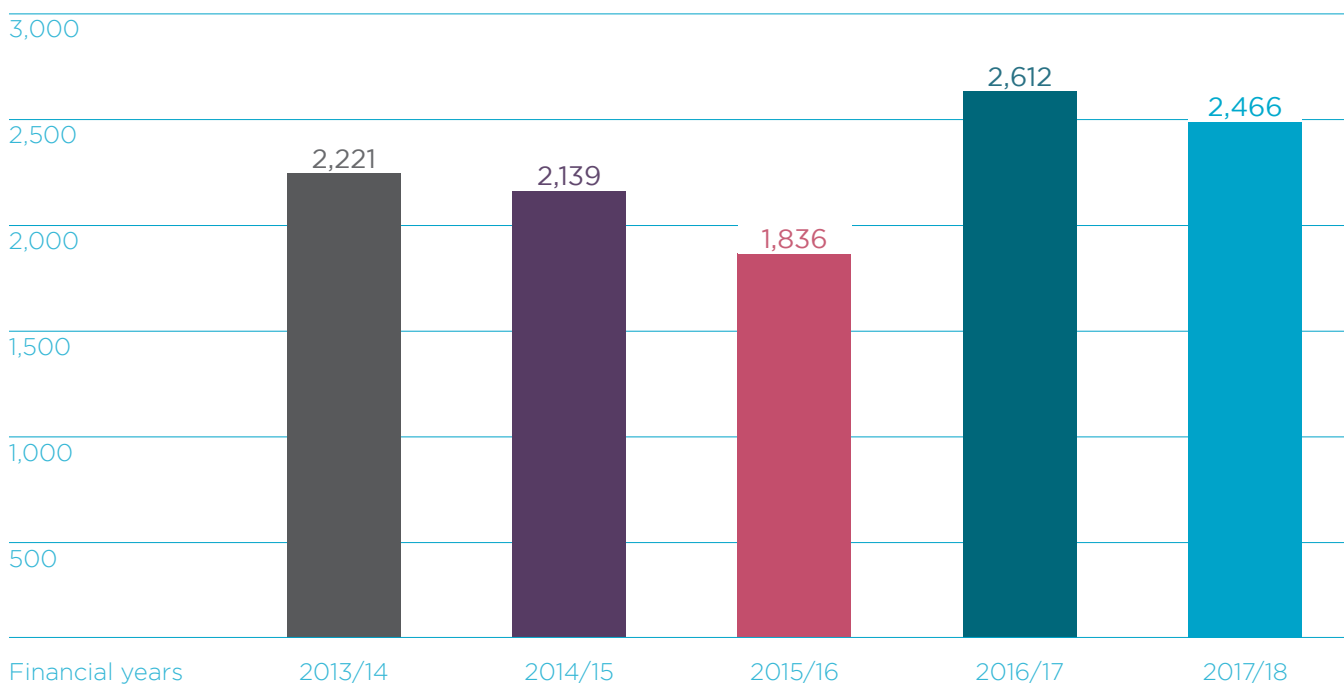
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complaint numbers



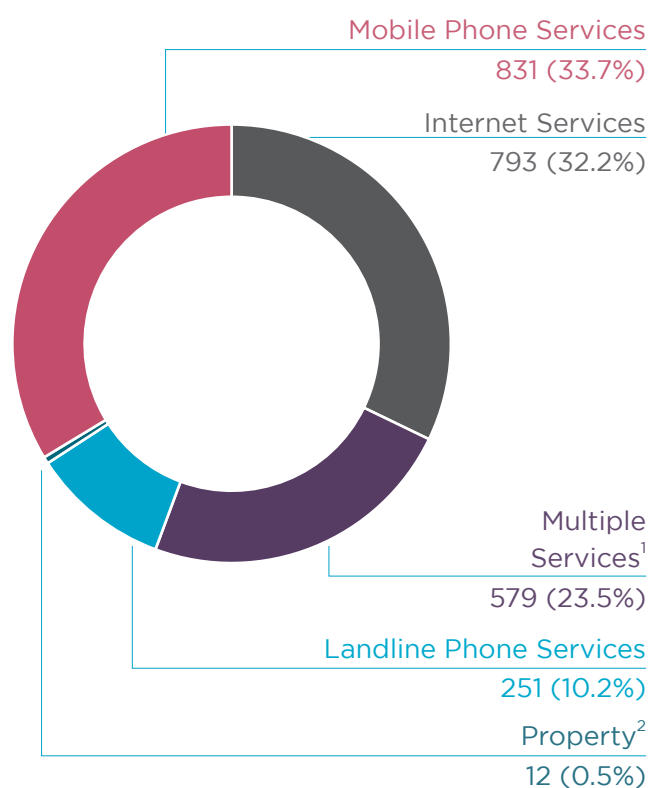
\*Total complaints that used a valid postcode.

### COMPLAINT NUMBERS

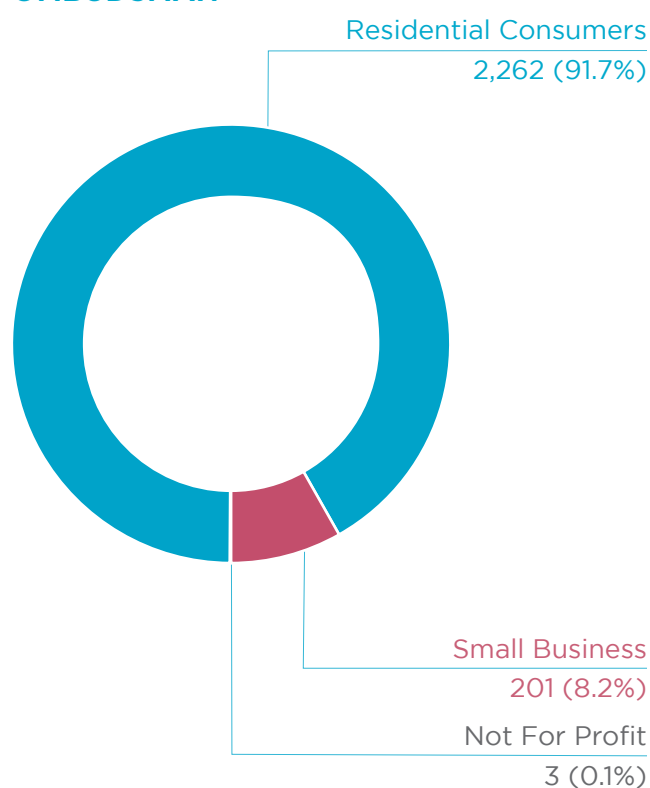
#### Complaints



### WHAT SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT



### WHO COMPLAINED TO THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OMBUDSMAN



1. A complaint which relates to more than one service.  
2. A complaint involving access or damage to property.

## New South Wales

52,989\*

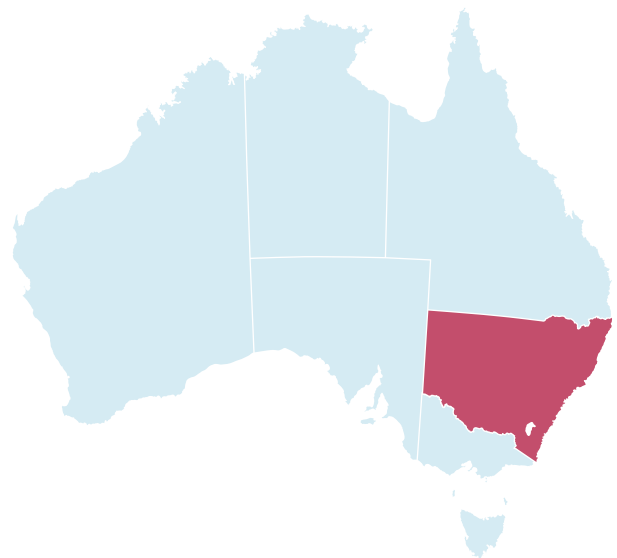
total complaints received in the  
financial year 2017/18

4.9%

increase in complaints compared to  
financial year 2016/17

31.6%

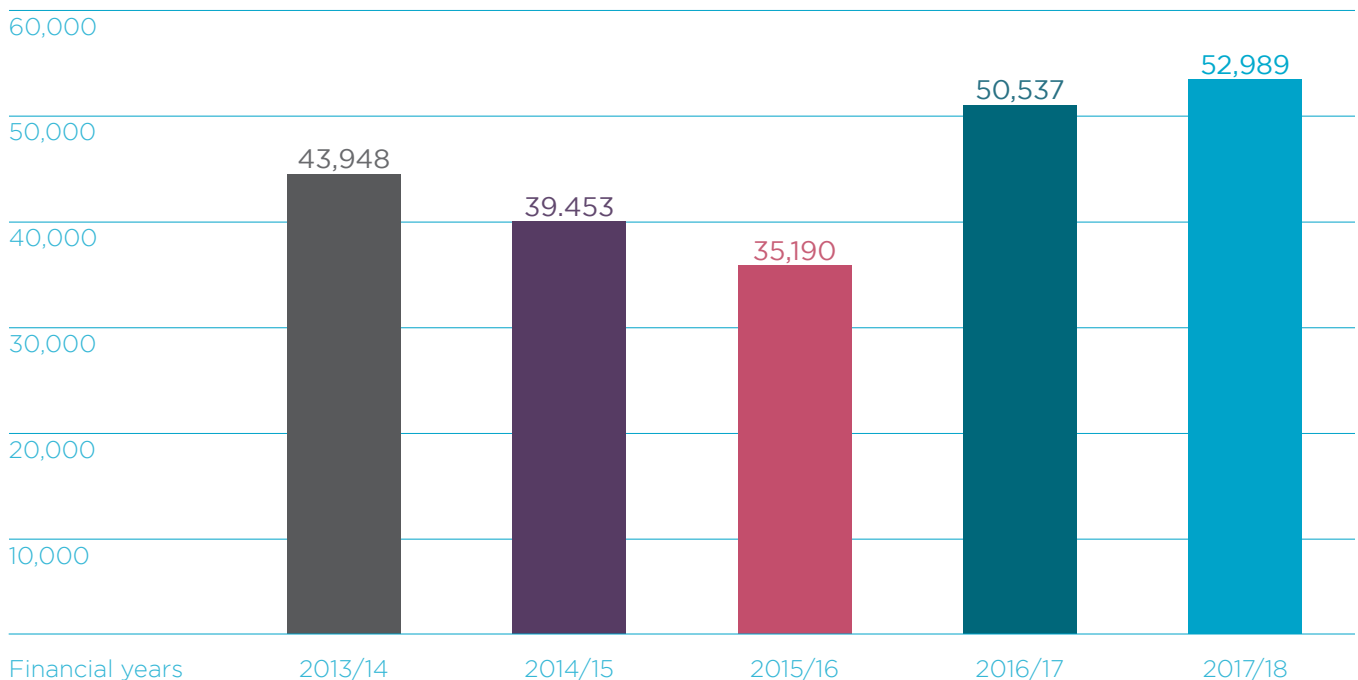
of national  
complaint numbers



\*Total complaints that used a valid postcode.

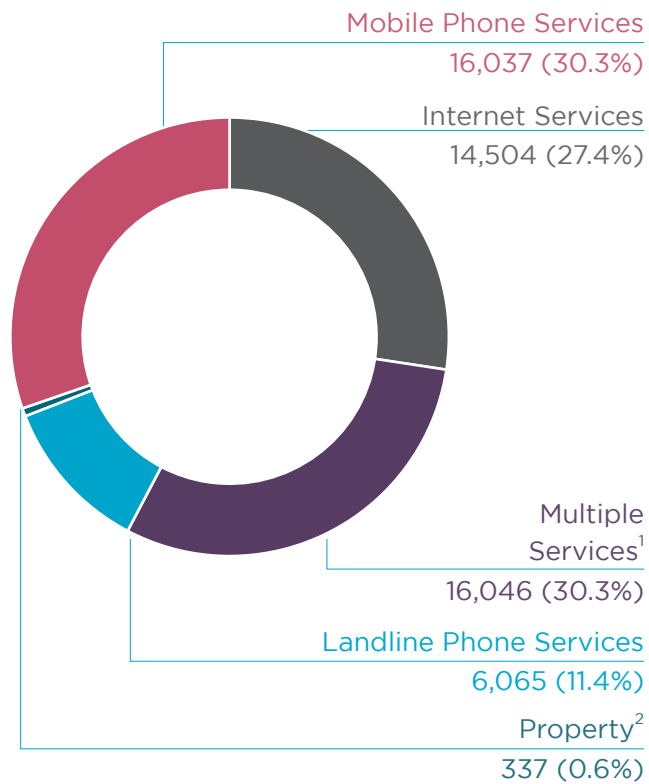
### COMPLAINT NUMBERS

#### Complaints

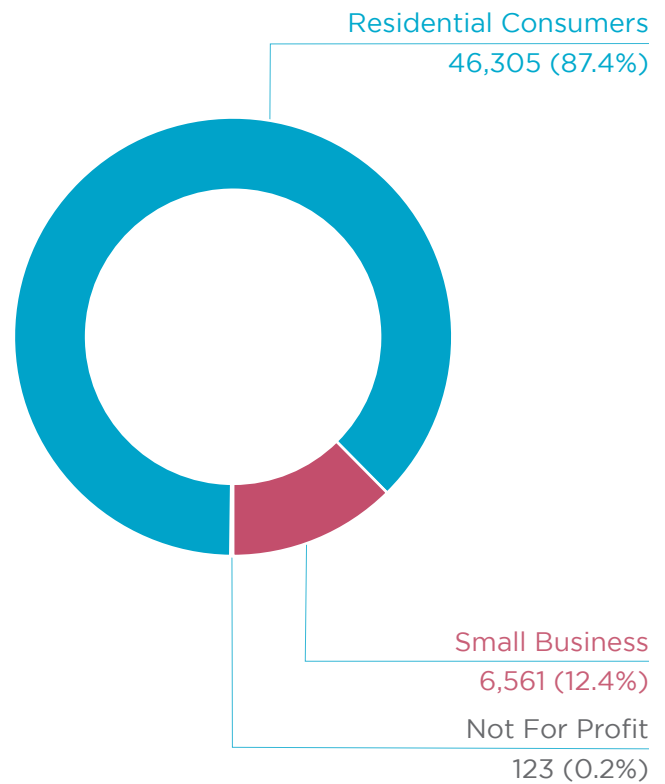




### WHAT SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT



### WHO COMPLAINED TO THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OMBUDSMAN



1. A complaint which relates to more than one service.  
 2. A complaint involving access or damage to property.

## Northern Territory

1,042\*

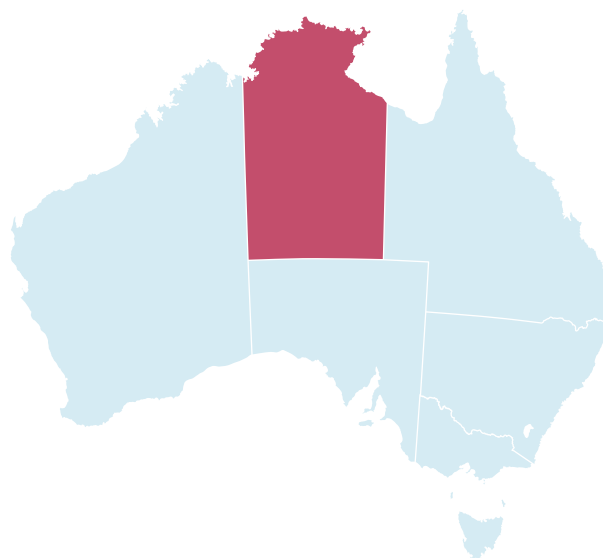
total complaints received in the  
financial year 2017/18

-0.1%

decrease in complaints compared to  
financial year 2016/17

0.6%

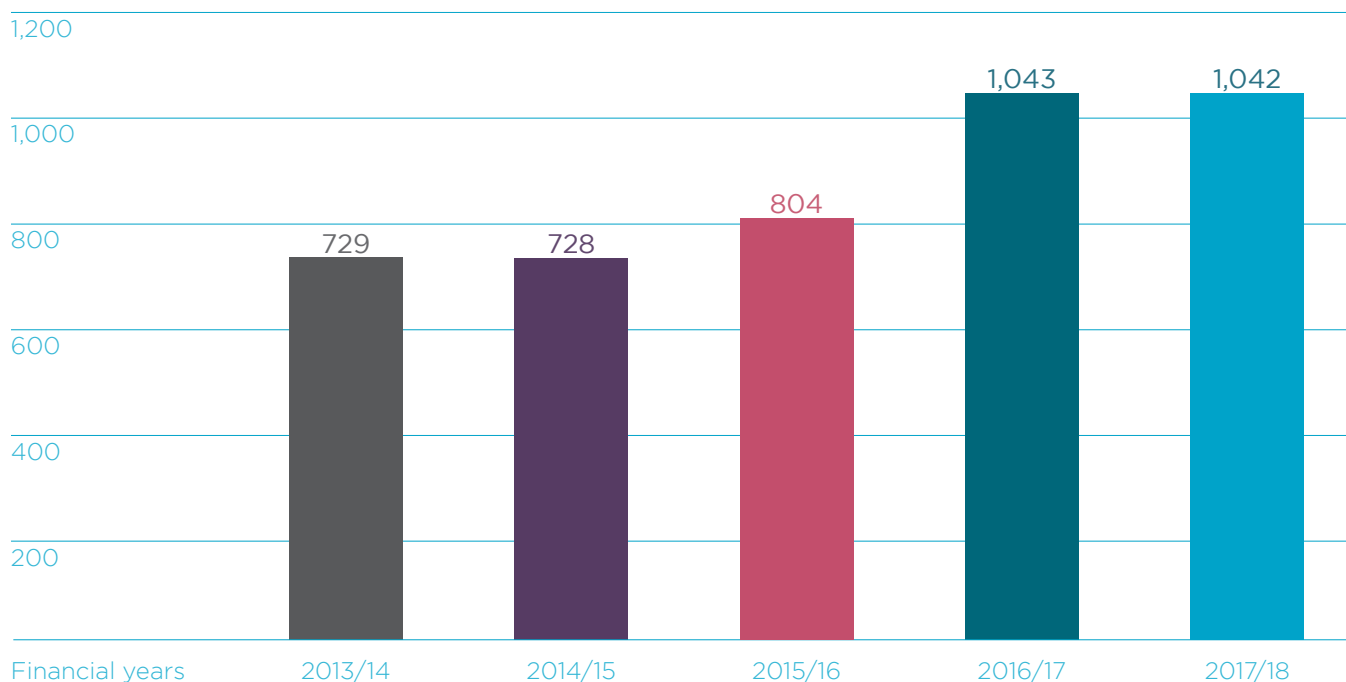
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complaint numbers



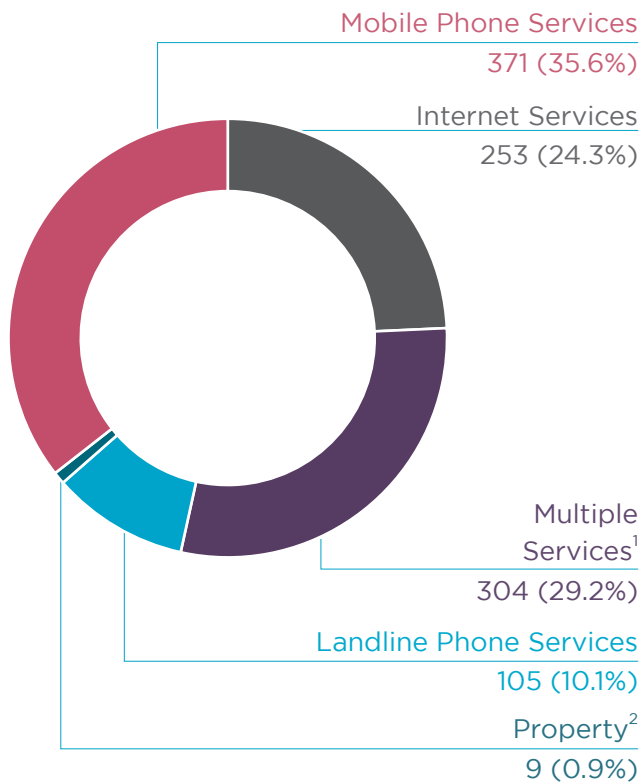
\*Total complaints that used a valid postcode.

## COMPLAINT NUMBERS

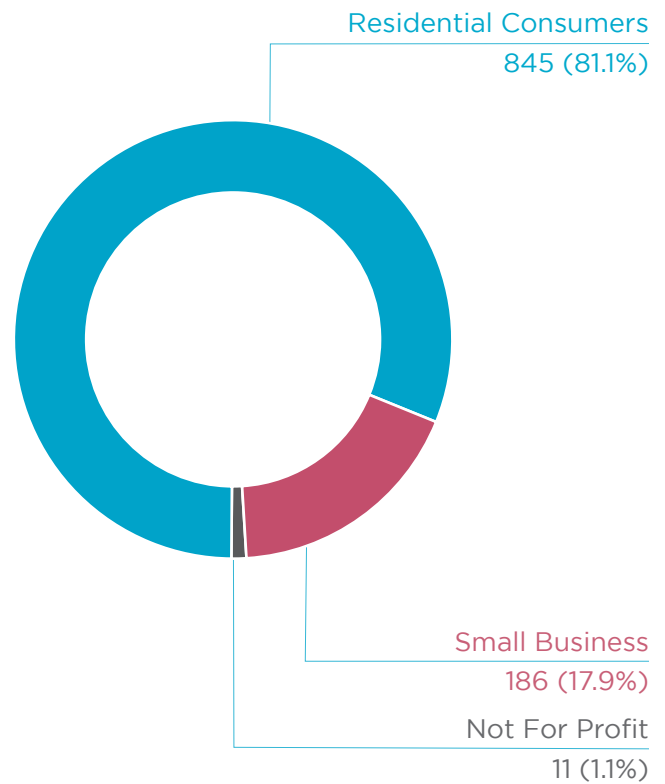
### Complaints



### WHAT SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT



### WHO COMPLAINED TO THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OMBUDSMAN



1. A complaint which relates to more than one service.  
 2. A complaint involving access or damage to property.

## Queensland

32,820\*

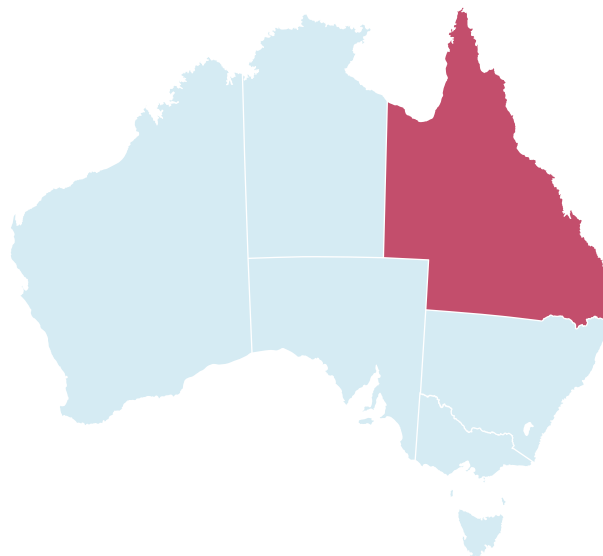
total complaints received in the financial year 2017/18

13.2%

increase in complaints compared to financial year 2016/17

19.6%

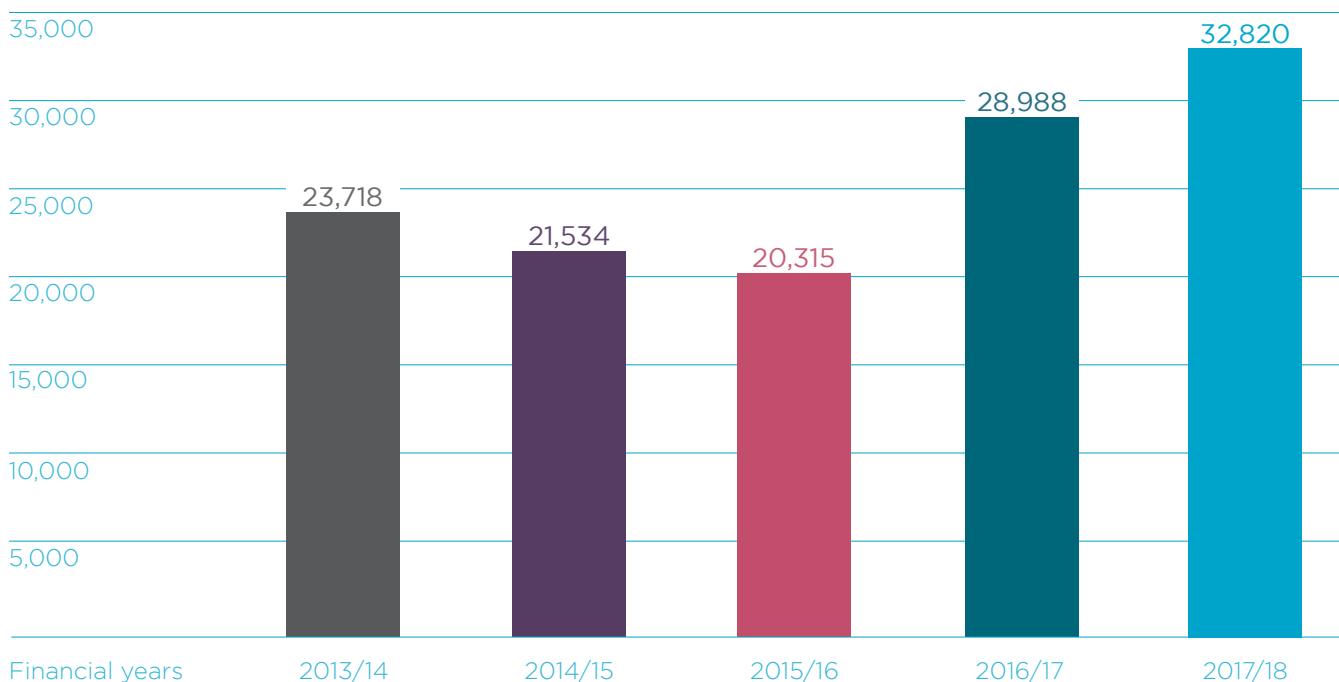
of national complaint numbers



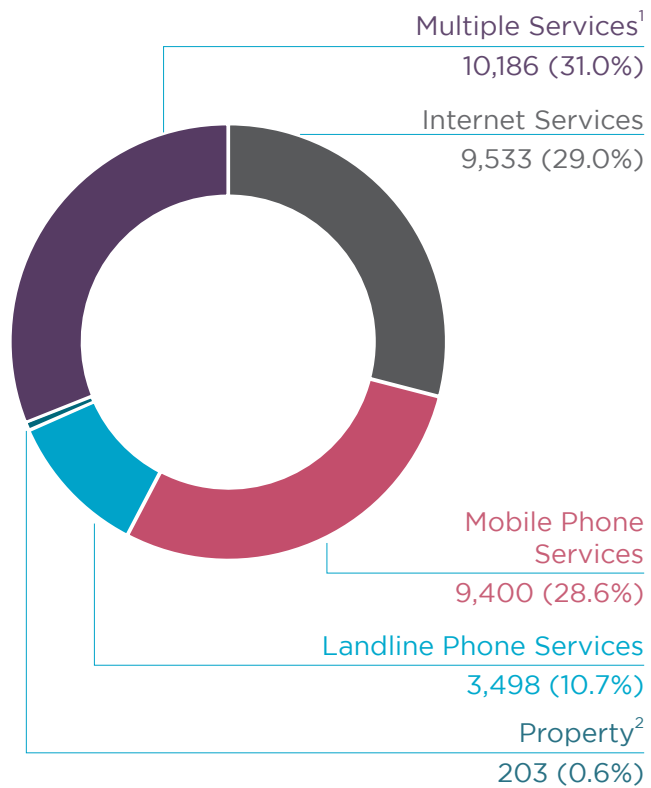
\*Total complaints that used a valid postcode.

### COMPLAINT NUMBERS

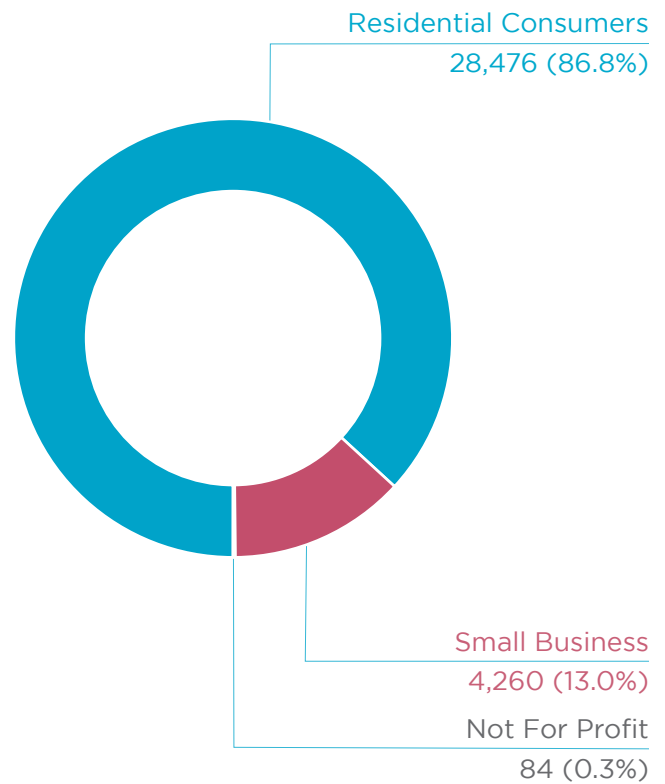
#### Complaints



### WHAT SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT



### WHO COMPLAINED TO THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OMBUDSMAN



1. A complaint which relates to more than one service.  
 2. A complaint involving access or damage to property.



## South Australia

12,667\*

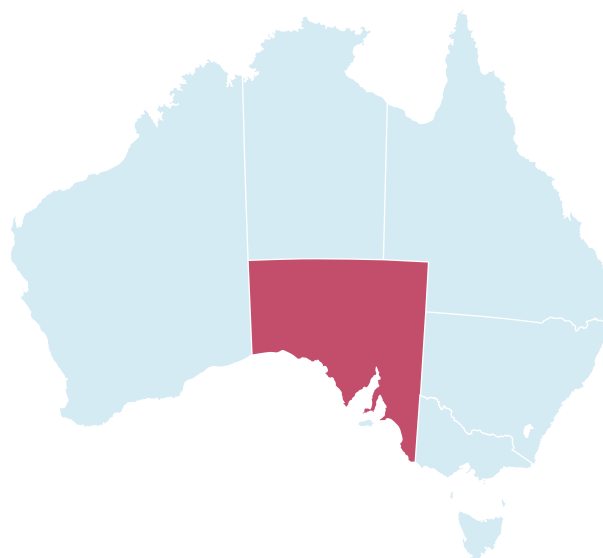
total complaints received in the financial year 2017/18

1.1%

increase in complaints compared to financial year 2016/17

7.5%

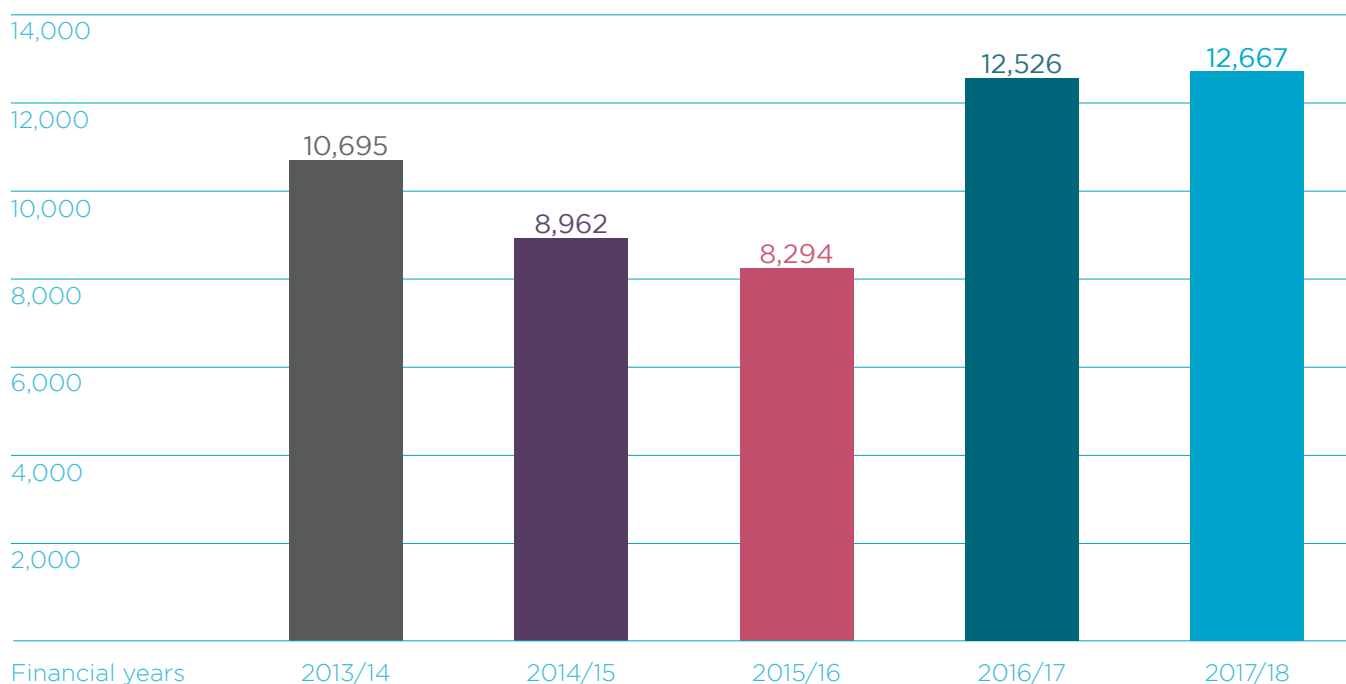
of national complaint numbers



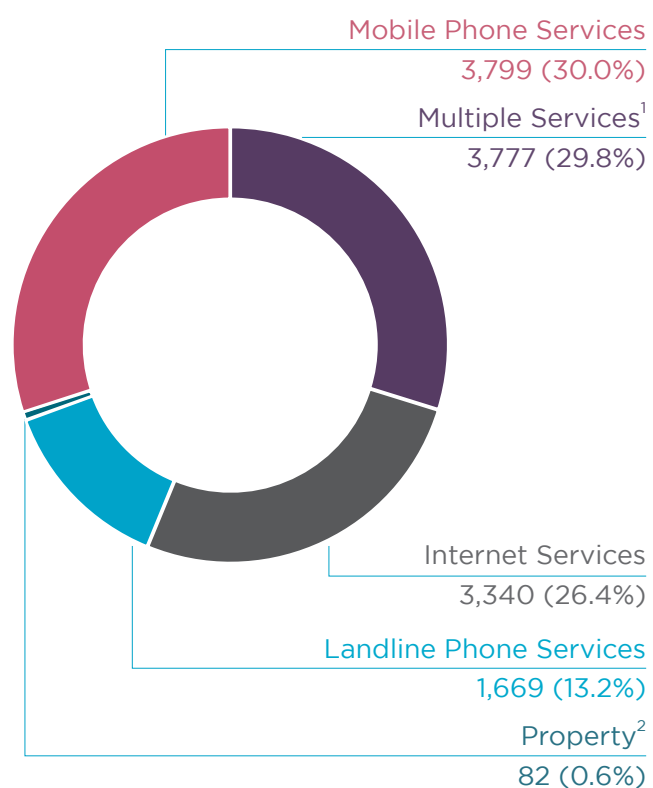
\*Total complaints that used a valid postcode.

### COMPLAINT NUMBERS

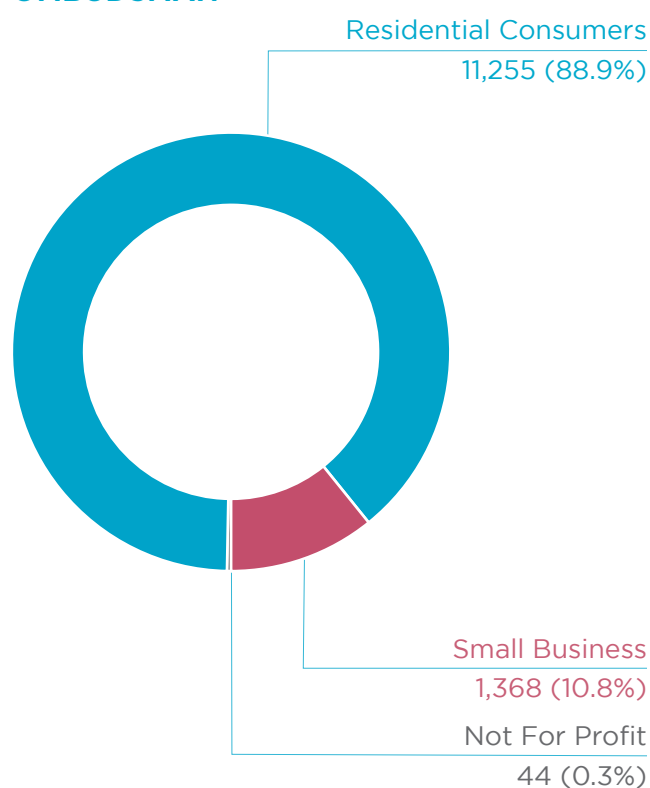
#### Complaints



### WHAT SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT



### WHO COMPLAINED TO THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OMBUDSMAN



1. A complaint which relates to more than one service.  
 2. A complaint involving access or damage to property.

## Tasmania

2,986\*

total complaints received in the financial year 2017/18

0.7%

increase in complaints compared to financial year 2016/17

1.8%

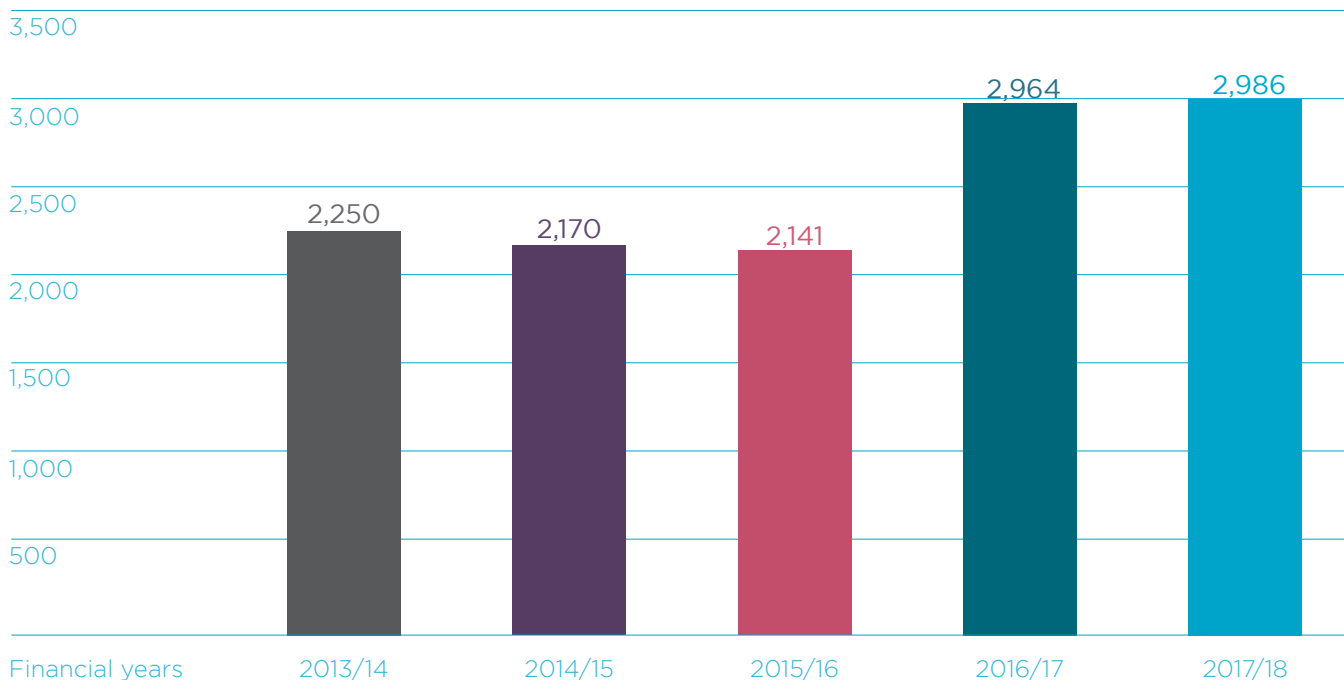
of national complaints



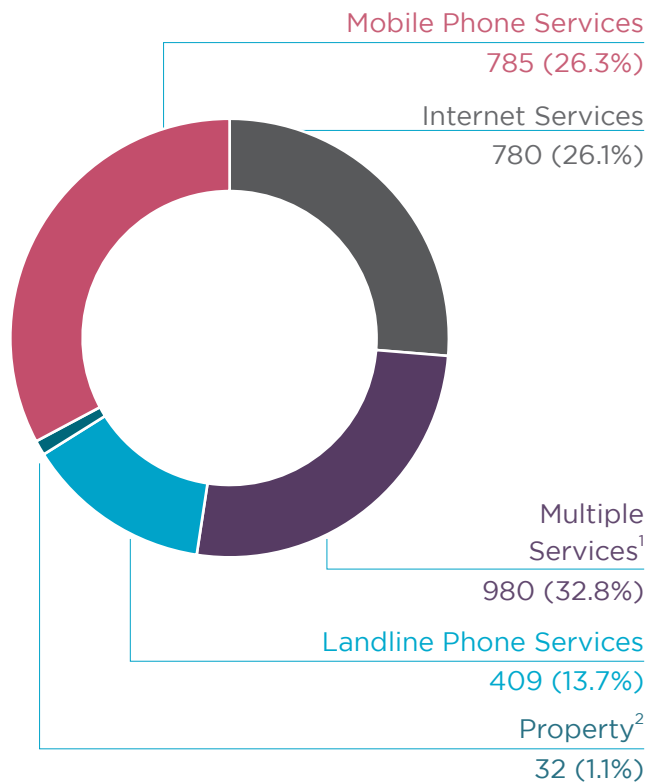
\*Total complaints that used a valid postcode.

### COMPLAINT NUMBERS

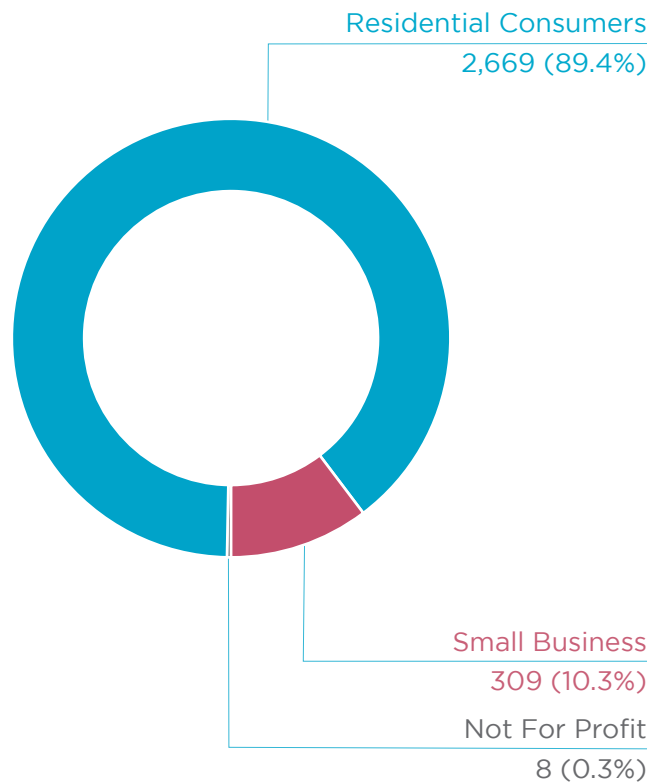
#### Complaints



### WHAT SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT



### WHO COMPLAINED TO THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OMBUDSMAN



1. A complaint which relates to more than one service.  
 2. A complaint involving access or damage to property.



## Victoria

47,620\*

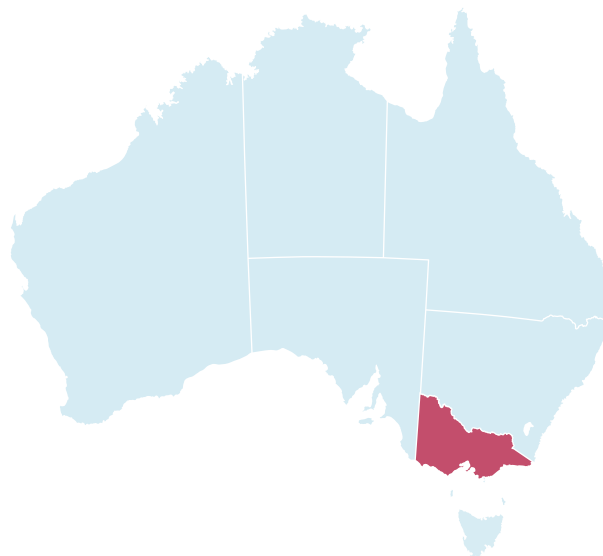
total complaints received from Victoria in 2017/18

9.3%

increase in complaints from 2016/17

28.4%

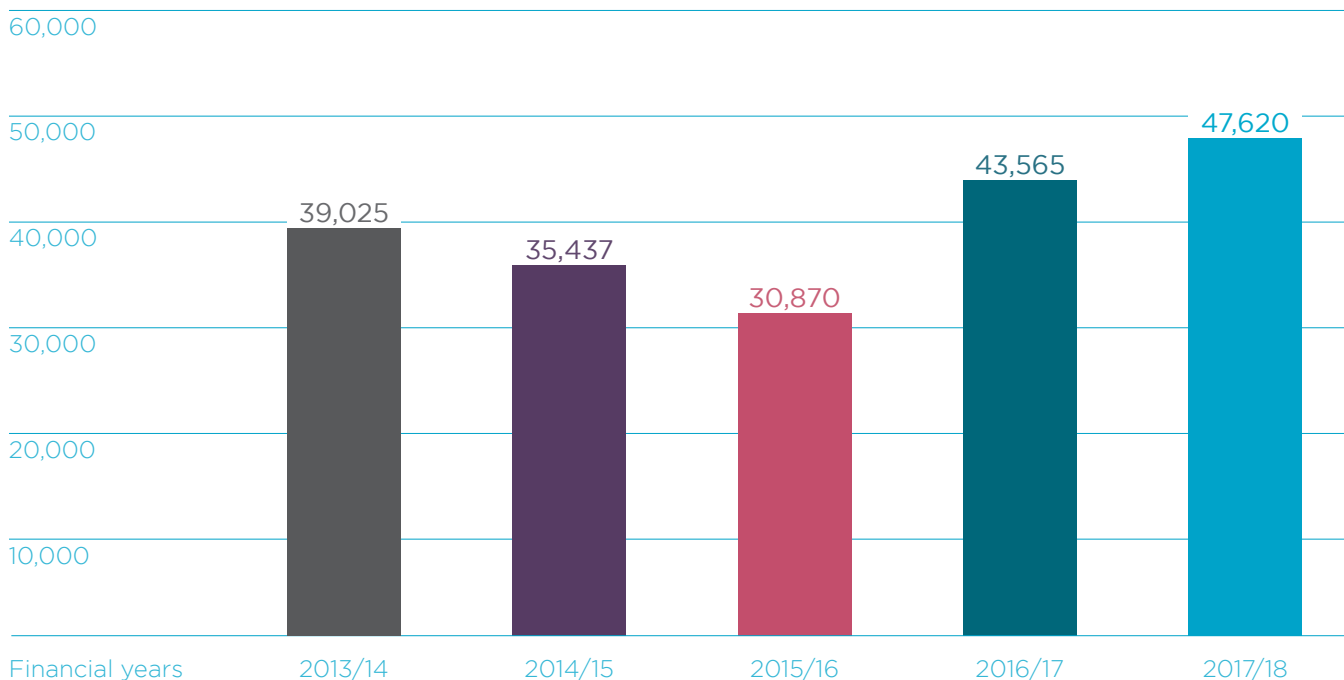
of national complaints



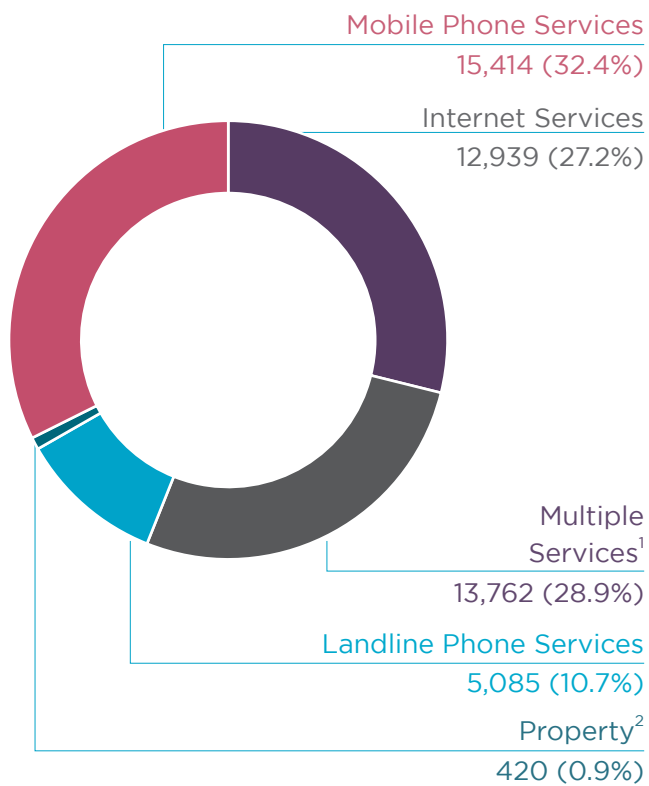
\*Total complaints that used a valid postcode.

### COMPLAINT NUMBERS

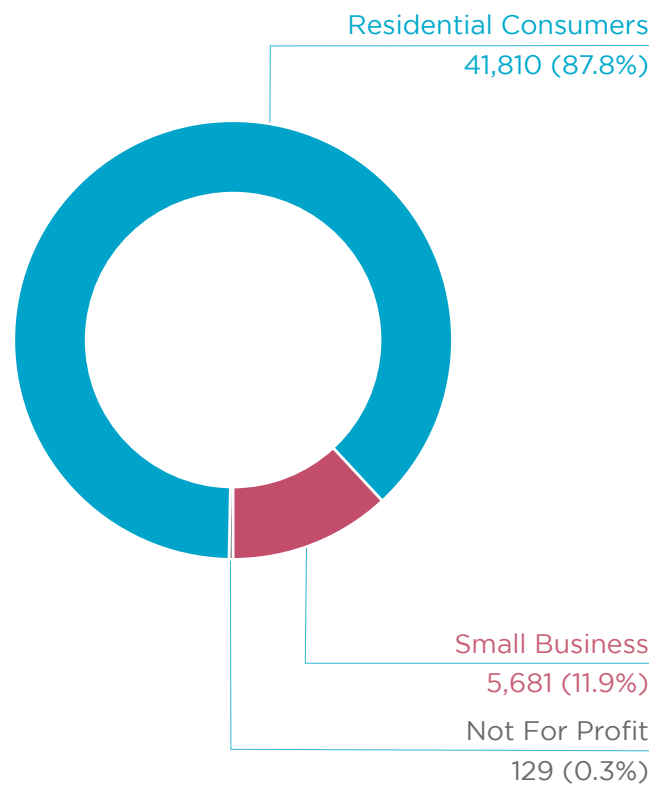
#### Complaints



### WHAT SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT



### WHO COMPLAINED TO THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OMBUDSMAN



1. A complaint which relates to more than one service.  
 2. A complaint involving access or damage to property.

## Western Australia

15,075\*

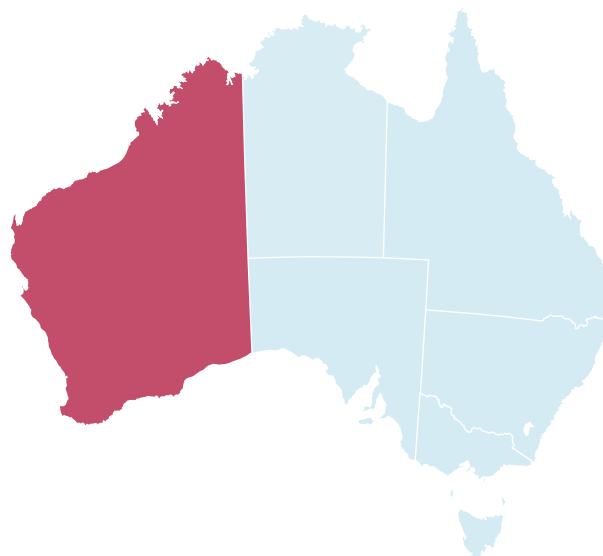
total complaints received in the  
financial year 2017/18

10.7%

increase in complaints from 2016/17

9.0%

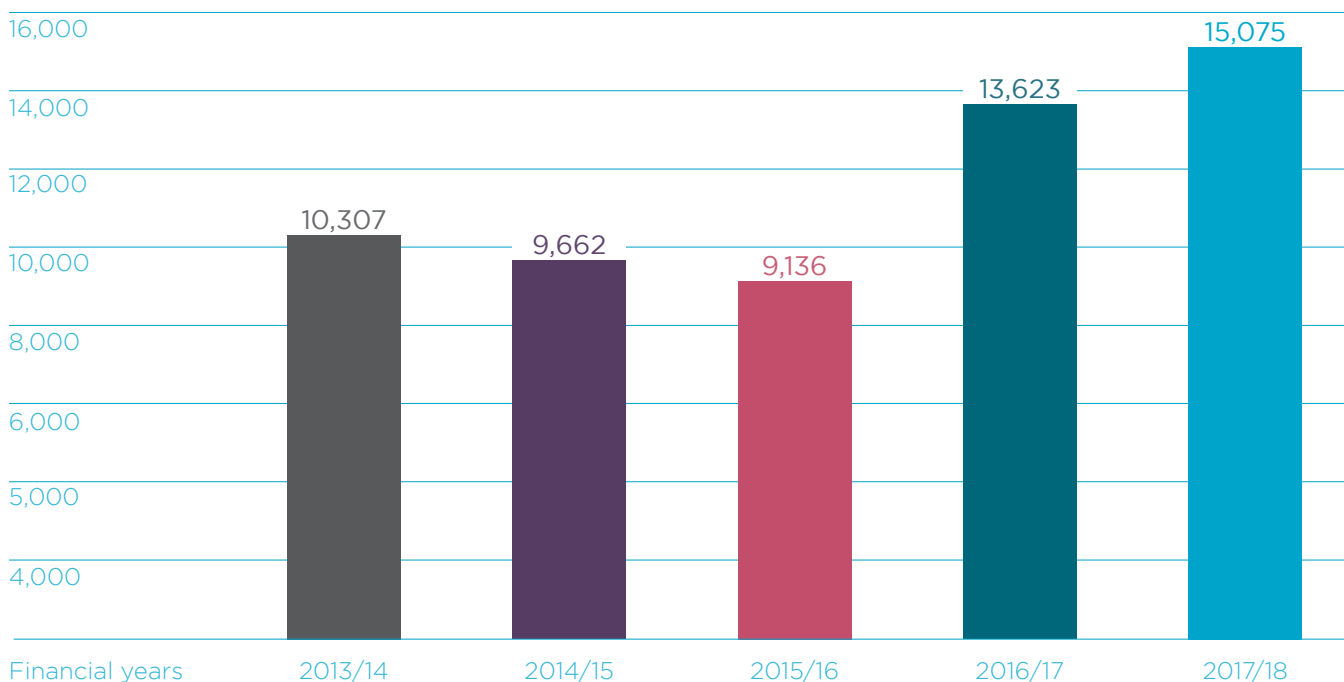
of national complaints



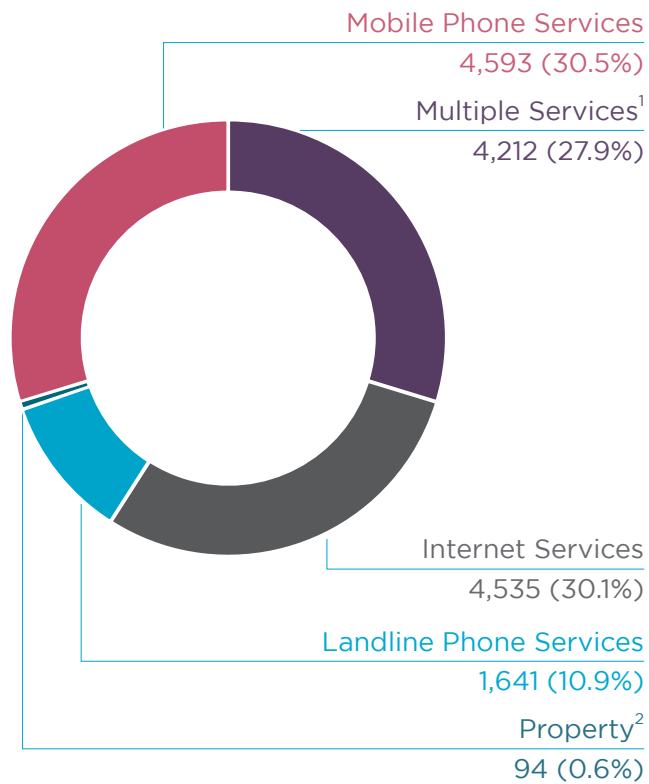
\*Total complaints that used a valid postcode.

### COMPLAINT NUMBERS

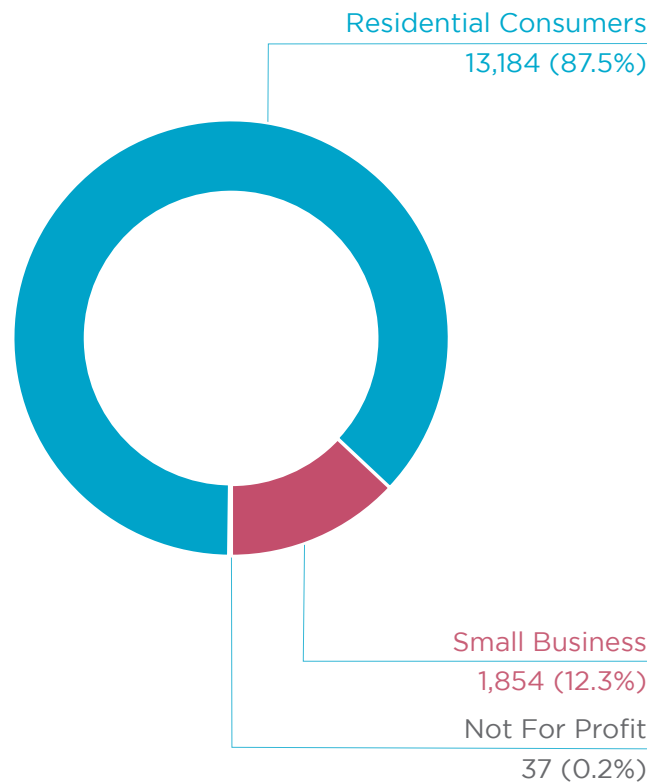
#### Complaints



### WHAT SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT



### WHO COMPLAINED TO THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OMBUDSMAN



1. A complaint which relates to more than one service.  
 2. A complaint involving access or damage to property.



# Complaints about phone and internet providers

As part of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's commitment to transparency and independence, this report outlines the ten phone and internet providers with the most complaints.

The data presented does not take into account the number of customers or services in operation by a provider during the reporting period.

The fact that the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman receives a complaint does not necessarily mean a provider is at fault. It simply means that a complaint will begin the Ombudsman's complaint resolution process.

The ten service providers whose data is published in this report accounted for 93.4% of all complaints.

There were complaints against 441 members in 2017/18, compared to 447 in 2016/17.

## PROPORTION OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS ABOUT EACH PROVIDER

Organisation/Group	FY16	FY17	FY18
<b>Telstra Corporation</b>	47.5%	48.5%	49.2%
<b>Optus Group<sup>1</sup> Including Virgin Mobile</b>	20.9%	19.1%	24.2%
<b>Vodafone Australia Limited</b>	6.9%	6.8%	5.8%
<b>iiNet Ltd</b>	5.0%	6.4%	4.6%
<b>TPG Internet Pty Ltd</b>	4.3%	4.4%	3.7%
<b>Dodo Services Pty Ltd</b>	2.9%	2.1%	1.9%
<b>Primus Telecommunications Pty Ltd</b>	1.3%	1.2%	1.1%
<b>MyRepublic Pty Ltd<sup>2</sup></b>	N/A	0.6%	1.1%
<b>M2 Commander Pty Ltd</b>	1.2%	1.1%	0.9%
<b>Southern Phone Company Ltd</b>	0.5%	1.3%	0.9%

1. Optus Group's statistics include the Virgin Mobile brand in this annual report, which differs from the treatment in previous years. This is due to the Virgin brand being phased out over the next two years. Virgin ceased the sale of Postpaid Mobile and Broadband plans in June 2018. Customers are being encouraged to move to Optus when their current contract expires.

2. No complaints for MyRepublic prior to 2016/17.

## COMPLAINTS RECEIVED PER PROVIDER

Organisation/Group	FY16	FY17	FY18	Change from FY17-FY18
<b>Telstra Corporation</b>	53,425	76,650	82,528	7.7%
<b>Optus Group<sup>1</sup> Including Virgin Mobile</b>	23,461	30,120	40,665	35.0%
<b>Vodafone Australia Limited</b>	7,772	10,684	9,752	-8.7%
<b>iiNet Ltd</b>	5,681	10,170	7,719	-24.1%
<b>TPG Internet Pty Ltd</b>	4,826	6,995	6,248	-10.7%
<b>Dodo Services Pty Ltd</b>	3,272	3,309	3,120	-5.7%
<b>Primus Telecommunications Pty Ltd</b>	1,451	1,917	1,918	0.1%
<b>MyRepublic Pty Ltd<sup>2</sup></b>	N/A	901	1,816	101.6.%
<b>M2 Commander Pty Ltd</b>	1,360	1,704	1,565	-8.2%
<b>Southern Phone Company Ltd</b>	564	2,068	1,484	-28.2%

1. Optus Group's statistics include the Virgin Mobile brand in this annual report, which differs from the treatment in previous years. This is due to the Virgin brand being phased out over the next two years. Virgin ceased the sale of Postpaid Mobile and Broadband plans in June 2018. Customers are being encouraged to move to Optus when their current contract expires.

2. No complaints for MyRepublic prior to 2016/17.

# Telstra

Complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman about phone and internet services delivered by Telstra in the 2017/18 financial year

82,528

complaints received about Telstra compared to 76,650 received in financial year 2016/17

49.2%

of all complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman were about Telstra

7.7%

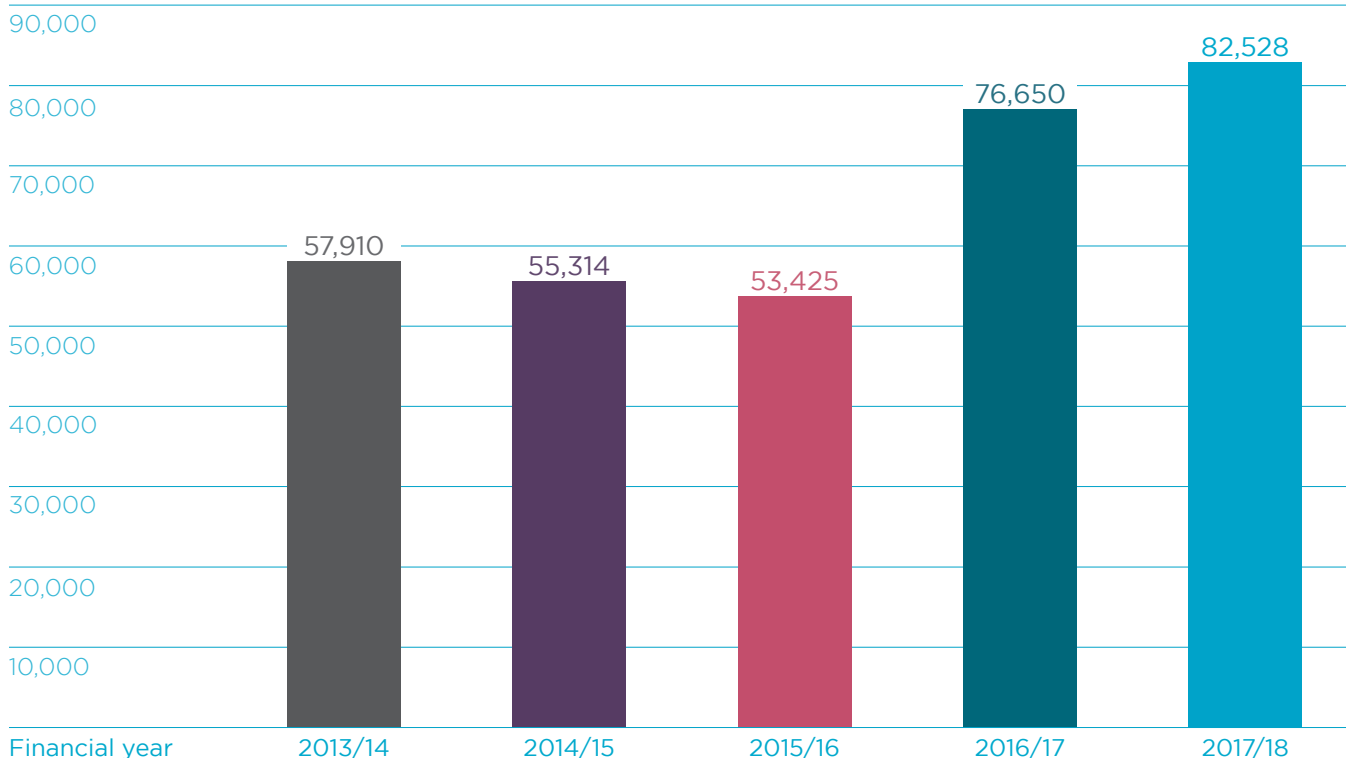
increase in complaints compared to financial year 2016/17

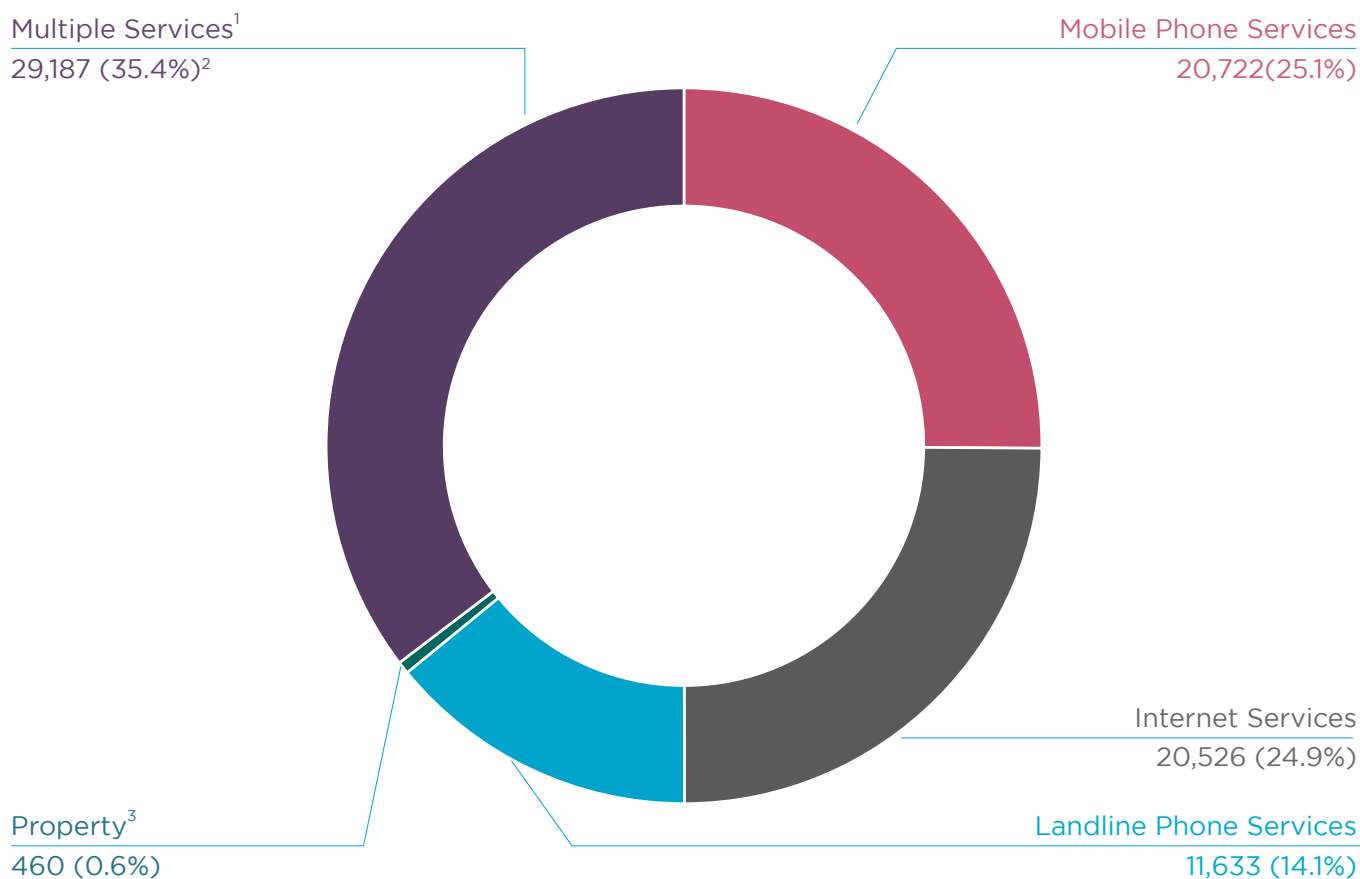
21,409

complaints about establishing a connection, service quality, missed appointments, or property received about Telstra services delivered over the National Broadband Network

## COMPLAINTS FOR FINANCIAL YEARS 2013/14 TO 2017/18

Complaints



**WHAT TELSTRA SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT**

1. A complaint which relates to more than one service.

2. Percentages rounded to the nearest decimal place. Percentages may not add up to 100%.

3. A complaint involving access or damage to property

# Optus Group<sup>1</sup>

Complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman about phone and internet services delivered by the Optus Group in the 2017/18 financial year

## 40,665

complaints received about Optus Group compared to 30,120 received in financial year 2016/17

## 24.2%

of all complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman were about Optus Group

## 35%

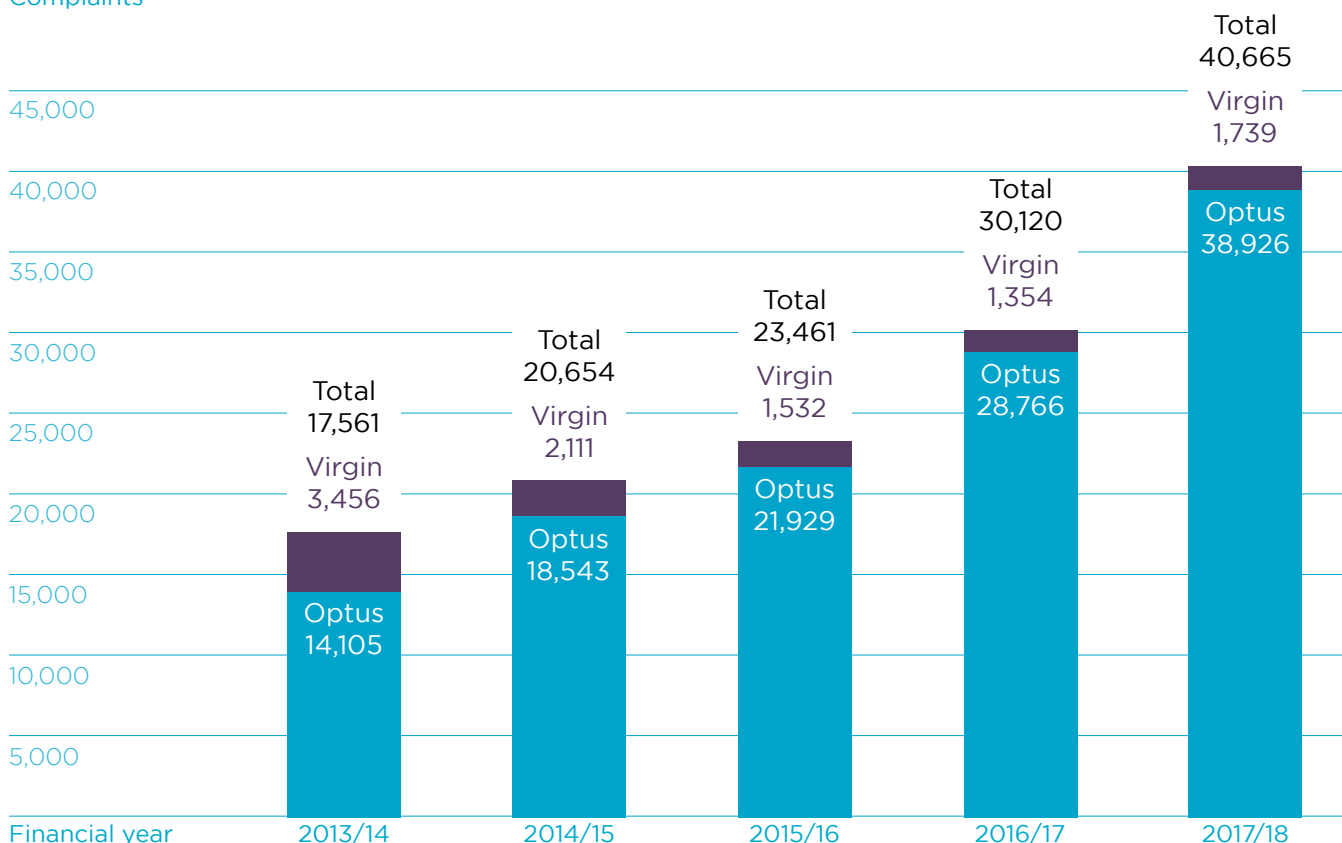
increase in complaints compared to financial year 2016/17

## 7,986

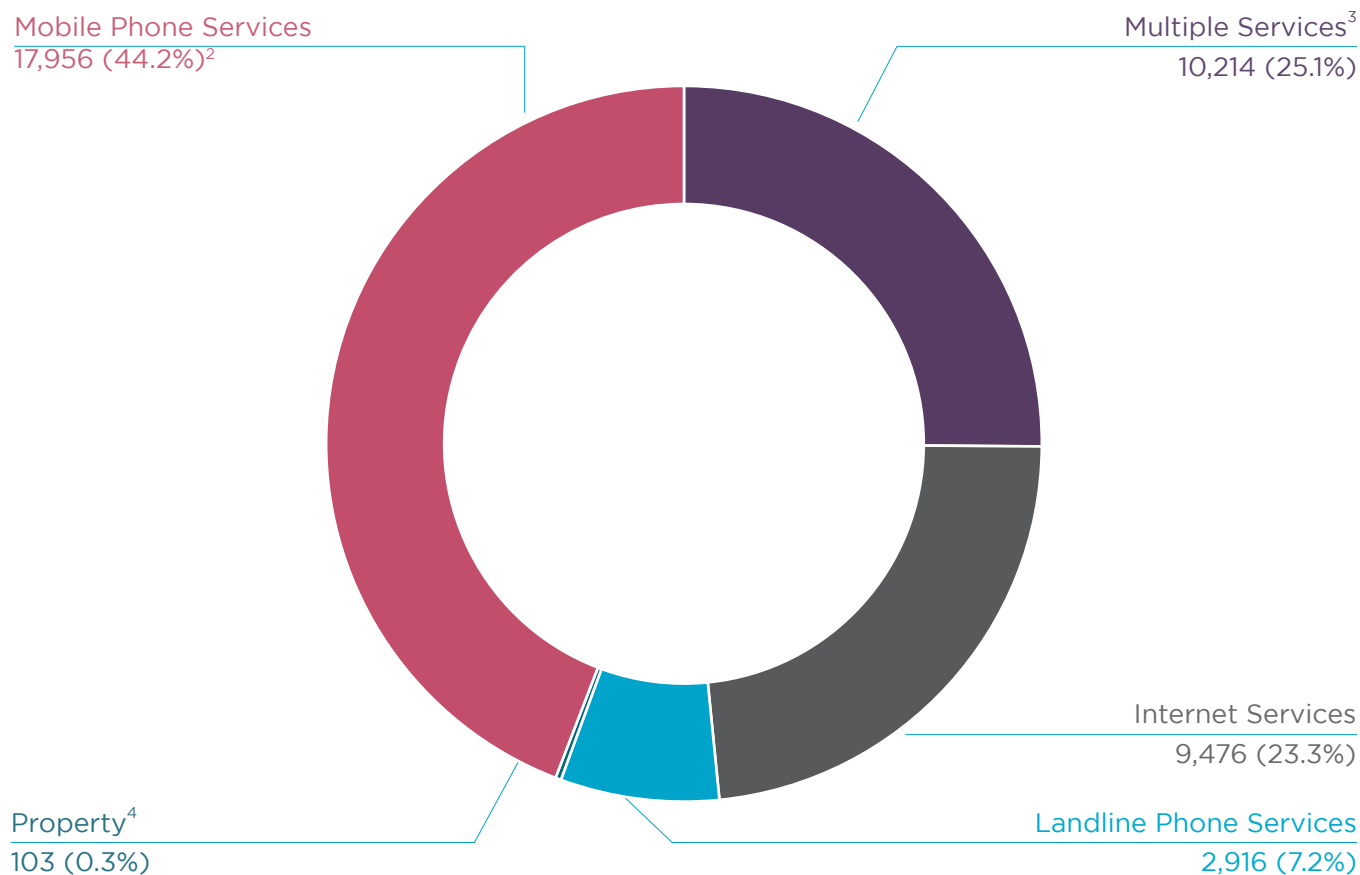
complaints about establishing a connection, service quality, missed appointments, or property received about the Optus Group services delivered over the National Broadband Network

### COMPLAINTS FOR FINANCIAL YEARS 2013/14 TO 2017/18

Complaints



## WHAT OPTUS GROUP SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT



1. Optus Group's statistics include the Virgin Mobile brand this year, which differs from the treatment in previous reports. This is due to the Virgin brand being phased out over the next two years. Virgin ceased the sale of Postpaid Mobile and Broadband plans in June 2018. Customers are being encouraged to move to Optus when their current contract expires.
2. Percentages rounded to the nearest decimal place. Percentages may not add up to 100%.
3. A complaint which relates to more than one service.
4. A complaint involving access or damage to property.



# Vodafone

Complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman about phone and internet services delivered by Vodafone in the 2017/18 financial year<sup>1</sup>

9,752

complaints received about Vodafone compared to 10,684 received in financial year 2016/17

5.8%

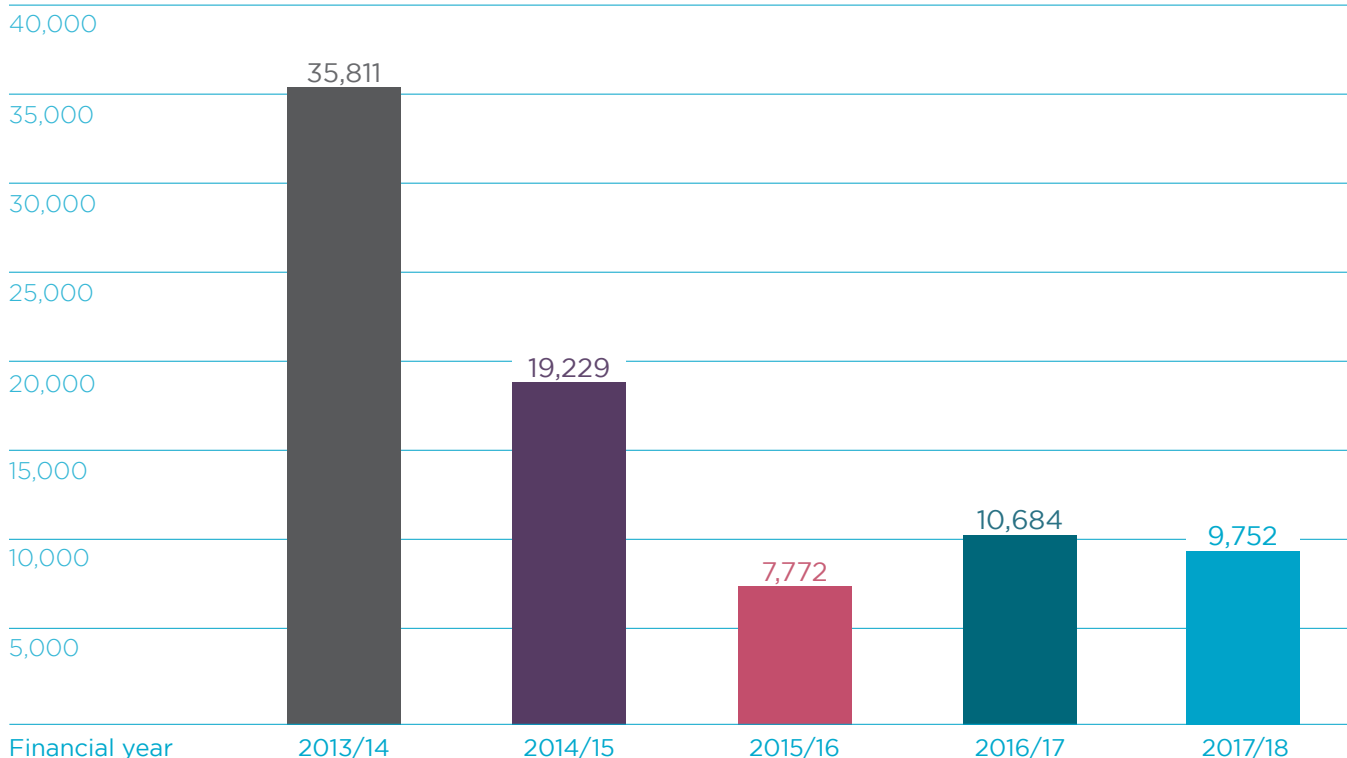
of all complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman were about Vodafone

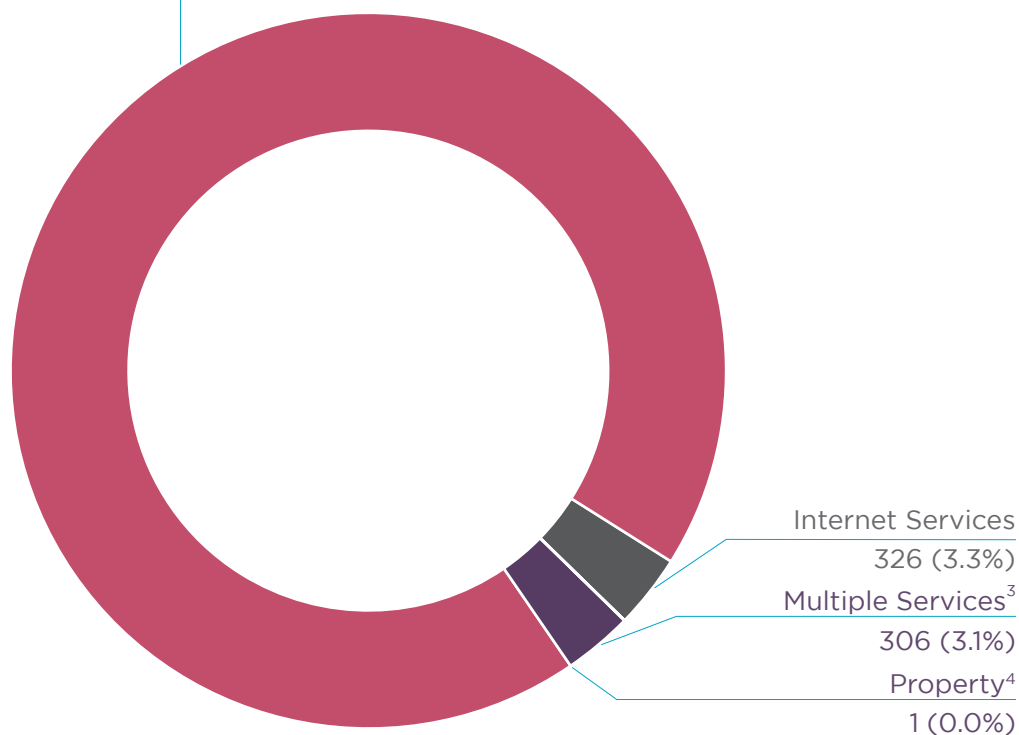
-8.7%

decrease in complaints compared to financial year 2016/17

## COMPLAINTS FOR FINANCIAL YEARS 2013/14 TO 2017/18

Complaints



**WHAT VODAFONE SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT****Mobile Phone Services**9,119 (93.5%)<sup>2</sup>

1. Vodafone does not deliver services over the National Broadband Network.

2. Percentages rounded to the nearest decimal place. Percentages may not add up to 100%.

3. A complaint which relates to more than one service.

4. A complaint involving access or damage to property.

# iiNet

Complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman about phone and internet services delivered by iiNet in the 2017/18 financial year

7,719

complaints received about iiNet compared to 10,170 received in financial year 2016/17

4.6%

of all complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman were about iiNet

-24.1%

decrease in complaints compared to financial year 2016/17

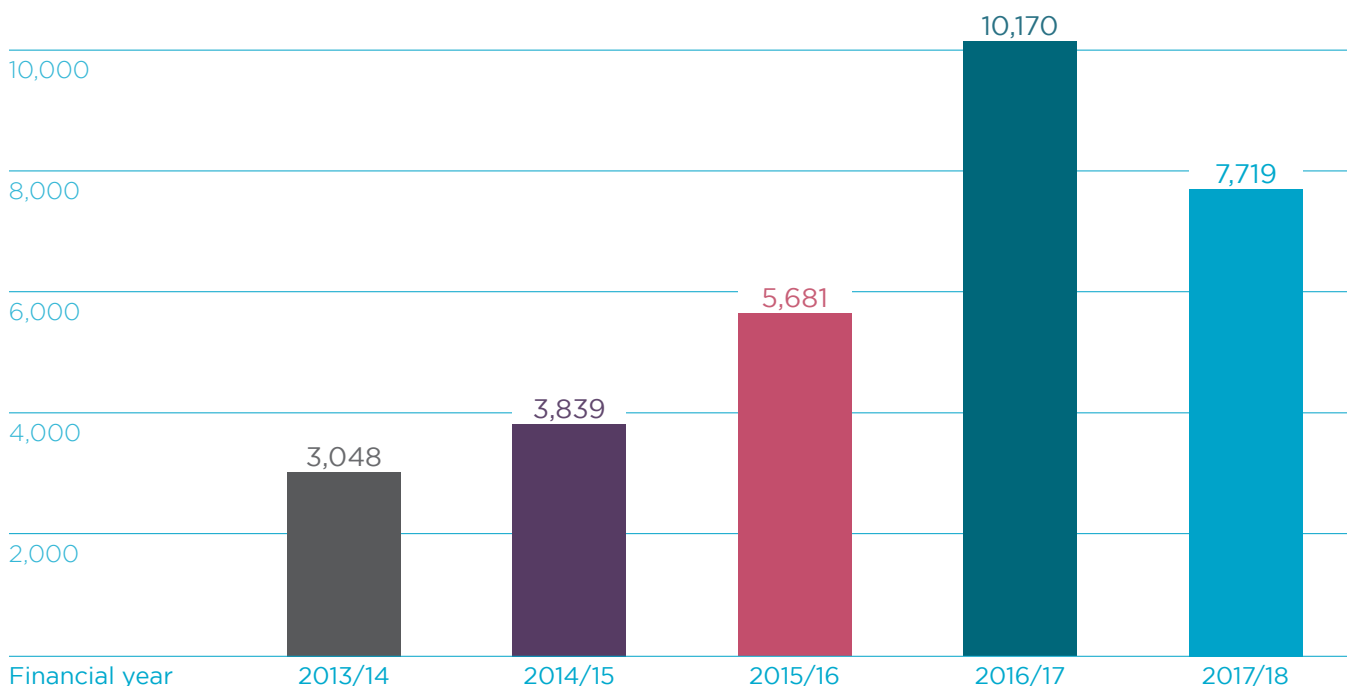
2,697

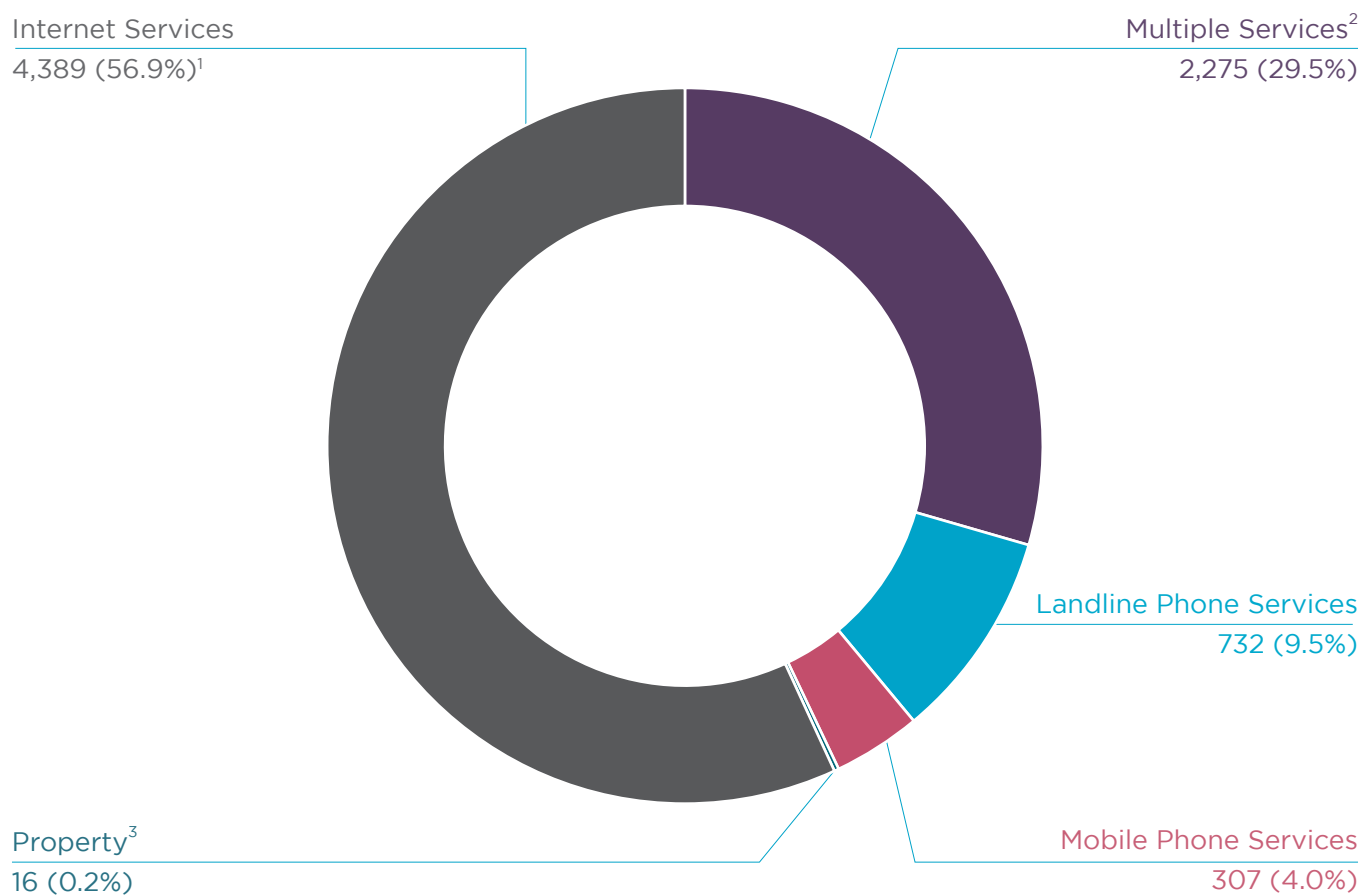
complaints about establishing a connection, service quality, missed appointments, or property received about iiNet services delivered over the National Broadband Network

## COMPLAINTS FOR FINANCIAL YEARS 2013/14 TO 2017/18

Complaints

12,000



**WHAT IINET SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT**

1. Percentages rounded to the nearest decimal place. Percentages may not add up to 100%.

2. A complaint which relates to more than one service.

3. A complaint involving access or damage to property.

# TPG

Complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman about phone and internet services delivered by TPG in the 2017/18 financial year

6,248

complaints received about TPG compared to 6,995 received in financial year 2016/17

3.7%

of all complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman were about TPG

-10.7%

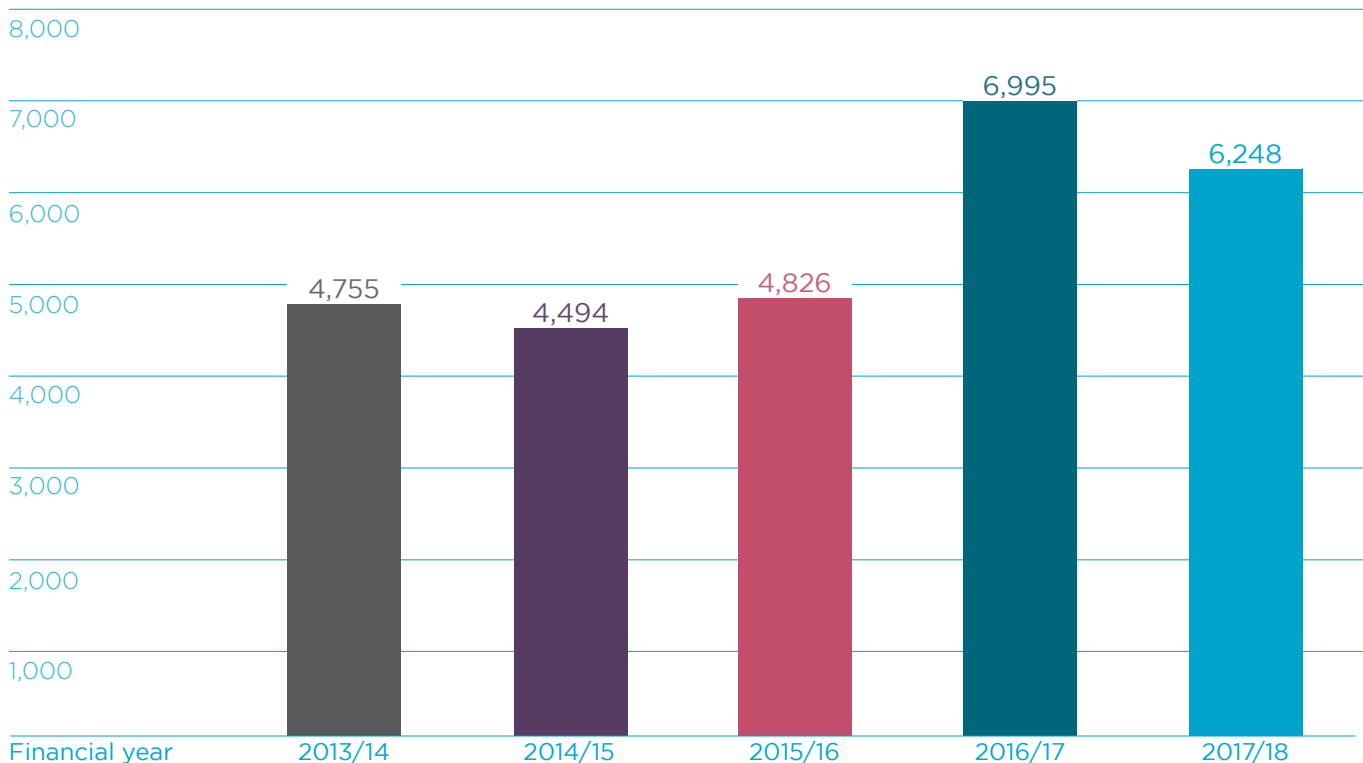
decrease in complaints compared to financial year 2016/17

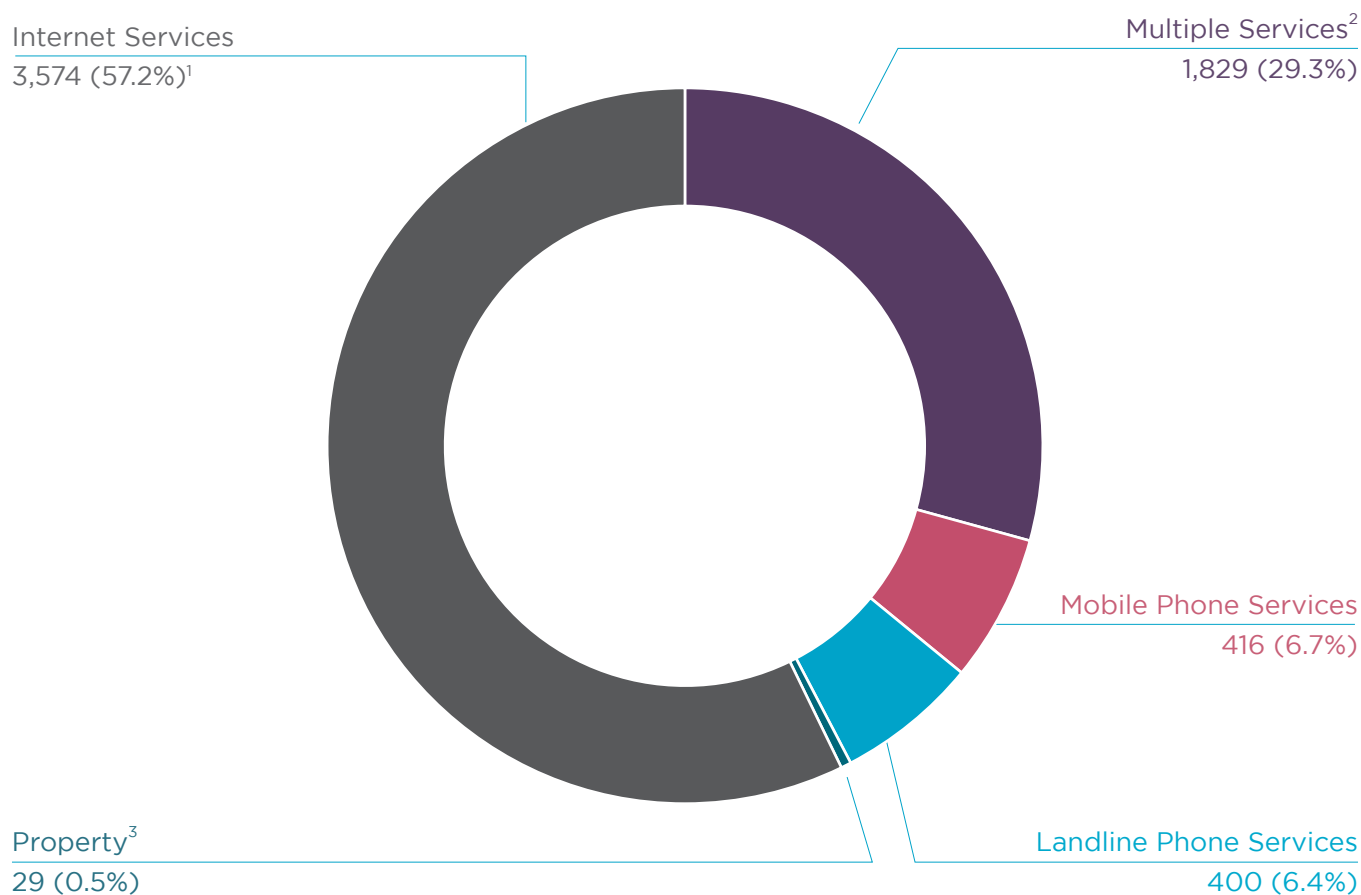
2,416

complaints about establishing a connection, service quality, missed appointments, or property received about TPG services delivered over the National Broadband Network

## COMPLAINTS FOR FINANCIAL YEARS 2013/14 TO 2017/18

Complaints



**WHAT TPG SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT**

1. Percentages rounded to the nearest decimal place. Percentages may not add up to 100%.

2. A complaint which relates to more than one service.

3. A complaint involving access or damage to property.



# Dodo

Complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman about phone and internet services delivered by Dodo in the 2017/18 financial year

3,120

complaints received about Dodo compared to 3,309 received in financial year 2016/17

1.9%

of all complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman were about Dodo

-5.7%

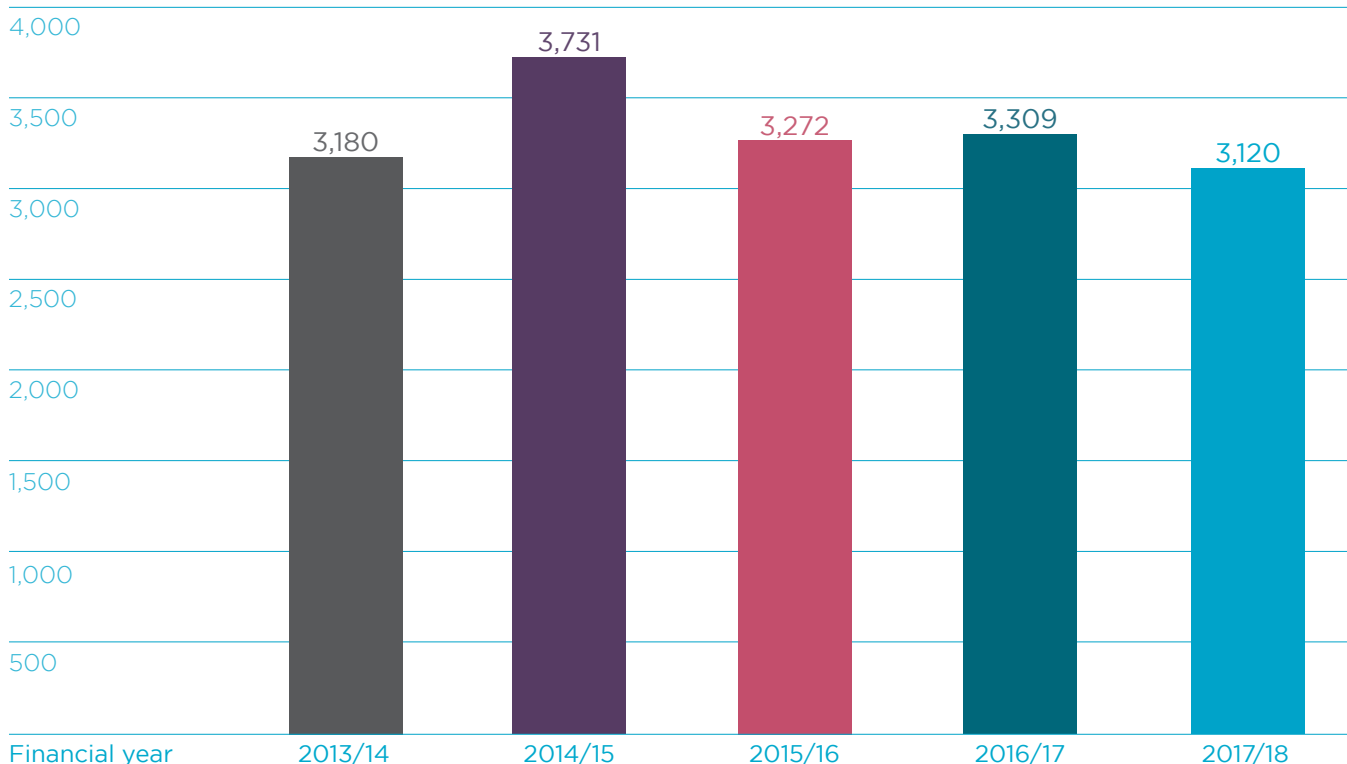
decrease in complaints compared to financial year 2016/17

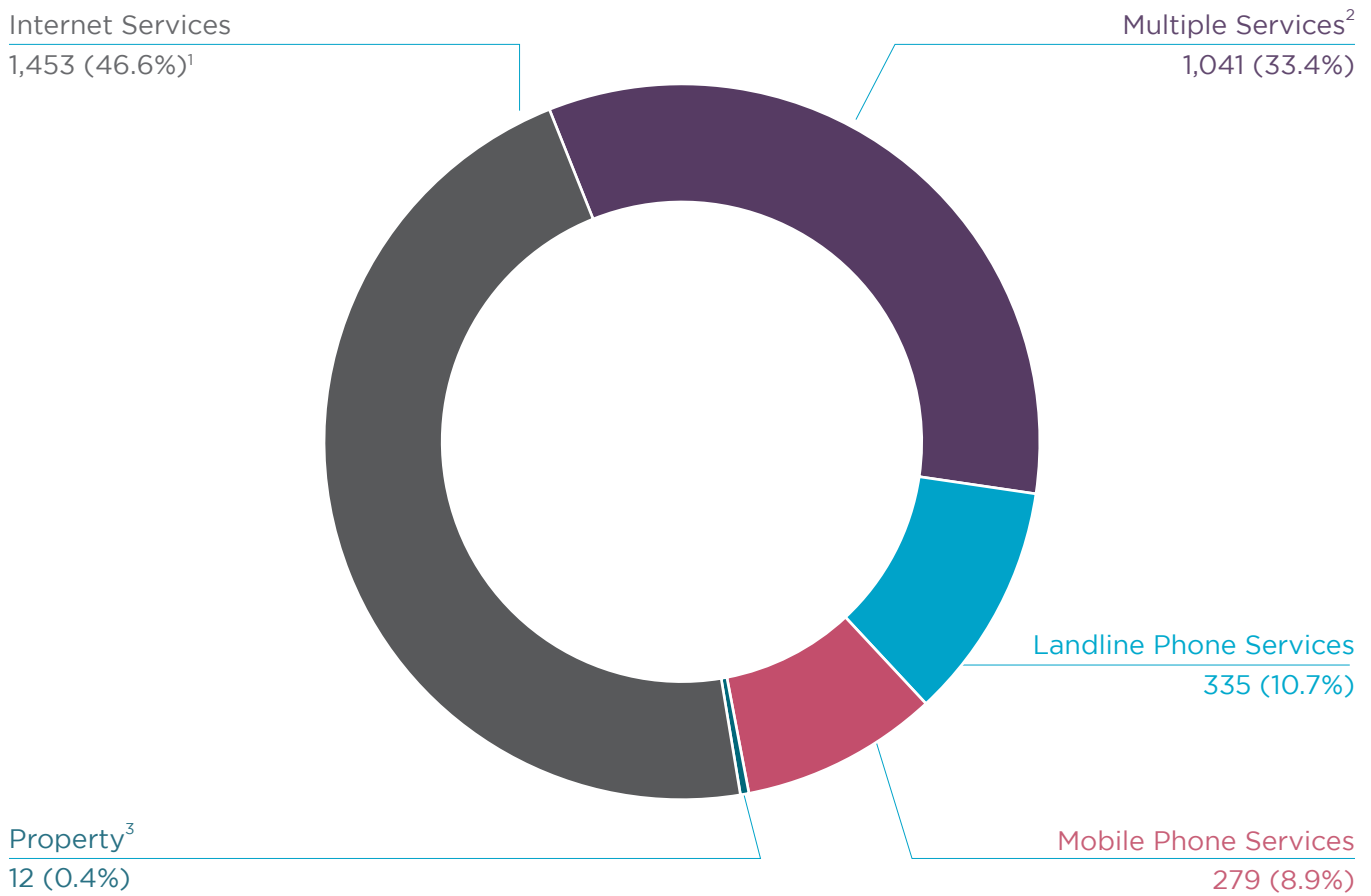
1,100

complaints about establishing a connection, service quality, missed appointments, or property received about Dodo services delivered over the National Broadband Network

## COMPLAINTS FOR FINANCIAL YEARS 2013/14 TO 2017/18

Complaints



**WHAT DODO SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT**

1. Percentages rounded to the nearest decimal place. Percentages may not add up to 100%.

2. A complaint which relates to more than one service.

3. A complaint involving access or damage to property.

# Primus Telecommunications

Complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman about phone and internet services delivered by Primus Telecommunications in the 2017/18 financial year

1,918

complaints received about Primus Telecommunications compared to 1,917 received in financial year 2016/17

1.1%

of all complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman were about Primus Telecommunications

0.1%

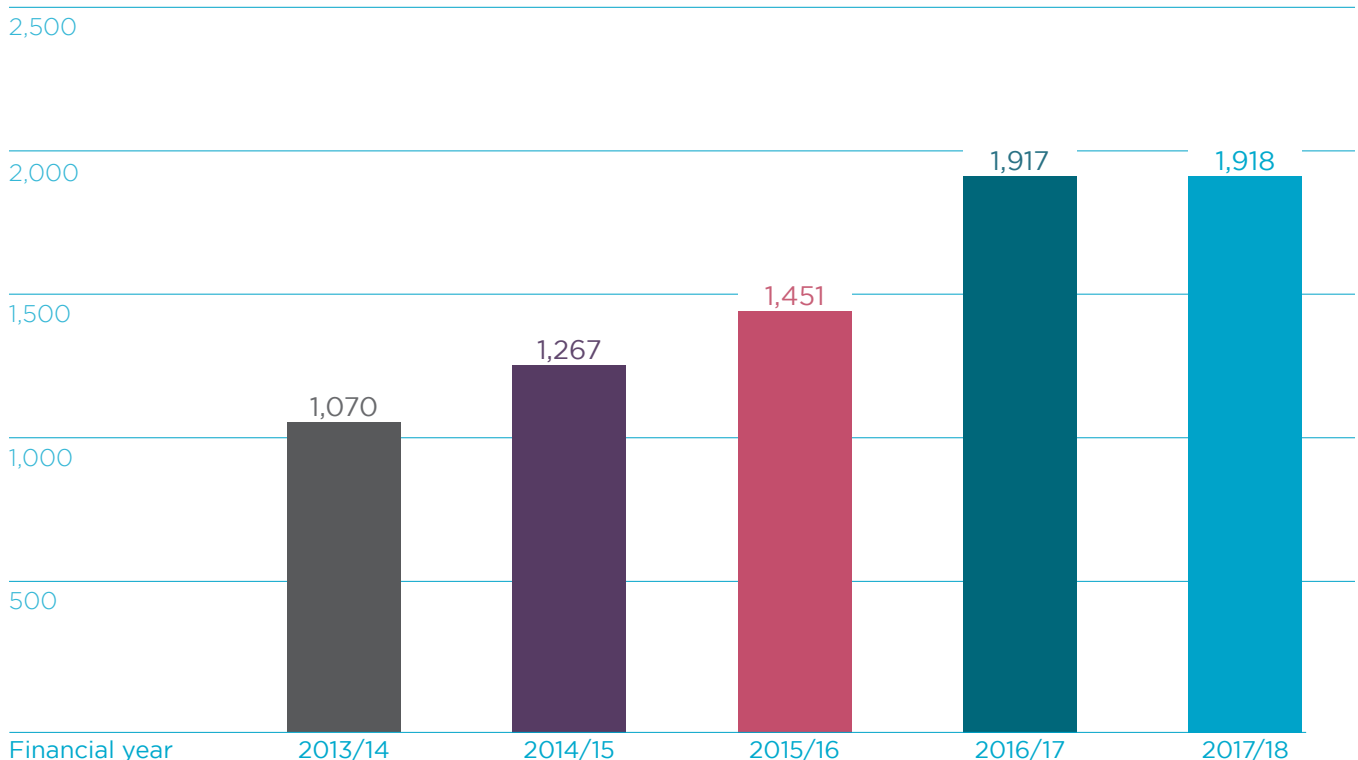
increase in complaints compared to financial year 2016/17

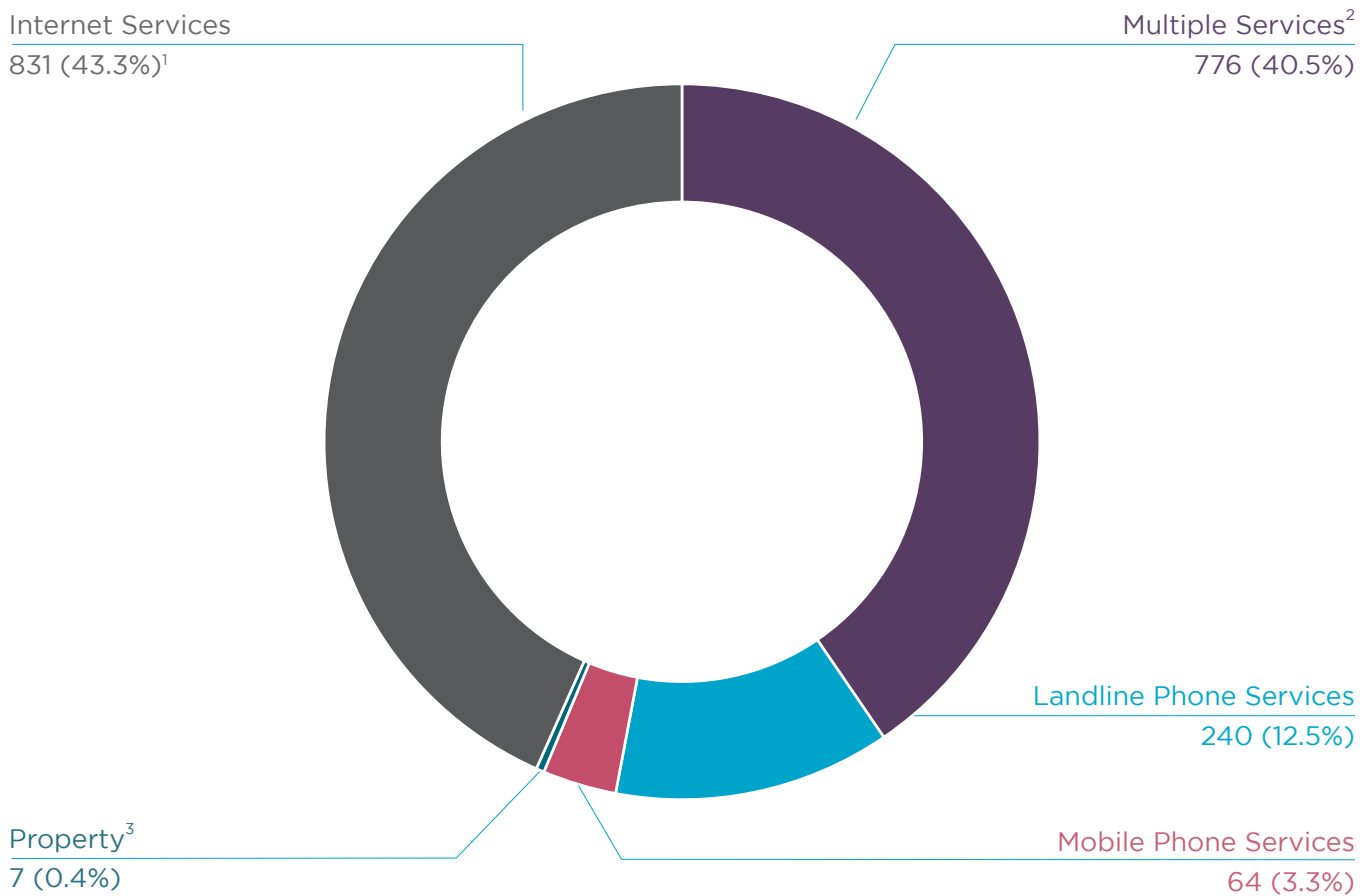
539

complaints about establishing a connection, service quality, missed appointments, or property received about Primus Telecommunications services delivered over the National Broadband Network

## COMPLAINTS FOR FINANCIAL YEARS 2013/14 TO 2017/18

Complaints



**WHAT PRIMUS TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT**

1. Percentages rounded to the nearest decimal place. Percentages may not add up to 100%.

2. A complaint which relates to more than one service.

3. A complaint involving access or damage to property.

# MyRepublic

Complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman about phone and internet services delivered by MyRepublic in the 2017/18 financial year

1,816

complaints received about MyRepublic compared to 901 received in financial year 2016/17

1.1%

of all complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman were about MyRepublic

101.6%

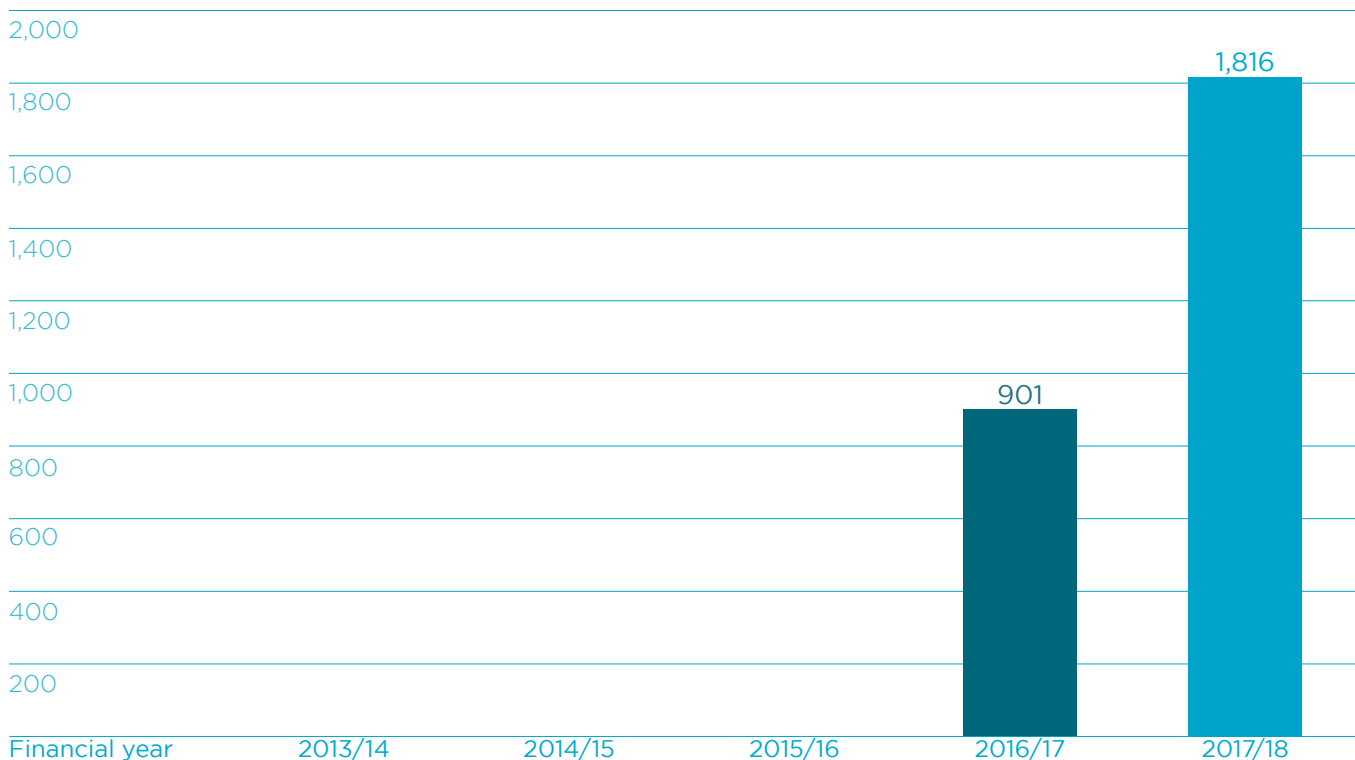
increase in complaints compared to financial year 2016/17

1,098

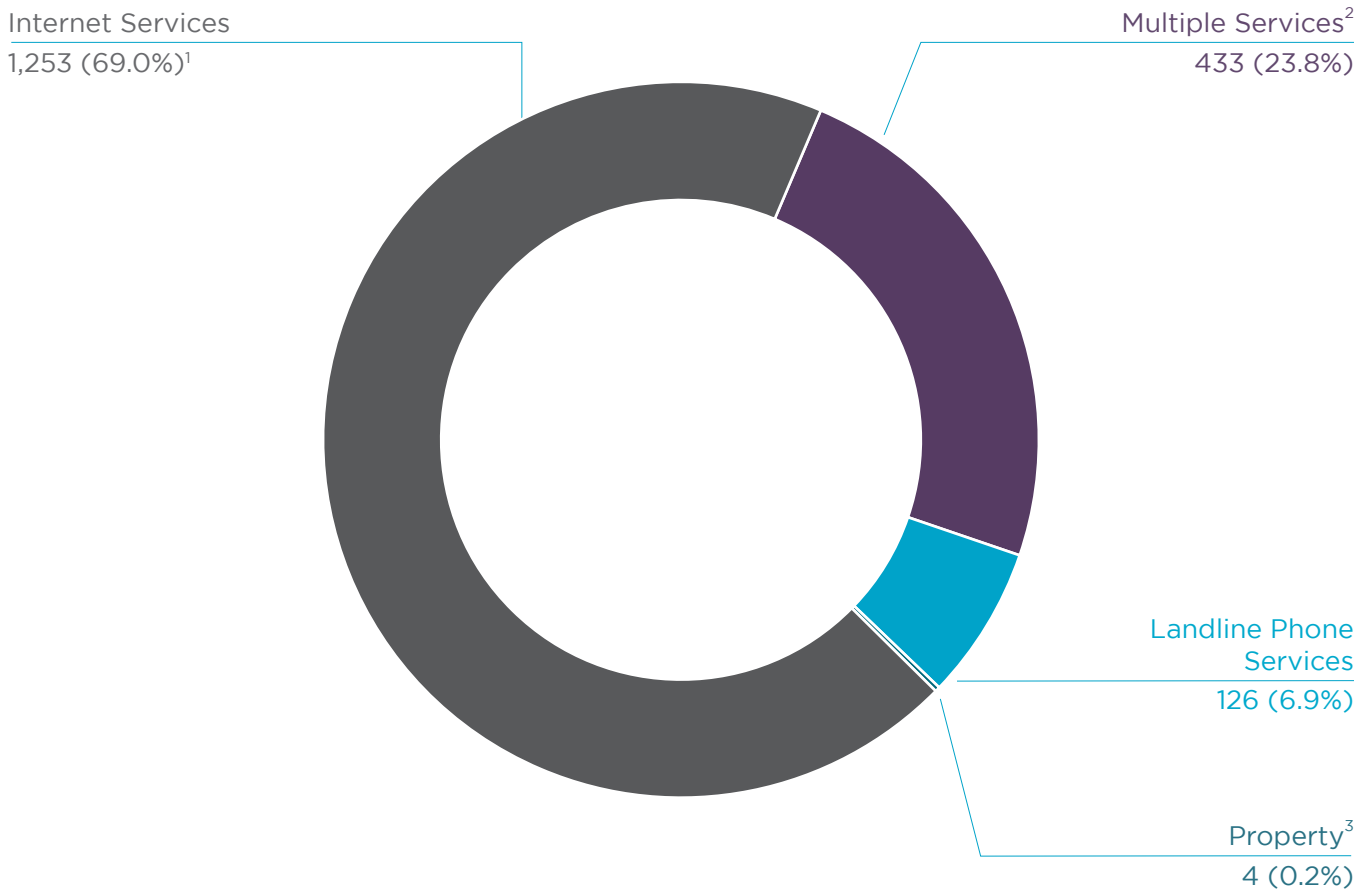
complaints about establishing a connection, service quality, missed appointments, or property received about MyRepublic services delivered over the National Broadband Network

## COMPLAINTS FOR FINANCIAL YEARS 2013/14 TO 2017/18<sup>1</sup>

Complaints



1. No complaints for MyRepublic prior to 2016/17

**WHAT MYREPUBLIC SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT**

1. Percentages rounded to the nearest decimal place. Percentages may not add up to 100%.

2. A complaint which relates to more than one service.

3. A complaint involving access or damage to property.

# M2 Commander

Complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman about phone and internet services delivered by M2 Commander in the 2017/18 financial year

1,565

complaints received about M2 Commander compared to 1,704 received in financial year 2016/17

0.9%

of all complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman were about M2 Commander

-8.2%

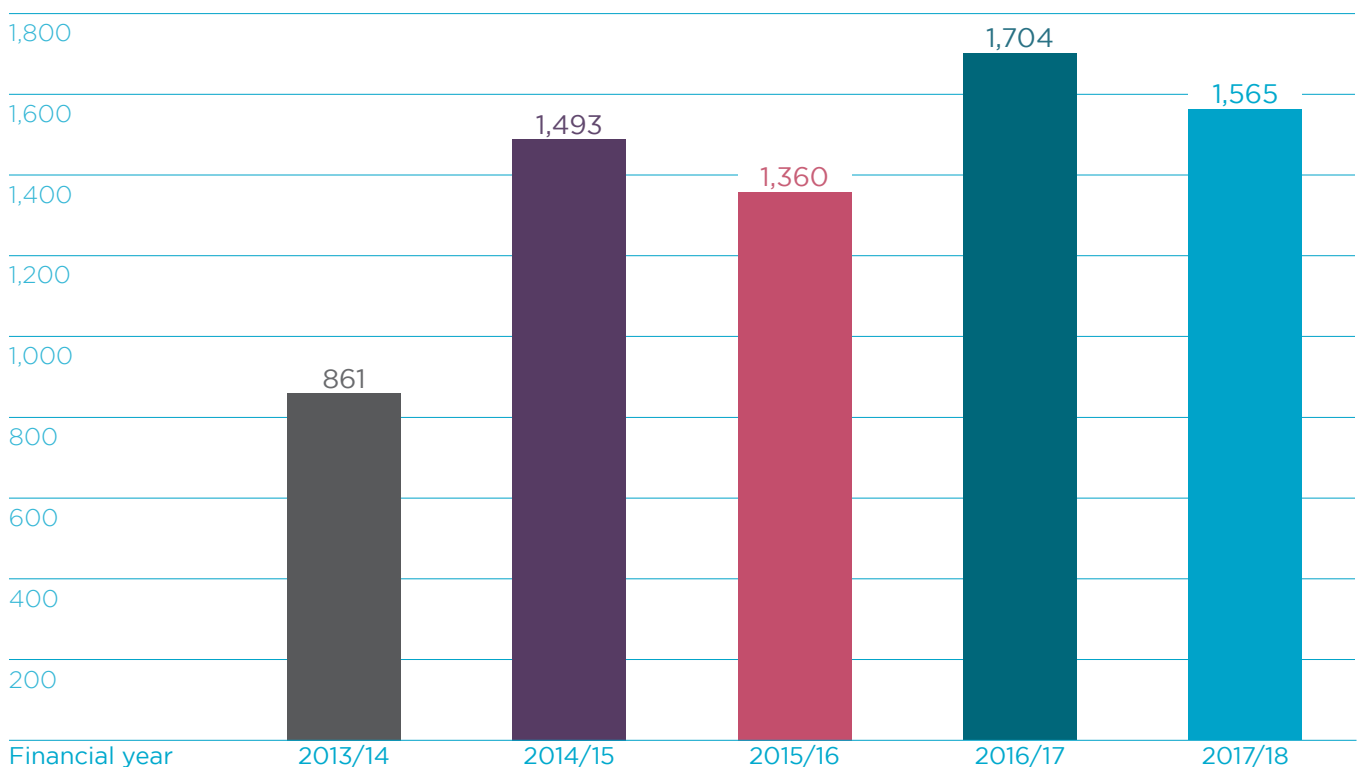
decrease in complaints compared to financial year 2016/17

322

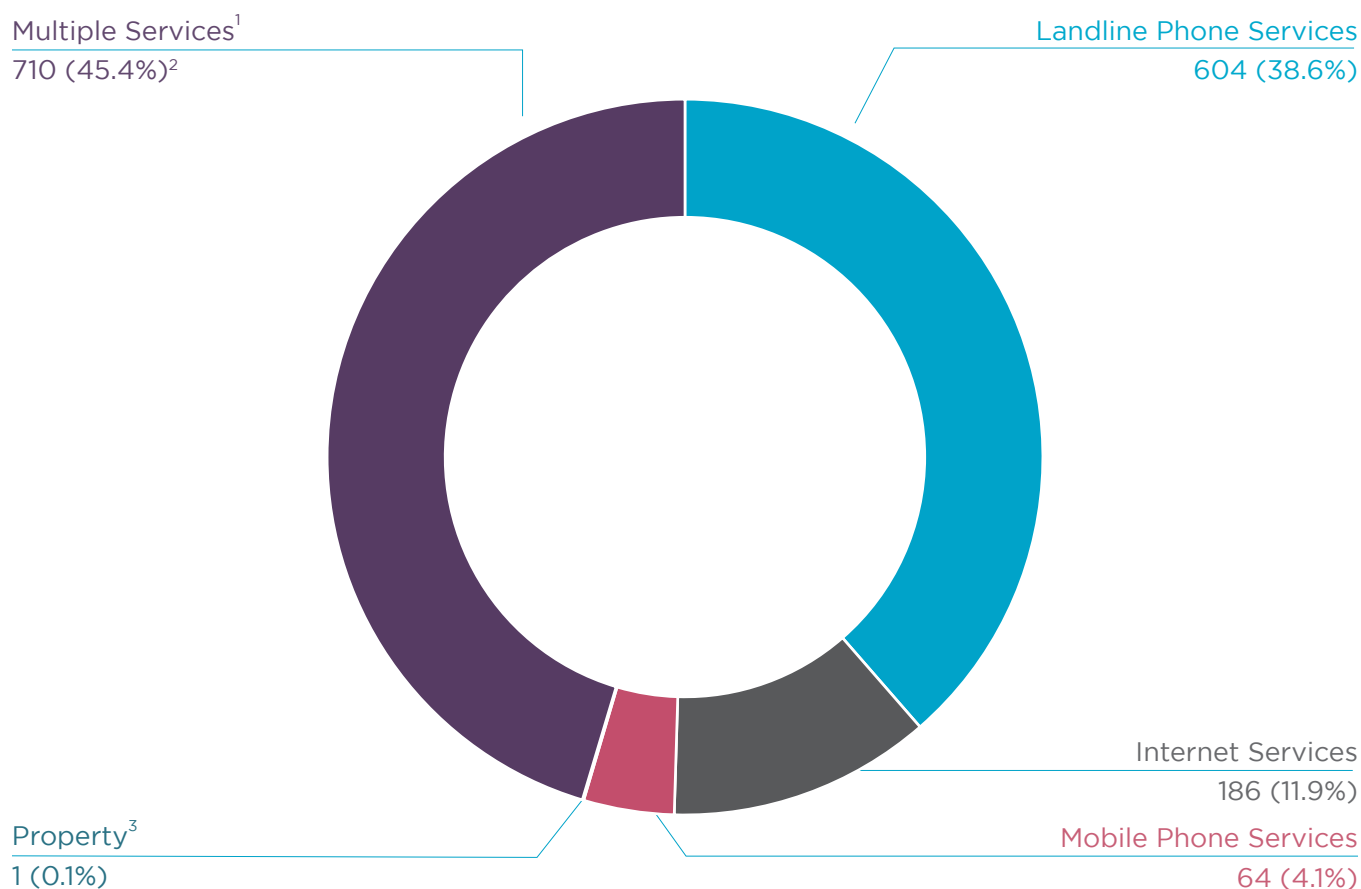
complaints about establishing a connection, service quality, missed appointments, or property received about M2 Commander services delivered over the National Broadband Network

## COMPLAINTS FOR FINANCIAL YEARS 2013/14 TO 2017/18

Complaints





**WHAT M2 COMMANDER SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT**

1. A complaint which relates to more than one service.

2. Percentages rounded to the nearest decimal place. Percentages may not add up to 100%.

3. A complaint involving access or damage to property.

# Southern Phone Company

Complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman about phone and internet services delivered by Southern Phone Company in the 2017/18 financial year

1,484

complaints received about Southern Phone Company compared to 2,068 received in financial year 2016/17

0.9%

of all complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman were about Southern Phone Company

-28.2%

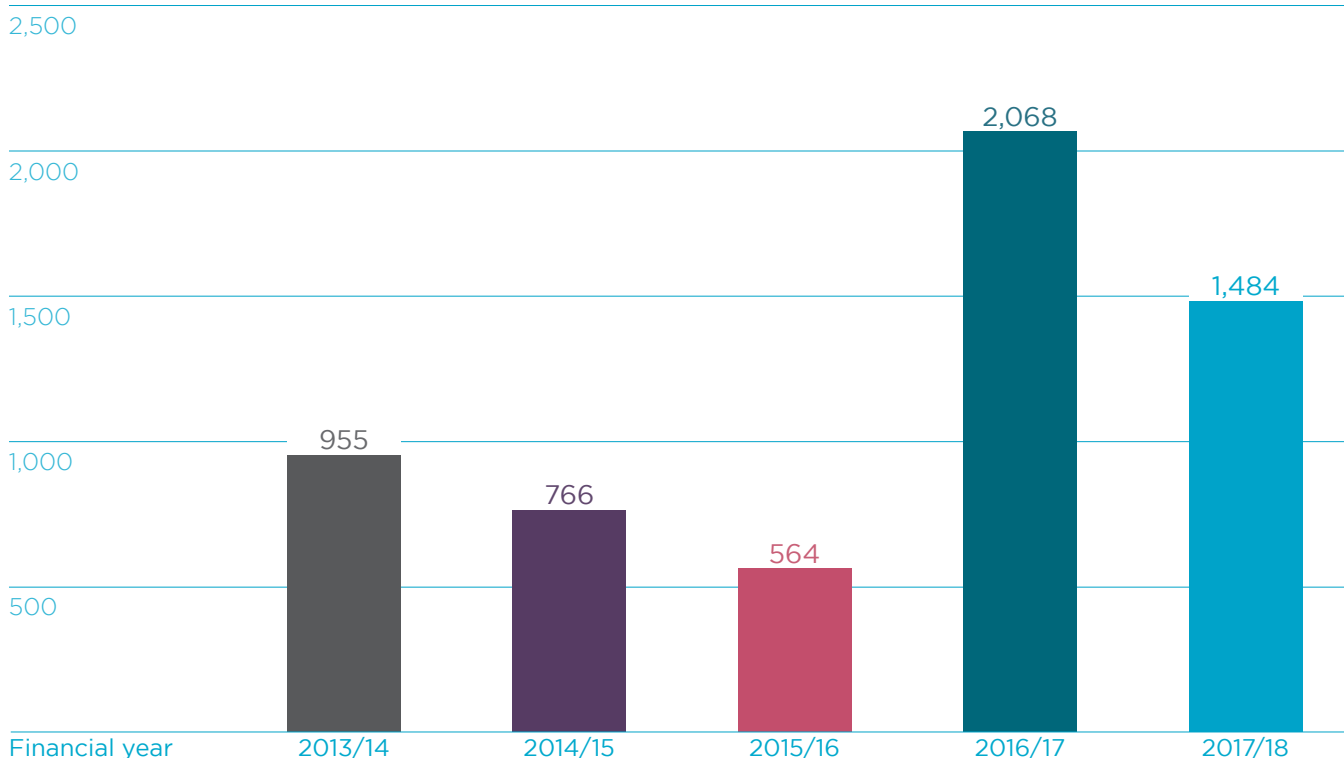
decrease in complaints compared to financial year 2016/17

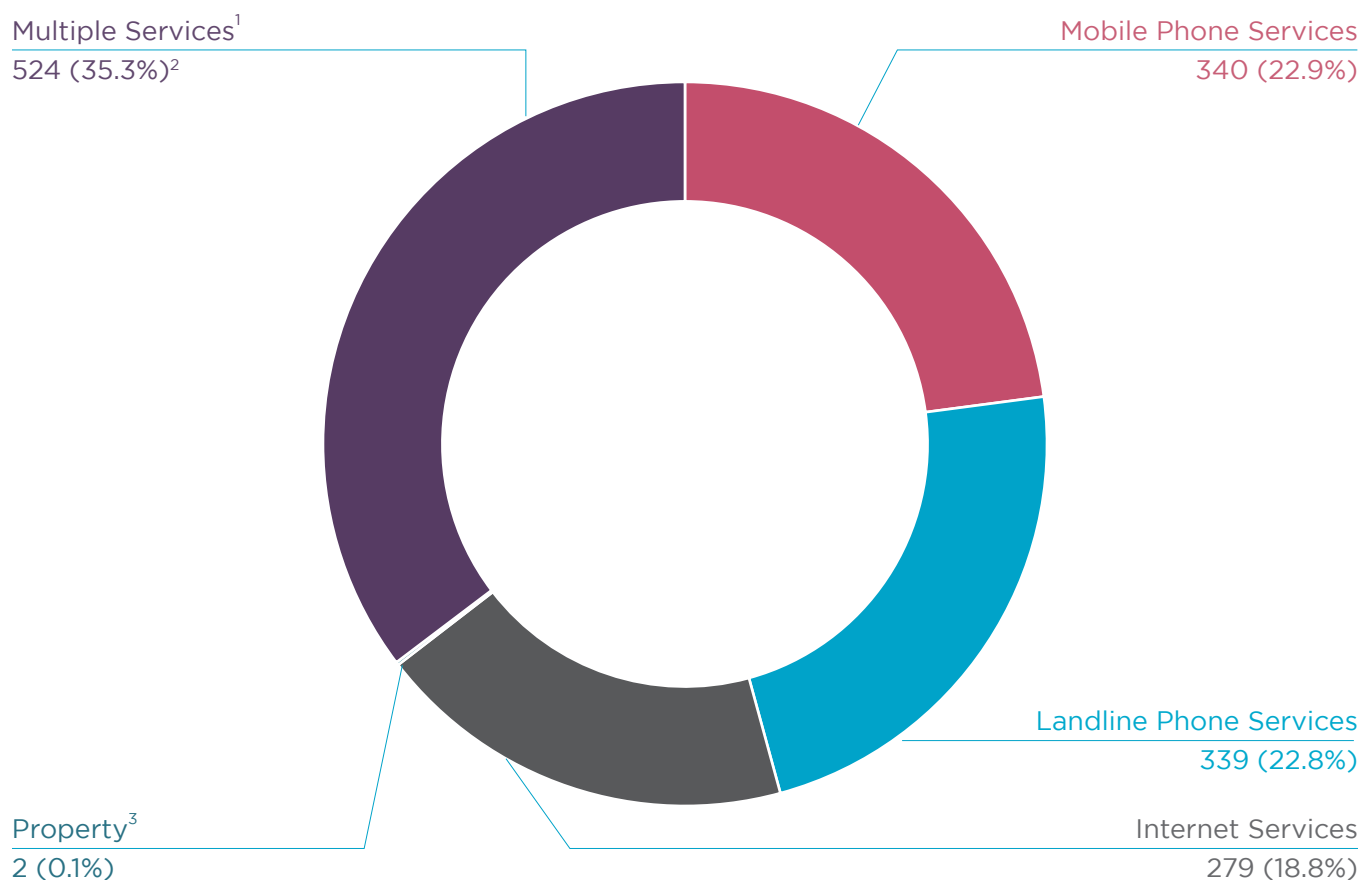
489

complaints about establishing a connection, service quality, missed appointments, or property received about Southern Phone Company services delivered over the National Broadband Network

## COMPLAINTS FOR FINANCIAL YEARS 2013/14 TO 2017/18

Complaints



**WHAT SOUTHERN PHONE COMPANY SERVICES CONSUMERS COMPLAINED ABOUT**

1. A complaint which relates to more than one service.

2. Percentages rounded to the nearest decimal place. Percentages may not add up to 100%.

3. A complaint involving access or damage to property.

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# Financial Report for the year ending 30 June 2018

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman  
Financial Report is a separate document available  
for download on the Telecommunications Industry  
Ombudsman website [www.tio.com.au](http://www.tio.com.au)





## Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman

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If you need an interpreter,  
please contact us through  
the Translator and Interpreter  
Service (TIS): 131 450

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's  
Privacy Policy explains how we collect, use and  
handle your personal information. Ask us for a  
copy or find it at <http://www.tio.com.au/privacy>

\*Free from landlines. If you are calling from  
a mobile, you can ask us to call you back.