

**Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman
Telco Accessibility Task Force
Terms of Reference
June 2024**

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of the Telco Accessibility Task Force is to convene cross sectoral leaders and decision makers to deliver meaningful improvements in the accessibility of the telecommunications industry, with a particular focus on the complaints processes of the telecommunications industry including:
 - a. establishing a collective understanding of factors that impact accessibility
 - b. examining, understanding and recognising the multifaceted factors that contribute to consumer vulnerability and impact the accessibility of telco systems and processes
 - c. avenues of action that may enhance overall accessibility for consumers; including shining a light on types of vulnerability and accessibility challenges that are overlooked or may appear invisible
 - d. the needs and interests of vulnerable, disadvantaged and hard-to-reach consumers
 - e. the needs and interests of small business consumers
 - f. consumer relationships with telecommunications providers
 - g. systemic issues, trends and regulatory issues
 - h. consumer views on the awareness and accessibility of the telecommunications industry to consumers
 - i. feedback on the continuing development and enhancement of complaint handling processes
 - j. key issues arising in the sector likely to impact on telecommunications complaints and complaint handling.
2. It is intended that the Telco Accessibility Task Force represents a diverse range of perspectives, minority groups and special interests, including but not limited to:
 - a. Telecommunications providers
 - b. Telecommunications and consumer regulators
 - c. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers
 - d. consumers living in rural, regional and remote areas
 - e. consumers with disabilities
 - f. culturally and linguistically diverse consumers
 - g. older consumers
 - h. small business consumers

- i. vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers
- j. young consumers.

WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP

- 3. The Telco Accessibility Task Force will bring together key representatives from consumer and community groups, relevant government agencies, academic and thought leadership hubs, affected civil society contributors, and representatives from the telecommunications industry.
- 4. Telco Accessibility Task Force members will be organisations or individuals appointed by the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman that are well placed to represent diverse perspectives of consumers in the telecommunications sector.
- 5. The Telco Accessibility Task Force will consist of up to 15 members at any time.
- 6. Telco Accessibility Task Force members are expected to canvass the views of bodies they represent to contribute comprehensive feedback.
- 7. Organisations are to be represented by the head of the organisation or another senior office holder nominated by the head of the organisation.

APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

- 8. The TIO will undertake a selection process for organisations or individuals to be appointed or reappointed as Working Group members.
- 9. Working Group member selection will be based on the following criteria:
 - a. expertise, experience and knowledge of telecommunications complaint handling
 - b. expertise, experience and knowledge of consumer interests
 - c. ability to actively identify, prioritise and represent telecommunications consumer views and issues
 - d. ability to provide information and communicate key messages to consumers they represent
 - e. ability to contribute to the diversity of perspectives represented by the Telco Accessibility Task Force as a whole.
- 10. Working Group members will be appointed for a period of up to two years.

WORKING GROUP CHAIR

- 11. The Telco Accessibility Task Force will be chaired by the Ombudsman.
- 12. If the Ombudsman is unable to attend a Telco Accessibility Task Force meeting, the Ombudsman will appoint a TIO Executive as acting Chair.

MEETINGS

- 13. Meetings will be held at least twice per year, generally at the TIO's Melbourne office.
- 14. Meetings may be attended physically or by teleconference.

WORKING GROUP MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

15. Unless expressly stated otherwise by the Ombudsman or the acting Chair, the activities of the Telco Accessibility Task Force are confidential and must not be disclosed to anyone other than the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman or other members of the Telco Accessibility Task Force.
16. Working Group members are responsible for declaring any conflicts of interest when they arise.

PAYMENT OF TRAVEL COSTS

17. The TIO will pay Telco Accessibility Task Force members their reasonable travel costs for attending Working Group meetings.