

How we can help with complaints about faults

Guidance Document

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Who is this document for?

This document is for anyone who wants to understand how the TIO approaches complaints about faults. It's designed to help consumers, representatives, and members of the scheme understand our work process and our expectations.

Whether you're making a complaint or responding to one, this guide explains how we work towards fair and consistent outcomes.

1. Common types of complaints involving faults

The following is a list of common faults complaints we can help with. This list does not cover all complaints, and we encourage all parties to contact us to find out if we can help with the complaint or concern.

	<p>1.1 Dropouts and no service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet services often drop out • Mobile calls break up and disconnect • Landlines are noisy or don't work
	<p>1.2 Mobile coverage availability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No reception • Dropouts • Black spots
	<p>1.3 Claims for compensation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When there are outages • When there's no service or delayed connections
	<p>1.4 Customer service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor experiences with support • No follow up • Unresolved complaints

2. How we handle complaints

When handling complaints about faults, we uphold fair procedures and practices in all aspects of our work. We engage with all parties in a clear, independent and transparent way. We seek to build trust and collaboration through our engagement with all parties. We use common approaches to do this.

The following examples show how we may resolve cases. The examples are guides only. What is fair and reasonable depends on the individual circumstances of each complaint.

2.1 Dropouts and no service

People complain about dropouts and no service across internet, mobile and landline services. Dropouts and no service can cause ongoing disruption to or prevent people from working, interacting with friends and family and using online services. Disruption can have varying impacts on individuals from minimal to extreme.

Report, respond & record

When people experience dropouts or no services, we expect them to report the faults to providers. This is so providers know about the faults and can respond appropriately.

We expect providers to quickly contact them, find faults and, if they can, fix them. We expect them to record the troubleshooting steps they take so consumers do not need to repeat them. If providers are unable to fix faults, we ask them to send technicians as soon as possible, tell consumers when they're coming and how long for.

In handling these complaints, we ask providers to give us information supporting what they've done so far. This helps us decide what we need to do next.

What did they agree to?

When handling these complaints, we ask providers and consumers what they agreed to. This is usually in documents like contracts or Critical Information Summaries. These agreements might be signed in-store, made over the phone, or agreed to in an online chat.

We ask providers what they discussed with consumers about how they use services. Their responses help us decide what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances.

Internet dropouts

When consumers report internet dropouts, our priority is to get them fixed. Where troubleshooting with providers has not worked, we ask them to send technicians to affected addresses to find faults and fix them.

Where fixing faults is delayed, we ask what type of internet connection consumers have. This helps us identify the technology so we can quickly understand what might be causing problems.

We check the accuracy of information providers gave consumers about the internet service against what they're getting.

We also check what people told providers about how they wanted to use the internet. We ask providers if there have been any changes in the quality of services.

We use this information to help us decide if the appropriate steps have been taken and what fair and reasonable solutions might be.

Mobile dropouts

When consumers report mobile dropouts, we ask them if the dropouts happen in specific areas or everywhere. This helps us decide if dropouts are local or broader network issues or related to phones.

If the issues are local, we check this against provider coverage maps and ask providers if there is congestion in the area. If there are differences between maps and actual coverage, we may ask providers to release consumers from contracts so they can find other providers that can meet their coverage needs. Where there are no other providers, we may ask providers to reduce charges or discount them to reflect the quality of services. This helps consumers pay less for the reduced service they get.

If the issues are network-wide, we ask providers if they are planning to improve their networks and when.

If providers decide not to improve the service locally or network-wide, we decide what fair and reasonable solutions might be.

Landline dropouts

We expect providers to quickly contact consumers by their preferred methods when they report faults with landline services and help them fix faults.

Standard telephone services (landlines only, not internet or mobiles) are covered by the Customer Service Guarantee (CSG) Standard. We expect providers to fix landline faults in line with the CSG Standard.

If they don't, we assess if compensation is applicable.

The CSG Standard also says providers must offer consumers interim or alternative services. We check if and when they did so. If they didn't, we ask them to explain their reasons and, if possible, supply alternative services. We use this information to decide what is fair in the circumstances.

Solutions

If providers delay fixing internet services, we check why and ask them to fix services as soon as possible. We may ask providers to refund any charges paid or compensate consumers when they cannot use internet services.

If providers do not offer consumers interim or alternate services (such as mobile or satellite phones), we may ask them to adjust compensation to reflect this.

Where mobile coverage is poor and providers have no planned improvements, we may ask them to release consumers from contract. This lets consumers find other providers that can meet their needs.

Where mobile coverage is poor and provider coverage maps say it is good, we may ask them to reduce charges or discount them to reflect the quality of services. This helps consumers pay less for the reduced they get.

Case study: Testing didn't show Jenny's internet was faulty until Supernet checked a crucial cable

Jenny lives in a rental property where she had an internet service on Fibre-To-The-Curb technology with Supernet for \$90 per month. She reported dropouts to Supernet over a period of four months. Supernet did troubleshooting with Jenny over the phone, but this didn't fix the fault. She said it sent a technician to fix the fault, but they did not show up. The internet continued to drop out, so Jenny complained to us.

We asked Supernet what the fault was. Supernet said remote testing showed the internet was working, so had not found any fault. This didn't match Jenny's experience of dropouts. Knowing the type of connection and common faults it has, we asked Supernet to send a technician to Jenny's place to check the lead-in cable from the curb to her house. The technician found the lead-in cable was damaged, so replaced it. This stopped the dropouts.

We asked Supernet to make Jenny an offer for the missed technician appointment and not fixing the fault. Supernet offered Jenny a refund of two months' charges. She rejected it. We asked Supernet to improve its offer based on Jenny's experience from when she first reported the fault. Supernet offered her a refund of five months' charges as a credit to her account, that is \$450. Jenny accepted the offer.

Our technical know-how helped Supernet find the fault and fix it. Jenny was pleased with the refund and fixed service, feeling she got a fair outcome.

2.2 Poor mobile coverage

Consumers complain about poor mobile coverage, saying providers told them coverage was good in areas where they said they use mobiles.

Accurate coverage maps

We expect providers to show consumers accurate coverage maps that show congestion and known blackspots before they sign up.

Where consumers experience poor mobile coverage, we ask providers to send us accurate coverage maps and ask for explanations about congestion and known blackspots. We check these against consumer experiences and what providers told them when they signed up.

Maintaining networks

We expect providers to regularly maintain their networks to avoid disruption to services. We expect them to tell people as soon as possible about planned and unplanned network events and quickly fix any faults. We may ask providers to show us how they have done this.

Solutions

If the maps and consumer experiences don't match, we may ask providers to release consumers from contracts so they can find other providers that offer good coverage where they need it.

If there are no other providers that can supply reliable mobile services, for example in rural or remote areas, we may ask providers to discount charges to reflect the actual quality of coverage or explore alternatives.

Case study: Country Mob was upgrading Luka's local tower but didn't tell him

Luka lives rurally with his elderly mother and runs a business from home. He relies on his mobile phone with Country Mob for business, managing health appointments for his mother and staying connected with friends and family. He pays \$110 per month.

Two months ago, coverage faded: calls dropped out and he missed incoming calls. He reported the issue to Country Mob, which said there was no problem at their end and offered him a \$20 credit. This happened two more times, then he complained to us. He wanted charges refunded for the last two months.

We asked Country Mob what was happening on its network in Luka's area. Country Mob said it was upgrading one of its mobile-network towers nearby and Luka might experience poor coverage until the work finishes.

We asked if it had told its local customers about the upgrade and how long it might take. Country Mob said no, but it had credited him \$60. We reminded Country Mob good

industry practice is to tell all its customers about planned changes in coverage so they can manage the way they communicate.

We asked it to reconsider its offer to Luka. Country Mob offered him the two months' charges he asked for on top of the \$60 it had credited him. Luka accepted Country Mob's offer.

Our [Good Industry Practice Guides](#) set out what we think is good industry practice for providers.

3. Laws, Codes and relevant information

The laws, codes and relevant information below are what we will consider in complaints involving faults.

- [Australian Consumer Law](#)
- [Debt Collection Guidelines](#)
- [Emergency Call Service Requirements 2020](#)
- [Inbound Number Portability Code 2024](#)
- [Installation Requirements for Customer Cabling \(Wiring Rules\) 2020](#)
- [Local Number Portability Code 2023](#)
- [Mobile Number Portability Code 2024](#)
- [NBN Access Transfer Code 2023](#)
- [Telecommunications Act 1997](#)
- [Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code 2019](#)
- [Telecommunications \(Consumer Complaints Handling\) Industry Standard 2018](#)
- [Telecommunications \(Consumer Protection and Service Standards\) Act 1999](#)
- [Telecommunications \(Emergency Call Service\) Determination 2019](#)
- [Telecommunications \(Financial Hardship\) Industry Standard 2024](#)
- [Telecommunications \(Mobile Number Pre-Porting Additional Identity Verification\) Industry Standard 2020](#)
- [Telecommunications Numbering Plan 2025](#)
- [Telecommunications Service Provider \(Customer Identity Authentication\) Determination 2022](#)
- [TIO Terms of Reference 2025](#)
- [Number Management Code - Use of Numbers by Customers Code 2023](#)

TIO Good Industry Practice

Our Good Industry Practice Guide for Faults sets out what we think is good industry practice for complaints about faults with services and equipment under these headings:

- Complaints we handle about faults
- Troubleshooting
- Assessing equipment
- Faulty equipment
- Equipment from third parties
- Internet faults
- Mobile coverage

Please see the [TIO Good Industry Practice Guide for Faults](#).

For more on how we approach fairness, see the [TIO Fairness Framework](#).