



27 May 2026

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee

Submission to Inquiry into Competition and the Consumer Amendment (Unfair Trading Practices) Bill 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry into the Competition and the Consumer Amendment (Unfair Trading Practices) Bill 2026 (**the Bill**).

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (**TIO**) supports the introduction of a prohibition on unfair trading practices and stronger protections against harmful subscription contracts. We strongly support these protections applying to the communications sector, including telecommunications and digital platforms.

Based on our experience as the independent external dispute resolution scheme for telecommunications consumers, we consider the Bill will strengthen consumer protections, increase consumer confidence, and help reduce complaints to the TIO by addressing practices that cause consumer harm. While we support the Bill, we also encourage the Committee to consider whether the amendments discussed below would be appropriate for inclusion.

Unfair trading practices

The TIO supports the current drafting of the Bill, which omits the word “unreasonably” before “manipulate the consumer” from proposed s 28B(1)(a)(i) as it appeared in the exposure draft. We expect this change to remove ambiguity, strengthen consumer confidence and support more effective regulatory action.

Between 2023-2025, we received 13,957 telco complaints about failure to cancel a service. Within these complaints, we see cancellation processes, including customer retention practices, that pressure consumers to keep products or services they do not want or need, waste consumers’ time, limit consumer autonomy, and cause consumers to experience financial and emotional harm. We support the prohibition applying to practices of this kind, and we are pleased the current drafting of s 28B appears to capture this.



Our [2026 Cancellations Policy Position Statement](#) includes further information on unfair customer retention practices in the telco sector, along with 13 proposed changes that we consider consistent with the objectives of the Australian Consumer Law.

Strengthening consumer protections for unfair trading practices also offers an important safeguard for digital platforms users. Although the TIO's current jurisdiction does not extend to digital platforms, we hear from users of digital platforms seeking help with their complaints.

Between 2023-2025 our office heard from over 1,700 people experiencing problems with digital platforms. Over 30 percent of these complaints related to fees and charges, including undisclosed subscription payments after the purchase of a digital product, ongoing charges after cancellation, and high barriers to cancellation.¹

To fully benefit from the protections in the Bill, digital platform users also need access to an independent dispute resolution scheme to handle complaints, provide remedies for unfair practices, and promote compliance across the sector, as in telecommunications.

Subscription contracts

The TIO supports the provisions in the Bill designed to protect against detrimental subscription practices and considers they will help reduce common sources of consumer harm. We also suggest two amendments for the Committee's consideration.

Our office receives complaints from consumers who say they were not aware that their telco subscription product was going to be renewed before it occurred, leading to unintended ongoing charges. To help reduce complaints and consumer detriment of this kind, we support the information disclosure requirements in s 48D and s 48E.

The contract term for some telco products can be up to one year, which is a long recommitment for an unwanted product. In cases where a telco subscription term is over 12 months, in addition to the information disclosure requirements in s 48D and s 48E, we recommend a requirement for consumers to opt-in to renewal.² We encourage the Committee to explore whether such a measure may be appropriate for inclusion in this Bill.

Consumers have also told us that when they could not cancel their subscription, or when their cancellation request was not processed, their subscription rolled over into a new month, which meant they had to pay another month for a service they no longer wanted. We are strongly supportive of the requirements in s 48F to help address issues of this kind.

¹ TIO, [Digital platforms complaints insights report](#), December 2025.

² TIO, [TIO Policy Position Statement – Cancellation Practices](#), January 2026.



Section 48F of the Bill requires suppliers to provide an online cancellation option where consumers entered, or could have entered, a subscription contract online. In addition to this, it is our position that telcos should be required to accept cancellation requests via all methods that the consumer signed up with.³ For example, if a consumer signed up in person, they should have the option to cancel in person. Such a measure may be beneficial for other services too. This change would align with the policy intent behind section 48F – that exiting a subscription contract should not be more difficult than signing up. We encourage the Committee to explore whether such a measure may be appropriate for inclusion in this Bill.

For more detail on the TIO's views on the Bill, please refer to our submission to the [Treasury's consultation on unfair trading practices exposure draft legislation](#).

We look forward to the outcome of the Committee's consideration and support the Bill's progression through the Senate.

Yours sincerely,

Cynthia Gebert
Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman

³ TIO, [TIO Policy Position Statement – Cancellation Practices](#), January 2026.