Accessible Telecoms Annual Report

Reporting period: 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024

Contents

1.   Executive Summary

The Accessible Telecoms (AT) project is Australia's first independent and up-to-date guide to mainstream and assistive telecommunications products and services.

This free service is an initiative of the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) to address the lack of consolidated, independent and up-to-date information about accessibility features of telecommunications equipment available in Australia, particularly for people with disability and seniors.

Since the service began in 2020:

- More than 850,000 people have visited the AT website
- The AT team has responded to more than 1400 enquiries over phone, email, live chat and SMS.

Accessibility and inclusivity are at the heart of ACCAN's approach to delivering AT. Two of the five current team members have lived experience of disability, ensuring the team has a deep appreciation for the unique challenges some consumers face in getting and staying connected.

The Commonwealth of Australia funds AT through a grant made under section 14 of the *Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999* (Cth). This grant is funded through the Telecommunications Industry Levy.

This grant has enabled ACCAN to address the consumer demand for the service more comprehensively. In the 12 months to July 2024:

- Over half a million 'events' have been recorded on the AT website, including content downloads, device searches and resources viewed.
- AT web pages have been uploaded nearly 200,000 times
- A new part-time communications assistant has launched AT on social media and new promotional channels, including LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram.

During FY2023-24, ACCAN provided quarterly reports to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (the Department). The current report consolidates achievements, metrics and reflections for the full 2023-24 financial year period.

2.   The year at a glance

	Q1: July – September 2023	Q2: October – December 2023	Q3: January – March 2024	Q4: April – June 2024
Consumer engagement	125 direct consumer engagements via 1800 helpline, email, live chat and SMS.	198 direct consumer engagements via 1800 helpline, email, live chat and SMS.	150 direct consumer engagements via 1800 helpline, email, live chat and SMS.	78 direct consumer engagements via 1800 helpline, email, live chat and SMS.
Resource development	Development and distribution of updated promotional brochures.	32 new devices uploaded to the website, including 26 mobile phones. Accessibility review and refinement of live chat function, including development of automated responses for after-hours enquiries. ACCAN awarded $40,000 auDA Foundation grant to create a database of digital skills training programs for people with a disability, to be hosted on the new AT website (H2 2024).	10 new accessories including smart watches, cochlear implant accessories and portable hotspots added to website. ACCAN launched Affordable Devices, an online consumer resource with cross-benefits for AT users. AT team is trained in the new resource, enabling them to assist consumers needing accessible communications products at more affordable price points.	14 new mobile phones uploaded to website. The AT team receives increasing numbers of enquiries in relation to the 3G shutdown. AT users are supported to use sectoral and ACCAN resources to ensure their devices would continue to work post 3G network shutdown.
Stakeholder engagement and events	Advisory Committee reconvened. Hosted display table and provided a presentation to delegates at ACCAN Consumer Congress in September.	Attended Financial Counsellors' Association of Western Australia's conference and hosted display table.	Vision Radio featured an interview with AT Project Assistant.	AT was invited to speak at a Sutherland Shire Aged Care Interagency meeting.
Awareness raising	Commissioned 12-month promotional campaign across targeted print and radio outlets. Advertisement in August Link Magazine (readership 20,000) promoted AT services and contact channels.	Online and print advertisements in December Link Magazine promoted benefits of accessible telecommunications technology, with AT contact channels. Radio advertising started via Vision Australia Radio and National Community Radio networks.	Social media action plan developed to raise profile of AT and deliver consumer education and support material. Full page advertisement and editorial in February Link Magazine focusing on contact channels and services provided by AT.	Launch of AT social media profiles via Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram and LinkedIn. Full-page advertisement and editorial in April and June Link Magazines focusing on range of services provided by AT team.
Website redevelopment	The project team consulted with several web developers to discuss revitalising the website. Feedback from our Advisory Committee determined which developer would be best suited for a complex redesign.	Commissioned website development company that is highly skilled in web accessibility. Commenced planning and devised a timeline.	The project team worked closely with developers to guide the User Experience (UX) and Information Architecture (IA) via multiple workshops and weekly meetings.	The site's accessibility for users and staff was refined during development, and the internal project team completed training to prepare for User Acceptance Testing in July 2024.
Team structure	Second casual Project Assistant onboarded, with particular focus on accessibility of AT processes and engagement.	ACCAN's Director of Inclusion, Dr Wayne Hawkins, retires. Responsibility for AT transfers to ACCAN's Director of Operations.	Recruitment and onboarding of Communications Assistant (0.6 FTE) to develop and implement communications strategy.	A third casual Project Assistant is recruited to support with peak consumer enquiries, engagement and social media during staff leave periods.

Table 1 – Accessible Telecoms 2023-24 highlights

3.   Website analytics

The [AT website](#) continues to be a key source of reliable information for consumers about accessible telecommunications devices, applications, accessories and training.

3.1   Website engagement

ACCAN captures interaction with the AT website through Google Analytics. Figure 1 shows engagement figures per quarter for the 2023-24 reporting year. The reporting metrics detailed are:

- **Active Users:** the number of unique users who engaged with the website.
- **Views:** an instance of a page being loaded on the website.
- **Events:** the number of times users triggered any event within the website, including viewing resources, downloading content, and utilising device or training searches.

As illustrated in Figure 1, there has been consistent growth in the number of website views and event interactions over the reporting year (**Table 5** in **Appendix A** details these metrics).

Figure 2, Figure 3 and Figure 4 respectively show our website engagement since 2020 and demonstrate significant growth in the numbers of active users, page views and events on the AT website.

We expect the new website will further enhance engagement given its improved user experience delivered via accessibility and design upgrades.

Key observations:

- In the last 12 months:

    - Consumers have engaged with AT website content over half a million times, downloading content, searching for a device or training, and viewing information and support.
    - AT web pages have been uploaded nearly 200,000 times
    - AT has seen a 150% jump in events since Q1. Given that the number of active users has remained relatively stable throughout this year, this suggests users are spending more time engaging with the website and exploring various aspects of the information and search function provided.

- Since its inception in 2020:

    - The number of active users to the AT website has grown by 322%
    - Page views have increased by 292%
    - Events on the site have increased by 12 times.

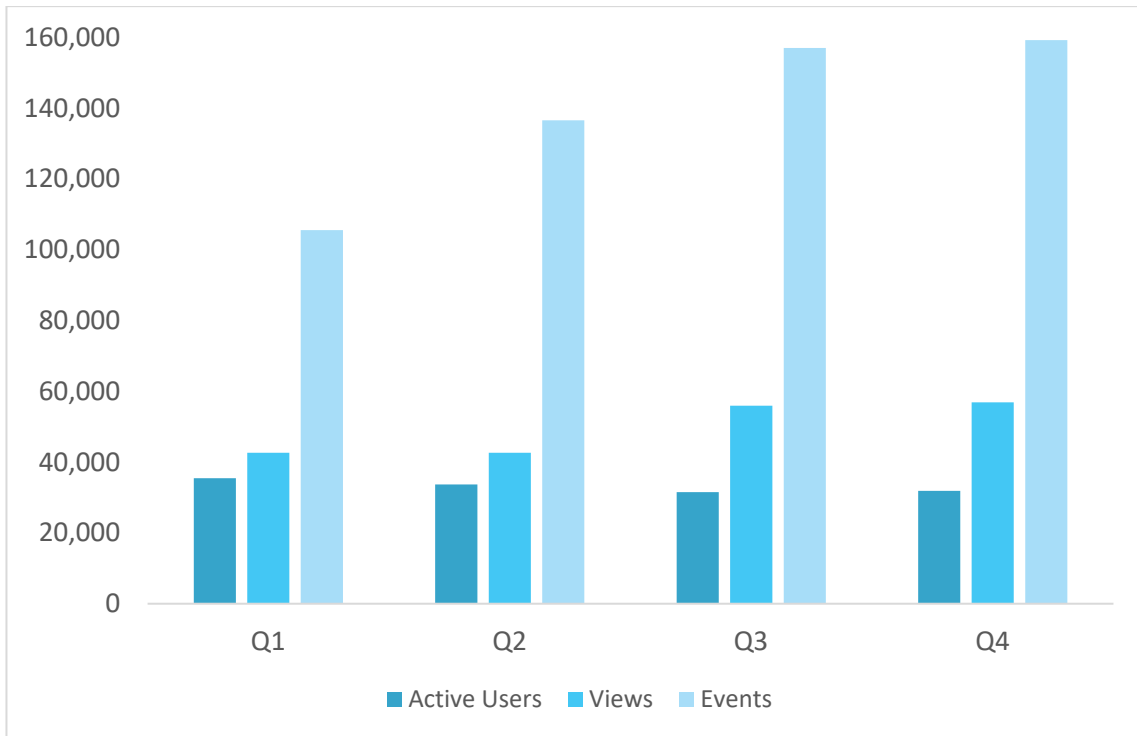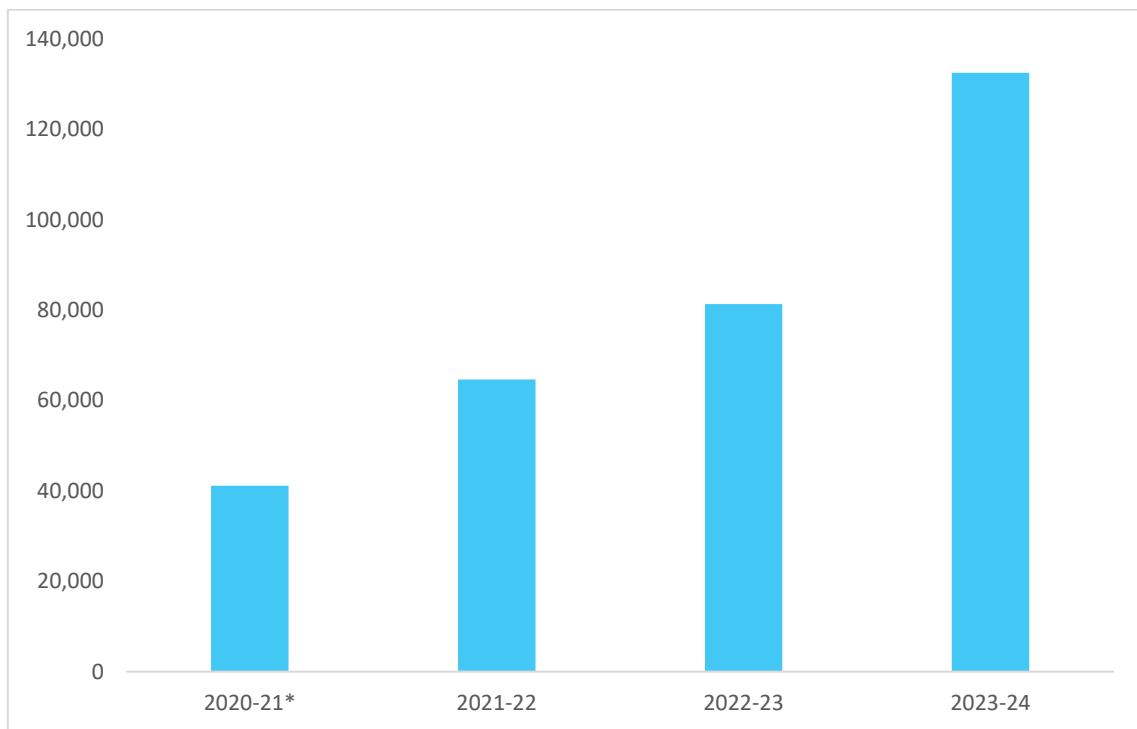*Figure 1 – Website metrics by quarter, 2023-24*

*Figure 2 – Website active user comparison by reporting year, 2020-21 to 2023-24. *Data capture commenced 1 August 2020.*
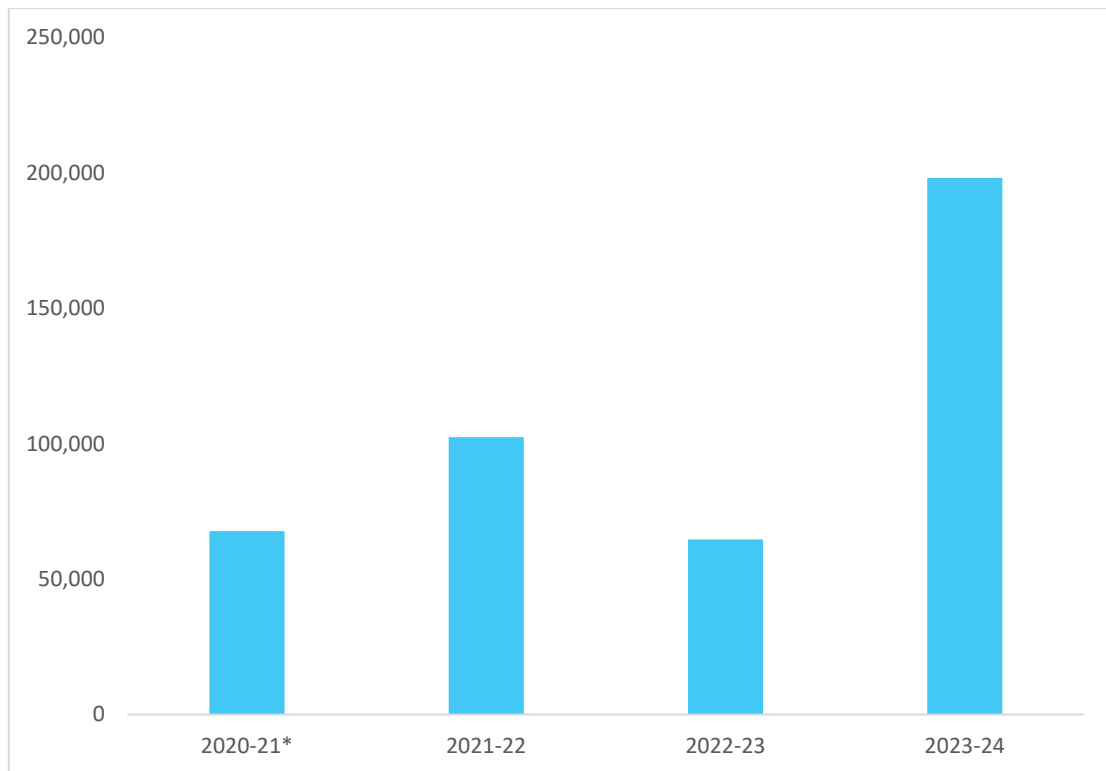
*Figure 3 – Website page views comparison by reporting year, 2020-21 to 2023-24. *Data capture commenced 1 August 2020.*
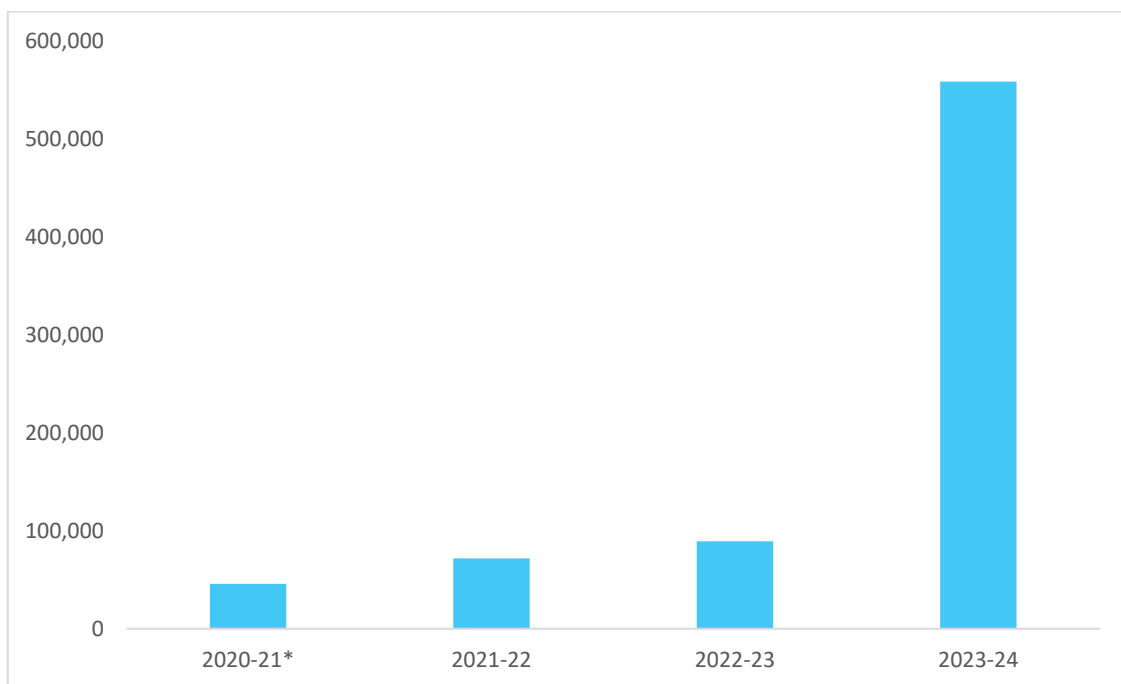
*Figure 4 – Website events comparison by reporting year, 2020-21 to 2023-24. *Data capture commenced 1 August 2020.*

3.2   How consumers find us

Google Analytics provides data on how users discover a site. The categories are divided into:

- **Organic search:** Users arrive at the site via search engine links, without the influence of paid advertising.
- **Referral:** Users arrive at the site via (unpaid) links on other sites, such as links on other websites or social media posts.
- **Direct:** Users arrive at the site without going via another site e.g. They've used a saved link or have entered the URL.

Table 2 details quarterly metrics that indicate how consumers access the AT website.

Key observations:

- Most users find our website through organic search indicating that our content is relevant, valuable, and discoverable.
- For the next reporting period we will include a new category called 'organic social', which will help track the effectiveness of our social media posts in driving traffic directly to our website.

	Organic search	Referral	Direct	Total
Q1 2023-24	20,751	3,615	2,631	26,997
Q2 2023-24	22,835	4,738	2,511	30,084
Q3 2023-24	22,625	5,863	2,624	31,112
Q4 2023-24	25,386	5,754	2,604	33,744

Table 2 User traffic source by quarter, 2023-24

3.3   Most visited web pages

Google Analytics ranks the most popular website resources and pages, demonstrating which devices and information users are seeking the most help with or are interested in.

Figure 3 illustrates the most heavily trafficked pages of the website for 2023-24.

Key observations:

- The AT website provides easy-to-read information for consumers to access the support they need.
- As illustrated below, the first and third most visited pages provided general information about AT (more information and homepage).
- In addition to these general pages, the most viewed pages on our site were for smart watches and the Telstra Flip 4, a low-cost and easy-to-use mobile phone.
- Information pages about assistive apps are heavily visited, with this category representing four of the ten most popular pages. These assistive apps are specialist products for people living with a disability, with information about eye gaze apps, large keyboard apps, speech generating / augmentative / alternative communication apps, and voice control apps particularly popular.
- Overall, the most popular page results suggest the resources listed on the website resonate well with the AT target audience of people living with a disability, seniors, and their carers.
- Many consumers use the AT website to get general information, with popular pages outside the top ten including information and links to the National Relay Service, telco customer service, and directory assistance, via the *Articles Of Interest* and *More Information* pages. These feature a range of resources that include information on telco accessibility services, funding options, operating systems, and more.
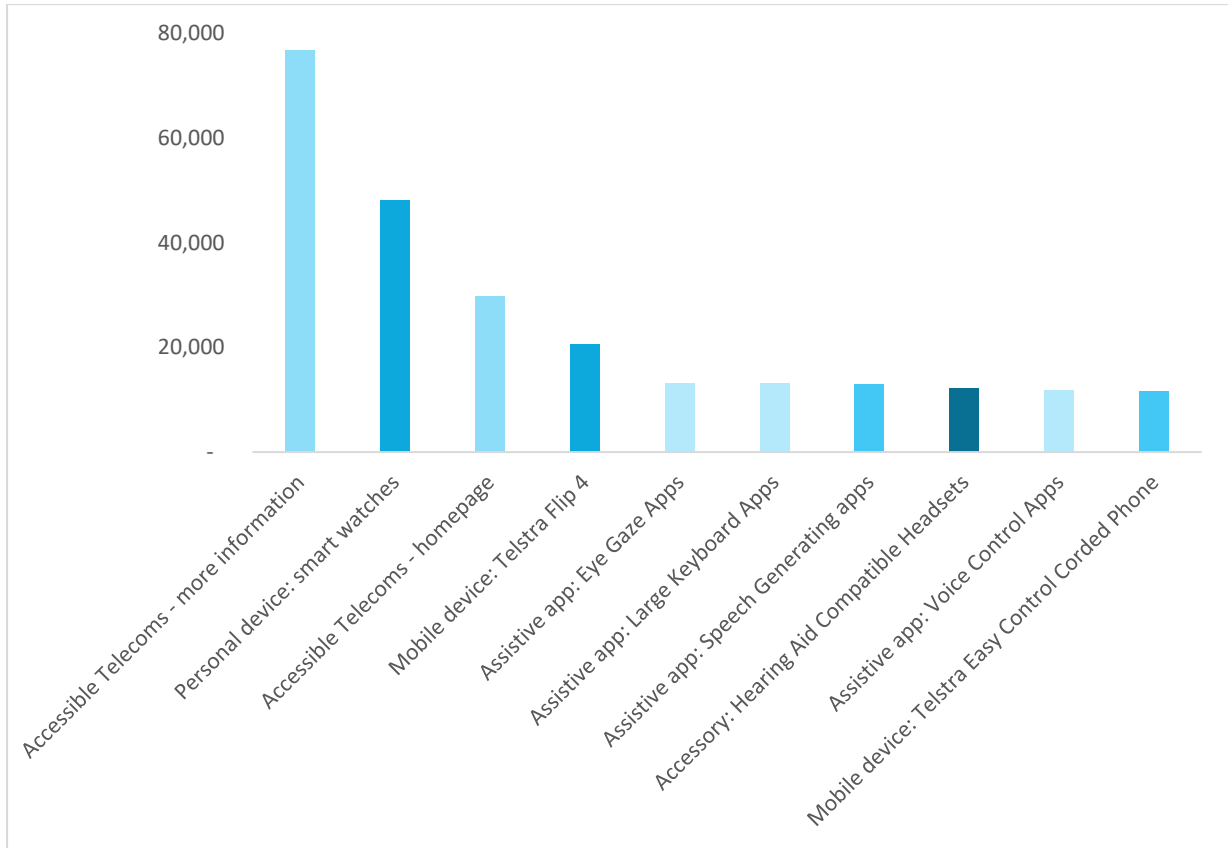
Figure 3 – Most visited pages and website resources, 2023-24

4.   Consumer contacts

4.1   Contact channels

Consumers contact the AT helpdesk by email, calling our 1800 helpline, SMS or via the live chat function on our website.

Our AT team received 550 contacts seeking assistance during the 2023-24 reporting year.

Figure 4 illustrates the comparative use of each contact channel across the reporting year Figure 5 breaks out the call volumes specifically for the 1800 number. Contact volumes by channel for each month are detailed in **Table 6** in **Appendix A**.

Key observations:

- Around two out of every three contacts are received via the 1800 helpline.
- Roughly equal numbers of consumers contact AT via email and live chat.
- It is vital that AT continues to provide a variety of channels for consumers to use when seeking assistance.
- November 2023 to January 2024 were particularly busy months for calls to the 1800 helpline, possibly driven by the end-of-year shopping season, and the start of the 3G network shutdown.
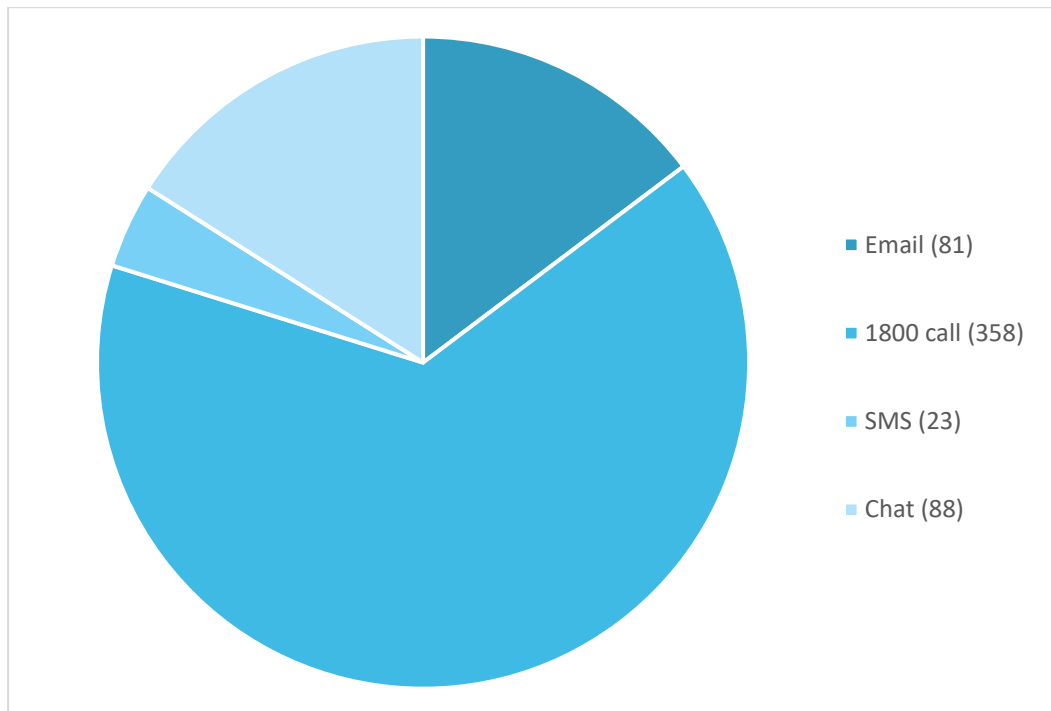
Figure 4 – Consumer contact channel – share of use, 2023-24, (n = count by issue)

As reported previously, AT has historically received a considerable portion of calls from people looking for their telecommunications provider, and in particular, from customers trying to contact Belong.

In response, the 1800 helpline welcome message was refined in January 2024 to provide a direct contact number for Belong. Call volumes decreased after this time, we assume due to some callers now being able to self-screen to instead contact their telco (Figure 5).

1800 message refined to include Belong's contact details

Subsequent decrease in 1800 calls
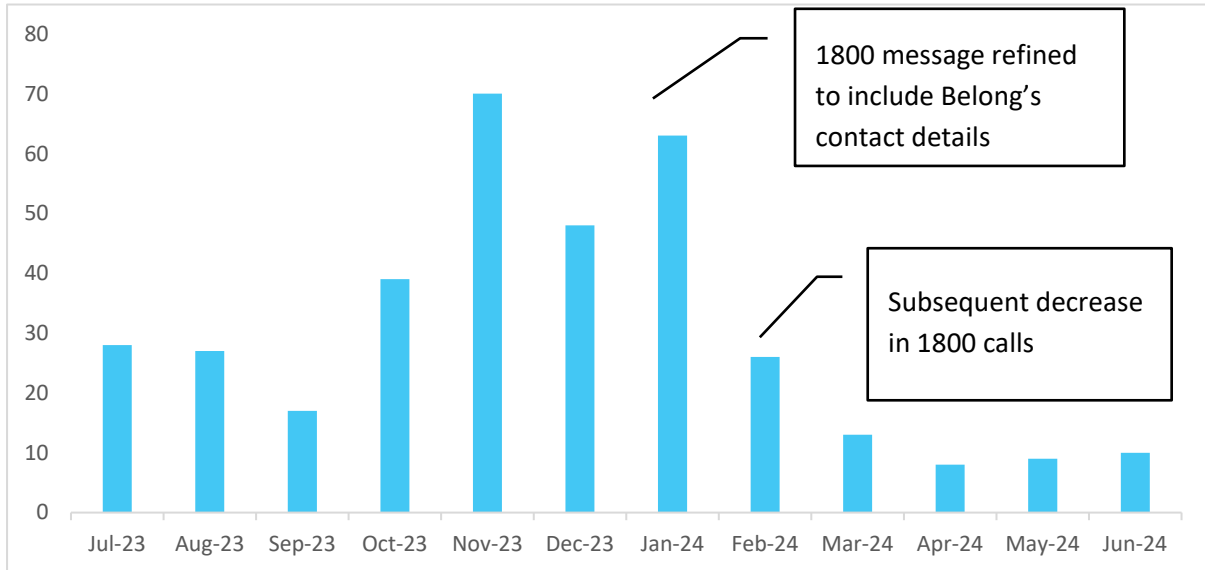
Figure 5 – 1800 call volume by month, 2023-24

4.2   Nature of enquiries

AT receives a wide variety of consumer enquiries, including some that are beyond the scope of our service. We categorise the nature of enquiries as:

- **Information on a device, app or accessory and/or its compatibility:** seeking information on product features, availability, cost, and/or whether the product is suitable for their needs.
- **Information on how to use a device, app, or accessory:** seeking a product user manual or instructions on how to use specific features.
- **Information on how to access or use a service:** seeking information on how to access services such as Directory Assistance and the NRS.
- **Difficulty contacting service provider**: seeking contact details and needing assistance from a service provider.
- **Other / Non-AT Related:** enquiries not specific to AT.

Figure 6 shows the proportion of callers categorised by topic.

Key observations:

- About 37% of incoming enquiries to AT are related to difficulty contacting a service provider (Figure 6). This suggests that Australian telecommunications providers can still do more to make it easier for their customers to contact them, particularly for people living with disabilities and older consumers.
- One in four contacts related to consumers seeking advice and recommendations about accessibility and one in five seeking advice specifically about using a device, app or accessory. This figure highlights the critical role of AT's specialised and knowledgeable team members.

Figure 6 – Incoming contacts to AT categorised by issue or problem, 2023-24 (n = count by issue)

4.3   Nature of solutions

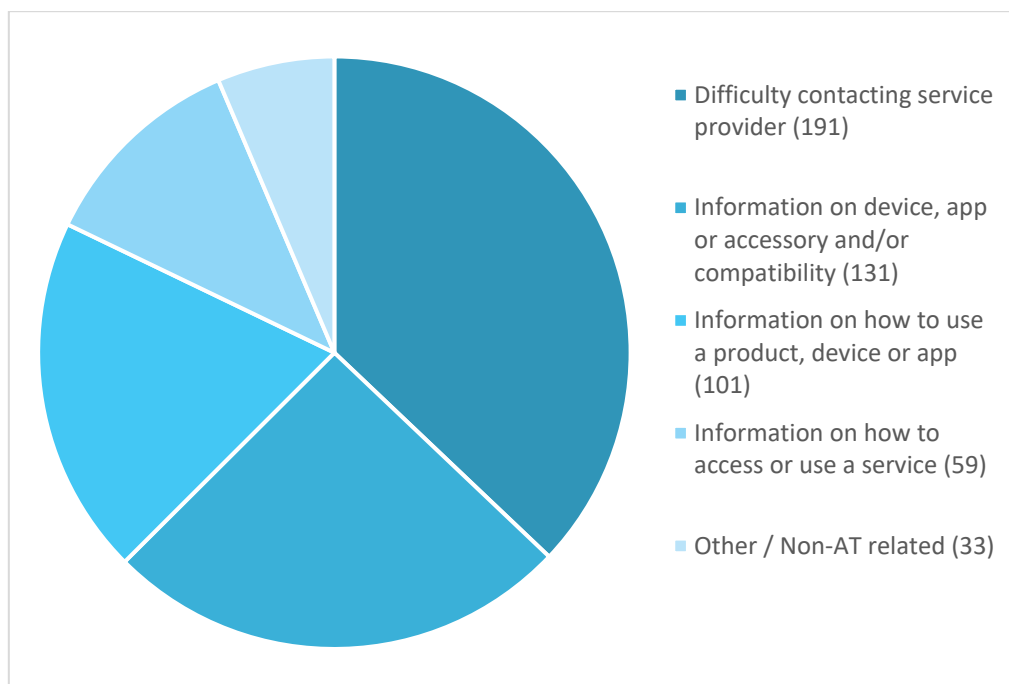The solutions offered to consumers are broadly categorised based on whether the AT provided direct information and advice, or if the consumer was referred to another organisation for assistance.

In addition to assisting via phone, email, chat and text, the AT team is often asked to post hard copy information such as device instruction manuals to consumers unable to access the internet.

- **AT provided immediate support**: the AT team provided on-the-spot support or information to resolve the issue.
- **AT provided extended support**: for more complex enquiries, the AT team asked questions to inform in-depth research and followed up with the consumer contact with recommendations and tailored advice.
- **Disability organisation**: the consumer was referred to a relevant disability organisation.
- **Manufacturer**: the consumer was referred directly to the device, app or accessory manufacturer.
- **Retailer**: the consumer was referred to a local or online device retailer.
- **Seniors' organisation**: the consumer was referred to relevant Seniors' organisations.
- **Service**: consumer was referred to a community service organisation for support
- **Telco**: referred to a telco for sales and/or support.
- **Training provider**: the consumer was referred to a local or relevant training provider.
- **Other**: other solutions provided.

Figure 7 illustrates the proportion of solutions grouped into major categories by topic. (Note the total number of incoming contacts was 550, but the sum of solutions provided in Figure 7 is 545 as not all consumers responded to our attempts to call or email them back.) **Table 7** in **Appendix A** details the number of solutions per topic.

Key observations:

- The AT team provided advice or support to resolve the problem directly or researched the issue and followed up with advice and recommendations for 230 contacts.
- Around 40% of incoming consumer contacts were referred directly to a telecommunications provider for sales and/or support advice, as shown in Figure 7.

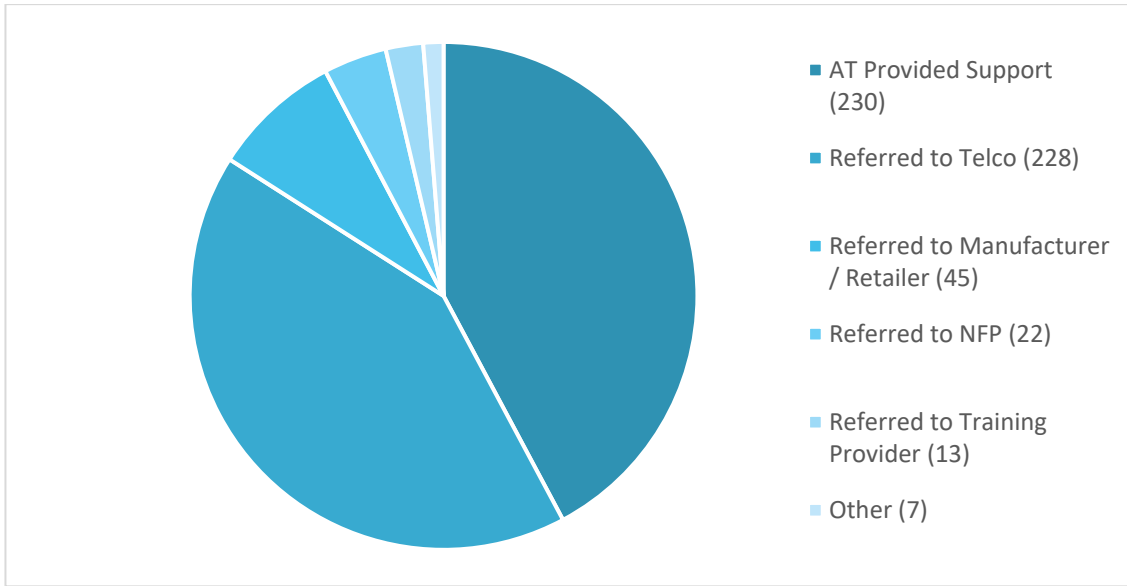*Figure 7 – Breakdown of solutions provided to consumers, 2023-24 (n= count by topic)*

Legend:
- AT Provided Support (230)
- Referred to Telco (228)
- Referred to Manufacturer / Retailer (45)
- Referred to NFP (22)
- Referred to Training Provider (13)
- Other (7)

4.4   Referrals to telecommunications providers

AT provides consumers with relevant telco contact details as needed. When appropriate, the team also refers customers to its guide on telco accessibility services[1].

Of the 545 consumers AT has provided solutions for this financial year, 228 or 42% were referred to their telecommunications service provider.

Figure 8 illustrates the breakdown of consumers referred to a specific telecommunications company.

Key observations:

- Many consumers continue to struggle to connect directly with their telecommunications provider to resolve issues. This can leave them in vulnerable positions, without reliable access to internet or mobile communications services.
- Around 54% of consumers were provided with contact details for Belong, suggesting this provider in particular could improve the visibility of their own customer help services. Based on the high number of enquiries specifically for Belong, we updated our after-hours 1800 number message with Belong's 1300 number so customers can contact them directly without going through the AT team.
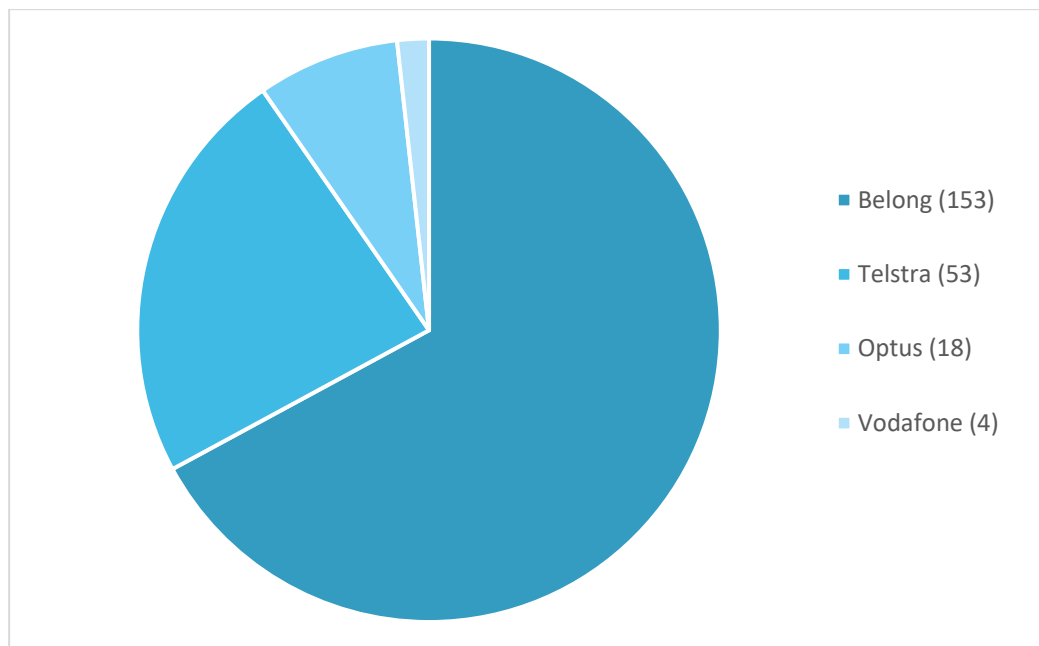
Figure 8 – Contacts referred to their service provider, 2023-24 (n= number of contacts)

Note that not all users of AT identify their telco. The information in this section was generally captured as part of the direct enquiry of the customer – for example, they were asking for advice about a Telstra device, an Optus accounts/billing enquiry or needed Belong's contact details. As part

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[1]ACCAN, 2024. Accessibility Services of Telecommunication Companies in Australia. Available at: https://www.accessibletelecoms.org.au/telecom-home/more-information.html?view=article&id=2451

of our plans to improve data captured during consumer enquiries, we will develop more specific prompts for our Project Assistants to enquire which telco the consumer is a current customer of.

5. Case studies

AT records case studies to capture systemic issues and other frequent enquiries the help desk assists with. Three examples from this year are included below. Names have been changed for privacy purposes and stock photos have been used.

5.1 Case study #1301– landline accessibility recommendation

Ingrid called on behalf of her mother who is vision and hearing impaired. Their current landline has a constant buzzing sound which was causing challenges for her mother. She was seeking advice on a very simple device.

She mentioned they were struggling to find a new handset that would meet their needs, as they were unable to view models in person at the Telstra shop – there were no landlines on display and staff were unable to open products for them to view.

Summary

- Seeking suitable landline for consumer with vision and hearing impairments.
- Requires recommendation for suitable devices, as the Telstra store did not have suitable products on display.

How AT provided support

1. Discussed challenges and requirements with Ingrid.
2. Provided a link to appropriate landline phones on the AT website that are suitable for people with vision and hearing impairments.
3. Noted that AT often hears from seniors and other consumers who prefer to physically see and trial products before making a purchase. For example, those with hearing impairments can be more confident after testing a phone to ensure it will be loud enough for their needs.

5.2   Case study #1356 – upgrading 3G phone

Jing received an email from Telstra informing him his current mobile needs to be upgraded as it will not work after the 3G network shutdown.

He noted he needs a very simplified phone. His priorities were making and receiving calls and texting. Jing indicated he would not use the phone for internet searches or streaming music. Big buttons were a priority and Jing mentioned his wife had previously struggled with a flip phone. Hearing aid compatibility was not required.

Summary

- Seeking 4G/5G compatible, simple-to-use phone with emphasis on big buttons.
- Requesting recommendations for suitable devices, including cost and how to purchase.

How AT provided support

1. Discussed what Jing appreciates about his existing phone, what he struggles with and what features are important to him.
2. Researched suitable phones, cost and how to purchase.
3. Called Jing back to provide advice about features of T-Lite, T-Essentials and Opel Big Button.
4. Suggested Jing visit Telstra store to view phones in person and purchase outright. The AT team noted for Jing that the T-Lite was on sale at the time.

5.3   Case study #1373 – linking with specialised support

Barry called ACCAN reception to enquire about possible assistance for upgrading his 3G phone. AT returned his call to learn more about his situation and specific requirements. Barry uses a wheelchair and has significant medical challenges, including low vision. He was also on a waitlist for public housing and had limited disposable income to purchase a new phone.

For Barry, maintaining a phone connection was critical for making medical appointments, communicating with his chemist and carers. Barry's preference was for a simple phone with a touch screen. Ability to increase font size was also important due to his low vision.

AT contacted three relevant community organisations on Barry's behalf to see if a refurbished phone could be obtained for him. AT connected with Spinal Life, a GIVIT partner who provided Barry with an Oppo phone that suited his needs.

Summary

- Seeking 4G/5G compatible phone suitable for a consumer living with disabilities, including low vision.

How AT provided support

- Returned Barry's call to understand his specific needs and preferences for a 4G/5G compatible phone.
- Researched local organisations who might be able to provide assistance via GIVIT, an organisation that provides donated resources to community organisations who can then pass them onto consumers.
- Connected with Spinal Life, Thalidomide Support Service and Bundaberg Neighbourhood Centre. Spinal Life in best position to help.
- Connected Spinal Life with Barry to liaise directly regarding delivery of phone.

6.   New accessible communications technologies

70 new devices were added to the AT website this year.

This is a key activity for the team, who undertake weekly environmental scans to identify new technologies, equipment, and services suitable for consumers with disability or seniors. Once identified, new technologies are thoroughly researched to identify key specifications and accessibility features, before publishing to the database.

Likewise, the AT team continuously check the currency of website resources to ensure our content is up-to-date and relevant, such as through the review and update of external links to NRS tutorial videos and other resources.

Table 3 details new resources added to the site during 2023-24.

Accessible Device Type	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2023-24
Mobiles	1	27	4	18	50
Tablets	1	6	1	0	8
Accessories	0	0	10	0	10
Apps	0	0	0	1	1
Landlines	0	0	2	0	2
Total	2	33	17	19	70

Table 3 – Devices added to AT website by category of device, 2023-24

Examples of innovative resources that have recently been published to our website include the Oricom Care920-1 Big Button Phone with Cordless Handset and Otter.ai caption generating application, below.

6.1   Oricom Care920-1 Big Button Phone with Cordless Handset

Click to view the [Oricom Care920-1 Big Button Phone](link) on the AT website.

The Oricom Care920-1 Big Button Phone with Cordless Handset is a user-friendly corded phone plus additional cordless handset that has been designed to ensure calls are reliably loud, clear and easily accessible.

It includes four large one-touch picture memory buttons to allow users to place a photograph of the person they want to call under the button's cover. This makes the phone suitable for consumers with cognitive impairments including memory loss or low vision. An additional cordless handset is sold separately.

This landline also features an extra louder ringer, visual alerts for incoming calls and is compatible with hearing aid microphones and telecoils, all features that make it suitable for those with hearing impairments. This landline is available to purchase via Oricom and other retailers for $199.

Other key features of the system include:

- Flatback for tabletop operation
- Physical dialling keys
- Speaker-phone option on handset and base with boosted volume
- Instant call blocking
- Ability to connect up to 4 handsets for greater coverage around the home
- 30-minute answering machine with slow playback option.

6.2   Otter.ai caption generating application

Click here to view the [Otter.ai](link) caption-generating application (and other similar apps) on the AT website.

Caption-generating applications help individuals with hearing impairments or who are Deaf to engage in conversations even when they are in noisy environments. Otter.ai is a voice-to-text transcription software that uses artificial intelligence (AI). It picks up words in an audio feed and processes them through an AI algorithm and starts stacking the words on the page to read, highlight and copy.

Otter.ai automatically detects when different people speak and can also pull up keywords automatically. It can be used to generate transcripts for media such as videos, podcasts or webinars that don't already have captions provided. Otter.ai has a free version and paid subscriptions start from US$100 annually.

The app requires iOS 13.0 or later or Android 5.0 and can be downloaded from the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store. As with other caption-generating applications, Otter.ai does not guarantee 100% accuracy.

Other key features of the app include functions that enable users to:

- Record and transcribe conversations
- Share conversations, including editing privileges
- Review, playback and edit conversations
- Upload audio and video files for transcription
- Organise conversations and provide conversation summaries.

7.   Statement of financial performance

For the current reporting period, expenditure for the AT service is outlined below:

	YTD to 30 June 2024
Total Income/rollover from the previous FY	$453,580.50
Total expense	$370,311.53
Surplus	$83,268.97
Rollover surplus to FY2024-25	($83,268.97)
Remaining funds	$0

Table 4 - YTD income and expenditure

Key areas of expenditure for AT were:

- Staff employment costs of $221,618, representing 60% of expenditure and reflecting the staff costs directly attribute to managing the project.
- ACCAN Management fee of $70,000 representing 19% of expenditure and reflecting the overhead and indirect costs of managing the project.
- Marketing and promotional costs of almost $65,000, representing 18% of expenditure.

A key area of expenditure this year has been the development of a much-needed new website. The current site was developed in 2018 and has not been upgraded since.

Work for the new site commenced early 2024, with the build now in its final stages of user testing. Our original budget for this year had included amortisation for the new site, however, this will instead occur through FY24-25. This accounts for the bulk of the surplus listed for YTD 30 June 2024.

Please see below for a detailed overview of year-to-date financial performance.

Accessible Telecoms
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE (The Accessible Telecoms Project)
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Actual June 2024	Budget June 2024	Variance June Fav / (Unfav)	Actual YTD 2024	Budget YTD 2024	Variance YTD Fav / (Unfav)	Budget YTD 2023-2024
INCOME							
Funding							
- Accessible Telecom funded by DITRDCA (rollover from FY2022-2023)	-	-	-	453,580.50	486,363.64	(32,783.14)	486,363.64
- Funding rollover to FY2024-2025	(83,268.97)	-	(83,268.97)	(83,268.97)	-	(83,268.97)	-
Sundry Income							
- Sundry Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	(83,268.97)	-	(83,268.97)	370,311.53	486,363.64	(116,052.11)	486,363.64
EXPENSES							
Running Cost							
- **Management Cost**							
Management Fee for ACCAN	-	-	-	70,000.00	70,000.00	-	70,000.00
- **ICT Cost**							
Accessibility Audit, Disability User and Augomation Testing	-	-	-	-	16,000.00	16,000.00	16,000.00
Web-site Depreciation (new website due to be completed by 3	4,489.57	4,167.00	(322.57)	4,489.57	25,000.00	20,510.43	25,000.00
Web-site Hosting & Maintenance	350.48	500.00	149.52	5,146.10	6,000.00	853.90	6,000.00
Call-centre ongoing cost	445.22	50.00	(395.22)	3,321.29	600.00	(2,721.29)	600.00
- **Marketing and Communications**							
Conference & Sponsorship	-	-	-	1,363.64	7,000.00	5,636.36	7,000.00
Advertising and Promotional material production and distributio	5,201.00	5,600.00	399.00	59,280.82	67,000.00	7,719.18	67,000.00
Staff Traveling	-	-	-	4,308.75	8,000.00	3,691.25	8,000.00
- **Employment Cost**							
Wages, Salaries & Loading	15,810.25	17,856.00	2,045.75	197,635.65	232,129.41	34,493.76	232,129.41
Superannuation	1,739.14	1,964.16	225.02	21,740.05	25,534.23	3,794.18	25,534.23
Professional Development	-	-	-	-	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
Expert Consultant	-	500.00	500.00	1,800.00	5,000.00	3,200.00	5,000.00
Other Employment related expense	-	150.00	150.00	713.64	2,000.00	1,286.36	2,000.00
- **Advisory Committee**							
Access/Support Service	-	-	-	-	3,500.00	3,500.00	3,500.00
Venue, Catering and Other Meeting Expense	-	-	-	-	3,000.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
Travel & Accommodation	-	-	-	212.02	4,500.00	4,287.98	4,500.00
Sitting Fees	-	-	-	300.00	3,600.00	3,300.00	3,600.00
- **Contingency**							
Misc./Contingency	-	210.00	210.00	-	2,500.00	2,500.00	2,500.00
	28,035.66	30,997.16	2,961.50	370,311.53	486,363.64	116,052.11	486,363.64
NET SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	(111,304.63)	(30,997.16)	(80,307.47)	-	-	-	-
ASSET EXPENDITURE							
Web-site Development	86,247.00	-	(86,247.00)	86,247.00	75,000.00	(11,247.00)	75,000.00
Depreciation Add-Back	(4,489.57)	4,167.00	(322.57)	(4,489.57)	(25,000.00)	20,510.43	(25,000.00)
	81,757.43	4,167.00	(86,569.57)	81,757.43	50,000.00	9,263.43	50,000.00
NET SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	(193,062.06)	(35,164.16)	(166,877.04)	(81,757.43)	(50,000.00)	9,263.43	(50,000.00)

8.   Conclusion

In 2023, 97% of Australians used a mobile phone for voice calls, 96% for SMS and 95% for access to the internet.[2] The usage of mobiles to access applications including government services is also increasing steadily.[3]

In an evolving digital environment people with disability are at increasing risk of digital exclusion, with more than 55% of people with disability experiencing affordability stress.[4] Access to free, independent advice on accessible devices that meet consumer needs via AT therefore remains key to assisting people with disability during a time of sustained cost of living pressure.

AT's experience engaging with telecommunications consumers has shown that providing access to accurate information and customised support to build digital skills and capacity is a vital service. Our reach continues to grow, with more than 133,000 users engaging with the service during the past year. The certainty the Commonwealth grant funding provides for 2023 – 2025 has enabled ACCAN to strengthen AT to better meet consumer demand.

Funding continuity has facilitated greater integration of the insights of AT

The continuity of funding has also allowed ACCAN to increasingly integrate the insights generated by AT with data, case studies and experiences captured by the service, providing new and meaningful insights into our policy work. For example, ACCAN's advocacy and consumer education regarding the 3G network shutdown was informed by an increase in the number of enquiries AT was receiving on the issue. In particular, consumers were seeking support to check if their devices would be impacted, as well as recommendations for upgrades that met their unique accessibility needs.

Consumer feedback reinforces the importance of fit-for-purpose channels for engagement

Many of our conversations with telco consumers highlight the importance of the specialised service AT provides – many report that they struggle to navigate their telco's customer service approach and channels.[5] Our data illustrates that consumers rely on multiple channels to get in touch, and that this remains a vital feature of AT: 65% of contacts come via the 1800 number, 16% via live chat and 15% via email.

For Deaf or people hard of hearing, text-based communication – such as SMS, chat and email – is vital. Our current website is accessible and includes easy English content and Auslan videos. For those living with vision impairment, a fully accessible online presence – both the resources on our site and the supporting media promotion – mean the experience provides equality of access comparable to that of a sighted person. For older people, the phone line and being able to speak with 'a real person' is key.

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[2] Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2023. Trends and developments in telecommunications 2022-23. Available at: https://www.acma.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-12/Trends%20and%20developments%20in%20telecommunications%202022-23_0.pdf

[3] Ibid.

[4] Australian Digital Inclusion Index, 2023, p. 20. Available at: https://www.digitalinclusionindex.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ADII-2023-Summary_FINAL-Remediated.pdf

[5] See the experience of Ingrid, in Case Study 5.1.

Advancing accessibility through AT into the future

ACCAN remains committed to improving access for those disproportionately affected when information is difficult to find or understand. Our vision is for communication services that are trusted, inclusive, accessible, and available to all.

As part of ACCAN, AT supports the broader efforts to lead change within the communications sector, making significant progress towards realising the fully accessible communications environment outlined in the Ideal Accessible Communications Roadmap. Developed in partnership with our members and the broader disability sector, this roadmap serves as a guide for expanding our influence and ensuring that accessible communication becomes the standard for everyone.

In the next 12 months, ACCAN's primary agenda is for wider engagement, promotion, and advertising to increase awareness of the benefits that AT provides to consumers, and therefore use of the service. Our project and its benefits are scalable and linked to awareness of our service. We anticipate that the launch of the new website and our focus on promoting it will result in more consumers using the website to find the accessibility information they need. We also expect this increased awareness of our service will drive consumers to our other contact channels.

Advancing improvements in accessibility, empowering older Australians and people with disability to break down barriers to access will remain AT's focus into the new year and beyond.

Appendix A: Additional data tables

Website engagement metrics by quarter – see section 3.1 for more detail.

	Active Users	Views	Events
Q1 2023-24	35,444	42,652	105,531
Q2 2023-24	33,685	42,635	136,552
Q3 2023-24	31,534	55,920	157,028
Q4 2023-24	31,893	56,882	159,245
Total	132,556	198,089	558,356

Table 5 - Website metrics by quarter, 2023-24

Consumer contact channels detailed by month – see section 4.1 for more detail.

Month	Email	1800 Call	SMS	Chat	Total
July 2023	8	28	1	3	40
August 2023	8	27	2	7	44
September 2023	7	17	1	15	40
October 2023	8	39	2	2	51
November 2023	3	70	7	1	81
December 2023	3	48	13	2	66
January 2024	5	63	3	4	75
February 2024	9	26	6	5	46
March 2024	6	13	4	6	29
April 2024	5	8	1	12	26
May 2024	9	9	0	4	22
June 2024	10	10	0	10	30
Total	81	358	23	88	550

Table 6 – Consumer channels – contact by month, 2023-24

Detailed breakdown of solutions provided to customers – see section 4.3 for more detail.

Nature of solution provided	Total count 2023-24
Referred to Telco	228
AT Provided immediate support	142
AT Provided extended support	88
Referred to manufacturer	23
Referred to Retailer	22
Referred to Training Provider	13
Referred to Disability Organisation	11
Referred to Seniors' Organisation	7
Referred to Service	4
Other	7

Table 7 – Solutions provided to consumers by solution topic, 2023-24