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Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA GROUP / COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES AND CONSUMER

Communications Accessibility Consultative Committee

Terms of Reference

November 2024

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Scope

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (department) will convene a Communications Accessibility Consultative Committee (Committee) to help inform the department on pertinent communications accessibility matters.

Aims of the forum

The aims of the Committee are to:

- strengthen engagement between the department and People with Disability (PWD) on communications accessibility issues
- provide the department with access to consolidated representative perspectives on issues affecting PWD in the telecommunications and broadcasting space
- provide the department access to additional networks for disseminating information to PWD about relevant telecommunications and broadcasting issues.

To achieve these aims, the Committee will draw together participants that represent a broad range of disability advocacy groups and encourage active and open discussion.

Terms of Reference

The Committee will provide information and advice to the department to assist with strategic planning on matters affecting PWD regarding communications (telecommunications and broadcasting) services, including:

- current and future demand for communications services by PWD, including the National Relay Service
- priority issues affecting the use of communications services by PWD in the short, medium and long term
- appropriate ways to address these issues, having regard to the current technology and policy landscape
- specific advice on issues being considered under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 and implementation of recommendations of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

Members may disseminate information, advice and updates from Committee meetings and correspondence within their organisation and/or through their networks. This could include topics that may be of concern to particular PWD and other relevant matters as requested by the department.

Membership

Composition of the Committee

The Committee will be comprised largely of representatives of advocacy organisations, as well as representatives from government departments and relevant industry participants.

Committee membership comprises the following:

- The department, which will provide the chair of the Committee
- The Department of Social Services (DSS), which will nominate a representative of appropriate seniority
- Ongoing members which are advocacy organisations in a position to represent the views of PWD on issues in communications accessibility

The members are to nominate a representative to attend Committee meetings. The representative must be of an appropriate seniority in the organisation with responsibility for disability, communications or consumer issues.

Process for selecting and appointing members

Members will be decided by the department in the first instance and invited to join the Committee via email. The department will ask members to nominate a representative prior to each meeting and will be asked to advise of any accessibility arrangements required to attend the meeting. Representatives may also be asked to assist in organising accessibility arrangements. Any costs associated with accessibility arrangements will be funded by the department.

Members may nominate any further committee members out-of-session in writing and at least one month prior to the next meeting.

Meetings

The Committee will endeavour to convene virtually four times per year.

The Committee may convene additional meetings in response to emergency situations that require urgent attention. These meetings will be scheduled as required to ensure advice on critical issues in a timely manner.

Attendance by non-members/observers

The Chair of Secretariat of the Committee may also agree to other persons attending a meeting or part of a meeting for the purpose of providing particular advice or canvassing particular issues. This may include additional representatives from members organisations, non-member organisations, government, industry representatives, subject matter experts or guests.

Non-member attendees will be invited at the request of the Chair or member and approved by the department. Non-member attendees will be asked to advise of any accessibility arrangements required to attend the meeting and may be asked to assist in organising accessibility arrangements. Any costs associated with accessibility arrangements will be funded by the department.

Observers to Committee meetings may be nominated or may nominate themselves in writing to the Secretariat and at least two weeks prior to the next meeting. Observers will be required to organise and fund any accessibility arrangements required for attending the meeting.

Further, members may submit materials for discussion on behalf of non-members both as agenda papers and out-of-session discussion papers.

Chairing meetings

The Committee will be chaired by the First Assistant Secretary, Communications Services and Consumer Division. Where the occupant of that position is unavailable, the Committee will be chaired by a suitable Departmental representative.

Operational arrangements

Work plan

The department will develop, in consultation with Committee members, a work plan for the Committee. The work plan will prioritise issues in line with the aims of the department and the Committee. The Committee will review progress against that work plan regularly.

Referral of issues

The Committee will principally provide an avenue for consultation. As such, the Committee may identify and analyse issues without resolving them. However, the Committee may refer issues to an appropriate body with a view to further consideration and/or resolution.

Working groups

Members of the Committee may propose establishing issue-specific working groups to facilitate targeted discussion on issues related to communications accessibility between formal meetings. These working groups can provide advice and recommendations to the Committee. Establishing a working group will be confirmed at the discretion of the Chair and once established, any accessibility arrangements required for attendance at the working group will be funded by the department.