

18^h February 2020

Submission into the Inquiry into the *Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Unsolicited Communications) Bill 2019*

I appreciate Senator Griff on his work for developing and introducing this legislation.

I believe people should be able to protect their right to privacy, including being able to opt out of unsolicited communication. There should be ways to avoid unsolicited electronic and telephone communication, including political or charitable communication. The proposed legislation provides clear benefits for consumers gaining greater freedom and power about what communication they accept.

Under the bill, electronic political communication will need to have provide a clear option to unsubscribe. Some people might, for whatever reason, come to receive political communication for a party or candidate that they do not support. Other people might not care about politics, or otherwise not want to receive electronic political communication. There is already an abundance of political communication during election campaigns. Some people might be happy receiving political communication and updates about the campaign. This can provide important information to voters about what a candidate or party stands for. But, people should always have the choice about whether they want to continue receiving this information or not. The bill also compels political calls to identify whether any actors are used. This is good in simply providing more transparency about political advertising, so people are not misled.

I can certainly attest (as many others can) about the annoyance of repeated, unwanted telephone communication from telemarketers or spammers. Consumers can currently opt out of telemarketing calls on the *Do Not Call Register*, but they currently cannot do so for charitable calls. Many Australians give generous support to charities. But they would generally want to support charities that they know and trust, and do so at a time that works for them personally. Personally, I give to several charities on a yearly basis. When I give to a new charity I like to

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take the time to research what they do and how effective they are. Being called and asked to give money on the spot can be awkward and mean people do not have adequate space to consider. There is a good saying that if you feel uncomfortable saying 'no' to buying something or donating, you probably should say 'no.' It is legitimate for consumers to want to avoid being placed in a position where they must continuously no or be pressured into spending money. Telephone communication may be an important part of charitable funding. This is not to say that charities should not pursue this avenue of funding, or that they do not do good work. Indeed, some people may be happy to receive calls from charities and making donations over the phone. However, people who do not want to hear from charities on the phone should have the freedom to avoid this. Presumably such an option would also help charities, as they would not waste their time calling people unlikely to donate.

This bill by Senator Griff seems to provide simple and welcome changes to the relevant legislation. The proposed changes give consumers greater choice and power over the communication they receive. This does not prevent political parties or charities from providing information to consumers that are willing to accept such communication. I recommend the Parliament adopt these amendments.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Kind Regards,

Benjamin Cronshaw.