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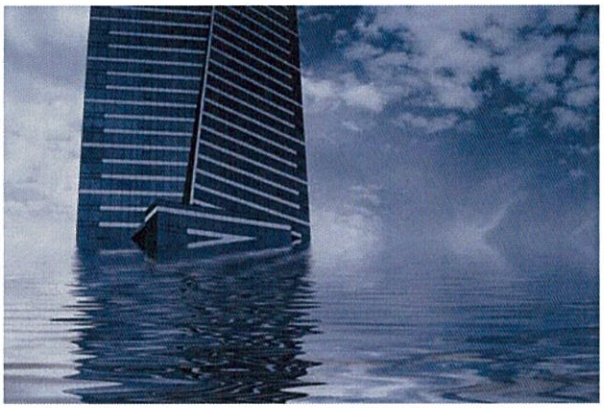
Australian telcos requested more disaster exemptions in FY 2012

Telecom industry says bad weather was more severe, more frequent

Adam Bender (Computerworld) | 05 June, 2013 09:02 | Comments | Like 1



Telcos declared nearly 100 more mass service disruptions (MSD) on landline services in the 2012-13 financial year compared to the previous year, according to a report by the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman.

Telcos can declare an MSD when a natural disaster or extreme weather cause service problems for many consumers in an area. The declaration exempts the telco from having to pay compensation to affected consumers.

In the 2012-13 financial year, 23 telecom service providers declared 584 MSDs, the TIO report said. Some of the exemptions were extended up to four months and were applied to capital cities and other large or densely populated areas, it said.

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An exemption relating to floods in Victoria covering metropolitan Melbourne and western Victoria was declared from 8 to 29 March and then extended to 31 May, according to the TIO report.

Heavy rains and flooding also led to an MSD declaration covering metropolitan and greater Sydney and the Hunter, Central Tablelands and Illawarra districts in New South Wales. That exemption originally ran from 29 January to 1 March but was extended to 3 May.

Bushfires in Tasmania resulted in an exemption in early January while "damaging winds" caused another for the entire state more recently, the TIO report said.

"The increase is a reflection of the number of severe weather events which occurred over that period, and the location and severity of those events," a Communications Alliance spokesperson told *Computerworld Australia*.

TIO Simon Cohen is "aware of the frustration that consumers experience when they have a delay in getting a service repaired or connected," Cohen said in a statement.

"However, when there are circumstances beyond any company's control, such as a natural disaster, it may be unreasonable or unrealistic to hold a rd such as the [customer service

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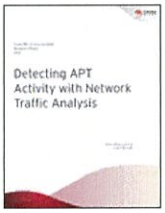

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previous quarter, but decreasing 23.3 per cent decrease compared to the same quarter in 2012.

The TIO attributed most of the year-on-year reduction to 30 per cent fewer mobile phone complaints.

However, complaints about faults in landline and internet services increased, it said. Complaints about fully unusable services increased to 2,507 issues, while those about delays in connecting new services increased to 2,339 issues, it said.

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