

The Aims of This Bill

The aims of this bill are noble. Nevertheless it has to be said that for many years the Federal Parliament has not kept its housekeeping up-to-date. Indeed, Acts of Parliament passed and given the Royal Assent over fifty years ago are repealed by this bill. It is good that this government is determined to get its housekeeping up-to-date.

My Concerns Regarding This Bill

As an ordinary member of the general public, I have taken the opportunity to skim read this bill looking for anything out of place. My concerns which may or may not be justified relate to my consideration of the bill's provisions. Briefly, I have concerns about provisions appearing on pages 14, 19, 20, and 61.

Page 14 repeals sections of the Telecommunications Act 1997 relating to standard agreements.

Page 19 amends the Telecommunications Act 1997 and the Telecommunications (Consumer Protection And Service Standards) Act 1999.

Pages 20 through 24 amend the Telecommunications (Consumer Protection And Service Standards) Act 1999.

What I would like to know is whether these amendments will have any effect on persons such as myself on old cancelled no longer available pre-paid mobile phone plans that Optus are pressuring to move onto monthly billing plans. My current pre-paid mobile phone plan dates from 2004. This pre-paid mobile phone plan is currently being used with its fourth mobile phone handset. Given that I almost never make outgoing calls, and in addition receive very few calls, it suits me to pay \$30 every six months to Optus for this paging service.

Without further investigation I can't work out whether the amendments on these pages would facilitate mobile phone companies successfully moving customers off loss making pre-paid mobile phone plans onto profitable monthly billing plans. In good faith I can say that at the time of the last mobile phone handset changeover, I did attempt to move my telephone number onto the cheapest available Optus pre-paid plan as then advertised on their website. All the automated system then would tell me is that that plan was not available for the model of handset that I'd just purchased. I figure then, that it's not my problem!

Pages 61 through 66 amend the environmental regulation acts passed in the 1990's to address the problem of chloro-fluro-carbon gases being used in equipment, then escaping from said equipment, or alternatively, then being released from said equipment at the end of the equipment's life, thereby damaging the ozone layer over the South Pole. This was legislation lawfully enacted in implementing international treaty obligations. Many lives will have been saved thereby. In a century or two when the ozone layer has recovered, the excess skin cancers caused by this inappropriate use of technology in refrigeration equipment will end. Though I am no expert on this field, I suspect this set of amendments is a substantive reduction in ozone layer protection and is not therefore routine housekeeping.

Recommendations To The Committee

I recommend to the committee that the committee seek assurances from the responsible Ministers that there are no unintended consequences to this Act.

I further recommend to the committee that the committee seek assurances from the responsible Ministers to allay my particular concerns in relation to particular sections of this Act, as detailed in this submission.