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9 September 2005

Dr Robyn Clough
Senate Environment
Communications, Information Technology
and the Arts Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Dr Clough,

ACIF welcomes this opportunity to provide a submission to this enquiry. ACIF was established in 1997 with the objective of implementing the government policy for the maximum use of industry self-regulation set out in the Telecommunications Act 1997.

Since its inception ACIF has created a body of work to deliver the benefits of competition in Australian telecommunications to end-users, most particularly in the development of industry codes governing inter-operating arrangements, consumer protections and Technical Standards,

ACIF operates on the central premise that the best outcomes are achieved through collaboration and consensus of all stakeholders rather than imposed solutions.

ACIF supports the measures to enable an association to recoup its costs for the development of consumer-related codes which are contained in the bills;

'The provisions of the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Future Proofing and Other Measures) Bill 2005'

'The provisions of the Telecommunications (Carrier Licence Charges) Amendment (Industry Plans and Consumer Codes) Bill 2005'

ACIF sees these measures as recognition of successful self-regulatory outcomes to date and supports enhancing future consumer outcomes.

ACIF's approach to consumer participation has always been inclusive. There is consumer representation on the ACIF board, in its standing advisory groups and on the working committees in the actual development of codes. In addition ACIF has two specialty advisory councils – the Consumer Council and the Disability Council.

Following the release of the Consumer Driven Communications paper, ACIF reaffirmed its commitment to enhancing consumer participation. With assistance of funding from DCITA, ACIF commissioned an expert consultancy group to review the consumer participation model in ACIF and make recommendations as to the optimal model for the effective underpinning of self-regulation. The report is due in November 2005.

In respect of the cost of recoupment measures in the draft bills, ACIF agrees with the reasoning contained in the Explanatory Memorandum to the 'The provisions of the Telecommunications (Carrier Licence Charges) Amendment (Industry Plans and Consumer Codes) Bill 2005'. In particular, as the development of codes is a costly procedure this measure will enable ACIF to recoup the costs of independent drafting, independent professional chair and facilitation services to resolve difficult issues.

Additionally the measures will act as an incentive for carriers not currently members of ACIF to now contribute to code development costs through their carrier licences, to become members of ACIF and contribute to enhancing self-regulatory outcomes.

There is also considerable work in consumer related issues with emmerging technologies such as VoIP and the initiatives contained in the 'Bills' will facilitate the development of timely and quality codes in the area.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A.C. Hurley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Anne Hurley
CEO