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Qld plagued by Internet, phone problems: report



Phone and Internet problems in Queensland have dominated reports to the State's community legal sector workers, according to a new report by the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) and Community Legal Centres Queensland.

Almost half of Queensland's community legal sector workers have reported hearing from their clients about a phone or internet problem every week and, more widely, 19% of said they hear of these problems every two to four weeks.

In addition, 17% of legal sector works stated they hear of phone or internet issues every month.

The Understanding The Impact of Phone and Internet Issues in Queensland report surveyed 137 Queensland community legal sector workers on their experiences of working with their clients over the last two years. The sector workers included lawvers, social workers, financial counsellors, in-take workers, NGO staff and allied professionals



The TIO and Community Legal Centres Queensland say the results of the survey show a surprising and varied pattern of issues related to phone and internet problems.

The most common phone and internet issues for clients of community legal sector workers were being unable to pay for a service and increasing debt.

Queensland professionals also reported issues with phone and internet services often led to subsequent problems for residential consumers and small businesses including mental health issues, debt or a suspension of their services

The report notes that improving availability of payment plans, providing clearer information, and introducing restrictions on overselling, were identified as the top ways consumers could avoid phone or internet issues.

According to the report, 55% of professionals said their clients do not know how to complain about their problem with a phone or internet service – and the main barriers to complaining were not knowing who to contact to complain, and a lack of

Ombudsman Judi Jones says. "There were 28.988 complaints about phone or internet services in Queensland in 2016/17, a 42.7% increase on the previous year. Everyone involved in the delivery of phone and internet services wants residential consumers and small businesses to have the best possible experience. This survey offers a solid snapshot of the key issues impacting internet and phone services and the effect on lifestyle and wellbeing, as well as possible solutions.

"We all have a responsibility to support those in difficulty. Phones and the internet are central in our lives and the message from Queensland's Community Legal Sector Workers is don't feel you're on your own," says James Farrell, Director of Community Legal Centres Queensland

"In tough times, mounting problems have a domino effect, one problem leads to another, and on to another. Our members and wider professionals in the field can offer support and advocate on your behalf."

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Peter Dinham

Peter Dinham is a co-founder of iTWire and a 35-year veteran journalist and corporate communications consultant. He has worked as a journalist in all forms of media - newspapers/magazines, radio, television, press agency and now, onlin including with the Canberra Times, The Examiner (Tasmania), the ABC and AAP-

Reuters. As a freelance journalist he also had articles published in Australian and overseas magazines. He worked in the corporate communications/public relations sector, in-house with an airline, and as a senior executive in Australia of the world's largest comm Burson-Marsteller. He also ran his own communications consultancy and was a co-founder in Australia of the global photographic agency, the Image Bank (now Getty Images).

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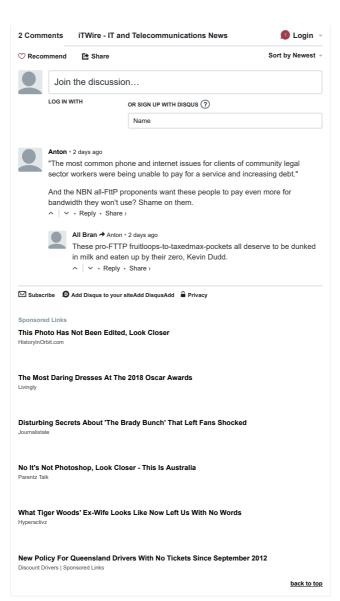
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