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## **Nearly 50% of Queensland's Community Legal Sector Workers Hear About Phone and Internet Issues Every Week**

Almost half of Queensland's community legal sector workers have reported hearing from their clients about a phone or internet problem every week, a new report published jointly by the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman and Community Legal Centres Queensland, highlights today (Friday 9 March 2018).

More widely, 19 per cent of Queensland's community legal sector workers said they hear of these problems every two to four weeks, and 17 per cent 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 lawyers, social workers, financial counsellors, in-take workers, NGO staff and allied professionals.

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 amongst community legal sector workers' clients were being unable to pay for a service, increasing debt, and not enough money to pay bills.

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.

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.

55 per cent of professionals stated their clients do not know how to complain about their problem with a phone or internet service. The main barriers to complaining were not knowing who to contact to complain, and a lack of confidence.

Launching the report, Ombudsman Judi Jones says, "There were 28,988 complaints about phone or internet services in Queensland in 2016/17, a 42.7 per cent 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."

James Farrell, Director of Community Legal Centres Queensland says, "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. 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."

Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman Judi Jones will be launching the report at the Community Legal Centres Queensland Conference at 10.00am AEDT Friday 9 March 2018 at the Oakwood Hotel and Apartments, 15 Ivory Lane, Fortitude Valley.

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**Note to editors:**

All media enquiries to 0437 548 540 [mediaenquiries@tio.com.au](mailto:mediaenquiries@tio.com.au)

The *Understanding The Impact of Phone and Internet Issues in Queensland* survey was conducted between 19 February 2018 to 4 March 2018, and surveyed 137 Queensland community legal sector workers.

**About the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman**

- The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman is a free and independent dispute resolution and complaint handling service for residential consumers and small businesses who have an unresolved complaint about their phone or internet service. [www.tio.com.au](http://www.tio.com.au) or 1800 062 058.

**About Community Legal Centres Queensland**

- Community Legal Centres Queensland provides support and advocacy for 33 independent, community-led community legal centres operating across Queensland. Queensland's community legal centres provide free information, advice and referral, representation and casework, community education and advocacy for vulnerable clients and communities facing legal problems.  
<http://communitylegalqld.org.au/>

**About the Telecommunications Sector**

- Government and the regulators set policy and regulations for the telecommunications sector. The Telecommunications industry regulators are the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) <http://www.acma.gov.au> Media enquiries to 02 9334 7719, 0434 652 063 or [media@acma.gov.au](mailto:media@acma.gov.au) The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) <https://www.accc.gov.au> Media enquiries to 1300 138 917, [media@accc.gov.au](mailto:media@accc.gov.au) After hours 0408 995 408.
- Communications Alliance is the peak body for Australian communications industry. Media enquiries to Sefiani Communications ([www.sefiani.com.au](http://www.sefiani.com.au)) 0431 478 558.
- The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is Australia's peak communications consumer organisation Media enquiries to 0409 966 931 or 02 9288 4000.