

# Complaints

ACMA collects information from four service providers (Telstra, Optus, AAPT and Primus) about complaints relating to the standard telephone service against five specified categories, based on major areas of complaint used by the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO). ACMA also receives data from the TIO on complaints that were escalated from service providers to the TIO for landline services. The escalated complaints information assists in identifying how successful a service provider is in resolving a customer's complaint at the first point of contact. This section reports on complaints to service providers for 2004–05 compared with 2003–04.

The complaint categories and examples are:

- provision of service—delays in service provision and connection issues;
- fault repair—delays in restoring service and fault repair work;
- customer transfer—issues regarding authorised transfer and unauthorised transfer ('slamming') processes, also referred to as 'churn';
- credit management—collection of debts, credit control policies and providers of bonds; and
- billing—accuracy of accounts, bill presentation and billing delays.

Complaint levels are translated into ratios for every 10,000 units in the category. For instance, complaints about customer transfer are recorded as numbers of complaints for every 10,000 customer transfers. While the total number of complaints is an unadjusted figure, the ratio measure takes into account the volume of the services provided.

For current reporting purposes, ACMA defines a complaint as 'any expression of dissatisfaction with the provision of a standard telephone service.' This definition does not include a customer request for information, or a customer reporting a fault for the first time. However, the definition of 'complaint' used by Telstra and Optus for all complaint categories differs from the ACMA definition. Both Telstra and Optus define a complaint as 'any expression of dissatisfaction with customer service, product or policy, or with any aspect of ... oral or written communication with [the service provider] that requires some action by [the service provider] beyond the initial contact.' This means that the information provided by Telstra and Optus is likely to be an understatement of their complaints compared with the ACMA definition. As a result of this and other differences between the service providers in calculating ratios, direct comparisons between the ratios are limited.

Overall, for three of the four service providers, there was a general trend towards decreased complaints to the service provider and complaints escalated to TIO for the five categories of complaint from 2003–04 to 2004–05. Telstra reported declining complaints ratios and there were fewer complaints to the TIO about Telstra, for all categories excepting complaints about customer transfer, which increased in 2004–05.

Optus reported decreases in four complaints categories and an increase in fault repair complaints, while complaints to the TIO about Optus decreased for all five complaint categories. Complaints to Primus decreased across all five categories of complaint, although this reflected changed calculation methodologies. Complaints about Primus to the TIO decreased for fault repair, customer transfer and billing, but increased for the other two categories. In contrast to the other three service providers, AAPT reported increases in most areas, with complaints about fault repair, customer transfer and billing up from 2003–04 levels. Complaints to the TIO about AAPT rose for all five categories.

Table 25 (on page 75) provides a summary of the complaint ratios for Telstra, Optus, AAPT and Primus.

### ***Provision of service***

All four service providers reported decreased ratios for 2004–05. Telstra's ratio fell from 8.6 in 2003–04 to 6.9 in 2004–05. Optus' ratio dropped from 5.0 in 2003–04 to 0.8 in 2004–05, reflecting a 32 per cent drop in the number of complaints to Optus about provision of service. AAPT's ratio decreased from 7.6 in 2004–05 to 2.5 in 2004–05. Primus' ratio, which is calculated on the basis of new services provided rather than total services in operation, was down from 93.6 in 2003–04 to 81.7 in 2004–05. The decrease in complaints about provision of service may reflect the declining take-up rate for fixed-line services.

The number of provision of service complaints to the TIO in 2004–05 compared with the previous year dropped for Telstra and Optus, but rose for AAPT and Primus.

### ***Fault repair***

Telstra and Primus reported decreased fault repair complaints ratios for 2004–05. Telstra's ratio, which is calculated on the basis of faults cleared within target instead of faults reported, fell from 172.1 in 2003–04 to 166.8 in 2004–05. Primus' ratio decreased from 32.9 in 2003–04 to 3.4 in 2004–05, reflecting a change in calculation methodology introduced in the December 2004 quarter. Optus and AAPT reported increased ratios, rising from 82.2 and 35 in 2003–04 to 129.9 and 36.1 in 2004–05 respectively.

The number of fault repair complaints to the TIO decreased in comparison with the previous year for Telstra, Optus and Primus, but increased compared with the previous year for AAPT.

### ***Customer transfer***

Optus and Primus reported decreased customer transfer complaints ratios, while Telstra and AAPT reported increased ratios for 2004–05. Optus' ratio fell from 12.2 in 2003–04 to 6.6 in 2004–05. Primus' ratio dropped from 40.4 in 2003–04 to 12.3 in 2004–05, again reflecting amended calculation methodology implemented in the December 2004 quarter. Ratios for Telstra and AAPT increased from 2.7 and 6.4 in 2003–04 to 5.5 and 12.1 in 2004–05 respectively.

The number of customer transfer complaints to the TIO for 2004–05 in comparison with 2003–04 decreased for Optus and Primus and rose for Telstra and AAPT.

## Credit management

All four service providers reported decreased credit management complaint ratios for 2004–05 compared with 2003–04. Telstra's ratio dropped from 4.3 in 2003–04 to 3.3 in 2004–05. Optus' ratio fell from 3.2 in 2003–04 to 0.6 in 2004–05, while AAPT's ratio decreased from 13 in 2003–04 to 8.8 in 2004–05. Primus' ratio fell from 1.3 in 2003–04 to 0.5 in 2004–05.

Complaints to the TIO about credit management in 2004–05 compared with 2003–04 decreased for Telstra and Optus, but increased for AAPT and Primus.

## Billing

Telstra, Optus and Primus reported decreased billing complaints ratios for 2004–05 compared with 2003–04. Telstra's ratio dropped from 3.3 in 2003–04 to 2.1 in 2004–05. Optus' ratio fell from 3.0 in 2003–04 to 1.9 in 2004–05. Primus' ratio decreased from 25.2 in 2003–04 to 16.9 in 2004–05. Primus' ratio is higher than those of the other 3 service providers, but reflects that Primus' classifies over half of all complaints received as billing-related. AAPT reported an increased billing complaints ratio for 2004–05 of 1.9, up from 1.7 in 2003–04.

The number of billing complaints to the TIO in 2004–05 compared with 2003–04 decreased for Telstra, Optus and Primus and increased for TIO about AAPT.

## Future monitoring of complaints to service providers

In place of the current complaints ratio measure, future ACMA monitoring on complaints for the 2005–06 reporting period will be undertaken through monitoring service provider compliance with industry complaints-handling codes and through future ACMA consumer satisfaction surveys. ACMA will continue to monitor service provider complaints escalated to the TIO.

**Table 25: Complaints ratios and complaints escalated to the TIO, 2003–04 and 2004–05**

	Telstra		Optus		AAPT		Primus	
	2003–04	2004–05	2003–04	2004–05	2003–04	2004–05	2003–04	2004–05
<b>Provision of service</b>								
No. of complaints received by CSP	18,437	15,744	3,240	2,148	595	263	454	180
Ratio of complaints per 10,000 services in operation	8.6	6.9	5.0	0.8	7.6	2.5	93.6	81.7
No. of complaints received by TIO	2,760	1,941	637	476	147	159	144	158
Percentage of complaints received by TIO about CSP	66.3	68	15.3	16.7	3.5	5.6	3.5	5.5
<b>Fault repair</b>								
No. of complaints received by CSP	62,916	61,543	3,360	5,153	298	424	233	22
Ratio of complaints per 10,000 faults reported	172.1	166.8	82.2	129.9	35	36.1	32.7	3.4
No. of complaints received by TIO	4,661	2,448	1,282	445	300	350	315	228

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	Telstra		Optus		AAPT		Primus	
	2003-04	2004-05	2003-04	2004-05	2003-04	2004-05	2003-04	2004-05
Percentage of complaints received by TIO about CSP	46.3	65.7	13.3	11.9	3.1	9.4	3.6	6.1
<b>Customer transfer</b>								
No. of complaints received by CSP	897	1,468	1,581	1,048	620	1,004	616	331
Ratio of complaints per 10,000 transfers	2.7	5.5	12.2	6.6	6.4	12.1	40.4	12.3
No. of complaints received by TIO	292	489	1,266	917	650	1,086	216	118
Percentage of complaints received by TIO about CSP	9.5	10.8	41.4	20.3	21.2	24.1	7.1	2.6
<b>Credit management</b>								
No. of complaints received by CSP	9,244	7,537	1,492	1,636	1,034	911	90	102
Ratio of complaints per 10,000 services in operation	4.3	3.3	2.3	0.6	13	8.8	1.3	0.5
No. of complaints received by TIO	5,350	3,709	1,726	709	516	754	253	287
Percentage of complaints received by TIO about CSP	56.3	64.1	18.2	12.3	5.4	13.0	2.7	5.0
<b>Billing</b>								
No. of complaints received by CSP	28,586	18,125	8,944	6,466	1,124	1,385	12,079	8,238
Ratio of complaints per 10,000 bills issued	3.3	2.1	3.0	1.9	1.7	1.9	25.2	16.9
No. of complaints received by TIO	8,984	5,627	5,012	2,349	1,155	1,445	1,231	855
Percentage of complaints received by TIO about CSP	42.8	41.5	23.9	17.3	5.5	10.7	5.9	6.3

Source: AAPT, Optus, Primus, Telstra and TIO