

Final Investigation Report

Entity	Ipsos Public Affairs Pty Ltd
ACN	070 101 352
Type of entity	Authorised research entity
Relevant Legislation	<i>Telecommunications Regulations 2021</i>

Findings

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (**ACMA**) has reached the view that Ipsos Public Affairs Pty Ltd (**Ipsos**) has, as set out at Table 1 below, contravened the *Telecommunications Regulations 2021* (**Regulations**).

Table 1: Summary of contraventions.

Provision	Number of contraventions
Paragraph 27(1)	1,064

Reasons

1. The reasons for the ACMA's view, including the key elements which establish the contraventions, is based on information provided by Ipsos on 22 July 2025 and 12 September 2025. Ipsos' submission on 3 November 2025 to preliminary investigation report has been taken into consideration.

Background

2. The Integrated Public Number Database (**IPND**) is a centralised database of public numbers¹ established in 1998. It is managed by the IPND Manager in accordance with a condition of its carrier licence (the **IPND Licence Condition**).²
3. While the disclosure of IPND data is generally prohibited under Part 13 of the *Telecommunications Act 1997* (the **Act**), the Regulations allow Telstra to disclose unlisted mobile information stored in the IPND to a person who has been granted a research authorisation by the ACMA (an **authorised research entity**).
4. An authorised research entity must comply with the conditions set out in Subdivision C of Division 2 of Part 4 of the Regulations, which govern the use, handling, and protection of authorised unlisted mobile number information.

¹ Public numbers are numbers specified in the *Telecommunications Numbering Plan 2025* and includes most numbers such as geographic, freephone, local rate, and international numbers.

² Prior to 1 January 2023, the licence condition was set out in section 10 of the *Telecommunications (Carrier Licence Conditions - Telstra Corporation Limited) Declaration 2019*. This instrument has since been renamed *Telecommunications (Carrier Licence Conditions - Telstra Infraco Limited) Declaration 2019* and section 10 has been removed. However, section 63A of the Act applies the section 10 licence condition as a condition of the carrier licence for the current IPND Manager (Telstra Limited).

5. On 6 June 2025, the ACMA granted a research authorisation to Ipsos under the Regulations to conduct permitted research relevant to public health, specifically for the [REDACTED].
6. On 11 July 2025, Ipsos downloaded unlisted mobile numbers from the Telstra IPND server and uploaded the data into its internal system.
7. On 21 July 2025, Ipsos commenced calls to the unlisted mobile numbers. Within an hour, it identified that the numbers were associated with Victorian postcodes. Ipsos immediately suspended the calls and isolated the Victorian records.
8. Ipsos took steps to determine how the error had occurred, establishing that the previously downloaded file for [REDACTED] survey had remained available on the Telstra IPND server. This file had been mistakenly downloaded for the [REDACTED].
9. Ipsos attributed this error to it not having previously being authorised for multiple research projects at the same time, and so it did not expect files for both the [REDACTED] survey and the [REDACTED] to be available on the IPND server. The files also had nearly identical names, being:
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
10. Ipsos notified Telstra of the incorrect records and requested that Telstra implement measures to archive downloaded files to reduce the risk of incorrect data being accessed under future authorisations. Ipsos also undertook to implement additional validation checks on downloads for future projects in response to the issue.
11. On 22 July 2025, Ipsos notified the ACMA of the incorrect use of mobile numbers. The Victorian mobile numbers were deleted from its system on the same day.
12. The ACMA sought further information from Ipsos. Ipsos confirmed it had initiated calls using 1063 numbers, of which 50 had successfully connected to the caller. Ipsos also confirmed it had received no complaints from those callers about the contact.
13. The ACMA has also received no complaints or enquiries about this matter independently of Ipsos.
14. A preliminary investigation report was sent to Ipsos on 13 October 2025, Ipsos provided a submission in response to the report on 3 November 2025.

Relevant provisions of the Regulations

15. Subsection 25(a) states a research authorisation is subject to the conditions specified in Subdivision C. This includes subsections 25 to 35.
16. Subsection 27(1) states an authorised research entity must not make a record of, or use, authorised unlisted mobile number information unless it is for the purposes of authorised research under the authorisation.
17. Subsection 29(1) states that if an authorised research entity collects, uses or discloses personal information about an individual for the purposes of authorised research under the authorisation, the entity must not do an act, or engage in a practice, that breaches:
 - (a) an Australian Privacy Principle in relation to personal information about the individual; or
 - (b) a registered APP code that binds the entity in relation to personal information about the individual.

18. Subsection 35(1) states that an authorised research entity must give written notice to the ACMA as soon as reasonably practicable after it becomes aware of a contravention of a condition of the authorisation (including any additional condition specified by the ACMA under subsection 22(4) or section 36) by:
 - (a) the entity
19. Subsection 35(2) states an authorised research entity must, as soon as reasonably practicable after it becomes aware of a contravention of a condition of the authorisation, take reasonable steps to minimise the effects of the contravention.

Ipsos's submissions

20. Ipsos acknowledged ACMA's findings that it had contravened the Regulations. However, Ipsos contended that the 1 data download and 1,063 call attempts should be treated as a single contravention reflecting an isolated procedural lapse, rather than multiple breaches.
21. Subsection 27(1) of the Regulations, the subsection contravened, does not refer to the processes or procedures of the research entity. Rather, it states a research entity must not make 'a record' or 'use' unlisted mobile number information. The ACMA's view therefore is that the downloading of the file and each call is an incidence of making a record or use of unlisted mobile number information.
22. Ipsos's procedures and systems have been taken into account when considering subsection 29 of the Regulations, which requires compliance with the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs). APP 11 states that if an APP entity holds personal information, the entity must take such steps as are reasonable in the circumstances to protect the information from misuse. The APP Guidelines provided by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) state 'reasonable steps' that an APP entity must take to ensure the security of personal information will depend upon circumstances,' and 'In all cases, reasonable steps should include taking steps and implementing strategies in relation to... internal policies, procedures and systems.'
23. The ACMA has kept this guidance in mind when considering Ipsos's compliance with subsection 29(1) of the Regulations.

Compliance with the Regulations

24. The ACMA has considered whether Ipsos complied with subsection 29. After reviewing the response provided by Ipsos on 12 September 2025, and taking into account the processes outlined in Ipsos' original application, we are satisfied that Ipsos took reasonable steps to protect personal information from misuse, complying with Australian Privacy Principle 11 in the Privacy Act.
25. The ACMA has considered whether Ipsos complied with subsection 35. After reviewing the responses provided by Ipsos on 22 July and 12 September 2025, we are satisfied that Ipsos gave written notice to the ACMA as soon as reasonably practicable after becoming aware of the contravention, and took reasonable steps to minimise its effect.
26. Consequently, we do not consider Ipsos has failed to comply with subsection 29 or subsection 35 of the Regulations.
27. The ACMA has considered whether Ipsos complied with subsection 27 of the Regulations by addressing the questions set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Assessing compliance subsection

Was Ipsos an authorised research entity at the time of the alleged contravention?	Yes. At the time of the alleged contraventions Ipsos had been granted four research authorisations.
Subsection 27(1), an authorised research entity must not make a record of, or use, authorised unlisted mobile number information unless it is for the purposes of authorised research under the authorisation	<p>Ipsos made a record and used authorised unlisted mobile number information not for the authorised research authorisation on 1,064 occasions.</p> <p>Specifically, between 11 July 2025 and 21 July 2025, Ipsos had:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Downloaded unlisted mobile number information to its systems on 1 occasion- Used an unlisted mobile number on 1,063 occasions

28. Accordingly, the ACMA has found that Ipsos contravened subsection 27(1) of the Regulations on **1,064 occasions** by making a record of, or using, authorised unlisted mobile number information for the purposes of authorised research not under the authorisation, thereby breaching the conditions of its research authorisation.