

***TIO announces priority complaints procedure for vulnerable consumers given heightened demand on internet and telecommunications infrastructure due to COVID-19***

Source: [Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman](#)

Date: 26 February 2020

**]Abstract:**

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman is preparing for an expected increase in urgent complaints from vulnerable and at-risk residential consumers and small businesses as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic place unprecedented strain on Australia's telephone and internet infrastructure.

Vulnerable and at risk residential consumers are those:

- Who have a serious medical condition, or a registered priority assistance telephone service,
- for whom not having an ongoing mobile or internet issue poses a specific safety risk, or
- who need urgent financial hardship support from their telephone or internet service provider.

Vulnerable and at-risk issues for small businesses are those

- whose phone or internet services are completely or partly unusable, or
- whose phone or internet outage may cause harm to others.

These individuals and businesses have now been provided with dedicated phone lines to facilitate priority resolution of their phone and internet complaints. They can call 1800 046 686 or 03 8600 8308 for assistance. The timeframe for providers to respond to urgent complaints from vulnerable and at-risk consumers remains two business days.

Residential consumers and small businesses customers with non-urgent complaints are advised to go through the usual process of lodging them via telephone or online and the timeframe for providers to respond to those complaints has been extended from 10 to 15 days.