

## 1. From the Chair – Chris Dodds (ACOSS)

On behalf of my LIMAC colleagues, I am pleased to present this eighth annual report on access to telecommunications for people on a low income in Australia.

The last 12 months have been relatively stable in regard to the Telstra Access for Everyone programs. Notably, the demand for Bill Assistance has retreated from the record levels experienced in 2009 due to the Global Financial Crisis. With some incremental improvements to distribution and functionality, the effectiveness of the programs remains at a steady level. For example, almost all Telstra customers are now able to access the Bill Assistance program whether they rely on a home or mobile phone, or Internet service, or combination of these services.



**Chris Dodds,**  
ACOSS Representative,  
LIMAC Chair

LIMAC is pleased that Telstra's CEO, David Thodey, continues to focus on customer service, having introduced a range of initiatives that benefit all Telstra customers, including people on a low income. For example, extending customer service contact hours to 24 x 7, introducing weekend appointments for technician visits, and making it free to ring Telstra customer service are significant improvements. Of note also are the changes to the Deceased Estate process affecting many older customers.

The 2010 federal election highlighted the significance of the proposed National Broadband Network for Australia's communications future, particularly for people in regional areas. LIMAC recognises that the affordability of communications in this changing industry and infrastructure environment is a public policy issue that requires broad discussion across Government, industry and consumer representatives and for a range of services, not just the home phone. LIMAC is pleased that these discussions are now beginning and looks forward to offering its substantial experience and insights in this regard. For example, one of our LIMAC members, The Smith Family, provides educational support to over 33 000 disadvantaged Australian children through their *Learning for Life* program, highlighting a key low-income policy area – enabling better educational outcomes through affordable access to high capacity broadband in the home. Appropriately, LIMAC's research program for 2011 is focussed on the opportunities and barriers of such access to broadband enabled services for people on a low income.

I would again like to thank my colleagues on the Committee, particularly those agencies who partner with Telstra on a day-to-day basis to provide the Access for Everyone programs through face-to-face contact with people who seek assistance in their local communities. I would also like to thank the Telstra staff for their continued commitment and support in keeping LIMAC very well informed on all matters of potential interest and ensuring the smooth running of the meetings.

## 2. The Committee

Organisation	Feb	May (a)	Aug	Sep (a)	Dec
<b>ACOSS</b>	•	•	•	•	•
<b>Jobs Australia</b>	•	•			
<b>The Smith Family</b>	•		•	•	•
<b>FaHCSIA</b>	•	•	•	•	•
<b>Homelessness Australia</b>	•	•			•
<b>The Salvation Army</b>	•	•		•	•
<b>St Vincent de Paul Society</b>	•	•	•	•	•
<b>Anglicare Australia</b>	•	•	•	•	•
<b>Council on the Ageing</b>	•	•	•	•	•
<b>ACMA (o)</b>		•		•	•
<b>DBCDE (o)</b>	•	•	•	•	•
<b>Telstra (o)</b>	•	•	•	•	•

(a) Audio conference (o) Observer

LIMAC met five times during 2009, twice by audio-conference. Committee meetings generally involve an update on the low-income package, the marketing plan, any new Telstra proposals that may impact customers on a low income and broader public policy issues of telecommunications and affordability. An operational sub-committee meets regularly before the main meeting with a focus on managing the Bill Assistance Program.

At the end of 2010 LIMAC farewelled two of its longest standing representatives: Marina Randall (The Salvation Army, 2003-10) and Ray Edwards (Council on the Ageing, 2004-10). The Committee recorded its sincere thanks to Marina and Ray for their valuable contributions to its work.



**Major Marina Randall (The Salvation Army) and Ray Edwards (Council on the Ageing)**

Major items discussed by LIMAC in 2010 were:

- ▶ The final results from the research into the Bill Assistance Program and public launching of the summary report at the ACOSS National Conference, Canberra.
- ▶ A request by the Centrelink Social Work section to access the Phonocard/ PhoneAway Card Program, which was agreed.
- ▶ Telstra customer service improvements, particularly its Deceased Estate Process.
- ▶ The ACT Utilities Infrastructure Tax, including representations to the ACT Treasurer.
- ▶ The introduction of the Telstra EasyCall™ pre-paid mobile handset specifically suited for seniors, some people with disability, and people on a low income.
- ▶ Calling 13/ 18 numbers from (pre-paid) mobile phones.
- ▶ A number of proposed pricing changes for Telstra services.
- ▶ A research program, rather than a single survey, that might address questions of digital inclusion for people on a low income.
- ▶ Affordability policy in a National Broadband Network world.

### 3. Low-income package

There have been no major changes by Telstra to the package during 2010. Take-up of the products and services has remained relatively stable except:

- ▶ HomeLine® Budget, which continues to see increasing take-up as the lowest monthly-cost full-service home phone;
- ▶ Bill Assistance Program, which retreated from last year's record usage; and
- ▶ Phonocard/ PhoneAway® Card Program, which continues to be popular.



The overall benefit provided to consumers through the package remained relatively stable in 2010 at approximately \$203m (see chart).

#### **InContact®**

The number of services in operation has been generally steady at around 74 000 at the end of 2010.

#### **Sponsored Access**

The number of services in operation has been relatively steady with approximately 1475 at the end of 2010 in Supported Accommodation Assistance Program dwellings.

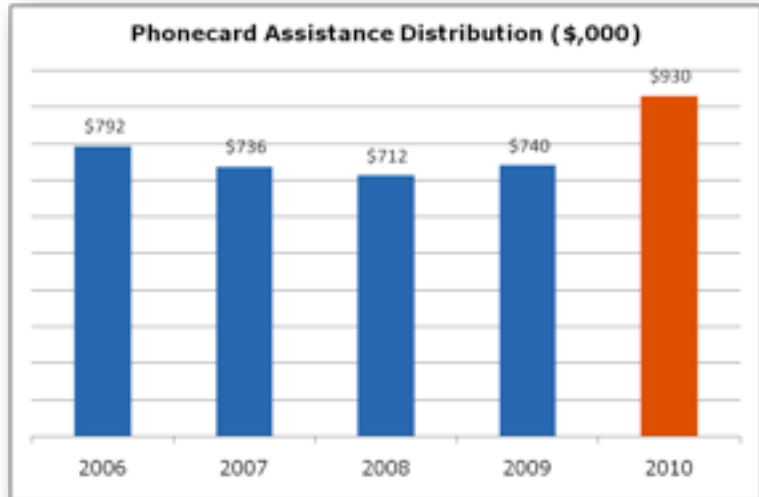
#### **MessageBox**

Some 4620 services were provided to community agencies in 2010 for use with clients who have no readily available communications service, a similar demand to 2009.



### Phonecard/ PhoneAway®

In 2010 some \$930 000 worth of cards (excluding distribution costs) were provided to agencies that are directly assisting clients in circumstances of domestic violence and homelessness, including young people and asylum seekers. This program continues to grow in popularity (see chart).



### Pensioner Discount

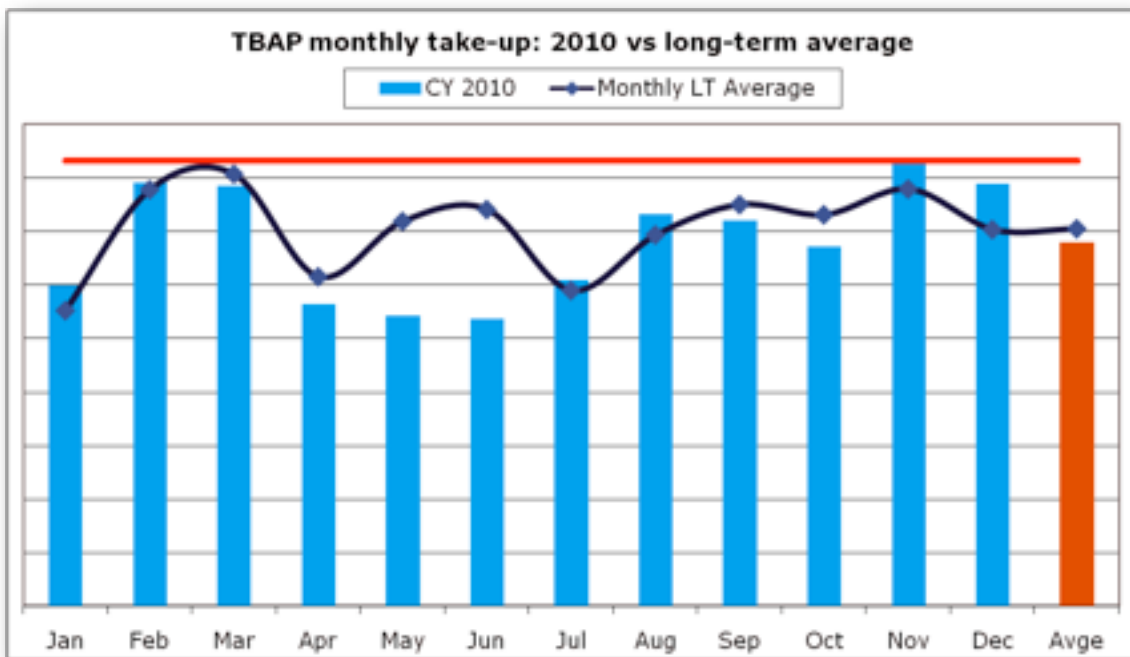
During 2010 the number of customers receiving the Telstra Pensioner Discount on their HomeLine plan decreased slightly to around 1.23 million. Telstra’s Pensioner Discount provides up to \$12.25 discount per month on access charges and calls, as well as other benefits.

### HomeLine Budget

This is Telstra's lowest monthly access charge HomeLine phone plan. The number of services in operation grew to around 616 000 towards the end of 2010.

### Bill Assistance

Take-up of the program during 2010 fell back closer to average levels following record demand due to impacts of the Global Financial Crisis in the previous year. On average, more than 3000 customers per month benefited from the program with slightly over \$4 million of relief provided (see charts).



## Centrepay

Use of Centrelink's Centrepay system to make regular payments against Telstra accounts has been steady throughout 2010 and similar to the previous year, averaging between 60 000 and 70 000 payments per month. This represents approximately one percent of Telstra's total payment volumes.

## 4. Other Telstra Services

These include: Telstra Pre-paid Home; Internet Services; Disability Services; Payphones; Pre-paid calling options; Options for contacting Telstra; Multicultural service centres; Indigenous Communities Helpline; Billing flexibility; "Stay Connected®" campaign; Telstra's Hardship Program; Pre-paid mobile phones; Telstra Conferencing Special Rate Service; and charity and not-for-profit BusinessLine® discounts.

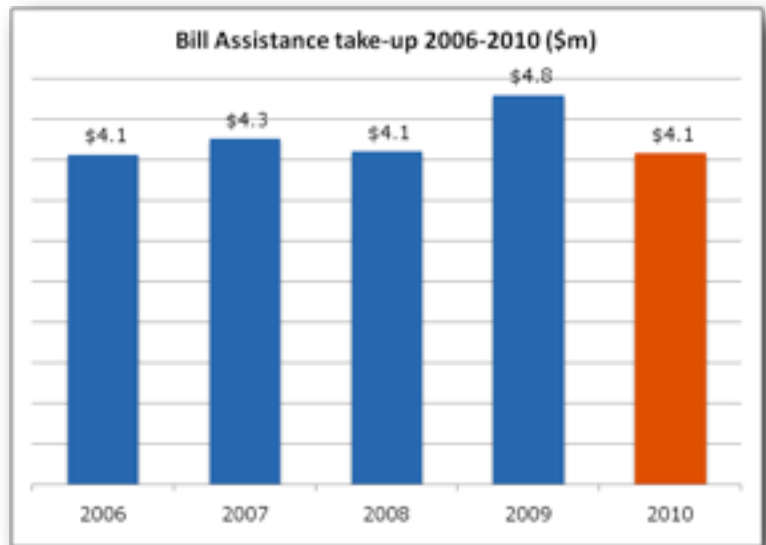
These services have all continued in a similar fashion except for the following notable changes and initiatives.

### Pre-paid Home

LIMAC agreed that this product could be exited due to its declining usage. Telstra began notifying customers from mid-2010 suggesting alternative options (such as In-Contact® with a PhoneAway® card) and offering an attractive discount for 12 months on a basic HomeLine™ Plan. Pre-paid Home is due to be finally switched off at the end of March 2011.

### Payphones

Towards the end of 2010, Telstra began a limited market assessment of a new Australian manufactured public touch-screen web-phone (see picture) that provides an all-in-one calling, text, web-browsing, email solution, with a range of other applications, for people who are out and about. The innovative technology allows for screen content to be quickly updated to all or selected sites and for applications to be made free or chargeable to the user or sponsored by content providers. For example, early in 2011, Telstra quickly put a "Queensland Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal" icon on the main screen, which with one click freely directed people to the web page to make a donation. This was in addition to converting over 100 payphones to free calls in support of communities affected by the severe flooding.





## Pre-paid mobile phones

Through 2010 Telstra again supported a number of domestic violence, youth homelessness and asylum seeker agencies with pre-paid mobile handsets and starters kits.

## Financial Hardship

During 2010 Telstra's financial hardship assistance team continued to support over 1000 customers at any one time, while noticing a doubling of referrals from community Financial Counsellors due to greater awareness of this service.

## Telstra Conferencing and Collaboration

During 2010 Telstra began offering eligible not-for-profit or charitable community welfare organisations, who support disadvantaged people in the community, a new "best-available" commercial telephone conferencing rate that provides a very substantial discount to standard. Community organisations can ring 1800 011 080 to inquire. This is in addition to the special rate service specifically provided to community organisations to support isolated people in their homes through regular group conferences.

## 5. Research

LIMAC did not commission any specific research during 2010 but has been developing a program of activities for 2011 that will contribute to knowledge and evidence regarding the opportunities of and barriers to accessing high capacity broadband services for people on a low income. This program will work collaboratively with existing surveys, such as the World Internet Project (Institute of Social Research, Swinburne University) and through LIMAC member projects taking place in 2011.

## 6. Marketing Plan

The following items highlight some of the activities undertaken to raise awareness of Telstra's Access for Everyone programs and benefits for specific customer groups, and to support partner community organisations.

### Fixed and mobile innovation

The role of user representation in Telstra's product development for seniors and people with disability was highlighted in a published paper, "Fixed and mobile innovation through user representation: Two case studies", *Telecommunications Journal of Australia*, 60(1), February 2010. The paper describes the design innovations that arose through consultation with seniors and people with disability on two successful communications products. Visit [www.tja.org.au](http://www.tja.org.au) for more information.

### Relaunch of Telstra's 1800 444 403 Indigenous Hotline

A new poster (see picture) was sent out to 100 communities and a radio campaign profiling the hotline ran from 27th Nov-14th Dec 2010 on 20 Indigenous Radio Stations in the NT, WA, SA & Far North QLD.





## Launch of the Bill Assistance Research Report, ACOSS National Conference

Telstra provided support to the 2010 ACOSS National Conference, Canberra, launching a summary report (see picture) of the results of its Bill Assistance research among customers and emergency relief agencies and contributing to a panel session on affordability and telecommunications (see picture).



Claire Martin (ACOSS), Kasy Chambers (Anglicare), David Quilty (Telstra) launching the Telstra Bill Assistance Emergency Relief Report

## Homelessness Australia 2010 Conference, Brisbane

Telstra supported this important bi-annual conference and Russell Williams from Telstra Country Wide formally welcomed guests at the Welcome Reception (see picture). For further information visit [www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au](http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au).



Russell Williams welcomes guests to the Homelessness Australia 2010 Conference

## Jobs Australia 2010 Conference, Melbourne

Telstra supported this conference with a range of prizes (see picture) used to raise money for the Jobs Australia Foundation to help the most marginalised and seriously disadvantaged communities and people in Australia. For further information visit [www.ja.com.au](http://www.ja.com.au).

Robert Morsillo (Telstra) with prizes for Jackie Parkinson (Enterprise & Training Company) and Steve Widders (Armidale Council) at the Jobs Australia 2010 Conference, Melbourne.





## ARATA 2010 conference, Hobart

Telstra supported the Australian Rehabilitation Assistive Technology Association conference in 2010, which brought together a wide range of people involved in creating technology solutions for people with disability (see advertorial). For further information visit [www.arata.org.au](http://www.arata.org.au).

## Disability services



International Year of People with Disability 2010



(a) In May 2010 the Hon Bill Shorten MP was our guest in awarding the inaugural Telstra-Telecommunications Journal of Australia Christopher Newell Prize for Telecommunications and Disability to Dr Denise Wood for her paper on "Communicating in Virtual Worlds through an Accessible Web 2.0 Solution". Telstra has also sponsored the prize for 2011.



**The Hon Bill Shorten MP, Denise Wood (UniSA), Peter Gerrand (TJA), and Robert Morsillo (Telstra) at the awarding of the inaugural Christopher Newell Prize.**

(b) Telstra launched its fifth three-year Disability Action Plan on International Day of People with Disability, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2010. This latest plan builds on Telstra's 20 year commitment to ensure Australians with a disability have access to communications, including to the latest technological advances.



Dr Rhonda Galbally, commenting on the Plan, said "Now more than ever, our nation needs corporate champions like Telstra to show what can be achieved when people with a disability are given the support they need to make the most of the abilities they possess." The Plan can be found by visiting [www.telstra.com.au/disability](http://www.telstra.com.au/disability).

**Dr Rhonda Galbally AO**





## 7. Contacts

Information about the Access for Everyone package is available online at [www.telstra.com.au/accessforeveryone](http://www.telstra.com.au/accessforeveryone).

Phone:

- ▶ For enquiries about residential services, please call 13 2200.
- ▶ The TTY number for customers who use a teletypewriter is 1800 808 981.
- ▶ The Indigenous Communities Helpline to assist Indigenous consumers in rural and remote areas with specialised products and services which may assist them is available on 1800 444 403.
- ▶ Consumers from non-English speaking backgrounds can call the relevant Multi-cultural Call Centre line. The service is available in the following languages:

<b>Language</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Hours of operation</b>
Cantonese	1800 677 008	9 am-9 pm
Mandarin	1800 678 876	9 am-9 pm
Italian	1800 649 013	9 am-5 pm
Greek	1800 189 129	9 am-5 pm
Indonesian	1800 429 432	9 am-5 pm
Korean	1800 773 421	9 am-5 pm
Arabic	1800 726 001	9 am-5 pm
Spanish	1800 726 002	9 am-5 pm
Vietnamese	1800 644 500	9 am-9 pm

For other languages, the Australian Government's Translating and Interpreting Service offers a translation service via 13 1450.

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## Appendix A: Telstra's Carrier Licence Condition 22

### Low-income measures

(1) By 1 July 2002, the licensee must offer, or have a plan for offering, products and arrangements to low-income customers (the low-income package) that has been:

- (a) endorsed by low-income consumer advocacy groups; and
- (b) notified in writing to the ACA.

(2) The low-income package must include details of the dates by which products or arrangements not offered to low-income customers from 1 July 2002 will be offered to such customers.

(3) The licensee must comply with the low-income package as in force or existing from time to time.

(4) The licensee must maintain and adequately resource a Low income Measures Assessment Committee (LIMAC), comprising representatives of such organisations as are approved by the Minister in writing from time to time.

(5) The role of LIMAC will be:

- (a) to assess proposed changes to the low-income package or to the marketing plan for the low-income package; and
- (b) to report annually to the Minister on the effectiveness of the low-income package and of its marketing by the licensee.

(6) From 1 July 2002, the licensee must have in place a marketing plan for making low-income consumers aware of the low-income package, being a plan that has been approved by LIMAC.

(7) The licensee must seek and consider the views of LIMAC before it makes any significant change to the low-income package.

Note: It is intended that the licensee may make minor non-substantive changes to the low-income package (such as minor editorial or typographical corrections) without having to seek and consider the views of LIMAC.

LIMAC is to be consulted on other proposed changes to the low-income package.

(8) If the licensee makes a significant change to the low-income package, the licensee must give the ACA a revised version of the package incorporating the change.

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