

COMMUNICATIONS ALLIANCE FACT SHEET



Providing information on the accessibility features of telephone equipment

Who should read this factsheet

Suppliers (manufacturers and importers) of telephone products, such as mobile phones and fixed-line phones, in Australia.

Industry Code on information on accessibility features for telephone equipment

With effect from April 2007, an Industry Code **Information on Accessibility Features for Telephone Equipment** and an accompanying Industry Guideline **Operational Matrices for Reporting on Accessibility Features for Telephone Equipment** require equipment suppliers to provide certain information to CSPs to evaluate their telephone products to fulfil their obligations.

In addition, carriage service providers (CSPs) are required to provide information to their customers about features of equipment they supply that meet a customer's specific communication needs under the Industry Code **Customer Information on Prices, Terms and Conditions**.

Why is this important?

Firstly, you have a legal requirement that your organisation must fulfil the obligations of the code. There are two basic obligations on equipment suppliers in the Accessibility Information Code:

- to provide information on equipment features to CSPs; and
- to respond to all reasonable requests from consumers about features of their equipment.

Secondly, it is an important part of your corporate and social responsibilities. Accessibility is an important issue and there are many features on existing devices that could benefit a person who has a specific accessibility issue. By completing these spreadsheets you are making it easier for consumers to make the right product choice and fulfilling your obligations to your service provider customers.

Regulatory powers

ACMA may employ its safety net powers under Part 6 of the *Telecommunications Act* to ensure compliance with registered Codes. These powers enable ACMA to issue formal warnings to industry participants regarding breaches of a code and also to direct industry participants to comply with the provisions of a code where contravened. That direction is enforceable in the Federal Court and non-compliance with a Court judgment can attract significant fines. Further information can be found at the ACMA approach to telecommunications code compliance webpage at www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC_2526.

What you have to do?

Your organisation is required to fill out a two page Excel spreadsheet template on each product that you sell in Australia. There is one spreadsheet for mobile manufacturers; there is another spreadsheet for fixed-line products.

In addition, you are required to provide a local public contact and an industry contact for your organisation to answer any accessibility related issues and questions.

Who is best to do it?

Most organisations have their product management team fill out the spreadsheets.

If your organisation has an accessibility team or specialist, these people would also be well placed to fill out the spreadsheets. Many manufacturers ensure that their sales team has this information and shares it with their customer as part of each sales process as this information is typically part of the compliance material that needs to be provided in order for a product to be accepted.

Where do you have to send it?

You are required by the Code to send the completed spreadsheet to the Accessibility contact at the CSPs you deal with.

It is also prudent to ensure that your sales and customer service teams also have the spreadsheets. We also strongly recommend that you make the completed spreadsheet available on your internal intranet and external website, and ensure that your staff are aware of its availability.

What else should you consider?

While it is not a requirement of the Code, we have found that many manufacturers are placing the completed information spreadsheets on their own websites, which has a number of immediate benefits:

- It allows your organisation to control the content. Should something change with one of your products, you can update and amend it simply and easily and then just resend the web link to the appropriate contacts.
- It allows you to simply provide a web link to your service providers which they can look up as required – and they can share within their organisation.
- It prevents the spreadsheets from being lost in the email or mail as everyone knows where the latest version is.
- It is also easy for organisations and consumers who may have accessibility related questions to find this information directly, without having to contact your business.
- You can also use it to demonstrate and promote your organisation's commitment to its corporate and social responsibility.

The Code Provisions

Information that must be provided to CSPs

Equipment suppliers must provide to CSPs, information about accessible features of their equipment that uses a telephone handset, and that is manufactured in, or imported to Australia, for use with a standard telephone service (STS), as defined in the *Telecommunications Act 1997*. That is, equipment that provides voice telephony (or equivalent) and passes the 'any-to-any' connectivity test.

The Code applies to fixed, cordless, mobile and satellite phones.

The information provided to CSPs must be in either the fixed or mobile template (matrix) form as per the guideline, mentioned above.

The information provided must be for each model of customer equipment within the supplier's product range, at the time of supply. If two or more models have the same features, one template can be used for those models. Information on equipment features not listed in the matrices can be provided, but it is not mandatory to do so.

Information that must be provided to consumers

Recognising that consumers buy telephone equipment from retail outlets as well as directly from CSPs:

- Equipment suppliers must respond to all reasonable requests from consumers for information about the features of their equipment, if that information can be provided. At a minimum, suppliers must provide the same information to consumers as is provided to CSPs.
- To facilitate such requests, equipment suppliers must have a contact point which is available at no or low cost to consumers.

Information that does not need to be provided

- Information about fax machines, small business systems and PABX equipment without handsets.
- Feature listed in either matrix that the supplier's equipment DOES NOT have.

The Guideline

The guideline has two matrices, for equipment used with fixed line services and for equipment used with mobile services

Features are listed in the matrices under three headings, recognising differing communications needs: 1) mobility/dexterity features; 2) vision features; and 3) hearing features.

The guideline will be regularly reviewed to ensure the matrices remain current and clear.

Further information

The ACIF C625:2005 **Information on Accessibility Features for Telephone Equipment** Industry Code can be downloaded from
<http://www.commsalliance.com.au/documents/codes/C625>

The accompanying ACIF G627:2005 **Operational Matrices for Reporting on Accessibility Features for Telephone Equipment** Guideline with the spreadsheets can be downloaded from
<http://www.commsalliance.com.au/documents/guidelines/g627>

This factsheet can be downloaded from
http://www.commsalliance.com.au/about_us/factsheets

Members of Communications Alliance can request further information regarding our compliance programs by contacting us on (02) 9959 9111 or by email at info@commsalliance.com.au.

About Communications Alliance

Communications Alliance was formed to provide a unified voice for the Australian communications industry and to lead it into the next generation of converging networks, technologies and services.

In pursuing its goals, Communications Alliance offers a forum for the industry to make coherent and constructive contributions to policy development and debate.

Communications Alliance seeks to facilitate open, effective and ethical competition between service providers while ensuring efficient, safe operation of networks, the provision of innovative services and the enhancement of consumer outcomes.

It is committed to the achievement of the policy objective of the *Telecommunications Act 1997* - the greatest practicable use of industry self-regulation without imposing undue financial and administrative burdens on industry.