

Factsheet: Complaints about mobile coverage

The TIO handles a variety of coverage complaints about mobile and mobile broadband services. This factsheet describes what we can do in coverage complaints, a provider's obligations in these types of complaints, as well as some limitations to our service.

What causes coverage issues?

Coverage can be affected by multiple factors, some of which may be outside of a provider's control. Poor coverage may be caused by:

- lack of or a fault with infrastructure
- black spot or landscape
- network congestion
- the building materials of a consumer's dwelling
- SIM card or device fault.

Types of coverage issues

Poor coverage may mean a consumer experiences:

- having no service at all
- poor call quality
- call dropouts
- inability to send or receive SMS
- mobile data dropouts
- slow mobile data speeds.

How we handle coverage complaints

When handling a coverage complaint, we work with both the provider and the consumer to:

- identify if there is a coverage issue, and the cause of that issue
- fix the issue or determine if the service cannot be improved.

If there is a coverage issue

If there is a coverage issue, we can explore how the provider intends to respond to the issue. A provider may:

- fix the service or its infrastructure
- provide a timeframe for any planned infrastructure maintenance
- decide not to fix the infrastructure.

Once the coverage issue is fixed, or the provider makes the commercial decision not to fix it, we consider if the provider has met its obligations to the consumer.

If there is no coverage issue or the service cannot be improved

If there is no coverage issue, or the issue is caused by something outside of a provider's control, we might only be able to provide information to the consumer.

We cannot compel a provider to:

- improve the service or fix its infrastructure
- offer an antenna or booster free-of-charge
- offer ongoing credits.

These are commercial decisions providers can make, which are outside our Terms of Reference.

Am I entitled to a remedy?

We expect consumers to notify their provider about a coverage issue they are facing and participate in troubleshooting.

If a consumer notifies a provider, a provider should take reasonable steps to identify the problem and either:

- fix the problem, or
- offer the consumer a release from the contract.

If a provider does not rectify the problem within a reasonable time, a consumer may be entitled to a remedy under the Australian Consumer Law, such as:

- a refund or credit of service charges
- a release from contract (if in contract and generally doesn't include device charges).

What we consider in coverage complaints

When handling coverage complaints, we will consider:

- the extent to which a consumer can use or derive a benefit from the service
- the accuracy of the information about coverage given to the consumer at point of sale
- any representations the provider made about the quality of service to the consumer
- if the consumer specifically told the provider where and how they would be using the service
- where the consumer is trying to use the service
- if the consumer has moved
- if the standard of service has changed.