

Factsheet: Internet Faults

The TIO handles a variety of complaints about internet services. This factsheet describes how we can help with internet fault complaints, a provider's obligations in these types of complaints, as well as some limitations to our service.

What causes internet faults?

Internet services can be affected by multiple factors, some of which may be outside of a provider's control. Internet faults may be caused by:

- wholesaler network or equipment issues
- provider network issues
- modem/router issues
- Wi-Fi connectivity issues.

Types of internet faults

Internet faults may mean consumers experience:

- slow speeds when browsing the internet, or downloading files
- constant buffering when watching videos or during online calls
- intermittent connectivity or dropouts
- having no service at all.

How do we handle internet fault complaints?

When handling an internet fault complaint, we work with both the consumer and provider to:

- identify if there is a fault,
- identify the cause and location of the fault,
- fix the fault or determine if the service can be improved, and
- consider appropriate remedies or alternative solutions.

What we consider in internet fault complaints

When handling internet fault complaints, we will consider:

- the location of the fault and who is responsible for it
- the accuracy of the information about the internet service given to the consumer at the point of sale
- any representations the provider made about the quality of service to the consumer
- if the consumer specifically told the provider how they would be using the service
- if the standard of service has changed
- the extent to which a consumer can benefit from the service
- if the provider has met its obligations under Australian Consumer Law.

If there is an internet fault

If there is an internet fault, we can explore how the provider intends to respond to the issue. A provider may:

- fix the service
- ask the wholesale provider to fix the infrastructure
- provide a timeframe for any planned infrastructure maintenance
- replace provider-supplied equipment
- advise the consumer how to fix a fault that may be beyond its control (e.g., Wi-Fi related issues, personal devices)
- decide not to fix the service.

Once the fault 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 and whether any compensation may be payable.

Consumer expectations

We expect consumers to notify their provider about an internet fault they are experiencing and participate in reasonable troubleshooting. This can involve:

- completing speed tests through a direct cable connection to the modem/router,

- providing logs of dropouts they experience
- replacing modem/routers
- being available for technician appointments

If there is no fault or the service cannot be improved

If there is no internet fault, or the issue is caused by something outside of a provider's control, we are limited in what we can do.

We cannot require the provider to:

- improve the service or fix the infrastructure
- fix faults beyond the Network Boundary Point (NBP)
- replace equipment it has not supplied
- 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 an internet fault they are experiencing and participate in troubleshooting.

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

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

If the provider does not supply a service that is fit for purpose, provided with due care and skill, or rectify the problem within a reasonable time, a consumer may be entitled to a remedy under the Australian Consumer Law (ACL), such as:

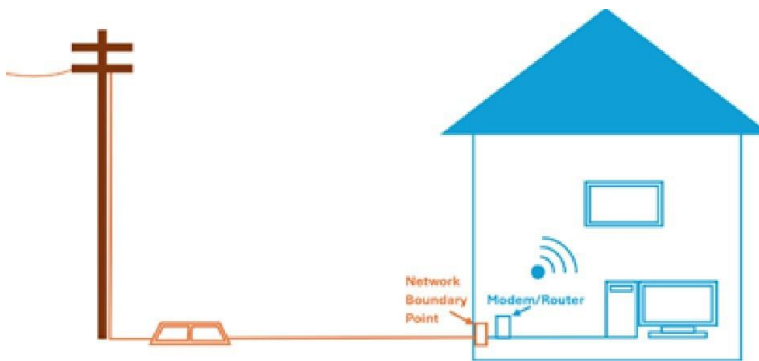
- a refund or credit of service charges
- a release from contract (if in contract, and generally doesn't include equipment charges)

We do not expect providers to guarantee a fault-free service.

Network Boundary Point

The Network Boundary Point (NBP) is the point where the provider's responsibility ends, and the consumer becomes responsible to maintain the service.

The NBP is where a consumer will plug their modem/router into and may be branded by the wholesale provider (e.g. NBN Co, Opticomm, etc)



Wi-Fi related issues

If the fault is caused by a faulty modem/router that was supplied by the provider, there may be entitlements we can consider under Australian Consumer Law.

If we determine that the fault is caused by Wi-Fi connectivity issues, it may not be the responsibility of the provider to fix.

There can be multiple environmental factors, such as the location of the modem/router, the composition of the building, and distance of the modem/router to other appliances that can interfere with the Wi-Fi strength.

For more information about Wi-Fi issues, please refer to our factsheet on Complaints about Wi-Fi issues.