

14 September 2026

Joint Select Committee on Artificial Intelligence
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Submitted via ai.joint@aph.gov.au

Dear Joint Select Committee

Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Artificial Intelligence

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) is pleased to contribute to the Joint Select Committee on Artificial Intelligence (AI). Our submission addresses reference terms (i) and (k) about the gaps in Australia's laws and regulatory frameworks and the risks and harms arising from AI.

The TIO is a free, fair and independent external dispute resolution service for people, small businesses and not-for-profits who have been unable to resolve their complaint with a phone or internet service provider. We receive a growing volume of requests from people with digital platforms problems who are unable to get the help they need.

Since January 2023, the TIO has received 2,500 complaints about online services, despite the TIO not having powers to help. Complaints about generative AI companies include privacy issues, breaches of terms of service and the inability to correct the generation of inaccurate information. More than 40 complaints named tech companies' use of AI when detailing difficulties engaging with a social media company or other digital platform as part of their automated decision-making or review processes, preventing them from resolving an issue such as being locked out of an account or disputing unfair fees.

To ensure Australia receives the productivity and innovation benefits of AI, people must have trust and confidence in the technology. In research commissioned by the TIO earlier this year, the Consumer Policy Research Centre found four in five Australians faced at least one digital service problem in the past year. 53 per cent of people report having lower trust online because of digital service problems, with overwhelming support (83 per cent) for the TIO expanding to be able to provide free, independent dispute resolution for digital services.¹

The ACCC and the Review of the Online Safety Act both recommended the Australian Government establish an ombuds scheme for digital services.² By expanding the TIO's jurisdiction, the Australian Government can ensure people have timely access to a trusted service to help resolve issues and improve trust in the digital economy. An ombuds scheme is a key consumer protection that delivers fair and reasonable outcomes and drives industry improvement through systemic issues identification without stifling innovation with overly burdensome regulation.

¹ CPRC (2026) [Someone To Turn To | The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman](#)

² ACCC (2025) [Key findings on the final report of the Digital Platform Services Inquiry 2020-25](#); Rickard, D (2024) [Report of the Statutory Review of the Online Safety Act 2021](#)

An ombuds scheme complements the Australian Government's broader digital agenda including important measures around online safety, unfair trading practices and privacy reform. The exposure draft of the Digital Duty of Care imposes internal dispute resolution obligations on the platforms. The inclusion of AI in the Digital Duty of Care shows the government is thinking about consumer harms across the communications landscape. But people need access to a practical, flexible, independent external dispute resolution (EDR) scheme so they have someone to turn to for support to enforce their new rights against big tech companies.

Access to a free and independent dispute resolution service is particularly important in sectors with a significant power imbalance between consumers and providers. For services as ubiquitous as AI and digital platforms, there must be an EDR mechanism to help consumers when internal processes fail. An industry-funded scheme would complement the regulatory work of the eSafety Commissioner in compliance, enforcement, and serious online safety harms. The TIO is calling for our jurisdiction to be expanded to take on this role, and handle both digital platforms and telco complaints as the Communications Ombudsman.

The TIO recommends the Committee recognises the importance of an ombuds scheme as a key consumer protection measure for AI and other digital platform users. By closing this key gap in consumer safeguards, the Australian Government can restore trust in the digital sector and protect Australians online.

We welcome the opportunity to provide any further information to the Committee, and look forward to continuing to work with government, regulators, industry, and the community to ensure Australia's digital framework keeps pace with changes in technology and the needs of consumers.

Kind regards,

Cynthia Gebert
Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman