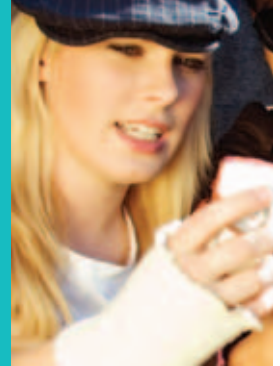


16 000 complaints a month and rising



Complaints about mobile phone issues have increased to more than 16 000 a month, according to data from the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman.



The TIO service is designed to assist both consumers and small businesses with telecommunications problems they have been unable to resolve with their providers.

During the first three months of 2009, the number of complaints increased by 28 per cent over the previous three-month period.

Most complaints were about disputed bills; in particular, disagreement over the total amount due and administration and termination fees.

The complaint-handling procedures of service providers also featured highly on the list of complaints, as did dropouts and other network faults.

Of the problems customers experienced with their mobile phone contracts, by far the most complained about issue was the advice provided by sales staff.

Some 7088 complaints were received during the first quarter of 2009 about mobile premium services. Not surprisingly, most of these complaints were about services the customer did not request. However, more than 1300 mobile owners told the TIO they were not given adequate assistance when trying to unsubscribe from the services.

More broadly, the most complained about issue with all mobile, fixed and broadband services related to billing.