

Cooling off periods will benefit telecommunications consumers

Three revised industry codes registered recently by ACMA cover the introduction of 'cooling off' periods for sales of certain telecommunications services.

The new rules will apply when telecommunications providers use telemarketing to encourage consumers to switch mobile phone providers or to pre-select alternative service providers on their landline phones.

The three codes—ACIF C515: 2005 Pre-selection Industry Code, ACIF C531: 2005 Commercial Churn Industry Code and ACIF C570: 2005 Mobile Number Portability Industry Code—were developed by the Australian Communications Industry Forum (ACIF). Registration of these codes by ACMA makes them enforceable.

The three codes were revised following extensive consultation with industry and consumer representatives, and submitted to ACMA for registration.

They promote informed decision-making by consumers, giving consumers more time to consider their purchasing

decisions. If consumers are not satisfied with the services offered by their new provider, they now have the option of having their old services restored without penalty during the cooling-off period. The changes recognise that providers and their customers have a vested interest in maintaining fairness in their dealings with one another.



The codes are on the ACIF website, www.acif.org.au.

ACMA to monitor free-to-air coverage of **anti-s phoning** sport

Senator Coonan, Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, has also announced that ACMA will monitor free-to-air coverage of events on the anti-siphoning list, to ensure its continuing relevance and integrity.

In announcing the policy, Senator Coonan said 'Generally, the policy rationale for retaining the anti-siphoning list remains but there is scope for further scrutiny of the list and the number of events on it'.

'ACMA will monitor free-to-air coverage of events on the anti-siphoning list from 1 January 2006 until 31 December 2010, when the current list is due to expire.

The anti-siphoning scheme aims to maximise free-to-air coverage of listed events and, where that is not possible or practicable, it aims to maximise coverage by enabling pay TV to broadcast events.

ACMA will formally monitor which events have been acquired by free-to-air or national broadcasters and the extent of their rights to those events; how those rights are used and whether unused or partially-used rights are offered to other broadcasters, including pay TV.

Senator Coonan has directed ACMA to report no less than once every six months.