



Do Not Call Register

Do Not Call Register begins operation

The Do Not Call Register has commenced full operation, with the register and industry standard commencing on 31 May. By then, more than 1 million telephone numbers had been listed on the Do Not Call Register since it opened on 3 May—over 200,000 in the first 24 hours alone.

It is now illegal, in the absence of consent, to make telemarketing calls to numbers listed on the Do Not Call Register. Exemptions apply for certain public interest organisations including charities, educational institutions, religious organisations, government bodies and political candidates.

To avoid penalties, businesses that make telemarketing calls can avoid making calls to telephone numbers on the register by checking or 'washing' their calling lists against the register. Businesses have been able to submit their calling lists to the register operator since 25 May. By the time the Do Not Call Register began operating on 31 May, 44 million numbers had been checked, or 'washed', against those listed on the register and 355 businesses had opened accounts with the register.

INDUSTRY STANDARD VARIED

ACMA has varied the *Telecommunications (Do Not Call Register) (Telemarketing and Research Calls) Industry Standard 2007* to allow research calls to be made on Sundays. The standard came into effect on 31 May. Under the industry standard, a research caller must not make or attempt to make a research call on a Sunday before 9.00 am or after 5.00 pm. Telemarketing calls are still prohibited on Sundays under the standard.

Before varying the standard, ACMA called for comments on the issue of research calls on a Sunday through the release of a discussion paper on 20 April 2007. The submissions received provided extensive new quantitative and qualitative information which emphasised the importance of Sunday calling to quality research.

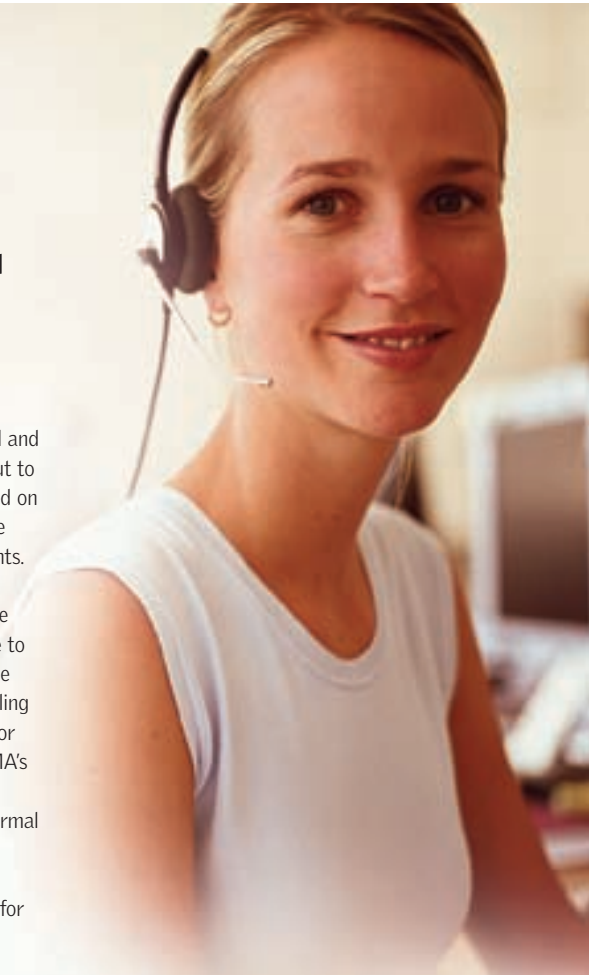
ACMA Chairman Chris Chapman said that the Authority reached the conclusion that prohibiting research calls on a Sunday could potentially reduce the benefits to the community from well-structured research. This view is based on strong evidence provided to ACMA that the prohibition could undermine the value of longitudinal data sets where data had previously been collected on Sundays, as well as increase the potential for bias because samples were not representative.

'ACMA understands that the community generally

considers unsolicited telephone calls to be inconvenient and intrusive,' said Mr Chapman. 'However, the community also appreciates the importance of quality research in delivering social and economic benefits. After considering the views put to us, we have concluded that calls should be allowed on Sundays, but with tighter calling hours than those existing under current self-regulatory arrangements. This will allow valuable research to continue.'

ACMA will closely monitor compliance with the new Sunday calling times and consumer response to the standard. The results of this monitoring will be used to inform a comprehensive review of the calling hours under the standard in the next 12 months, or earlier if significant concerns are brought to ACMA's attention.

Breaches of the standard may incur either a formal warning or financial penalty, determined by the Federal Court. Penalties are up to \$250,000 per contravention for bodies corporate and \$50,000 for individuals.



Minister warns against Do Not Call Register scams

The Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Senator Helen Coonan, has warned consumers about potential unscrupulous door-knocking scams where people have been asked for money in return for being listed on the Do Not Call Register. ACMA has received reports of scammers charging as much as \$79 to sign people up to the service.

'Everyone needs to be aware that it is FREE to put your home and mobile number on the register. The government has paid for the establishment of the register, with industry contributing to the running costs.

'I urge residents not to hand over money to these scammers, but to get as many details as possible from them to help authorities identify the criminals,' Senator Coonan said.

While some calls will be allowed, including those from charities and market research companies, evidence shows that the register will greatly reduce the number of unsolicited calls. Registrations are valid for three years, and people can withdraw their registration at any time.

If consumers receive telemarketing calls more than a month after registering on the Do Not Call Register, they can lodge a complaint at www.donotcall.gov.au or the Do Not Call complaints line on telephone 1300 792 958.