



**SUBMISSION FOR THE
CONSUMER AND FINANCIAL LITERACY TASKFORCE**

AUGUST 2004

What does PhoneChoice do for consumers?

[PhoneChoice](#)¹ is a free, independent consumer website that compiles the details of hundreds of mobile and fixed-line phone plans.

Information on PhoneChoice is updated continuously based on the advertised rates published by telecommunications companies.

Consumers can compare the rates of any plans, according to their preferred criteria, to help them choose the plan that best fits their needs. Using the online bill calculator, consumers can compare mobile plans to see which works out cheapest for them, based on their typical calling pattern.

PhoneChoice does not endorse or recommend any specific provider or product. We assist consumers to make apples-to-apples comparisons of what's available, so they can make an informed choice about what product is right for their specific situation.

The site is of relevance to all **householders** and **small-to-medium-sized businesses**. It is also of use to **secondary school students**, who are making their first choice of phone, and are vulnerable to unmanageable debts.

PhoneChoice also helps keep the public informed of developments in the ever-changing telecommunications industry through the extensive media coverage we generate. A PhoneChoice spokesperson is always available for public discussion on TV, radio and print to explain how new products and services affect Australian consumers.

Additional services include a comprehensive [glossary](#)² of telecommunications terms, to de-mystify the terms used in advertising and jargon. Also available are [tips and tricks](#)³ to save on phone bills and an [Ask the Experts](#)⁴ panel (including the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman) to field technical questions or issues of general interest to consumers.

¹ www.phonechoice.com.au

² <http://www.phonechoice.com.au/content.cfm?section=Glossary>

³ <http://www.phonechoice.com.au/content.cfm?section=tipsntricks>

⁴ <http://www.phonechoice.com.au/content.cfm?section=experts>

Who else needs to know about PhoneChoice?

For the purposes of the CFL taskforce, the following government and semi-government bodies would be best advised about the existence of PhoneChoice, so that they do not needlessly duplicate the information and services already available free to consumers from our website:

- School curriculum designers in all states and territories.
- Consumer advisory bodies
- Small business incubators
- Telecommunications providers
- Telecommunications industry bodies, government and non-govt.
- Any organisation that purchases telecommunications services

What role does PhoneChoice play in the telecommunications industry?

PhoneChoice offers an independent, unbiased channel where telecommunications companies can offer competing products and services on a level playing field.

Consumers benefit when they understand how to get the best service and value from the industry, and the industry itself can improve its products when it best understands what is important to customers.

PhoneChoice favours an approach that engages the telecommunications industry in a spirit of co-operation, not confrontation, to encourage them to listen to consumers and address their concerns.

We welcome liaison with the telecommunications industry, so that we can promote best business practice by industry players. To this end, PhoneChoice conducts regular consumer research, to better inform the industry about what consumers really need.

Key details for the CFL taskforce stocktake spreadsheet

Provider:	PhoneChoice
Resource:	Website
Type of resource:	Web-based
Date:	Since 2000 - daily updates
Cost:	Free
Target audience:	General public, Households, Businesses
Availability:	www.phonechoice.com.au
Information available:	Consumer rights Where to get information/assistance Making an effective complaint Avoiding scams Up-to-date comparison of Mobile , Pre-Paid , International National , fixed-to-mobile and Local calls

**APPENDIX
PHONECHOICE OVERVIEW**

ABOUT PHONECHOICE

PhoneChoice is the only Australian website that provides **free** independent, unbiased solutions based on the hundreds of different offers made by the Telecommunication industry including Telstra, Optus, Vodafone and Hutchison.

Phonechoice has over 200,000 visitors each month. On average, visitors spend over five minutes per visit.

PhoneChoice Policy

PhoneChoice provides information on a wide range of tele-communications products and services to thousands of consumers visiting its site daily, allowing visitors to the site to make easy, objective and meaningful comparisons without the mumbo jumbo and hype that is usually associated with offers from the telecommunication industry.

How does PhoneChoice help consumers find the best deal?

Simply go to www.phonechoice.com.au and enter the section that interests them - Mobile, PrePaid, International, National or Local.

In the Mobile section, the PhoneChoice *Bill Calculator* gives consumers an up-to-date comparison of the cost for plans that fit their usage pattern.

After answering some basic questions about phone usage, visitors click on the submit button and within seconds the Bill Calculator sorts through approximately 1,000 offers from the service providers and display the best plans to meet their needs.

This is a free service, and consumers can make as many enquiries as they wish.

Who lists offers on the PhoneChoice site?

Most companies submit their offers to PhoneChoice for inclusion on the comparable data in the Bill Calculator. The PhoneChoice research team also makes enquiries with companies that do not provide information unprompted.

Sometimes suppliers ask not to be listed; presumably they do not want to be compared on an “apple to apple” basis. However, provided the information is publicly available, and PhoneChoice judges it as worth collecting, it is included in our tables.

Is PhoneChoice independent?

PhoneChoice does not take payments from providers in return for listings in its comparative tables, ensuring that all offers in the tables are genuine and unbiased.

PhoneChoice does not recommend or endorse any provider, product or service.

There are certain sections of the site, such as ‘current best offers’, where service providers can display banner advertisements for their products. The paid advertisements have no connection with or influence upon the data used in the bill calculator database.

FREE FEATURES OFFERED BY PHONECHOICE

Thousands of consumers take advantage of the other free services

PhoneChoice has to offer:

- **News and Views**

Articles are compiled on a daily basis supplying up to date information on the latest products and services available to mobile phone users, plus happenings in the world of telecommunications.

- **Ask the Experts**

The expert panel comprises of senior managers from all corners of the industry, with extensive technical and practical experience within their fields, including the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman.

- **Tips and tricks**

A list of tips to help consumers avoid the traps when buying a mobile phone or signing a service contract, tips for travelers, saving money on your bills and much more.

- **Glossary / Jargon**

The PhoneChoice site features a comprehensive glossary of telecommunications terms, to de-mystify much of the jargon that consumers face when choosing a phone or plan.

- **Free Membership**

Members receive email alerts on the latest developments that effect buying decisions.

PhoneChoice has approximately 10,000 members.

THIRD PARTY ENDORSEMENT FOR PHONECHOICE

Many government, semi-government and industry bodies within the telecommunications sphere have recognised the contribution that PhoneChoice makes to the industry and the needs of consumers.

We are grateful for the recognition and participation of these groups, and are proud to be associated with them.

- **Australian Communication Authority**

Contact: Allan Horsley, A/g Deputy Chair

The Australian Communication Authority have included referrals for PhoneChoice in their publications; *My Mobile Phone Tool Kit* and *My Internet Tool Kit*.

The Australian Communication Authority's logo appears on PhoneChoice as a mark of their association with us.

- **The Telecommunication Industry Ombudsman (TIO)**

Contact: John Pinnock, Telecommunications Ombudsman

The Ombudsman graciously consented to be a part of the PhoneChoice website to enable consumers to the PhoneChoice site to submit questions directly to the TIO.

This arrangement has worked very well since its inception and many problems have been solved to the satisfaction of consumers.

- **Australian Consumers' Association**

Contact: Norm Crothers, General Manager

At present we are undertaking a major project as a joint venture with the Australian Consumers' Association involving their members and members of PhoneChoice.

The project is to undertake a survey of consumers nationally to discover the changing ways they are using their landline phones.

- **CHOICE website**

The Australian Consumers' Associations website features all of the PhoneChoice data regarding the hundreds of offers made to consumers by all of the service providers of mobile phones and plans in Australia.

Consumers to the CHOICE website are able to use the PhoneChoice Bill Calculator to ascertain which is the best offer to meet their individual requirements.

This arrangement is on-going and all offers are kept up to-date in keeping with the PhoneChoice policy.

- **Consumer Affairs Victoria**

Recently recommended PhoneChoice and the Bill Calculator as a tool for students to study when undergoing some exams.

- **Online Access Centre Association of Tasmania (OACAT)**

Recommended PhoneChoice on their new website -
www.telconsumersrights.info