LIMAC
Low Income Measures Assessment Committee

Public Report to the
Minister for Communications,
Information Technology and the Arts

On Telstra's
Access for Everyone Package

**A package of telecommunications initiatives
for customers on low incomes**

As at 31 December 2005

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Executive Summary

This is the third annual report by the Low-Income Measures Assessment Committee (LIMAC) to the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. The purpose of this report is to advise the Minister on the effectiveness of Telstra's Access for Everyone package in meeting the telecommunications needs of low-income consumers and the marketing of this package by Telstra. This report covers calendar year 2005. This report also marks the conclusion of the 2002-2005 price control arrangements, through which the Access for Everyone package was initially established.

LIMAC and its role

LIMAC was established to ensure disadvantaged Australians can connect and maintain a tele-communications service. Central to this goal is the belief that all Australians should have access to affordable telecommunications services. The Committee recognises the efforts of Telstra and its Access for Everyone package to assist disadvantaged members of the community to stay in touch with friends, family, potential employers, support services and their community. This is an important contribution to community well-being and capacity building.

LIMAC is an independent committee established to specifically advise Telstra on providing services to customers who are on a low income. The Committee is comprised of representatives of such organisations as are approved by the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts and generally includes representatives of community groups together with the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA).

LIMAC met five times in 2005 including the inaugural public meeting held in Wollongong, NSW. Additionally LIMAC met three times via audio-conference in response to consultation requests from Telstra. LIMAC has formally met 28 times in 2002 - 2005.

Telstra has provided LIMAC with regular briefings on the development, rollout and take-up of products and services available through the package. The Committee has provided advice on changes which it considers appropriate to the products and services offered through Access for Everyone, and on the communications activities to raise awareness of, and to promote, the package.

In 2005 LIMAC and Telstra conducted a public awareness campaign around the Access for Everyone program. The campaign commenced with the launch of the 2004 LIMAC Annual Report by the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts in May 2005. Additionally there were a number of media releases promoting the Access for Everyone package distributed across Australia as well as wide-spread distribution of a radio Community Service Announcement recorded by John Williamson. Chris Dodds, the Chair of LIMAC, was interviewed extensively on regional radio about Access for Everyone.

Additionally, LIMAC appointed a Research Sub-committee, a Report Sub-committee, the Telstra Bill Assistance Program Working Group and the Telstra Phonecard Assistance Program Working Group. Section 2 of the report details the work undertaken by LIMAC and its sub-committees throughout 2005.

The 2004 LIMAC Annual Report contained a number of actions and commitments relating to the Access for Everyone and related programs. LIMAC has received regular updates from Telstra on progress against those actions and commitments and notes that these have all either

been completed or are in progress. A table outlining the actions and commitments from the 2004 LIMAC Annual Report, and Telstra's progress against these is included as Appendix C.

Since the establishment of LIMAC, Telstra has regularly provided a financial report to the Committee. Telstra reported to LIMAC that for the financial year ended 31 July 2005, the value of the Access for Everyone package exceeded $200 million. Since the establishment of the Access for Everyone package in July 2002, the value of the package has exceeded $600 million of targeted assistance for low-income and disadvantaged consumers.

Low-income target groups under Access for Everyone

To assist with the development of offerings through the Access for Everyone package and the marketing of the products and services available, seven low-income target segments have been identified. These are:

- Age pensioners
- Indigenous Australians
- Low-income families
- People from non-English speaking backgrounds
- People with disabilities
- Transient and homeless people
- Unemployed persons.

Access for Everyone Market Research program

When the Access for Everyone package was created in 2002, Telstra undertook qualitative and quantitative market research to benchmark telecommunications access and consumer satisfaction with services across the seven low-income target groups. Each year LIMAC has commissioned research to monitor the effectiveness of the Access for Everyone package in meeting the telecommunications needs of low-income Australians and awareness of the low-income package. In 2003 all target groups identified in the Access for Everyone Marketing Plan were surveyed. In 2004 the Market Research focussed on surveying Homeless and Indigenous Australians, as previous research showed these segments had much lower access to, and satisfaction with, communication services in comparison to the general population.

In 2005 the market research was conducted with users of the products and services available through the Access for Everyone package, in contrast to previous years where people generally in the target segments have been interviewed. The purpose of surveying the users of the low-income package products and services was to assess the user experience, and satisfaction with the products and services offered. Findings from the research will guide further development of the package, and marketing of the offerings contained in the package. The 2005 market research also included interviews with community agencies to assess how the services met the needs of their clients.

Key findings from the 2005 research include:

Customers
- HomeLine Budget customers are highly satisfied with the current service (only 3% expressed dissatisfaction with the service), but believe that there is room to provide cheaper line rental and call costs.
- InContact customers are generally satisfied with this service (90%), however there is low awareness and usage of the ability to make outgoing calls through pre-paid PhoneAway cards.

- Telstra customers who use Centrelink's Centrepay service to pay their Telstra account are highly satisfied with this service (91% and there were no dissatisfied users), and most indicated that the minimum of $20 payment per fortnight suited their budgetary needs (67%).
- The majority of Bill Assistance customers (83%) had trouble paying a telephone bill on time, requiring extensions of time for payment. The Bill Assistance certificates are highly regarded for one-off debt repayment.
- A large proportion of users had heard about the product/service they were using through word of mouth or friends.

Agencies
- Half of the agencies surveyed indicated that the Telstra initiatives they were aware of were 'extremely effective'.
- There was low awareness amongst the staff of community agencies of the full range of products and services available through the Access for Everyone package for their clients.
- As with customers, there was a low level of awareness of the ability to use pre-paid PhoneAway cards from InContact and Sponsored Access services.
- There was a strong interest in distributing free Telstra Phonecards for use in Telstra public payphones across all agencies.

Further details of this research is provided in Section 4 of this report under each relevant product.

Access for Everyone package and Marketing Plan

The initial Access for Everyone package was formally documented in a Marketing Plan, endorsed by LIMAC on 3 June 2002. The Marketing Plan provides details of new service offerings and enhancements to existing services offered as part of the package. Currently the low-income package comprises:

- HomeLine® Budget phone plan
- Telstra Pensioner Discount Scheme (formerly the Telstra Pensioner Concession Scheme)
- InContact®
- Telstra Bill Assistance Program
- Telstra MessageBox
- Homelink® 1800
- Sponsored Access
- Multiple Number
- Telstra BudgetPay
- Access to Centrelink's Centrepay service for Telstra customers.

Telstra ceased sale of the HomeLine Low Income Health Care Card phone plan on 30 September 2005 after consultation with LIMAC and notification to the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts.

The Telstra Phonecard Assistance Program is a new offering in the Access for Everyone package, which commenced in January 2006.

Section 4 of this report provides a current explanation of the products and services comprising the Access for Everyone package, feedback from the annual market research, as well as take-up, monitoring and work in progress, if any.

Highlights and main issues for 2005

Products and arrangements:

Section 4 outlines the products and arrangements that are available through the Low Income Package. The highlights and main issues with the products and arrangements include:

- The cessation of sale of HomeLine Low Income Health Care Card phone plan due to the low take-up and usage of the phone plan, and the difficulties with targeted marketing of the plan to increase awareness.
- The launch of Telstra's BudgetPay services (formerly known as Bill Smoothing).
- The planning for a new offering through the low-income package, the Telstra Phonecard Assistance Program.
- Ongoing work to establish a validation process for recipients of the Telstra Pensioner Discount Service, to ensure that only customers who are eligible for the discount receive this.
- Modification to the eligibility criteria for InContact to allow customers connection to the service if they have a pre-paid mobile phone service.
- Over 40% increase in the number of HomeLine Budget services in operation.

Communications and promotions:

Section 4 also provides details of communication and promotional activity to the end of December 2005. Highlights of work undertaken include:

- Public launch of the 2004 LIMAC Annual Report by the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts in May 2005.
- A public awareness campaign including radio Community Service Announcements, recorded by John Williamson from May 2005.
- A public forum held in Wollongong to launch the new BudgetPay service, celebrate the 10th anniversary of the InContact service and to allow interested parties to observe and participate in the work undertaken by LIMAC in June 2005.
- A targeted communications program to inform potential customers of the new BudgetPay option from June 2005.
- Promotion of the Access for Everyone package in a range of internal Telstra publications to raise awareness amongst Telstra staff.
- Usage of the John Williamson Community Service Announcement on Telstra 'messages on hold'.
- Awareness raising articles in a range of Telstra external publications, such as a quarterly bill insert *News you can use*, Telstra bill messages and Telstra's Corporate Social Responsibility Report.
- Creation of a new multi-lingual brochure distributed to new settler agencies promoting the availability of the Access for Everyone package.

Additional communication and promotion for individual products and services available through the package also occurred, and are discussed in detail in Section 4.

LIMAC endorses the current use of grassroots, community-based programs and partnerships with community agencies to promote the Access for Everyone package. Clearly this strategy is working; however the Committee believes that more Australians would benefit from this important service if community awareness could be raised through 'word of mouth', by encouraging people to talk to family and friends about the different ways they can be assisted.

Other activities considered by LIMAC

LIMAC also monitors other activities occurring within Telstra that may assist low-income customers but are not included in the Access for Everyone package. Section 5 refers to these activities where LIMAC has received briefings from Telstra, and had the opportunity to input its views as to strategies and direction for these activities, as well as planned promotion and communications activities. Issues considered in 2005 include specialised payphone services for remote Indigenous communities and Telstra's Hardship Assistance Policy.

LIMAC conclusions

LIMAC believes that Telstra has worked successfully with the Committee throughout 2005 to provide a program assisting low-income Australians to access telecommunications services. Telstra personnel involved in the Access for Everyone package have worked closely and collaboratively with LIMAC and have fully resourced the Committee to enable it to carry out its responsibilities.

LIMAC again endorses Telstra's strategy of targeted communications through grassroots community agencies and organisations. This strategy has again appeared successful in promoting the products available through the Access for Everyone package in 2005 where the market research continued to highlight that 'Telstra', 'word of mouth' and 'welfare agency' were how the majority of users became aware of the products they were using.

LIMAC makes the following particular recommendations to Telstra for 2006:

R1. Having now gained a change to the relevant regulation, Telstra should commence a verification process for recipients of the Telstra Pensioner Discount to ensure proper targeting of the discount.

R2. Telstra should continue to explore relevant options to assist low-income customers such as Health Care Card holders, job seekers and their children/families, including access to Broadband Internet and mobile phone services.

R3. In 2006 Telstra should place additional focus on making information available to community agencies to assist them to educate their clients about the options available to them and on how to manage telecommunications expenditure.

R4. Telstra should undertake regular proactive promotion of the ability to make outgoing calls via a PhoneAway card from an InContact service.

R5. Telstra should investigate possibilities to assist agencies that distribute Telstra Bill Assistance Certificates to cross-promote other aspects of the Access for Everyone package that may assist their clients.

R6. Telstra should continue to focus efforts on promoting the Access for Everyone package at the grassroots level and through community agencies.

R7.   With the cessation of sale of HomeLine Low Income Health Care Card, Telstra should consult closely with LIMAC on migrating current users of that phone plan to another phone plan which meets their needs.

LIMAC continues to believe that the Access for Everyone package, providing a range of targeted products and services to meet varying customer circumstances, is an effective model for ensuring affordability of telecommunications for people on low incomes.

1. Introduction

Under Clause 22 of Telstra's Carrier Licence Conditions (see Appendix A), Telstra is required to establish an independent committee, the Low-Income Measures Assessment Committee (LIMAC), to specifically advise Telstra on providing services to customers on low-incomes. The Committee is comprised of representatives of such organisations as are approved by the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts and generally includes representatives of community groups.

Also under Clause 22 of Telstra's Carrier Licence Conditions, Telstra is required to offer, or have a plan for offering, products and services to address the needs of low-income customers. This low-income package was announced by Telstra in April 2002, and called 'Access for Everyone'. The Low Income Package, and the Marketing Plan for this package were initially endorsed by LIMAC on 3 June 2002. This document contains details of the products and arrangements provided through the Low Income Package (Access for Everyone) and how Telstra will market these services.

To assist in the development of the Access for Everyone initiatives and in the marketing of these activities, seven low-income segments were identified:

- Age pensioners
- Indigenous Australians
- Low-income families
- People from non-English speaking backgrounds
- People with disabilities
- Transient and homeless people
- Unemployed persons.

The Access for Everyone package was originally developed through extensive consultation with consumer and community groups, including the Telstra Consumer Consultative Council. This consultation process was undertaken at formal meetings of the Council, as well as more informal group meetings and one-on-one meetings with community and consumer organisations over a 12-month period before Telstra announced the package.

LIMAC is required to produce a report annually on the effectiveness of the Access for Everyone package in meeting the communications needs of low-income Australians and of the marketing of the package by Telstra.

This is LIMAC's third Annual Report, covering calendar year 2005. This report is provided to the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. This report also marks the end of the price control regime which initially established LIMAC and the Access for Everyone package.

Under the new price control arrangements (2006-2009), Telstra is required to continue with the Low Income Measures program according to Clause 22 of its Licence Condition.

LIMAC notes Telstra's view that the requirement to maintain a low-income package through the current price control arrangements is an example of good regulation which is currently inequitably funded. LIMAC is of the opinion that all Communications Service Providers in Australia should be required to contribute to the provision of equity arrangements for people on low-incomes.

2. Low-Income Measures Assessment Committee (LIMAC)

2.1 Membership and role

The Low-Income Measures Assessment Committee (LIMAC) comprises representatives of community organisations who are approved by the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, as well as a representative from the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. An interim committee met in May 2002, and after Ministerial approval of the organisations represented, was formally constituted in June 2002. LIMAC is comprised of representatives of the following organisations:

- Anglicare Australia
- Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)
- Australian Federation of Homelessness Organisations (AFHO)
- COTA National Seniors
- Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA)
- Jobs Australia
- The Salvation Army
- The Smith Family.

There are also a number of representatives who attend the LIMAC meetings who have observer status. These include representatives of the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA), the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), St Vincent de Paul Society and Telstra.

LIMAC is resourced by a secretariat maintained within Telstra.

The role of LIMAC, as set out in its governing rules (Appendix B), is:

1. To produce a report annually which:

a)   assesses whether the resources committed under the low-income package by Telstra are best allocated to the needs of low-income consumers;

b)   evaluates the effectiveness of the low-income package in making telecommunications services available to the disadvantaged and those on low-incomes;

c)   advises on the effectiveness of the promotion of the low-income package; and

d)   makes recommendations on how Telstra can improve the utilisation of resources committed under the low-income package to maximise the benefits to low-income telecommunications consumers.

2. To assess proposed changes to the low-income package or to the marketing plan for the low-income package.

2.2 Meetings and attendance

LIMAC met five times in person in 2005, including the inaugural public meeting held in Wollongong. Additionally LIMAC met three times via audio-conference to discuss a proposed price change to the Telstra HomeLine Part phone plan, and also payphone pricing and the establishment of the Telstra Phonecard Assistance Program. The table below shows representation of the member organisations at each meeting.

Member/ Observer	Feb 05	Apr 05	May 05[*]	Jun 05[ˆ]	Aug 05	Sep 05[*]	Oct 05[*]	Dec 05
Anglicare	X	X	X		X	X		
ACOSS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
AFHO	X		X					
COTA NS	X	X		X	X			
FaCSIA	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Jobs Australia	X	X			X	X	X	X
Salvation Army	X	X	X			X	X	X
Smith Family		X	X		X	X	X	X
ACMA¥	X	X	X	X		X		
DCITA¥	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
St Vincent de Paul Society¥	X	X		X	X		X	X
Telstra¥	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

[*] Meeting held via audio-conference
[ˆ] Public meeting held in Wollongong
[¥] Attended as an observer.

LIMAC appointed a working group to oversee the operational aspects of the Telstra Bill Assistance Program in 2003. This working group met four times in 2005 with representatives from the following organisations

- Anglicare Australia
- Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)
- St Vincent de Paul Society
- The Salvation Army
- The Smith Family
- Telstra.

Additionally in 2005 LIMAC appointed a working group to oversee the establishment of the new Telstra Phonecard Assistance Program. This working group had representatives from

- Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)
- The Salvation Army
- Telstra.

It is proposed that LIMAC will appoint a working group to oversee the operational aspects of the Telstra Phonecard Assistance Program for at least the first year of operation. This working group will be appointed in 2006.

2.3   Activities undertaken

In 2005 LIMAC:

- submitted its second Annual Report on the Access for Everyone program to the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts;
- submitted a response to the Metropolitan Broadband Connect (MBC) program Draft Guidelines and Request for Information;
- commissioned research activity as outlined in the LIMAC Governing Rules (Appendix B);
- received regular briefings from Telstra on the development and rollout of its low-income programs both formally at meetings and informally by email from the LIMAC Secretariat by way of brief updates;
- commenced work on a new offering through Access for Everyone, the Telstra Phonecard Assistance Program;
- assisted Telstra with a public awareness campaign promoting the Access for Everyone package;
- held the inaugural public LIMAC meeting, where various communications industry stakeholders were able to observe and contribute to the work undertaken by LIMAC;
- advised Telstra on changes which it considered appropriate to the products and services available under the Access for Everyone package;
- received updates from Telstra on communications activities undertaken to promote the package, including the ongoing maintenance of the website www.telstra.com.au/accessforeveryone; and
- advised Telstra on communications activities it believed would increase awareness and promotion of the products and services available through the Access for Everyone package.

Additionally LIMAC appointed the following:

- a Research Sub-committee to oversee the research activities relevant to the fulfilment of the Committee's terms of reference with representatives from the following organisations;

    o   Anglicare Australia
    o   Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)
    o   COTA National Seniors
    o   Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
    o   Jobs Australia.

- a Report Sub-committee to oversee the development of LIMAC's annual report to fulfil the Committee's terms of reference with representatives from the following organisations;

    o   Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)
    o   Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
    o   Jobs Australia.

- a Telstra Phonecard Assistance Program working group to oversee the implantation of this new offering with representatives from the Australian Council of Social Service and The Salvation Army.

Telstra has consulted LIMAC on changes to the Access for Everyone programs before proposed changes were announced by Telstra.

Since LIMAC's establishment, Telstra has launched all planned programs and has expanded the package to now include the Telstra Phonecard Assistance Program. LIMAC will continue to work with Telstra to investigate opportunities to provide customers on a low-income with affordable high-speed Internet options.

Telstra has regularly provided LIMAC with a financial report, including capital expenditure to implement programs. Marketing, research and operational costs also incurred by Telstra have not been included.

Telstra reported to LIMAC that the value of the package in the 2005 calendar year exceeded $200 million.

2.3.1 Actions and commitments from 2004 LIMAC Annual Report

The 2004 LIMAC Annual Report contained a number of actions and commitments relating to the Access for Everyone package and related programs. LIMAC has received regular updates from Telstra on progress against those actions and commitments and notes that these have all either been completed or are in progress. A table outlining the actions and commitments from the 2004 LIMAC Annual Report, and Telstra's progress against these is included as Appendix C.

2.3.2 Research program 2005

In 2002 LIMAC undertook benchmark qualitative and quantitative market research to measure low-income and disadvantaged Australians' access to, and satisfaction with, communications services. Since this research was undertaken LIMAC, through the Research Sub-committee, has annually commissioned a research program that aims to better understand and benchmark low-income and disadvantaged Australians' attitudes toward, and usage of, telecommunications services. LIMAC is involved in the development of the research methodology and sample design, research objectives, discussion guides and questionnaires.

In previous years the market research program has focussed on target segments as outlined in the Access for Everyone Marketing Plan. In 2005 LIMAC chose to focus on end users of the products available through the Access for Everyone package, to gain a better understanding of customer satisfaction with the products and services provided, ways these offerings or communications about these offerings can be improved, and how customers were being made aware of the offerings.

The research program involved telephone interviews with 150 users of each InContact, HomeLine Budget, Telstra Bill Assistance Certificates and Centrelink's Centrepay service to pay their Telstra home phone account. Additionally telephone interviews were conducted with 10 agencies that supply Telstra Bill Assistance Certificates, 10 agencies that provide MessageBox and 10 agencies that supply Sponsored Access services.

Field work for the 2005 annual quantitative survey was undertaken in October and November 2005. Telstra supplied the market research company with lists of customers who used each of the products and services surveyed. Respondents qualified for participation if they met the criteria of low-income (weekly household income divided by the square root of the number of persons in household ≤ $270; increased from $263 in the previous survey on the advice of the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling). Flyers were also placed in agencies which supply Telstra MessageBox cards and Sponsored Access services requesting that users

of these services contact the market research company to participate in a satisfaction survey about these services. There was no response to these flyers. Telstra supplied the market research company with lists of the agencies which provide the services surveyed.

The market research had two key areas of investigation:
- Satisfaction with the services by current users, and awareness of other options to meet telecommunications needs amongst these low income Australians.
- Interviews with agencies to determine how the services fit with customers' needs.

A detailed overview of the research results is provided in Section 4 of this report.

2.3.3   Telstra Bill Assistance Program (TBAP) working group

Throughout 2005 the TBAP working group monitored the take-up of Telstra Bill Assistance Certificates across Australia by State/Territory and by distributing agency. It also considered feedback from distributing agencies with regard to eligibility for the program and administrative issues related to effective distribution of the TBAP Certificates.

The working group noted the lower than expected take-up in Queensland and Northern Territory, compared to other states. Regular reports by agency and by State/Territory are sent to all lead distributing agencies to provide feedback on TBAP usage in their agency/ location. The working group also developed a predictive model of take-up under the program and this was used to voluntarily reallocate TBAP Certificates from areas of under utilisation to areas of high utilisation towards the end of the program year.

Feedback from agencies indicated that many low-income clients presenting for emergency relief were relying on mobile phones for their communications needs, and so were not eligible for TBAP assistance. Access for Everyone was developed in response to changes occurring to the fixed home telephone service. However, in consideration of the feedback from LIMAC and other community agencies, and in response to the changing nature of telecommunications, Telstra undertook to investigate extending eligibility of the program to mobile phone accounts. Having investigated this proposal, Telstra advised LIMAC that due to system and other process changes required this was not feasible at this time. Telstra has committed to re-investigating this issue as changes occur in their systems and processes.

2.4   Future role of LIMAC

Under the price control arrangements for 2006-2009 and Clause 22 of its Carrier Licence Condition, Telstra remains committed to maintaining a low-income package for Australians who are financially disadvantaged, which is overseen by the Low Income Measures Assessment Committee.

As well as its role as an overseer of Clause 22 of Telstra's Carrier Licence Condition, LIMAC has a pro-active role to play in looking at communications affordability more generally in such areas as mobile phones and (Broadband) Internet access.

LIMAC will be discussing these issues with Telstra in 2006 noting that the outcomes will depend to some extent on the Government's own priorities for its Connect Australia communications package in regard to people on low incomes.

3. Low-Income target groups

The Access for Everyone package targets low-income Australians in the following seven segments:

- Age pensioners
- Low-income families
- Indigenous Australians
- People from non-English speaking backgrounds
- People with disabilities
- Transient and homeless people
- Unemployed persons.

The criteria of 'low-income' is generally regarded as the lowest 20% of households by income and is set by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM). In 2005 this was weekly household income divided by the square root of number of persons in the household is ≤ $270; this was increased from ≤ $263 in 2004.

Following is a brief description of each target segment, and a table outlining the products and services that might suit customers in these groups. A more comprehensive description of each target segment is published in the 2003 LIMAC Annual Report.

Planned promotional activities were discussed at each LIMAC meeting and members were able to offer advice to Telstra during these discussions. LIMAC has also received regular detailed reports on those activities, by way of record.

In addition to general promotion of the Access for Everyone package, specific promotion has occurred for the individual products and services available through the package and for specific target segments identified in the Access for Everyone Marketing Plan. Information about targeted promotion for specific target segments is included in this section.

3.1 Age pensioners

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimated that, as at June 2004, 12.8% of Australia's population, or around 2 545 000 people, were aged 65 years or more. The proportion of the population aged over 65 years will almost double to around 25% over the next 40 years.

When Telstra launched the BudgetPay option (June 2005) a bill message was placed on all Telstra Pension Discount recipients bills, to advise them of this new payment option.

3.2 Low-income families

Families identified as being at risk include sole parent families; families impacted by unemployment; Indigenous families; and families that are solely on Government income support. For example, the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services reported that in 2003 around 62% of one-parent families' primary source of income was government income support as compared to 11% of coupled families.

During 2004, Telstra identified the top 100 postcodes most likely to have low-income families residing in them according to publicly available socio-demographic data. Telstra provides ongoing information to relevant community services and organisations within those postcodes

about the Access for Everyone program. By December 2005 Telstra had listed over 7000 relevant agencies on a database.

3.3   Indigenous Australians

The Australian Torres Straits and Islander Commission (ATSIC) Annual Report 2002-2003 reported that 2.4% of the Australian population was Indigenous Australians. Around 50% of Indigenous Australians live in or near major cities, and 27% of the Indigenous population live in remote areas as compared to 2% of other Australians. The Indigenous population accounts for approximately half of the total remote population of Australia.

According to an ATSIC submission to the *Senate Enquiry into Poverty and Financial Hardship* 30% of Indigenous households are experiencing financial hardship with an estimated 50% of Indigenous adults reliant on some form of Government income support. Previous research commissioned by LIMAC in 2004 showed that Indigenous Australians were much less likely to have access to a personal telecommunications service than other Australians and are less satisfied with their access levels. Over the last two years LIMAC has focussed on raising awareness of the Access for Everyone package amongst Indigenous communities to address these issues.

In 2005 Telstra expanded its database of community agencies to include Community Legal Centres and Health Services, as the 2004 market research indicated that the majority of Indigenous Australian respondents had utilised one of these services in the past 12 months. Indigenous Australians also responded that 'word of mouth' was the most effective way of raising awareness of the Access for Everyone package. In October 2005 Telstra sent information to almost 7000 additional community agencies and support services regarding the Access for Everyone package.

3.4   People from non-English speaking backgrounds

Multicultural Australia is made up of people from more than 100 nationalities. According to the ABS, as at June 2001, Australia's overseas-born residents comprised 4.5 million, 23% of the total estimated resident population. For many new settlers and other Australians, English is not their first language. In 2001, 2.8 million or 16% of the total Australian population spoke a language other than English at home.

Telstra distributed an 'in language' brochure for new arrivals via resettlement agencies in November 2005, aiming to make these people aware of the Access for Everyone package as they establish their communications needs.

3.5   People with disabilities

People with a disability who are likely to experience difficulties with communications are people with a hearing impairment including people who are severely/profoundly deaf; a mobility impairment; a dexterity impairment; a vision impairment or who are blind; a speech impairment or communications disability; and/or an intellectual disability. Around 20% of the Australian population have some form of disability.

In 2002, among adults living in private households, more than half (53%) of those with disabilities were receiving a government pension or allowance. For the most part, this was their principal source of income. The proportion of people with a disability receiving a government pension or allowance increased with severity and age. (ABS: *Australia Now*)

Telstra continued to advertise in *Link* magazine in 2005, including one advertisement that focussed on the Telstra Pensioner Discount Scheme.

3.6 Transient and homeless people

The 2001 ABS Census found that seven in 1000 Australians were homeless. According to the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) client database (2002-2003) 58% of homeless are males (average age 30 years) with 42% female (average age 33 years). Indigenous Australians are over-represented as SAAP clients with 18% being Indigenous, compared to 2% of the total population. More than half (58%) of SAAP clients are not in the labour force, one-third are unemployed, and only 9% are employed with more than two-thirds of these working part time.

Previous research by LIMAC showed that the homeless segment has significantly lower access to personal communications services than any of the other target segments. All telecommunications services are seen as hard to afford by this segment, however overall they claimed to be generally satisfied with their levels of telecommunications access. Due to the comparatively low levels of access to personal communications services amongst the homeless segment, LIMAC has focussed much of their efforts on this segment.

LIMAC appreciates the difficulties in effectively targeting homeless and transient people. However the 2004 market research indicated that 'word of mouth' was the most effective way of reaching this segment. It was also found that in the previous 12 months more than 60% of research participants had visited a housing/accommodation service, more than half had accessed a health service and just under half had visited an employment service. LIMAC believes that Telstra's strategy of supplying information to community agencies and support services about the Access for Everyone package, such as occurred in October 2005, is the most effective way of reaching this target segment.

3.7 Unemployed persons

The rate of unemployment in Australia has continued to decline over the past decade, from a high of around 11% in 1992 to around 5% as at December 2004 (ABS: 6202.0), with an estimated 616 300 unemployed. Although anyone can become unemployed, the most likely are the following: Indigenous Australians; recently arrived migrants; people with disabilities; young people; people living in regional and remote communities; and/or older workers who have been retrenched.

It is expected that the new BudgetPay service will suit many customers in this segment. When Telstra launched BudgetPay a letter was sent to Telstra's database of community agencies advising of the new service and how this can be used.

3.8 General Access for Everyone communications

In addition to targeted communications, as outlined under each segment group, Telstra undertook a range of other activities to raise awareness of the Access for Everyone package to all target groups as well as the general community.

The LIMAC 2004 Annual Report to the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts was released by Senator Coonan in May 2005. This launched a general community awareness campaign which included a number of media releases and a radio Community Service Announcement recorded by John Williamson. The community awareness campaign was followed by the LIMAC meeting and public forum held in Wollongong, NSW

in June 2005. At this public meeting the BudgetPay service was officially launched and the 10th anniversary of InContact was celebrated. Television, radio and print media all covered this event in the Illawarra region.

From October 2005 Telstra used the John Williamson Community Service Announcement promoting Access for Everyone as one of its messages on hold for callers to residential sales and customer service (13 2200). Telstra placed an awareness message on over 6 million residential bills promoting Access for Everyone, Telstra's Pensioner Discount and the InContact service from May to August 2005 and again from November 2005 to February 2006. Additionally there was an article advising of the Access for Everyone package in the Telstra bill insert *News you can use* which was sent to over 6 million residential customers from October 2005 to January 2006.

In November 2005 Telstra commenced placing brochures promoting the Access for Everyone package in information bays in Telstra Shops.

Links were placed on the front page of www.telstra.com in February to March 2005 and May to June 2005 directing visitors to the Telstra Internet site which contains information about Access for Everyone. The promotional links on telstra.com caused individual visits to the Access for Everyone site to more than triple in these months than the average.

Telstra also undertook widespread distribution of a range of information promoting the Access for Everyone package, including the brochures *Access for Everyone – your A-Z Guide* and *Keeping Australians in Touch*, as well as specific items promoting Telstra MessageBox and Telstra Bill Assistance Certificates.

The Access for Everyone program is mentioned in a range of Telstra public reports, including Telstra's Annual Report and CSR Report.

Additionally Telstra published a range of articles about Access for Everyone and products and services available through the package in a variety of internal communications vehicles to raise awareness about the package amongst Telstra staff.

3.9   Access for Everyone services for target groups

The table below shows which Access for Everyone products and services are particularly relevant to each of the target groups.

	Age pensioners	Low-income Families	NESB	People with disabilities	Homeless / Transient	Indigenous Australians	Unemployed persons
HomeLine Budget	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Pensioner Discount	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
InContact	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bill Assistance	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
MessageBox					✓	✓	✓

	Age pensioners	Low-income Families	NESB	People with disabilities	Homeless / Transient	Indigenous Australians	Unemployed persons
Homelink® 1800		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Sponsored Access					✓	✓	✓
Multiple Number		✓					
BudgetPay	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Centrepay*	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓

* The Centrelink Centrepay option (as described in 4.11) is available to all Telstra customers who receive an eligible payment from Centrelink.

The new Telstra Phonecard Assistance Program is expected to primarily benefit Indigenous Australians, Homeless/Transient and unemployed persons segments.

3.10   Future considerations

LIMAC will continue to explore the relevance of the Access for Everyone package, and will consider the role of other communications services, such as mobiles and the Internet, in supporting low-income customers.

4. Access for Everyone programs

This section provides an update of the products and services that have been developed or significantly enhanced as part of the Access for Everyone package. Full details are available in the Access for Everyone Marketing Plan.

4.1 HomeLine® Budget phone plan
4.2 HomeLine® Low Income Health Care Card phone plan (ceased sale 30 September 2005)
4.3 Telstra Pensioner Discount Scheme (formerly Telstra Pensioner Concession Scheme)
4.4 InContact®
4.5 Telstra Bill Assistance Program
4.6 MessageBox
4.7 Homelink® 1800
4.8 Sponsored Access
4.9 Multiple Number
4.10 BudgetPay
4.11 Access to Centrelink's Centrepay service for Telstra customers
4.12 Future programs.

Following is a current explanation of the product or service, take-up, monitoring and developmental work in progress (if any). This section also includes results of the market research for specific products where this was undertaken, including Telstra Bill Assistance Program, HomeLine Budget, InContact and Access to Centrelink's Centrepay service for Telstra Customers.

Highlights and main issues for 2005 include:

- The launch of the Telstra BudgetPay service in June 2005, which was the final element of the original Access for Everyone package designed in 2002.
- The cessation of sale of HomeLine Low Income Health Care Card phone plan due to low take-up and usage and the difficulties with targeted marketing of the plan to increase awareness.
- The planning for a new offering through the low-income package, the Telstra Phonecard Assistance Program.
- Ongoing work to establish a validation process for recipients of the Telstra Pensioner Discount, to ensure that only customers who are eligible for the discount receive this.
- Modification to the eligibility criteria for InContact to allow customers connection to the service if they have a Telstra pre-paid mobile phone service.
- An over 40% increase in the number of HomeLine Budget services in operation.

4.1 HomeLine® Budget

Program description

The HomeLine Budget phone plan offers a lower monthly rental than the standard HomeLine plan, but with higher than standard per-call costs. HomeLine Budget phone plan is tariffed such that the average customer using this service will not experience price movement above CPI.

Target groups

Residential customers with just one fixed line service who make very few calls, including low-income families and age pensioners.

Take-up

Customer take-up of HomeLine Budget phone plan has been gradual and sustained. Services in operation grew by over 40% in calendar year 2005.

Monitoring

LIMAC sought assurances from Telstra that customers would be monitored to ensure that HomeLine Budget customers were taking up the most appropriate HomeLine plan. In response, Telstra conducted outbound telemarketing campaigns at six monthly intervals, the last in May 2004. Overwhelmingly, the customers were satisfied that they were on the most appropriate plan. After considering these findings, LIMAC agreed that the monitoring campaign could subsequently occur annually via direct mail. The annual direct mail monitoring campaign occurred in October 2005.

2005 Market Research

Sample

A total of 150 telephone interviews were conducted from customer lists supplied by Telstra and filtered by the low-income criteria. Nearly half the respondents surveyed were single, over half received their primary source of income from Government Support (53%) while 14% did not receive any Government allowance. Age was skewed at both ends of the spectrum with 35% under 34 years of age and 41% aged over 55 years. One in five respondents was from a non-English speaking background.

Access to and affordability of telecommunications services

Satisfaction with the HomeLine Budget service was very high with only 3% of respondents expressing dissatisfaction. The main reason for dissatisfaction with the service was cost. HomeLine Budget phone plan customers have similar levels of access to fixed-line and mobile phones as the general population, but Internet access was substantially lower amongst this group. The main reason for not having a mobile phone or Internet access was personal choice. However overall satisfaction with access to personal communications was 94%.

In general low-income HomeLine Budget customers responded that their spend on personal communications made up a small to fair proportion of their income, and there were moderate levels of satisfaction with the affordability of maintaining a home phone. The main strategy

for managing telecommunications spend was to consciously limit the number of phone calls made, or to call in off-peak periods.

**Table 1. Access to personal telecommunications services**
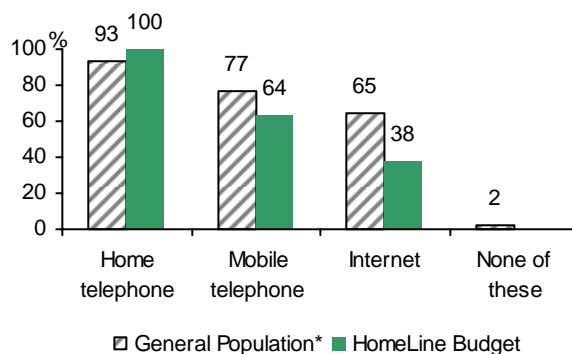
Information and assistance

The majority of low-income HomeLine Budget respondents (71%) had become aware of this service through Telstra in person or their bill, over the phone or through Telstra's website. Forty two per cent of respondents advised that they would contact Telstra if they had financial difficulty in setting up or maintaining a telecommunications service, whilst over a quarter (29%) indicated that they would not know who to contact. Only one in five HomeLine Budget respondents had had trouble paying their telephone bill in the past 12 months. The majority of respondents who had difficulty paying their account had sought out information on low cost options for telephone services or had made contact with Telstra to arrange an extension of time to pay their account.

Awareness and usage

The HomeLine Budget customers surveyed had low awareness of the other Telstra low-income initiatives. However, about one in five respondents had used or are using Centrelink's Centrepay service to pay their Telstra account, or Telstra Bill Assistance Certificates. There was a high level of interest in the InContact service and Telstra Bill Assistance Certificates.
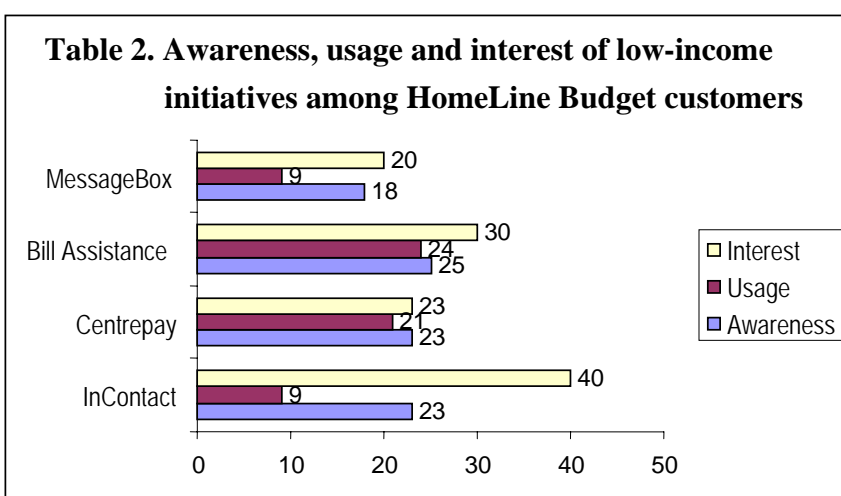
Work undertaken in 2005

Telstra again undertook a monitoring campaign via direct mail in October 2005, with a very low number of customers choosing to change HomeLine Plans.

HomeLine Budget was generally promoted as part of the Access for Everyone public awareness campaign in May to June 2005, which included a radio Community Service Announcement recorded by John Williamson, and later used in Telstra 'messages on hold'. HomeLine Budget is also promoted on Telstra.com, in the *Access for Everyone – your A-Z guide* and *Keeping Australians in touch* booklets.

In 2005 LIMAC considered the relationship between the HomeLine Budget and HomeLine Low Income Health Care Card phone plans. Due to the low take-up and awareness of HomeLine Low Income Health Care Card phone plan, a decision was made to cease sale of this service as of 30 September 2005. Telstra will work with LIMAC to determine if and when existing customers on this phone plan will be migrated to either the HomeLine Budget or HomeLine Complete services, dependent on their calling patterns.

Conclusions and future directions

LIMAC considers that the HomeLine Budget phone plan is a well established product with sustained take-up and that the excellent satisfaction ratings from low-income users indicate that this plan is meeting a real need. LIMAC will continue to request that Telstra undertake an annual monitoring campaign as to suitability of the service for users. LIMAC does not consider that further, specific promotion of this service is required.

4.2 HomeLine® Low Income Health Care Card (ceased sale 30 September 2005)

Program description

This phone plan offered a lower monthly rental charge than the standard HomeLine plan with slightly higher calling charges, and a reduced in-place connection fee which could be spread over subsequent billing cycles to people who have a Low Income Health Care Card from Centrelink.

Target groups

Australian Government Low Income Health Care card holders.

Take-up

Take-up of this product was very low, in part due to the difficulties in targeted promotion.

Monitoring

LIMAC noted the low take-up of this plan and was involved in discussions with Telstra and Centrelink about targeted promotion of this plan through Centrelink. Information from Centrelink indicated that the majority of Low Income Health Care Card holders are students. LIMAC has hypothesised that the majority of Low Income Health Care Card holders are using a pre-paid mobile phone in preference to a fixed home phone service, even one structured such as HomeLine Low Income Health Care Card. Due to the low take-up and the difficulties with targeted promotion of this phone plan LIMAC agreed to Telstra ceasing sale of the plan as of 30 September 2005. LIMAC advised the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts who has acknowledged this action. Telstra also advised LIMAC that on average, customers who were on this plan would not be adversely affected by moving to either the HomeLine Budget or HomeLine Complete phone plans. This action fulfilled Recommendation 1 of the LIMAC Annual Report 2004.

Conclusions and future directions

This phone plan will no longer be promoted. Should Telstra propose to migrate existing customers on this phone plan to another phone plan, LIMAC expects that Telstra will consult with the committee as to the process that will be followed.

4.3   Telstra Pensioner Discount Scheme (formerly Telstra Pensioner Concession Scheme)

Program description

Telstra's Pensioner Discount Scheme was introduced in 1992. It originally provided a monthly concession on local calls and a substantial discount on new or in-place telephone connections. Free access to Telstra's Call Control feature was added later.

Under Access for Everyone, the monthly concession for most Telstra pre-selected customers has been considerably increased and may now apply to a range of calls and monthly access charges,. Telstra committed to ensuring that the average eligible pensioner will not experience price movement above CPI over the period 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2005. Customers who are not pre-selected to Telstra are not eligible for either the monthly access or call concession components of the Telstra Pensioner Discount Scheme.

Target groups

Telstra's Pensioner Discount Scheme is available for eligible pensioners who:
- (a)   are a home customer;
- (b).   are billed directly by Telstra for monthly access and local calls; and
- (c)   holds an eligible Australian Government Pensioner Concession Card that is valid and was issued for a full year by Centrelink or the Department of Veteran Affairs.

Telstra is considering improvements to validation process for customers applying for the Pensioner Discount.

Take-up

The number of customers receiving the Telstra Pensioner Discount has increased steadily since the launch of the Access for Everyone package. In 2006 Telstra intends to begin a program to revalidate existing Pensioner Concession recipients to ensure the correct targeting of the discount, which may have an affect on take-up.

Monitoring

Telstra had been unable to validate a customer's eligibility for the Telstra Pensioner Discount directly with Centrelink due to *National Privacy Principle 7.2*. Throughout 2005 Telstra and LIMAC sought a change to the regulation to allow confirmation of a customer's eligibility to receive this discount, while complying with the *Privacy Act 1988*. This change occurred in December 2005 completing Recommendation 2 in the LIMAC Annual Report 2004. LIMAC will consult with Telstra about their verification process and the communications customers will receive as part of this process in 2006.

Work undertaken in 2005

LIMAC understood the difficulty Telstra was experiencing with not being able to validate the eligibility of new and existing recipients of the Telstra Pensioner Discount Scheme, and was regularly informed of Telstra's efforts to resolve this difficulty. LIMAC wrote to the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts in August 2005, and to the Attorney General in December 2005, on this matter.

LIMAC considered the name change from Telstra Pensioner Concession Scheme to Telstra Pensioner Discount Scheme. LIMAC agreed that changing the name would further distance the discount given by Telstra from the allowance paid by the Government to pensioners.

The Telstra Pensioner Discount Scheme was generally promoted as part of the Access for Everyone public awareness campaign in May to June 2005, which included a Community Service Announcement recorded by John Williamson, and later used in Telstra 'messages on hold'. The Telstra Pensioner Discount is also promoted on telstra.com, in the *Access for Everyone – your A-Z guide* and *Keeping Australians in touch* booklets. A bill message promoting the Telstra Pensioner Discount was placed on over 6 million residential telephone bills in May to August 2005.

Conclusions and future directions

The Telstra Pensioner Discount is a major component of the Access for Everyone program, and LIMAC is pleased that awareness and usage of this service continues to grow.

LIMAC is also pleased that Telstra was given confirmation in December 2005 that they will be able to access Centrelink's Confirmation e-Service (CCeS) to determine customer eligibility for the Pensioner Discount Scheme. This has been made possible by the implementation of the *Privacy (Private Sector) Amendment Regulations 2005*, which will allow Telstra to access CCeS without being in breach of the National Privacy Principles. LIMAC believes that through Telstra being able to confirm eligibility for this Discount there will be better targeting of the Discount.

4.4   InContact®

Program description

Telstra launched InContact in June 1995 as a telephone service free of ongoing monthly access charges. It allowed incoming calls, with outgoing access to the emergency services number 000, Telstra Sales and Service and Telstra Homelink® 1800 numbers.

Under Access for Everyone, InContact has been enhanced to enable:

- Telstra MessageBox message retrieval;
- Outgoing calls to most other numbers via the Telstra PhoneAway service;
- Calls to Telstra National Reverse Charge; and
- Calls to most 'free to call' numbers in the '24-Hour Services, Health and Help' section of the White Pages® directory.

In 2005 Telstra adjusted the eligibility criteria, at the request of LIMAC, to allow customers to have access to a Telstra pre-paid mobile phone service whilst on InContact. This change was welcomed particularly by community Financial Counsellors.

Target groups

InContact is targeted to low-income families and job seekers. Eligibility for new InContact services is restricted to people who have an eligible Centrelink or Department of Veterans' Affairs concession card or who are Telstra credit management customers (for a maximum period of 12 months while an outstanding debt is being resolved), or agencies eligible under the Sponsored Access program.

Take-up

The number of InContact customers has remained reasonably steady over the period of the Access for Everyone program. There is occasionally a minor decrease in customer numbers when Telstra disconnects credit management customers who have had the service for longer than 12 months, and have not responded to Telstra's request for contact to either resolve the debt to Telstra, or switch to a pre-paid service with line rental.

Monitoring

LIMAC believes that the change to the InContact eligibility criteria to allow access to the service while owning a Telstra pre-paid mobile phone may increase the number of InContact connections.

2005 Market research

Sample

A total of 150 telephone interviews were conducted from customer lists supplied by Telstra and filtered for low-income respondents. InContact customers surveyed tended to be over 35 years old. A high proportion reported they have a chronic illness or a disability. Nearly all respondents receive a government allowance, with this being their primary form of income. One in five are unemployed and looking for work. Eighty-three per cent of those surveyed lived in rental accommodation.

**Access to and affordability of telecommunications services**

Satisfaction with InContact was high, with only 10% of respondents expressing dissatisfaction with the service. The main reasons for dissatisfaction was the restricted nature of the service, and that some customers were offered this service due to credit management reasons. InContact customers surveyed reported significantly lower access to mobile phones and Internet than the general population. Cost was the main barrier cited for not having access to a mobile phone or Internet service. Other reasons for not having an Internet service included inability to access an Internet service as the telephone service was restricted, cost of buying a computer and not interested.

The majority of InContact customers had access to a public payphone and, for most, this is within one kilometre of their home (81%). Two-thirds of the InContact respondents were using a payphone at least once every two weeks with 13% using daily or more.

Satisfaction levels with the overall accessibility of telecommunications services were polarised with this group; 33% nominated the higher ratings of 'full access to everything you need and want' while 38% nominated the lower ratings, suggesting no or poor levels of access.

The majority of InContact respondents reported that their spend on telecommunications services made up a 'very small' or 'small' proportion of their income, however overall telecommunications tended to be perceived as not affordable by this group. The low level of satisfaction with affordability of telecommunications could be because many of the InContact customers are on the service for credit management reasons, and may be paying off another telephone account. The main strategy for managing telecommunications expenditure in this group were using pre-paid services or cards, both for home and mobile (54%) and consciously limiting the number of calls made (48%).

Table 3. Access to personal telecommunications services

Legend: ▨ General Population* ■ InContact
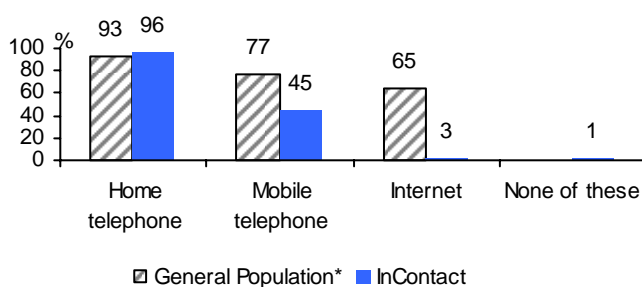
Information and assistance

Thirty-four per cent of the InContact respondents had heard about the service through friends, or 'word of mouth' with a further 19% hearing about the service through family. Perhaps due to the high percentage of credit management customers in this sample 29% had heard about the InContact service through Telstra. Half the respondents in this group would contact Telstra if they had financial difficulty setting up or maintaining a telephone service, 27% did not know who they would contact in this circumstance.

Nearly half the respondents in this group had difficulty paying a bill on time in the past twelve months and this tended to lead to disconnection, which is possibly why they have an InContact service. When in difficulty the majority would contact Telstra to make an extension of time to pay, or borrow money from family and friends to pay the account.

Awareness and usage

Only 30% of those surveyed were using a pre-paid PhoneAway card to make outgoing calls via their InContact service, which suggests usage of this option may not be high. Verbatim feedback as to reasons for dissatisfaction strengthen this conclusion with many comments suggesting low awareness of pre-paid card options, such as 'because I can't ring out' and 'the only thing I can call is 000 and calling 000 is not doing a lot if it's raining and I need someone to pick my kids up from school'.

The InContact customers surveyed had a low level of awareness of the other Telstra low-income initiatives. Twenty per cent of customers surveyed had used or were using Centrepay and there was a high level of interest in Telstra Bill Assistance Certificates (perhaps to be able to resolve a debt) and MessageBox (perhaps to be able to receive messages).

Table 4. Awareness, usage and interest of low-income initiatives InContact

Initiative	Interest	Usage	Awareness
MessageBox	44	22	15
Bill Assistance	38	17	35
Centrepay	22	20	27
HomeLine Budget	19	0	20
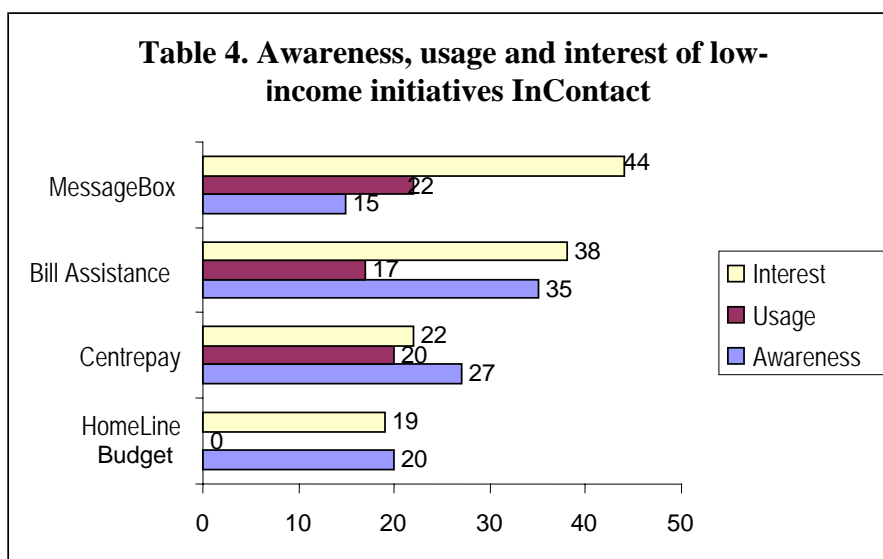
Work undertaken in 2005

LIMAC was pleased that Telstra amended the eligibility criteria for InContact to allow access to customers who have a Telstra pre-paid mobile phone service.

InContact was generally promoted as part of the Access for Everyone public awareness campaign in May to June 2005, which included a radio Community Service Announcement recorded by John Williamson, and later used in Telstra 'messages on hold'. InContact is also promoted on telstra.com, in the *Access for Everyone – your A-Z guide* and *Keeping Australians in touch* booklets. A bill message promoting InContact was placed on over 6 million residential telephone bills in May to August 2005.

Conclusions and future directions

LIMAC believes that InContact is a very important aspect of the Access for Everyone service, and that the inclusion of outgoing calls via Telstra PhoneAway cards is an important improvement to this service. The market research indicates that InContact is well targeted and meeting a real need. However LIMAC is concerned by the apparent low level of awareness of the ability to make outgoing calls from an InContact service, particularly with a pre-paid card. LIMAC will investigate ways of raising this awareness in 2006.

4.4 Telstra Bill Assistance Program

Program description

The Telstra Bill Assistance Program (TBAP) provides relief to Telstra customers who have difficulty paying their Telstra home phone bill. Telstra provides $25 certificates to the value of $5 million per annum for distribution by community agencies to their clients.

Within the overall guidelines of the program, Telstra respects the assessment of the community agency in determining to whom they will provide bill assistance and how much.

Four lead agencies have assisted Telstra to implement the program throughout Australia. These are The Smith Family, The Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul Society and Anglicare Australia. In addition to those agencies, their sub-agencies, branches and parishes, another approximately 200 community agencies have joined the program to provide widespread geographic and cultural accessibility.

Target groups

Financially disadvantaged customers including low-income families, Indigenous Australians and job seekers.

Take-up

On average, nearly 3400 Telstra customers are being assisted with their bills each month. In the 2004-05 Financial Year nearly $4.2 million of Bill Assistance Certificates were distributed – this was comparable with the $4.3 million distributed in 2003-04.

Monitoring

As discussed in Section 2.3.3, LIMAC has appointed a Telstra Bill Assistance Program Working Group to oversee take-up and monitoring of the program as well as the communications to agencies and any policy issues. Telstra produces a monthly report on take-up for LIMAC, and a quarterly report which is sent to all 32 lead agencies across Australia.

Feedback from agencies that distribute TBAP has included:

> *I estimate that of the clients we see at this office 70% would have an overdue phone account. It is such a relief when you hear a client is with 'Telstra' as you know you are going to be able to offer them some immediate assistance with the Telstra Bill Assistance Certificates. Telstra is the only service provider that offers such practical assistance that we can pass on to our clients. I have personally had so many clients who have benefited from this scheme. Brisbane, QLD*

> *The Telstra Bill Assistance Program enables people with often complex needs, who access this Agency, to have the burden of their individual life journeys to be made just that little bit lighter. On behalf of those we seek to assist, thank you. Stepney, SA*

> *This is the second year we have been a sub agency and we really utilise the vouchers well for our clients. We have never found that people have come in and asked for vouchers, it is great when we are able to offer something that they would not normally expect. Belmont, WA*

2005 Market research

Sample

A total of 150 telephone interviews were conducted from customer lists supplied by Telstra and filtered for low-income. The majority of Bill Assistance certificate respondents tended to be single, and 34% had a disability or chronic illness. Half the respondents lived in a regional centre or small country town and 37% live in a capital city. The primary source of income for 93% of respondents was a Government allowance, while 4% received their primary income from employment. One in five Bill Assistance customers were unemployed and looking for work.
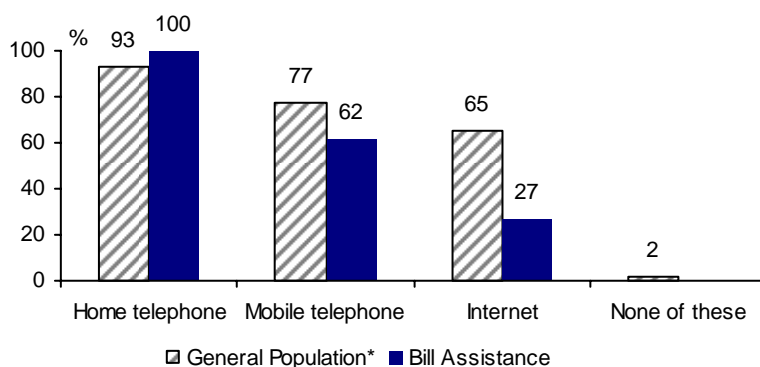
Ten community agencies which supply Telstra Bill Assistance Certificates were also interviewed as part of the market research.

Access to and affordability of telecommunications services

The majority of customers who received a Telstra Bill Assistance Certificate(s) were highly satisfied with the service. Amongst the small percentage who were dissatisfied the main reasons were value of the certificates and the number received. Telstra Bill Assistance Customers have similar levels of access to fixed lines and mobile phones as the general population, but substantially lower levels of Internet access. The main barriers to Internet access was cost, both in maintaining a service and the cost of purchasing a computer. Overall satisfaction with levels of access to personal communications was high with 67% reporting access to everything they need and want, and only 5% reporting no or poor levels of access.

Sixty-four per cent of those surveyed rated their telecommunications spend as a very small to fair proportion of their income and 31% rated this as a large to very large proportion, however cost of a home phone service was rated as moderate on affordability. The main strategy for managing telecommunications spend was consciously limiting the number of calls made (61%), calling mainly during off-peak times (49%) and putting aside money each week/fortnight to cover the phone bill (45%).

Table 5. Access to personal communications services

Chart showing percentages for General Population* and Bill Assistance:
- Home telephone: 93, 100
- Mobile telephone: 77, 62
- Internet: 65, 27
- None of these: 2

☐ General Population* ■ Bill Assistance

The majority of community agency staff surveyed did not know or could not think of anything that could be improved with the Telstra Bill Assistance Program. Of the agencies that could think of improvement, suggestions were for more certificates per agency and/or certificates of a higher amount than $25.

Information and assistance

The majority of Bill Assistance Certificate recipients surveyed first heard about the service through a welfare agency (51%). A large proportion had also heard about the service through friends or word of mouth (30%). Forty-six per cent of those surveyed advised they would contact Telstra if they had difficulty paying their telephone account, and 29% would contact a welfare agency.

Eighty-three per cent of customers who had received a Bill Assistance Certificate had had difficulty paying their telephone account in the past year, however for most this did not result in disconnection as they had contacted Telstra to arrange an extension of time to pay, or had contacted a welfare agency for assistance to pay their telephone bill.

Awareness and usage

Seventy-five per cent of customers who had received a Bill Assistance Certificate had used this for one-off debt repayment, approximately half the recipients had received multiple certificates in the past year.

One-quarter of those surveyed had used or were using Centrepay, 17% had used or were using InContact. There was strong interest in InContact and Centrepay, and again apparent confusion between Telstra MessageBox (see p 33) and Telstra MessageBank.

Table 6. Awareness, usage and interest of low-income initiatives Bill Assistance
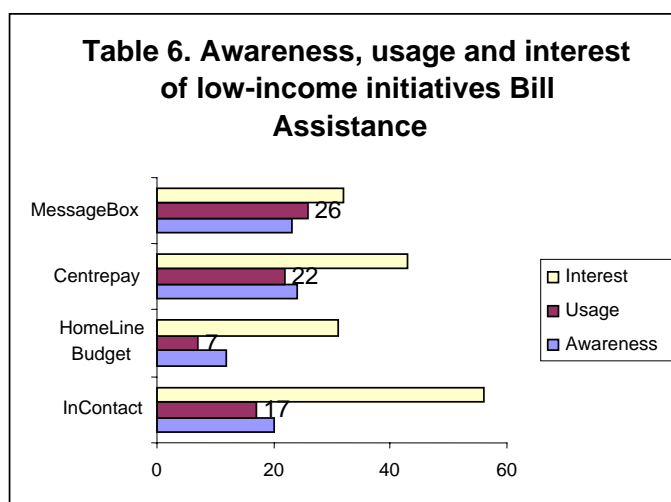
The majority of customers were not informed by the community agency of other Telstra low-income options that might assist them manage their telecommunications spend when they received a Bill Assistance Certificate. This may be due to the short-term nature of emergency relief provision.

Seven of the 10 community agencies surveyed were aware of access to Centrelink's Centrepay service for Telstra customers, and MessageBox. Two of the agencies surveyed also provided InContact and Telstra MessageBox services.

Table 7. Prompted awareness and provision of Telstra low-income initiatives

	Prompted awareness	Services provided
InContact	5	2
HomeLine Budget	3	1
Centrepay	7	1
Bill Assistance	10	10
Sponsored Access	2	0
Telstra MessageBox	7	2

Work undertaken in 2005

LIMAC continues to monitor distribution of Bill Assistance certificates. Certificates are allocated to each State and Territory in line with the Commonwealth Emergency Relief program. LIMAC and Telstra considered the possibility of extending the Telstra Bill Assistance Program to cover mobile phones as well as fixed line accounts. After investigation Telstra informed LIMAC that due to required system and process changes this was not feasible at this time. Telstra has committed to on-going consideration of this issue as changes to its billing system occur.

The Telstra Bill Assistance Program was generally promoted as part of the Access for Everyone public awareness campaign in May to June 2005, which included a radio Community Service Announcement recorded by John Williamson, and later used in Telstra 'messages on hold'. Telstra Bill Assistance is also promoted on Telstra.com, in the *Access for Everyone – your A-Z guide* and *Keeping Australians in touch* booklets.

See under Section 2.3.3 for a more detailed explanation of ongoing work.

Conclusions and future directions

LIMAC considers that the Telstra Bill Assistance Program is providing effective, targeted assistance to the intended audience. The high levels of satisfaction with the service reported through the market research, from both recipients of the certificates and distributing agencies indicates the success of the program.

The market research indicated that there remained further opportunity for Telstra to provide additional information for community agencies, to enable them to inform their clients of other low-income initiatives. Given the significant role of word of mouth in raising awareness of the low-income initiatives, LIMAC believes that further agency information about, or prompts on Bill Assistance booklets to mention, other low-income initiatives would assist with appropriate take-up of these products and services.

4.6   Telstra MessageBox

Program description

Telstra MessageBox (launched in December 2002) is a free message service for people who do not have access to a working or secure telephone service and who are homeless, experiencing financial hardship or are in a crisis (e.g. domestic violence situations). MessageBox provides customers with a telephone number and MessageBox number that they can give out to people, who can then confidentially leave messages for them. These messages can be retrieved for free from most Telstra fixed line phones (including InContact) and Telstra public payphones in Australia.

Distribution of MessageBox services is via community agencies that are in contact with eligible people. These include Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program (SAAP) agencies, Domestic Violence outreach services, and Job Network agencies.

Within the overall guidelines of the program, Telstra respects the assessment of the community agency in determining MessageBox service recipients.

Target groups

People without stable accommodation, including transient people, people in domestic violence situations, and people (including job seekers) who do not have a secure telephone service.

Take-up

Telstra has distributed MessageBox cards to more than 680 agencies supporting this program. The number of cards used peaked in June 2005, with more than 190 cards being used in that month. Where clients are using the service, they do so regularly.

Monitoring

LIMAC was directly involved in the development of Telstra MessageBox.

Qualitative feedback from agencies demonstrates that this program is extremely effective in actual use.

> *Without the MessageBox card there would often be no way of any other services to make contact with a client and therefore the client would not have any chance of obtaining accommodation or support. Our clients have been grateful for the MessageBox cards to enable them to maintain contact with family and friends. Adelaide, SA*

> *Workers could leave messages of encouragement, appointment reminders and so forth. We commend Telstra on this great service for the disadvantaged. Hindmarsh, SA*

> *MessageBox has also helpful for people seeking employment. Prospective employers can sometimes be concerned if they find that someone is homeless and without a contact number. Gold Coast, QLD*

LIMAC has also noted that pre-paid mobile phones are becoming the preferred communications choice for homeless people. A mobile phone allows instant communication, pre-paid services can be used with low top-up denominations, and caseworkers can send clients an SMS.

Some agencies reported a design limitation of MessageBox in not allowing users to make or return calls. Telstra has informed LIMAC that its PhoneAway and Phonecard pre-paid products are generally available for this purpose. The launch of the Telstra Phonecard Assistance Program may assist with this limitation.

2005 Market Research

Ten community agencies who distribute Telstra MessageBox cards were interviewed in the 2005 market research study. It was not possible to recruit a statistically valid sample of Telstra MessageBox users.

Most of the ten community agencies surveyed were aware of the Centrepay service, InContact and/or Telstra Bill Assistance Certificates.

Table 8. Prompted awareness and provision of Telstra low-income initiatives

	Prompted awareness	Services provided
InContact	7	2
HomeLine Budget	3	0
Centrepay	8	5
Bill Assistance	5	2
Sponsored Access	2	0
Telstra MessageBox	10	10

Work undertaken in 2005

A letter, brochure and order form were sent to over 6000 community agencies and other support services in October 2005, encouraging them to become a MessageBox distributor. Telstra MessageBox was generally promoted as part of the Access for Everyone public awareness campaign in May to June 2005, which included a radio Community Service Announcement recorded by John Williamson, and later used in Telstra 'messages on hold'. Telstra MessageBox is also promoted on telstra.com, in the *Access for Everyone – your A-Z guide* and *Keeping Australians in touch* booklets.

Conclusions and future directions

LIMAC acknowledges that the numbers of people using Telstra MessageBox appears low. However, from agency feedback, LIMAC is encouraged that where a person is using MessageBox they find the service valuable and suits their needs. LIMAC again encourages Telstra to inform MessageBox distributors of other products and services available through the Access for Everyone program, so they can pass this information on to their clients who may benefit from the package.

4.7   Homelink® 1800 enhancement

Program description

Homelink 1800 is a cashless calling service designed to help families maintain communication. It provides a 1800 phone number that is linked to a fixed Telstra phone service. It was launched by Telstra in late 1997. There is no charge to the caller of the Homelink® 1800 number. Instead, the legal lessee of the fixed telephone service the Homelink 1800 number is liable to pay for calls at standard Homelink 1800 rates. This now has become a cheaper option when compared to Telstra public payphone rates.

Under Access for Everyone, the service has been enhanced so that if the Homelink 1800 number does not answer or is busy, callers are given the option to be connected to another party through Telstra National Reverse Charge. Also, Homelink 1800 provides an STD capped call offering. During 2005 the Homelink 1800 STD capped call offering was extended from 7:00 pm to midnight to from 4:00 pm to midnight 7 days a week for capped STD calls. This change was in response to a request from community groups, particularly to assist families with school aged children living away from home.

Target groups

Low-income families, Indigenous communities, people who are transient, not-for-profit community organisations who need to maintain contact with clients and InContact customers.

Take-up

Homelink 1800 calling has been available since late 1997. Use of the reverse charge call option has been growing steadily.

Monitoring

LIMAC considers that Homelink 1800 is an established product and close monitoring is not required.

4.8   Sponsored Access

Program description

Since 1 July 2002 Sponsored Access has offered an InContact telephone service in Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP) properties. In this circumstance, InContact offers a relatively secure telephone service, free of ongoing charges, for use by residents.

Previously, InContact was only available to individual residential customers. With Sponsored Access, Telstra allows the Crisis Accommodation agency itself to become the lessee of the service thus ensuring a permanent service in the property. If requested, Telstra also supplies at no charge the silent line status for a Sponsored Access service.

In response to community agency feedback, in 2004 Sponsored Access was enhanced to enable outgoing calls to Telstra National Reverse Charge and calls to most 'free to call' numbers in the '24-Hour Services, Health and Help' section of the White Pages™ directory.

Target groups

People in need of emergency housing.

Take-up

Take-up of Sponsored Access continues at a steady rate.

Monitoring

Some CAP agencies and members of LIMAC have queried the higher cost of making local calls from a Sponsored Access service using a PhoneAway card. Telstra has noted that providing PhoneAway cards to tenants has been the practice of some emergency accommodation services before Sponsored Access. Telstra has also noted that other options are available to agencies, such as having a standard telephone service restricted to local calls only, or using a Blue or Gold leased payphone.

2005 Market research

Ten community agencies who have a Sponsored Access service connected were interviewed in the 2005 market research study.

Eight of the ten community agencies surveyed rated the service as highly effective in meeting the needs of clients in refuges and crisis accommodation services. However only six of the surveyed agencies were aware that they clients could make outgoing calls via a pre-paid Telstra PhoneAway card from their Sponsored Access service. There was also low awareness of the ability to call the 'free to call' numbers in the '24-Hour Services, Health and Help' section of the White Pages™ directory.

Eight of the ten community agencies surveyed were aware of the InContact service and seven were aware of the Centrepay service. Three of the agencies were suggesting InContact to their clients and two were suggesting Centrepay.

Table 9. Prompted awareness and provision of Telstra low-income initiatives

	Prompted awareness	Services provided
InContact	8	3
HomeLine Budget	4	0
Centrepay	7	2
Bill Assistance	5	1
Sponsored Access	10	10
Telstra MessageBox	5	0

Work undertaken in 2005

Sponsored Access was generally promoted as part of the Access for Everyone public awareness campaign in May to June 2005, which included a radio Community Service Announcement recorded by John Williamson, and later used in Telstra 'messages on hold'. Sponsored Access is also promoted on telstra.com, in the *Access for Everyone – your A-Z guide* and *Keeping Australians in touch* booklets.

LIMAC had suggested that Telstra investigate the possibility of extending this service to group homes for people with an intellectual disability, which are licensed by State Government departments. Telstra and LIMAC are still discussing this proposal.

Conclusions and future directions

The high level of satisfaction from the community agencies which offer Sponsored Access services indicates that this offering is meeting the needs of the target recipients. The market research did indicate that there remained further opportunity for Telstra to provide additional information for community agencies, to enable them to inform their clients of other low-income initiatives. Given the significant role of word of mouth in raising awareness of the low-income initiatives LIMAC believes that further targeted information to Sponsored Access agencies about Telstra's other low-income initiatives would assist with take-up of these products and services.

4.9 Multiple Number

Program description

This service provides the ability to have a split account on the one telephone line service by dialling a short account code before calling the desired phone numbers. It enables different people in the household to take responsibility for their own calling costs. An individual sharing a house can charge their calls to their own 'number' and recognise when an incoming call is for them via a different ring tone. Further, by using Call Control on either or both sub-accounts this splitting can be enforced.

Target group

Independent youth still living at home within low-income families.

Monitoring

LIMAC considers that Multiple Number is an established product and close monitoring is not required.

4.10   BudgetPay (formerly known as Bill Smoothing)

Product description

Telstra launched its BudgetPay service in June 2005. The service allows customers to plan their expenses by spreading the estimated total cost of their yearly phone bill across equal monthly or fortnightly instalments. Customers arrange for regular fixed payments via Telstra EasyPay or Centrelink Centrepay service and keep their Telstra account up to date automatically. Customers still receive their regular bill, showing the charges they have incurred and the amount that has been paid through BudgetPay.

Target groups

Low-income customers who want the ability to budget for a fixed amount to pay for their telephone service.

Take-up

Take-up of the BudgetPay service has been slow to date, however Telstra has informed LIMAC that this could be due to the high levels of take-up of Telstra's EasyPay service which also allows for fixed payments, but with any balance owing on an account being required to be paid by the due date.

Monitoring

There was a delay in launching the BudgetPay service, due to the complexity of the billing system requirements and the need to align the development with that of Telstra's EasyPay service. LIMAC received regular updates from Telstra regarding the delay, what solutions were being investigated and revised launch dates.

Work undertaken in 2005

Due to the delay in the launch of the BudgetPay service, LIMAC requested that Telstra undertake a targeted communications program to inform customers who might benefit from this service of its availability.

The BudgetPay service was launched at the LIMAC public meeting held on 20 June in Wollongong, NSW. A national media release announcing the availability of the service was issued on that day. Telstra also sent a letter to over 3000 community agencies and support services advising that the service had been launched and was available for their customer to sign up to. Additionally a bill message promoting the service was placed on bills sent to recipients of the Telstra Pensioner Discount in June-September 2005. The promotion of this service completed Recommendation 4 of the 2004 LIMAC Annual Report.

The BudgetPay service is promoted on telstra.com and all collateral promoting the Access for Everyone program since July 2005.

Conclusions and future directions

LIMAC was disappointed by the delay in the launch of the BudgetPay service, however believe that once the service was available Telstra undertook an appropriate and comprehensive program to promote the service. LIMAC notes the low numbers of customers who are currently using this service, and will continue to monitor take-up of the service in 2006.

4.11　Access to Centrepay for Telstra customers

Program description

Centrepay is a service offered by Centrelink that provides the ability to direct government payments, in this case, towards Telstra telephone accounts. The Centrelink customer is able to nominate an amount to be regularly deducted from their Centrelink payment and put towards their Telstra account. The minimum payment accepted by Telstra is $20. Telstra began offering this payment option in April 2003.

Target groups

Recipients of government payments made by Centrelink.

Take-up

The number of payments received through Centrelink's Centrepay service each month has been increasing steadily since the launch of this payment option.

Monitoring

LIMAC will consider feedback on the Centrepay promotion via pre-populated forms in Telstra accounts to recipients of the Telstra Pensioner Discount (see below).
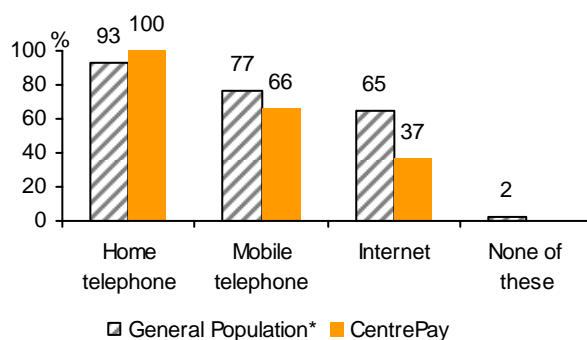
2005 Market research

Sample

A total of 150 telephone interviews were conducted from customer lists supplied by Telstra and filtered for the low-income criteria. Nearly half the users of Centrelink's Centrepay service for their Telstra account were aged over 55, with a quarter receiving an Aged Pension. Forty percent of those surveyed had a chronic illness or disability. The primary source of income for 90% of respondents was from Government Support, but only 7% of users were unemployed and looking for work.

Access to and affordability of telecommunications services

Satisfaction with Centrelink's Centrepay service for Telstra customers was extremely high with 91% of those surveyed being very satisfied, and 9% being satisfied. Sixty-seven per cent of respondents felt the $20 minimum payment was just right for their needs. Telstra Centrepay users have similar levels of access to fixed-line and mobile phones as the general population, however Internet access was significantly lower. Cost, personal choice and lack of interest were the main reasons cited for lack of Internet access, this is likely linked to the older demographic of those surveyed. Overall satisfaction with personal communications was high with 76% being highly satisfied and only 6% being dissatisfied.

The majority of users of Centrelink's Centrepay service reported that their spend on telecommunications made up a small to fair proportion of their income and there was moderate levels of satisfaction with the affordability of maintaining a home phone. The main strategy for managing telecommunications spend was to consciously limit the number of phone calls made, or to call in off-peak periods.

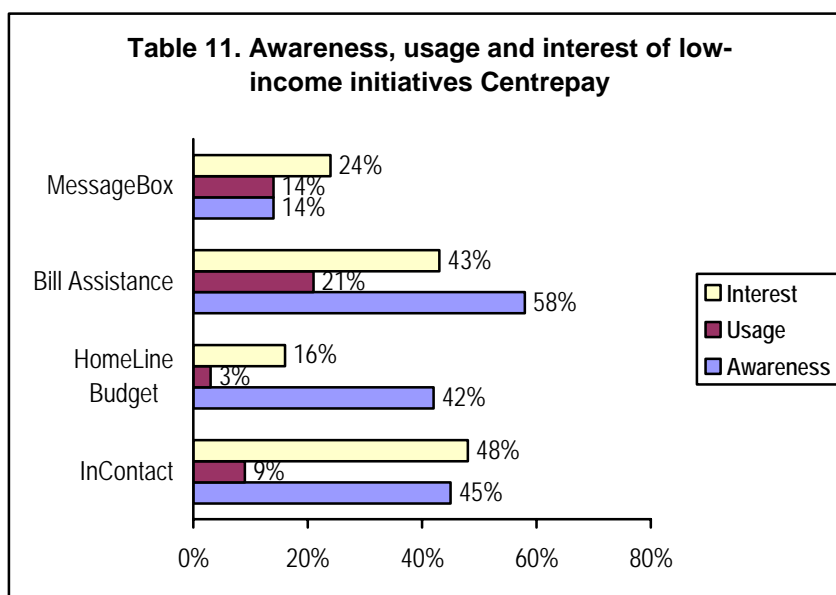**Table 10. Access to personal telecommunications services**

Bar chart showing percentages for General Population* and CentrePay:
- Home telephone: General Population 93, CentrePay 100
- Mobile telephone: General Population 77, CentrePay 66
- Internet: General Population 65, CentrePay 37
- None of these: General Population 2

Legend: ☑ General Population* ■ CentrePay

Information and assistance

The majority of respondents surveyed had become aware of Centrelink's Centrepay service to pay their Telstra bill through word of mouth (33%) or through Centrelink (31%), 13% of users had heard about the service through family. Over half the respondents advised that they would contact Telstra if they had financial difficulty in setting up or maintaining a telecommunications service, only 17% did not know who they would contact in this situation.

Forty-one per cent of those surveyed reported difficulty in paying a phone bill in the past year and this resulted in disconnection for nearly half of these customers. Over half the respondents who had difficulty paying their account had made contact with Telstra to arrange an extension of time to pay, while 39% had sought information on low cost options for telephone services.

Awareness and usage

Users of Centrelink's Centrepay service to pay their Telstra account have reasonably high awareness of other Telstra low-income initiatives. Over half were aware of the Telstra Bill Assistance Program with one in five having used Telstra Bill Assistance Certificates. Nearly half were aware of the InContact service. There was a high level of interest in both Telstra Bill Assistance Certificates and InContact.

Table 11. Awareness, usage and interest of low-income initiatives Centrepay

	Interest	Usage	Awareness
MessageBox	24%	14%	14%
Bill Assistance	43%	21%	58%
HomeLine Budget	16%	3%	42%
InContact	48%	9%	45%

Work undertaken in 2005

Telstra inserted a pre-populated Centrepay application form in Telstra bills issued to over 50 000 customers who receive the Telstra Pensioner Discount in April 2005.

Access to Centrelink's Centrepay service to pay Telstra home phone accounts was generally promoted as part of the Access for Everyone public awareness campaign in May to June 2005, which included a radio Community Service Announcement recorded by John Williamson, and later used in Telstra 'messages on hold'. This service is also promoted on telstra.com, in the *Access for Everyone – your A-Z guide* and *Keeping Australians in touch* booklets.

Conclusions and future directions

LIMAC is pleased with the very high levels of satisfaction reported by Telstra customers who use Centrelink's Centrepay service to pay their account, which indicates that the service is meeting a real need. LIMAC notes the high level of customers who had heard about the service through word of mouth and encourages Telstra to continue promoting this service at the grassroots level.

4.12 Future programs

4.12.1 Telstra Phonecard™ Assistance Program

In January 2006 Telstra launched an additional program in the Access for Everyone package, the Telstra Phonecard Assistance Program. Through this program Telstra will provide $5 Phonecards to the value of $1 million per annum for distribution by community agencies to their clients.

Within the overall guidelines of the program, Telstra respects the assessment of the community agency in determining to whom they will provide Phonecards, and how many Phonecards they may receive.

Telstra is initially distributing cards through the Telstra Bill Assistance Program lead agencies: The Smith Family, The Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul Society and Anglicare Australia. LIMAC expects additional community agencies will become distributors in 2006 to provide widespread geographic and cultural accessibility.

LIMAC will appoint a working party in 2006 to oversee the distribution of Phonecards, and monitor the usage of this program.

4.12.1 Other products and services

Subject to the outcomes of discussions regarding its role LIMAC will investigate mobile and Internet services for use by people on low incomes to access relevant health, education and employment opportunities.

5. Other Telstra services available for low-income users

Telstra provides a range of other services of relevance for low-income customers, which are not part of the Access for Everyone package. Whilst these are not part of Access for Everyone, they may provide a more complete communications solution for the segments targeted through this program. Telstra frequently provides updates to LIMAC regarding these services, and seeks its advice on how they may be tailored to meet the needs of the target segments in the Access for Everyone program.

These services include:

- Telstra Country Calling trial
- National Indigenous Directorate
- Disability services
- Payphones
- Pre-paid calling options
- Multicultural Call Centres
- Indigenous Communities Helpline
- Hardship Assistance Program.

A brief description of these services is below.

5.1 Telstra Country Calling trial

Country Calling is a combination of 2 products, the Country Calling Line, and the Country Calling Card and is designed to provide an appropriate communications service for those who reside in Remote Indigenous Communities. Telstra commenced a trial of this service in 5 Remote Indigenous Communities across Australia in November 2005.

The Country Calling line provides customers with a fixed home telephone service, which allows them to receive incoming calls, and make free calls to a limited number of services, which include Telstra services and most 'free to call numbers' in the '24 hour Health and Help Section' of the White Pages. Customers currently trialling this service are charged a monthly fee, with the payment automatically made through Centrelink's Centrepay service.

The Country Calling Card is a pre-paid, calling card which has two tariffs. When the card is used to make a call from a Country Calling line, charging is similar to a standard HomeLine Complete service. When the Country Calling card is used to make a call from a payphone, or a non-Country Calling Line service, charging is similar to standard payphone rates.

The trial will conclude in December 2006. Telstra has committed to keeping LIMAC updated on the trial and its outcomes.

5.2 National Indigenous Directorate

Telstra established a National Indigenous Directorate in July 2005 to coordinate improvements to telecommunications services for remote Indigenous communities across Australia. Based in Darwin, the National Indigenous Directorate works closely with remote Indigenous communities and key Indigenous groups across Australia to co-ordinate and develop a range of Indigenous products and services, manage Indigenous sponsorships, and provide training opportunities within the company for Indigenous Australians.

5.3 Disability Services

Telstra provides specialised service and equipment for eligible customers with a disability to enable them to access the standard telephone service at the same cost as standard rental e-quipment. Telstra also provides information in alternative formats on request, including large print and Braille bills.

5.4 Payphones

Telstra provides public payphones of various types, including approximately 250 TTY pay-phones. Telstra also recognises the integral role of public payphones in remote Indigenous communities as in many instances the payphone may be the primary telecommunications link a community has with other communities in Australia. Telstra supplies a customised pay-phone cabinet to many of these communities, which is designed to suit the particular envi-ronment of these communities.

5.5 Pre-paid calling options

Telstra offers both a pre-paid mobile and a pre-paid home calling service. Using a pre-paid service may assist users on a low-income to manage their calling expenditure. Telstra also of-fers a range of pre-paid calling cards, such as the Telstra PhoneAway card which can be used from almost any phone in Australia including InContact and Sponsored Access services. An-other pre-paid card, the Telstra Phonecard, can be used instead of coins in most Telstra pay-phones, and is currently being offered through the Telstra Phonecard assistance program.

5.6 Multicultural Call Centres

Telstra operates 9 Multicultural Call Centres, where customers from a non-English speaking background can ring to receive information in their own language. Staff in each of these call centres speak the relevant language and have a comprehensive understanding of the cus-tomer's cultural background. For languages other than those catered for by the Multicultural Call Centres, the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs provides a Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) for non-English speakers.

5.7 Indigenous Communities Helpline

Telstra Country Wide® has established a helpline to assist Indigenous consumers in rural and remote areas with specialised products which may assist them.

5.8 Hardship Assistance Program

In 2005 Telstra established a pilot Hardship Assistance Team to assist customers who are fac-ing financial hardship, caused through an unforeseen circumstance to maintain a communica-tions service. In 2006, Telstra using the learnings from the pilot have established a full time, ongoing Hardship Assistance Team.

6. LIMAC Conclusions

LIMAC believes that Telstra has worked successfully with the Committee throughout 2005 to continue to provide programs assisting low-income Australians to access telecommunications services. Telstra personnel involved in the Access for Everyone package have worked closely and collaboratively with LIMAC and have fully resourced the Committee to enable it to carry out its responsibilities.

In particular, LIMAC believes that Telstra has kept it fully informed on:

- the status of the products and services available through the Access for Everyone package;
- proposed changes to the programs and other services that impact on people on low incomes;
- the promotional activity undertaken for the package; and
- LIMAC requests for additional or new information.

LIMAC also believes that Telstra has listened and responded in a timely manner to suggestions and recommendations to improve the products and services available through the Access for Everyone package. For example, in response to LIMAC and community agency feedback, Telstra changed the eligibility criteria for InContact to extend eligibility to customers who have a pre-paid mobile phone service.

Telstra has responded to all of the actions and commitments proposed in the previous LIMAC report. All have been completed or are in progress (refer to Appendix C).

LIMAC continues to endorse Telstra's strategy of targeted communications through grass-roots community agencies and organisations. This strategy again appears to have been effective over the past 12 months where the research continued to highlight that word of mouth was the most effective means of raising awareness among these segments. However LIMAC is aware of the concerns by some about the apparent low awareness of Access for Everyone among the general public, and is pleased to note the outcomes of the public awareness program which resulted in significant increase in traffic to both Telstra call centres, and Telstra's website regarding the Access for Everyone program.

LIMAC makes the following particular recommendations to Telstra for 2006:

R1. Having now gained a change to the relevant regulation Telstra should commence a verification process for recipients of the Telstra Pensioner Discount to ensure proper targeting of the discount.

R2. Telstra should continue to explore relevant options to assist low-income customers such as Health Care Card holders, job seekers and their children/families, including access to Broadband Internet and mobile phone services.

R3. In 2006 Telstra should place additional focus on making information available to community agencies to assist them to educate their clients about the options available to them and on how to manage telecommunications expenditure.

R4. Telstra should undertake regular proactive promotion of the ability to make outgoing calls via a PhoneAway card from an InContact service.

R5. Telstra should investigate possibilities to assist agencies that distribute Telstra Bill Assistance Certificates to cross-promote other aspects of the Access for Everyone package that may assist their clients.

R6. Telstra should continue to focus efforts on promoting the Access for Everyone package at the grassroots level and through community agencies.

R7. With the cessation of sale of HomeLine Low Income Health Care Card, Telstra should consult closely with LIMAC on migrating current users of that plan to another phone plan which meets their needs.

LIMAC continues to believe that the Access for Everyone package, providing a range of targeted products and services to meet varying customer circumstances, is an effective model for ensuring affordability of telecommunications for people on low incomes. Telstra should continue to seek the support of community agencies to highlight the importance of communications in assisting their clients and to disseminate information about the options available through the low-income package and to assist with take-up of the products and services.

LIMAC is confident that further progress will be made through the Access for Everyone programs in the year ahead to enhance access to and affordability of telecommunications services for low-income Australians.

7. Contacts

Information about the Access for Everyone package is available online at www.telstra.com.au/accessforeveryone.

Phone:

- For enquiries about residential services, please call 13 2200 between 7 am and 6 pm Monday-Friday and between 9 am and 5 pm Saturday (Eastern Standard Time).
- The TTY number for customers who use a teletypewriter is 1800 808 981.
- The Indigenous Communities Helpline to assist Indigenous consumers in rural and remote areas with specialised products and services which may assist them is available on 1800 444 403.
- Consumers from non-English speaking backgrounds can call the relevant Multicultural Call Centre line. The service is available in the following languages:

Language	Number	Hours of operation
Cantonese	1800 677 008	9 am-9 pm
Mandarin	1800 678 876	9 am-9 pm
Italian	1800 649 013	9 am-5 pm
Greek	1800 189 129	9 am-5 pm
Indonesian	1800 429 432	9 am-5 pm
Korean	1800 773 421	9 am-5 pm
Arabic	1800 726 001	9 am-5 pm
Spanish	1800 726 002	9 am-5 pm
Vietnamese	1800 644 500	9 am-9 pm

For other languages, the Australian Government's Translating and Interpreting Service offers a translation service via 13 1450.

LIMAC Secretariat C/- Telstra Consumer Affairs Locked Bag 4960 Melbourne VIC 3001 Email: consumer.affairs@team.telstra.com Phone: 1800 804 591 Fax: 1800 659 416	**LIMAC Chairperson** Mr Chris Dodds Email: chrisd@ewon.com.au Phone: 0418 249 998

Appendix A: Telstra's Carrier Licence Condition 22

Low-income measures

22. (1) By 1 July 2002, the licensee must offer, or have a plan for offering, products and arrangements to low-income customers (***the low-income package***) that has been:

(a) endorsed by low-income consumer advocacy groups; and

(b) notified in writing to the ACA.

(2) The low-income package must include details of the dates by which products or arrangements not offered to low-income customers from 1 July 2002 will be offered to such customers.

(3) The licensee must comply with the low-income package as in force or existing from time to time.

(4) The licensee must maintain and adequately resource a Low income Measures Assessment Committee (***LIMAC***), comprising representatives of such organisations as are approved by the Minister in writing from time to time.

(5) The role of LIMAC will be:

(a) to assess proposed changes to the low-income package or to the marketing plan for the low-income package; and

(b) to report annually to the Minister on the effectiveness of the low-income package and of its marketing by the licensee.

(6) From 1 July 2002, the licensee must have in place a marketing plan for making low-income consumers aware of the low-income package, being a plan that has been approved by LIMAC.

(7) The licensee must seek and consider the views of LIMAC before it makes any significant change to the low-income package.

Note: It is intended that the licensee may make minor non-substantive changes to the low-income package (such as minor editorial or typographical corrections) without having to seek and consider the views of LIMAC.

LIMAC is to be consulted on other proposed changes to the low-income package.

(8) If the licensee makes a significant change to the low-income package, the licensee must give the ACA a revised version of the package incorporating the change.

Appendix B: LIMAC Governing rules

1. Establishment

1.1   This Committee, to be called the Low-Income Measures Assessment Committee, is established by Telstra in accordance with Carrier Licence Conditions (Telstra Corporation Limited) Declaration 1997 (the Licence Conditions) and is to be governed in accordance with these rules. Telstra may vary the terms of these rules from time to time provided that they comply with the Licence Conditions.

2. Committee Terms of Reference

2.1 To produce a report annually which:
   a)   assesses whether the resources committed under the low-income package by Telstra are best allocated to the needs of low-income consumers;
   b)   evaluates the effectiveness of the low-income package in making telecommunications services available to the disadvantaged and those on low-incomes;
   c)   advises on the effectiveness of the promotion of the low-income package; and
   d)   makes recommendations on how Telstra can improve the utilisation of resources committed under the low-income package to maximise the benefits to low-income telecommunications consumers

2.2   To assess proposed changes to the low-income package or to the marketing plan for the low-income package.

3. Provision of Report to Minister and Publication

3.1   The Committee's report must be provided to the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. The Minister has the discretion to make the report publicly available.

3.2   The publication of the report must not result in the publication of any commercially sensitive information.

3.3   If the report is made publicly available, the report will be made available on Telstra's Internet site and distributed as determined by the Committee.

4. Powers and role of the Committee

4.1   The Committee may engage an independent market research expert to provide research relevant to the fulfilment of the Committee's terms of reference.

4.2   It is the role of the Committee to:
   a)   select the researcher and endorse the methodology and sample design;
   b)   design the market research brief, specifically the research parameters, research objectives, research budget and project timing;
   c)   oversee the research project, including, recommending discussion guides and questionnaires, recommending stimulus material and observing qualitative research, if appropriate; and
   d)   on completion of the research, confirm that the research has been conducted in accordance with the aims and objectives.

4.3   Prior to instructing the market research expert to commence work, the Committee must consult with Telstra in relation to the market brief and obtain Telstra's approval for the total cost of the research work.

5. Committee Membership

5.1   The Committee will initially be comprised of a representative from each of:
   i.   Australian Council of Social Service
   ii.   COTA National Seniors
   iii.   The Salvation Army (Eastern Territory)
   iv.   The Smith Family
   v.   Australian Federation of Homelessness Organisations
   vi.   Jobs Australia
   vii.   Anglicare Australia
   viii.   Department of Family and Community Services

5.2   In accordance with the carrier licence condition to which Telstra is subject, Telstra will seek the agreement of the Minister to each of the welfare organisations to be represented on the Committee. An organisation's right to representation on the Committee may be removed from time to time by the Minister.

5.3   In addition, representatives of the following organisations shall have observer status:

a) The Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts;
b) The Australian Communications Authority;
c) The Salvation Army (Southern Territory); and
d) Telstra Corporation Limited.

5.4 Observers shall be entitled to participate in meetings of the Committee but shall have no right to vote on any decision being taken by the Committee.

5.5 Each organisation represented on the Committee has full discretion to appoint the person who is to represent it at meetings of the Committee.

6. Meetings and Attendance

6.1 Chair
The Chair will be determined by the Committee on an annual basis.

6.2 Committee Secretary
The Committee Secretary:
a) co-ordinates the activities of the Committee;
b) ensures compliance with agreed governance procedures for the Committee;
c) manages the Committee secretariat; and
d) attends Committee meetings,
but does not vote in Committee meetings.

6.3 Meetings
a) Meetings of the Committee will be convened by the Committee Secretary in accordance with an agreed research plan or as required.
b) The meetings may be held face to face or by videoconference or teleconference.

6.4 Quorum
A quorum for any formal meeting of the Committee is five members of the Committee.

6.5 Agenda
Every effort will be made to distribute an agenda and any relevant supporting documents by the Committee Secretary to the Committee members at least one week prior to the Committee meetings.

6.6 Minutes
Draft minutes of the meeting and resolutions will be kept by the Committee Secretary and distributed to the Committee members no later than one week after the Committee meetings for ratification.

7. Decision-making

7.1 It is expected that the Committee's decision-making and particularly the report recommendations will be achieved on a consensus.

7.2 If the Committee cannot achieve a consensus on a decision, the decision will be made by majority vote of the members present. The Chair will have a casting vote.

8. Confidentiality

8.1 It is expected that confidentiality will be maintained on sensitive issues which may arise. Examples may be those concerning reputation, commercial or competitive considerations.

9. Resourcing

9.1 Telstra will pay:
a) for the provision of the Committee Secretariat (including making a person available to perform the role of Committee Secretary);
b) the reasonable expenses, e.g. travel costs and out of pocket expenses, of the Committee members (except those who are representatives of a Commonwealth Department); and
c) the approved costs of the research undertaken by the market research expert.

Appendix C: Actions & commitments from previous report

The 2004 LIMAC Report contained a number of actions and commitments relating to the Access for Everyone and related programs. LIMAC has received regular updates from Telstra on progress against those actions and commitments and notes that these have either been completed or are in progress and provides the following detailed assessment.

COMMITMENT	STATUS
RECOMMENDATIONS	
(R1) Given the inability to promote the HomeLine Low Income Health Care Card phone plan through Centrelink, Telstra should investigate options for making the benefits of that phone plan more effectively available by considering its relationship to the HomeLine Budget phone plan.	Completed. Telstra ceased sale of HL LIHCC from 30 Sep 05, and LIMAC advised the Minister 21 Sep 05. Analysis by Telstra of customer spend on this plan indicated that on average they would not be disadvantaged if they chose either HL Budget or HL Complete phone plans.
(R2) Given the advice to Telstra by the Office of the Federal Privacy Commissioner and the Attorney-General's Department, and the resulting inability for Telstra to check concession eligibility through Centrelink, Telstra should continue the dialogue with Government agencies regarding privacy issues surrounding the development of an authentication process to enable Telstra to efficiently target concessions to low-income customers. LIMAC notes that this is a key issue in any future consideration of targeting benefits to eligible concession card holders.	Ongoing. Telstra has been advised that required changes to privacy regulations have now been made thus allowing further consideration of an authentication processes.
(R3) Given the continuing concern by some about a low general public awareness of the Access for Everyone package, Telstra should consider further ways to raise awareness within the general community of Telstra's provisions for people on low incomes. LIMAC notes that this is no substitute for the continuing targeted promotion required to raise awareness within the specific community segments that might benefit from the various programs and where 'word of mouth' appears to be most effective in raising awareness. Continued targeting of Homeless and Indigenous Australians through health, employment, housing/ accommodation and community legal services.	Completed. • Successful PR campaign for launch of 2004 LIMAC report and launch of Telstra BudgetPay. • John Williamson radio Community Service Announcement. • Regional print Community Service Announcement. DM to additional 3000 agencies took place in Oct 05.
(R4) Given the delay in the implementation of Bill Smoothing, now scheduled to launch by 30 June 2005, Telstra should promptly undertake a targeted communications program to inform customers of this new option.	Completed. Public launch of Telstra BudgetPay 20 June 2005 in Wollongong with media attention. A letter introducing BudgetPay sent to > 3000 community agencies 15 June 2005.

COMMITMENT	STATUS
(R5) Given the apparent increasing use of mobile telephones by people on low incomes, Telstra should continue to seek ways to enable these customers who often move about to connect a home telephone service at an affordable price. Telstra should also seek further ways to enable community agencies to assist these customers to maintain their communications services.	Ongoing. TBAP can be used to cover the cost of telephone connections, charges for which appear on the first bill.
Investigate the possibility of extending Sponsored Access to group homes for people with an intellectual disability, which are licensed by State Government departments.	Ongoing. Charities and not-for-profit organisations receive a substantially discounted line rental from Telstra.
(R6) Given the further developments under the Government's Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities (TAPRIC), Telstra should ensure that the Access for Everyone programs remain relevant and effective for Indigenous Australians on low incomes. Further work to be done in regard to communications for Indigenous Australians: • Robust payphones • Pre-paid calling solutions • Indigenous Directorate	Ongoing. With the launch of the Telstra Country Wide National Indigenous Directorate regular updates on progress will be provided to LIMAC. • A trial of 20 locations now underway, eg. Alice Springs town camps. Further installations under the Community Phones program progressing. • "Country Calling" trial in 6 communities from September 2005. • Began 1 July 2005, headed up by Mr Lawrie Mortimer in Darwin.
BILL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM	
Additional awareness raising activities in QLD and NT TBAP	Completed. • Quarterly TBAP reports now being sent to all lead agencies. • Personal visit to Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul Society leads. • QLD radio coverage during PR campaign.
Extend eligibility for TBAP to mobile phone accounts	Ongoing. Also (R5) above
Refine TBAP allocation model in line with CTH ER program updated model.	Not required during 2005.
CREDIT MANAGEMENT	
Development of an industry-wide approach to offering consumers protection against unexpected high bills.	Completed. ACIF hardship policy guidelines published; 190 InfoCall premium rate services capping now in place; the revised Credit Management Code has been submitted to ACMA for registration, with registration expected to take place in March 2006.
Implementation of Credit Management Services "Hardship" policy	Completed. Progressively launched from 19th July 2005. Full implementation February 2006.

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