

2 August 1996

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Group Manager Regulatory  
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MELBOURNE VIC 8100  
**FACSIMILE NO: 9663-1218**

Dear [REDACTED]

### **CHARGING FOR SHORT DURATION AND UNANSWERED CALLS**

I refer to publicity on the above issue in recent months and our ongoing liaison with Telstra since the issue was first raised in 1994.

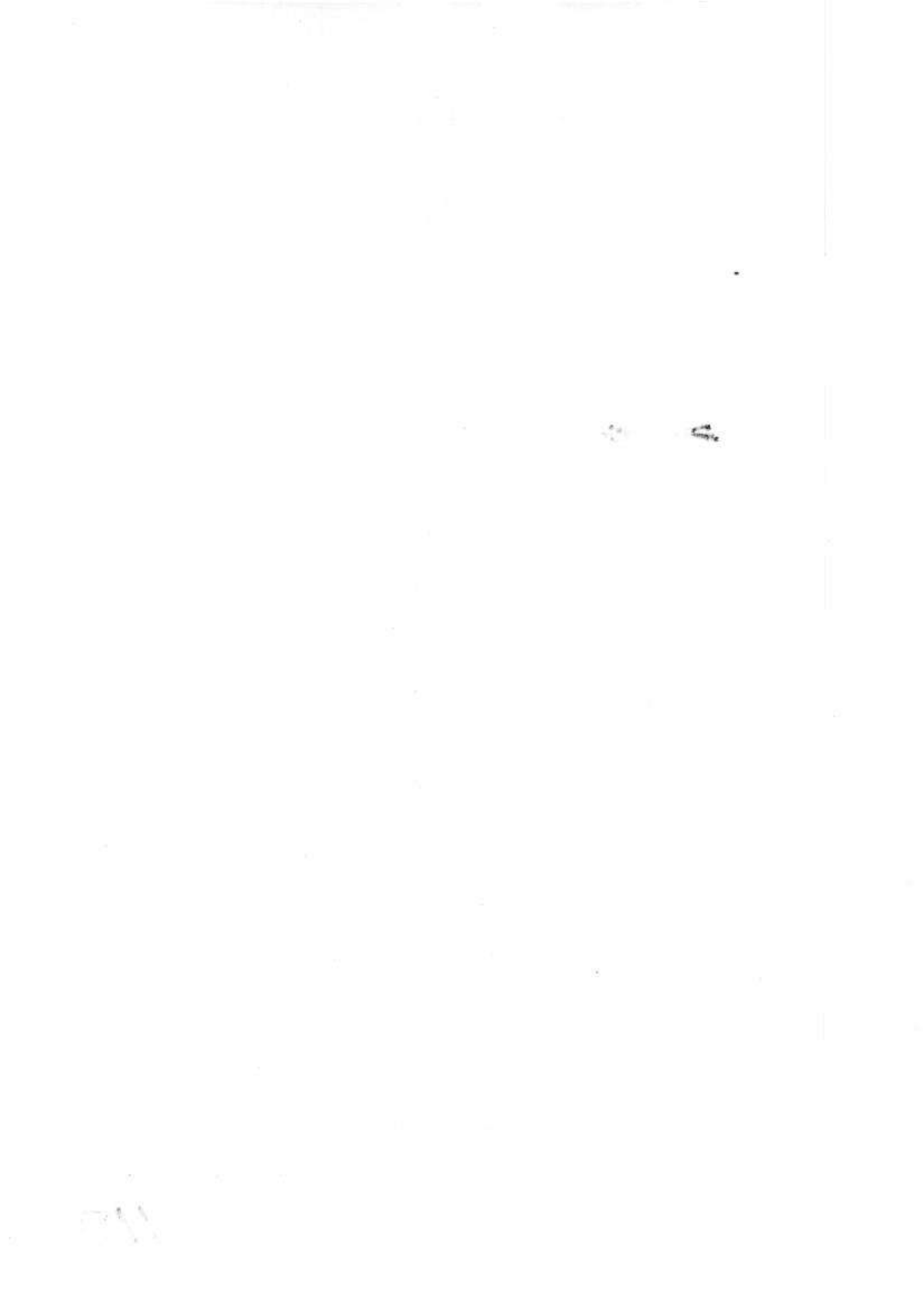
I am now seeking a range of information to facilitate consideration of the substance, incidence and nature of complaints regarding short duration and/or unanswered calls. Certain of this information relates to statistics required to be furnished under section 5.4 of Licence Declaration No. 2 of 1991. I understand that Telstra's complaint management support system, CICERO, contains a sub-category which enables it to separately record complaints relating to short duration calls (SDC).

#### **Complaint data concerning short duration calls**

You are asked to provide AUSTEL with the following complaint data concerning short duration calls for the latest available twelve month period:

- (a) the total number of SDC complaints received by Telstra;
- (b) the percentage of the total number of billing complaints which concern SDC;
- (c) the number of SDC complaints relating to IDD Calls;
- (d) the number of SDC complaints concerning STD calls;
- (e) the number of SDC complaints relating to 008/1800 services,
- (f) the total number of 008/1800 services currently in operation, and
- (g) the number of SDC complaints relating to mobile services (if possible, disaggregated into digital and analogue technologies).

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Your comment on the view included in recent newspaper reports that the problem has its highest incidence at older exchanges would also be appreciated.

Please advise whether the incidence of SDCs is known to be higher in particular charge zones. If so, please supply details for any zone where the incidence of SDC as a proportion of long distance calls is greater than 20% over a period of say one month or more.

#### **Traffic study data concerning short duration calls**

In relation to Telstra's advice of 16 October 1995 ( Mr Steve Black ) that some 12% of all long distance calls are valid calls of less than 15 seconds:

- (a) what is the current proportion of 'long distance' calls under 15 seconds;
- (b) does the 'long distance' category detailed include IDD calls; and
- (c) what proportion of 'long distance' calls are between 1-5 seconds, 6-10 seconds, and 11-15 seconds.

#### **Telstra complaint handling practices concerning short duration calls**

Telstra's advice quoted above stated that STD and IDD SDCs of 6 seconds or less are not charged to the caller. Please advise:

- (a) is this practice confidential; and
- (b) the procedures which Telstra normally adopts when a customer complains of a short duration call, including the process of investigating the validity of the customer's complaint.

#### **Advice to customers on how the duration of a call is measured**

The advice quoted states that the billing system for 008/1800 services records the length of the call as the time between the called party picking up the phone and the caller hanging up at the end of the conversation and that this billing practice is no different from a normal call.

As these call measurement practices are relevant to the duration of the call which may appear on a customer's bill, please advise what advice Telstra provides to customers or has made publicly available on:

- (a) the commencement of the billing period of a 'normal' call; and
- (b) the completion of the billing period of a 'normal' call.

**Results of studies on the causes of short duration calls**

I acknowledge Telstra's recent advice of continuing difficulties in work to facilitate the Short Duration Call /customer perspective study first referred to in August 1994 and the hope that some progress on the support platforms would be made in June 1996.

Apart from this study—of which we would wish to be appraised—the letter of 16 October stated that Telstra proposed to undertake the following work in relation to short duration calls in the context of the possible existence of fault conditions:

- (a) technical research and testing with a focus on the customer access network; and
- (b) internal research involving overseas telcos.

Please advise the outcome of these studies.

Could I have your response by 23 August 1996 please. I would be pleased to discuss or clarify any of the issues raised in this letter.

Yours sincerely

John MacMahon  
General Manager  
Consumer Affairs