Mobile Premium Services Industry Code Submission

Wednesday 15 May 2019

Background

Following requests from Australian charities and examples of effective use overseas, the Telco Together Foundation joined forces with Telstra, Optus and Vodafone to develop Australia’s first one step text donation platform. The Text Giving platform provides Australians with a simple and secure way to give, and charities with the opportunity to increase their fundraising efforts.

Telstra, Optus, Vodafone, and aggregator Open Market, supported an initial two year pilot program, which saw 18 Australian charities trial the technology and raise almost $235,000 for their causes. Following the success of the pilot, and with the support of Telstra, Vodafone, and aggregator Ansible, the open model platform went live in October 2018. While it is still early days in Australia, overseas examples show the potential of text donations to be a positive force for good and increase charitable giving in Australia.

How it works

The Text Giving platform uses Premium SMS (PSMS) technology for social good. Eligible charities promote a text to donate call to action and inspired donors actively opt in to make a donation by texting a keyword to the charity phone number. The donation is a one-off and fixed $5 payment that is charged to the donor’s mobile phone bill. Text Giving is currently available to Telstra and Vodafone customers on postpaid services.

Donors have been overwhelmingly positive about Text Giving. In a survey conducted with Text Giving donors in 2017, 94% of respondents said they did not experience any difficulties donating via text, and 76% said that if available, they would donate via text in the future. The small number of donors who reported difficulties stated that these were primarily related to interactions with the charity following their donation, rather than the act of donating using PSMS. Donors said they chose to give via text because it was the easiest way to give and they did not need to provide credit card details.

Response to the draft Mobile Premium Services Code

Telco Together works closely with aggregator Ansible, carriers Telstra and Vodafone, and participating charities to ensure Text Giving is managed in line with the Mobile Premium Services Industry Code and other relevant standards and legislation relating to fundraising, privacy and telemarketing. We are committed to ensuring Australians have a positive PSMS experience when using the Text Giving platform.

We support initiatives to ensure consumers are well informed when choosing to use a premium service, such as Text Giving, and have access to the appropriate channels to provide feedback or seek assistance. However, we are concerned about discussions regarding a proposed default spend limit of $0 for all customers and the confusion this would create.

Text Giving donors already actively opt in to make their one off $5 donation and the current process and communication to donors is clear and transparent. Enforcing a $0 default would have a huge impact on
the donor experience, and remove the freedom for Australians to respond and donate instantly to the causes they care about. We expect that potential donors who had not raised their spend limit from $0, or were unaware of the need to do so, would be put off by the time consuming requirement to contact their carrier to lift the $0 default in order to facilitate a $5 donation. As a result, the pool of potential donors would reduce and this would significantly impact the total funds raised for Australian charities.

Text Giving is an example of one of the positive ways consumers can choose to engage with premium services. Telco Together supports the current measures that give consumers the freedom to use PSMS to make an informed charitable contribution, without having to navigate the confusion and inconvenience of a default $0 spend limit.