



Inquiry into Triple Zero Service Outages

Submission to the Senate Environment
and Communications References
Committee

25 November 2025

Recommendations

This submission recommends the Australian Government:

1. Implement wholesale and retail mobile network infrastructure performance standards to improve consumers' access to emergency services.
2. Strengthen the governance and skills of the Australian Communications and Media Authority by promoting Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Deputy Chair Catriona Lowe and Commissioner Anna Brakey to full ACMA members to ensure their participation in all Authority matters and leverage their regulatory skills and expertise more fully.
3. Support a technology-neutral approach to accessing emergency services, including a broad review of how consumers access 000 including through video relay-to-000, text-to-000 and real time text-to-000.
4. Expand Triple Zero (000) capabilities to cope with future demand associated with the achievement of government policy objectives such as the implementation of the Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation.
5. Undertake an expansive review into the functionality, objectives and sustainability of the Triple Zero (000) service.
6. Empower the Triple Zero Custodian to have end-to-end oversight of the Triple Zero system and require improvements from service providers and industry.
7. Provide a progress update of the actions towards the recommendations of the Review into the Optus Network Outage of November 8, 2023 to provide transparency concerning the outstanding recommendations of the Review.
8. Revisit the case for domestic mobile roaming noting the public safety implications of telecommunications outages in regional, rural and remote areas and the current and future competitive settings of the mobile telecommunications market.

About this submission

ACCAN is pleased to provide this submission to the Environment and Communications References Committee (**the Committee**) into Triple zero service outages (**the Inquiry**).

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ACCAN is the peak national consumer organisation advocating trusted, accessible, inclusive, affordable and available communications and digital services.

1. Introduction

Australians believe that access to mobile telecommunications is critical for participation in daily life. However, the mobile telecommunications infrastructure that underpins the delivery of telecommunications services, including Triple Zero (000) is not regulated as an essential service.

The current telecommunications legislative framework does not reflect the modern-day essentiality of telecommunications or set minimum standards of reliability. While recent reforms to Triple Zero (000) are positive and will benefit consumers, without reform to the underlying reliability of mobile network infrastructure, telecommunications outages will continue to materially impact public safety and the provision of Triple Zero (000) services.

When access to telecommunications services, especially Triple Zero (000) is disrupted, public safety is threatened, and significant consumer harm can occur as a result. Ensuring the regulation of telecommunications services is undertaken with reliability and public safety at the forefront is critical to improving the outcomes experienced by communications consumers, especially those living in Regional, Rural and Remote (**RRR**) areas of Australia. ACCAN's submission aims to improve the reliability, inclusivity and availability of the mobile telecommunications services which underpin the delivery of Triple Zero (000) call services.

2. Background

On 18 September 2025, an upgrade to Optus' network caused a Triple Zero (000) outage (**the September Outage**) impacting over 600 Triple Zero calls across South Australia, Western Australia, New South Wales and the Northern Territory. As of the writing of this submission, three deaths are believed to have been linked to this outage. Since this outage, a smaller Triple Zero outage occurred on 28 September 2025 in Dapto, NSW and did not result in any deaths.

On 7 October 2025, the *Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Triple Zero Custodian and Emergency Calling Powers) Bill 2025* was introduced to Parliament, passing both houses on 28 October 2025. This Bill established the Triple Zero Custodian, a reform recommended by the Review into the Optus outage of 8 November 2023 (**the Bean Review**).

On 8 October 2025, the Department of Transport, Infrastructure, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (**DITRDCA**) and the Australian Communications and Media Authority (**ACMA**) appeared at Senate estimates to provide evidence to the Committee and answered questions concerning the September Outage.

On 3 November 2025, executives from Optus and the ACMA appeared at the first sitting of the Inquiry and gave evidence concerning their actions during and after the September Outage. Optus' submission to the inquiry highlighted its internal and external communications with government and industry stakeholders. On 13 November 2025, a failure of Triple Zero (000) occurred when older Samsung phones were unable to connect (or camp on) to the TPG network for emergency calling leading to a further death.

3. Key Issues

As noted by the Bean Review, 'A robust and reliable telecommunications system is essential to the proper functioning of Australian society'.¹ Telecommunications underpin the delivery of other essential services and 'facilitate almost every aspect of our everyday home and work lives'.² In emergency situations, consumers need to have reliable access to mobile connectivity, including Triple Zero (000). Telecommunications outages, especially in RRR areas of Australia with only a single mobile network provider are a significant public safety issue and without reform to the reliability of mobile network infrastructure, public safety and wellbeing is at risk.

We do not believe that recent Triple Zero (000) outages indicate that Australia's emergency system is broken, however these outages can understandably impact consumers' confidence in emergency services. ACCAN considers that the progression of the following reforms will improve the reliability, transparency and robustness of the Triple Zero (000) system.

3.1. Regulating telecommunications as an essential service

Despite recent positive reforms, the absence of appropriate regulation for the underlying reliability of mobile infrastructure may mean that consumer expectations for the level of security and assurance of Triple Zero (000) are not met. Reliable mobile communications are essential to the effective delivery of Triple Zero (000) and therefore to supporting public safety. However, the mobile networks and infrastructure which Triple Zero (000) services operate over are not regulated with the express goal of reliability. Further, performance standards for mobile infrastructure reliability are absent from the telecommunications regulatory framework.

Telecommunications are not currently regulated as an essential service, despite recognition by the community, government, industry and regulators as to the essential nature of telecommunications services in underpinning public safety and the operation of other essential services.

The *Telecommunications Act 1997* (Cth) (**the Act**) does not:

- prioritise the interests of the Australian public.
- reflect the modern-day essentiality of telecommunications services.
- set minimum standards of reliability for telecommunications services.
- establish effective minimum protections for consumers.
- empower an effective regulator.
- establish effective and real-time oversight of Triple Zero.

¹ Department of Infrastructure et al, *Review into the Optus Outage of 8 November 2023: Final Report* (Report, 30 April 2024) 7 <<https://apo.org.au/node/326618>>.

² Ibid.

Instead, the Act makes it clear that:

The Parliament intends that telecommunications be regulated in a manner that:

- (a) Promotes the greatest practicable use of industry self-regulation; and*
- (b) Does not impose undue financial and administrative burdens on participants in the Australian telecommunications industry;*

but does not comprise the effectiveness of regulation in achieving the objects mentioned in section 3.³

Self-regulation in the telecommunications sector has facilitated some of the highest profile corporate failures in the last decade, leading to significant consumer harm. These failures include Telstra and Optus participating in unconscionable sales conduct against people living with a disability and remote First Nations consumers.⁴ Further, data breaches from telecommunications providers have exposed consumers to risks of scam activity and identity theft.

While some aspects of the telecommunications sector and the Triple Zero (000) ecosystem are directly regulated under the Act, these systems operate over infrastructure which is not subject to reliability performance standards. It is no longer appropriate that the Act leaves the determination of the level of coverage, reliability and service that consumers receive to the judgment of telecommunications providers. While this may have seemed appropriate in an era of payphones and landlines in 1997 when the Act was developed, this is no longer fit for purpose in a world where all Australians rely on connectivity for their social and economic wellbeing.

ACCAN considers that the centrality of mobile reliability to the availability of the Triple Zero (000) demonstrates that the Government should reconsider the adequacy of Australia's telecommunications regulatory, legislative and policy frameworks to ensure the reliability of mobile telecommunications services. Wholesale and retail mobile network infrastructure performance standards would improve consumers' access to emergency services (by ensuring that mobile networks which Triple Zero (000) requires to operate) perform to community standards.

³ *Telecommunications Act 1997* (Cth) s.4.

⁴ Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, 'Telstra to Pay \$50m Penalty for Unconscionable Sales to Indigenous Consumers' (Webpage, 13 May 2021) <<https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/telstra-to-pay-50m-penalty-for-unconscionable-sales-to-indigenous-consumers>>. Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, 'Federal Court Orders Optus to Pay \$100m Penalty for Unconscionable Conduct' (Webpage, 24 September 2025) <<https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/federal-court-orders-optus-to-pay-100m-penalty-for-unconscionable-conduct>>.

Breaching reliability standards in other essential services can result in significant financial penalties. However, the mobile networks which underpin access to telecommunications, including Triple Zero (000), do not have any reliability standards in place for the vast majority of services. Implementing these standards would greatly improve consumer confidence in the telecommunications sector and facilitate significant improvements in public safety, especially in RRR areas of Australia.

3.2. Self-regulation has created a poor compliance culture and undermined accountability

Effective self-regulation requires certain market conditions to be in place.⁵ The ACMA identified optimal conditions for self-regulation in a 2015 paper and subsequently concluded in 2020 that ‘it is apparent... these conditions no longer exist’ in the current telecommunications market.⁶ First, self-regulation is appropriate for markets with low or moderate public interest concerns. Second, self-regulation is suited to markets with product homogeneity and a small number of participants. Third, self-regulation is appropriate where there is ‘collective will or genuine industry incentive to address the problem or enhance existing provisions’.⁷ **It is clear these conditions are not representative of the current telecommunications market.**

The telecommunications industry has persistently demonstrated that it is unwilling to uplift self-regulatory codes such as the Telecommunications Consumer Protections (TCP) Code despite repeated instances of demonstrable consumer detriment. These repeated and ongoing shortcomings resulted in the Minister for Communications directing the ACMA to implement mandatory standards covering complaints handling, financial hardship and domestic and family violence protections.

These shortcomings were recently demonstrated by the ACMA deciding not to register a draft TCP Code after more than two years of code development and issuing a formal notice to the Australian Telecommunications Alliance (ATA), requiring it to address deficiencies in the existing 2019 TCP Code within 30 days.⁸ On the rejection, the ACMA noted that ‘it is disappointing they [ATA] have not been able to develop a draft Code that would deliver what their customers deserve’.⁹

⁵ ACCAN, ‘Creating a More Dynamic and Resilient Economy - Interim Report’ (Submission, 2025) 5 <<https://www.acan.org.au/acan-submission/creating-a-more-dynamic-and-resilient-economy-interim-report>>.

⁶ Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Optimal Conditions for Effective Self- and Co-regulatory Arrangements: 2015 Edition* (Report, 2015) <<https://www.acma.gov.au/publications/2015-06/report/optimal-conditions-effective-self-and-co-regulatory-arrangements-2015-edition>>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Australian Communications and Media Authority, ‘ACMA Rejects Proposed Telco Industry Code | ACMA’ (1761258000) <<https://www.acma.gov.au/articles/2025-10/acma-rejects-proposed-telco-industry-code>>.

⁹ Ibid.

A legislative framework which explicitly prioritises self-regulation and a regulator which is limited in its ability to regulate the sector has facilitated a poor culture of compliance which cannot simply be isolated to the consumer protections offered by telecommunications providers.¹⁰

3.3. Mobile infrastructure reliability and performance standards

The Optus Network Outage of November 8, 2023, and the September Outage have highlighted persistent challenges with poor service reliability. Many consumers, particularly in RRR areas, face ongoing barriers to accessing Triple Zero (000) due to intermittent service, frequent dropouts and poor mobile coverage.

ACCAN considers the reliability of mobile services must be a priority beyond responses to widespread outage events. Introducing mobile reliability standards will ensure that consumers can access telecommunications, including Triple Zero (000), whenever they need them. ACCAN recommends that the Committee consider the amendments to the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment Telecommunications Amendment (Enhancing Consumer Safeguards) Bill 2025 at **Appendix A** to facilitate the implementation of mobile reliability and performance standards in the telecommunications sector.

Minor amendments to the *Telecommunications (Consumer Protections and Service Standards) Act 1999* (Cth) (**the TCPSS Act**) can allow for the Minister (or the ACMA via ministerial direction) to establish reliability standards and performance benchmarks for carriage services. Enforceable wholesale and retail performance standards will incentivise network reliability and investment, aligning the telecommunications sector with that of other essential services. This would drive material improvements to reliability and reduce the incidence of network outages, as well as Triple Zero (000) outages, placing a higher priority on consumer safety.

The amendments would provide a timely mechanism for advancing improvements to network reliability via regulation under Part 5 of the TCPSS Act and ensure breaches of performance standards and benchmarks are enforceable through civil penalty provisions. Further, the amendment will introduce a new suite of retail consumer protections that are directly enforceable by consumers, including direct compensation for breaches of performance standards which recognises the many financial and other costs of telecommunications service disruptions.

¹⁰ For example, In the case of Optus's Mount Isa store, which has now closed, the telco pursued debts in circumstances where its then senior management knew that those debts related to contracts for goods and services that appeared to have been entered into at the Optus Mount Isa Store fraudulently and without consumer knowledge. The ACCC further noted that Optus's then senior management became increasingly aware that Optus staff were engaging in the inappropriate sales practices and that Optus's systems and controls could not stop the conduct. Optus acknowledged it failed to promptly take steps to fix deficiencies in its systems, which allowed the conduct to continue. Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, 'Federal Court Orders Optus to Pay \$100m Penalty for Unconscionable Conduct' (Media Release, 24 September 2025) <<https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/federal-court-orders-optus-to-pay-100m-penalty-for-unconscionable-conduct>>.

Direct compensation to consumers can facilitate the Government's response to Recommendation 13 of the Bean Review which recommends that 'an industry wide standardised approach to the form of resolutions available to consumers affected by a crisis or large-scale outage should be implemented'.¹¹

The amendment would also update the objects and regulatory policy of the Act, modernising an outdated framework that has prioritised industry interests over that of consumers. The amendments would reflect the essential role of telecommunications services, promote the long-term interests of end-users, and clarify that the telecommunications sector should be regulated in the public interest. Revisions to the objects and regulatory policy of the Act would foster a regulatory culture that is reflective of and responsive to the modern telecommunications environment and promote positive consumer outcomes.

3.4. Strengthening the governance and skills of the ACMA

We consider that the performance, skill sets and regulatory effectiveness of the ACMA can be improved by the appointment of new Authority members. There are currently 5 vacancies for full members of the ACMA.¹² Currently, the ACMA does not have non-associate members from a consumer, community sector or First Nations background. Similarly, First Nations communications consumers are disproportionately impacted by unconscionable conduct, predatory sales practices and poor digital inclusion outcomes and yet there is no First Nations representation within the ACMA.

The Minister for Communications can appoint a full member to ensure First Nations representation within the Authority. This step would also directly support the achievement of Target 17 of the Closing the Gap initiative, emphasising transformative structural reforms to foster genuine inclusivity and empowerment for First Nations peoples within communications governance. This reform can be undertaken through Part 3 of the *Australian Communications and Media Authority Act 2005* (Cth).

ACCAN considers that the governance and skill set of the ACMA could be materially strengthened by clarifying the appointments of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) Deputy Chair Catriona Lowe and Commissioner Anna Brakey who are both currently associate members. While the ACCC Commissioners can legally participate in ACMA decision making as associate members, by convention the Commissioners have not been involved to the extent of a full member and are not invited to all Authority meetings.

¹¹ 'Australian Government Response to the Bean Review Final Report - Review into the Optus Outage of 8 November 2023 - April 2024 | Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts' <<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/departments/media/publications/australian-government-response-bean-review-final-report-review-optus-outage-8-november-2023-april>>.

¹² We have previously advocated for the reform of the ACMA Act to require the ACMA to have members with RRR and First Nations consumer experience. ACCAN, '2024 Regional Telecommunications Review' (Submission, 2024) 5 <<https://www.accan.org.au/accan-submission/2024-regional-telecommunications-review>>.

Promoting ACCC Deputy Chair Catriona Lowe and Commissioner Anna Brakey to full members will ensure their participation in all Authority matters and leverage their regulatory skills and expertise more fully.

3.5. Technologically neutral Triple Zero access meets community needs

ACCAN recommends that the Government support a technology-neutral approach to accessing emergency services. This approach would include a broad review of how consumers access 000 including video relay to 000, text-to-000 and real time text-to-000. As the Federal Government explores a "Next Generation Triple Zero" system, it is essential that accessibility and consumer rights are embedded in the design and delivery of emergency services.

Australia's Triple Zero (000) service remains primarily voice-only. While services such as the National Relay Service (**NRS**) and the TTY 106 number offer limited alternatives for people with disability, they are outdated, slow, and dependent on additional steps and infrastructure. In a crisis, time is critical relying on third-party relays or legacy technology is not acceptable.

Accessible options like SMS to 000, real-time text (**RTT**), and app-based messaging are already used in countries like the U.S., U.K., and New Zealand. These services are not only feasible but essential to improving the lives of Australians. For example, the significant portion of Australians who live with at least one long-term hearing disorder may benefit greatly from text-to-000.¹³

Legislation to enable expansions in emergency access technologies has already been implemented in comparable countries. For example, 'the European Accessibility Act requires Member States to deploy Real Time Text by 2027'.¹⁴ Further, to comply with the European Electronic Communications Code, European Union member states are 'obliged to ensure that end-users with disabilities benefit from access to emergency services equivalent to that enjoyed by other end-users'.¹⁵ These examples show that Australia is lagging and must act to meet technological standards and human rights obligations.

¹³ According to self-reported data from 2014, 'over 3 million Australians had at least one long-term hearing disorder'. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. Australia's health 2016. Australia's health series no. 15. Cat. no. AUS 199. Canberra: AIHW.

¹⁴ European Emergency Number Association, '112 day recommendations' (Report, February 2025) 7 <https://eena.org/wp-content/uploads/EENA_112_Recommendations_Report.pdf>.

¹⁵ European Commission, '2024 Report on the Implementation of the EU Emergency Number 112 | Shaping Europe's Digital Future' (Report, 2024) <<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/2024-report-implementation-eu-emergency-number-112>>.

ACCAN recommends that the Government:

- Undertake an urgent feasibility study into SMS and IP-based 000 access, involving disability stakeholders, RRR, and emergency services.
- Pilot SMS to 000 and real-time text access in select locations, with user input and emergency services coordination.¹⁶
- Review and amend the Emergency Call Service Determination and relevant laws to mandate inclusive access.
- Allocate federal funding to upgrade Telstra systems, train emergency call takers, and raise public awareness.
- Set a national implementation deadline (e.g. pilots by 2026, national rollout by 2027).
- Undertake further research to understand how people with disability contact Triple Zero (000).
- Improve NRS response times and resilience while longer-term systems are being developed.

Further, ACCAN considers that text-to-000 should not require registration and be available to all Australians. ACCAN's engagement with stakeholders in RRR Australia demonstrates that consumers may be able to make initial contact with emergency services, but the quality of the connection precludes a meaningful call to Triple Zero. Text-to-000 would mean that consumers in these circumstances would be able to access emergency services without having to risk disconnection during an emergency situation.

The implementation of text-to-000 is critical to the Government achieving the objectives of the Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation (**UOMO**). One of the stated policy objectives of the UOMO was to expand access to Triple Zero services in Australia.¹⁷

However, the Direct-to-Device (**D2D**) technologies identified as critical to the success of the UOMO in RRR Australia currently support only SMS functionality.¹⁸ This limitation makes it essential for Australians to be able to contact Triple Zero via text message. Currently, Australians can only directly contact emergency services via voice calls. To achieve the UOMO's policy objective of expanding access to Triple Zero, the Australian Government must establish a text-to-000 service.¹⁹

¹⁶ For example, Expression Australia is undertaking a trial to ensure that Deaf individuals can communicate their needs directly and receive timely assistance in emergencies. 'Auslan Emergency Interpreting | Expression Australia' <<https://www.expression.com.au/projects/auslan-emergency-interpreting>>.

¹⁷ Transport Ministers for the Department of Infrastructure, 'Albanese Labor Government Building Australia's Mobile Future' (Media Release, 25 February 2025) <<https://minister.infrastructure.gov.au/rowland/media-release/albanese-labor-government-building-australias-mobile-future>>.

¹⁸ ACCAN, 'ACCAN's Submission to the Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation (UOMO) Draft Legislation' (Submission, October 2025) <[https://www.accan.org.au/accan-submission/accan%E2%80%99s-submission-to-the-universal-outdoor-mobile-obligation-\(uomo\)-draft-legislation](https://www.accan.org.au/accan-submission/accan%E2%80%99s-submission-to-the-universal-outdoor-mobile-obligation-(uomo)-draft-legislation)>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

The implementation of text-to-000 is essential while D2D technologies remain limited to SMS and do not support full voice-calling capabilities. Without this reform, ACCAN is concerned that the UOMO may fail to meet its intended policy objectives.

Emergency communications must be available to everyone. Many Australians, including people with disability, people in unsafe situations (e.g. family violence), and those in low-coverage areas, need a way to silently and reliably access help. All Australians deserve equal access to life-saving emergency services. Enabling text-to-000 and IP-based options is not only technically feasible, it is a legal, moral, and practical imperative.

Accessible emergency communications should be a foundational element of a modern, safe, and inclusive society. Ensuring that emergency communications are accessible to everyone will help Australia better align with its international obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which explicitly recognises access to emergency services as a fundamental human right.²⁰

3.6. Reducing emergency services fragmentation

The National Emergency Communications Working Group (**NECWG**)’s June 2025 White Paper on ‘Emergency Communications in Australia’ (**the White Paper**) noted that Australia’s Emergency Contact System (**ECS**), underpinned by Triple Zero (000) ‘is facing unprecedented demand and increasing complexity, driven by population growth, more frequent and severe emergencies, evolving societal expectations, and rapid technological advancement’.²¹

‘Australia has experienced a 44% increase in calls to Triple Zero (000), rising from 8,104,189 in 2014 to 11,676,742 calls in 2024’ fuelled by several factors increasing demand for emergency services, including access to mobile phones, increases in population and complexity of calls and ‘shifts in the frequency and nature of emergencies’.²²

The White Paper notes several issues present with Australia’s existing telecommunications regulations, including that ‘Australia’s Telecommunications Act 1997 does not address interaction channels outside of landline and voice’.²³ Increases in uptake of wearable technology, safety applications, personal alarms, crash detection systems are noted as a ‘largely ungoverned market’ as it relates to their dependence on government services.²⁴

²⁰ United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. 2009. Article 9(1)(b).

²¹ National Emergency Communications Working Group, ‘Emergency Communications in Australia’ (Report, 2025) 6 <<https://eena.org/wp-content/uploads/Emergency-Communications-in-Australia-a-NECWG-White-Paper.pdf>>.

²² Ibid 9-11.

²³ Ibid 33.

²⁴ Ibid 33.

While these apps and devices can offer a range of features to help users meet their needs and feel safe and secure, they may not be regulated to the same reliability standards of Triple Zero (000) despite possibly contributing to consumer demand for access to emergency services.

Additionally, further increases in quantities of emergency calls are likely to be facilitated through the implementation of the UOMO. Increases in demand for emergency services and the absence of coordinated reform 'risks being out of step with public and emergency service organisations' expectations and may fall short of meeting community needs'.²⁵

To address this, White Paper recommended:

- The development of a focussed Emergency Contact Strategy led by the Triple Zero Custodian to 'provide clear objectives and a roadmap to support the enhancement of the Emergency Contact System over time'.
- The development of an 'evidence base for preferences and implications of new [emergency] contact methods noting there is little (if any) contemporary research on whether this data extends to emergency services'.²⁶

ACCAN supports the above recommendations of the NECWG and would encourage the Government to undertake an expansive review into the functionality, objectives, future demand sources and sustainability of the Triple Zero (000) service.

3.7. A fit-for-purpose Custodian will provide ongoing systemic benefits

ACCAN welcomed the Triple Zero Custodian Bill legislation as a vital step towards rebuilding public faith in the telecommunications sector.²⁷ We welcome the Custodian's information gathering powers which expand the information-gathering tools available to the ACMA. We are supportive of the Bill put forward by the Government but consider that to be fit-for-purpose, effective and transparent, the Custodian must be empowered.

The Bean review recommended the Custodian have end-to-end monitoring of the performance of the ecosystem.²⁸ A Custodian imbued with solely retroactive powers not only risks similar uncoordinated responses to Triple Zero (000) outages as stakeholders experienced during the September Outage but may not fulfill the recommendation 2 of the Bean Review.

²⁵ National Emergency Communications Working Group, 'Emergency Communications in Australia' (Report, 2025) 23 <<https://eena.org/wp-content/uploads/Emergency-Communications-in-Australia-a-NECWG-White-Paper.pdf>>.

²⁶ Ibid 23.

²⁷ ACCAN, 'Consumers Want Stronger Action to Shore up Triple Zero Certainty' (Media Release, 2025) <<https://www.accan.org.au/accan-s-media-releases/consumers-want-stronger-action-to-shore-up-triple-zero-certainty>>.

²⁸ Transport Department of Infrastructure, 'Review into the Optus Outage of 8 November 2023 – Final Report' (Report, 30 April 2024) 9 <<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/departments/media/publications/review-optus-outage-8-november-2023-final-report>>.

The NECWG's White Paper recommended the Triple Zero Custodian facilitate a robust research and engagement model that:

- 'Monitors industry developments in apps, systems, and services that may have implications for the Emergency Contact System (**ECS**).
- Coordinates the analysis of these implications with the relevant stakeholders and subject matter experts to determine where any regulatory or legislative instruments are applicable or should be developed.
- If required, coordinates the development of a submission seeking amendment to, or creation of, appropriate regulation or legislation to minimise the disruption or impacts to the ECS'.²⁹

These recommendations underscore the positive potential of the Custodian as able to respond to immediate and systemic issues with the Triple Zero (000) system. For the Custodian to appropriately fulfill its objective of possessing end-to-end oversight of the performance of the ecosystem, it should be given additional powers, including:

1. The ability to engage in real-time monitoring of the Triple Zero (000) ecosystem.
2. An expanded ability to require service and process improvements to the internal processes and systems of telecommunications providers.
3. The ability to undertake periodic reviews of the Triple Zero (000) system.
4. Identifying and reporting on contemporary and emerging risks to the Triple Zero (000) system.

ACCAN considers that these reforms will further strengthen the Custodian without introducing a regulatory function to its operations. These reforms provide a strong retroactive base for the Custodian to improve practices and oversight of emergency call services post hoc.

'Without clear leadership governance, both State and Federal parties are unable to take a proactive approach to managing technological advances in communications capabilities'.³⁰ A Custodian which is empowered to provide a real-time support and advisory function during Triple Zero (000) outages can provide greater benefits to government, industry and community stakeholders by acting as the coordinating authority during outage events.

²⁹ National Emergency Communications Working Group, '*Emergency Communications in Australia*' (Report, June 2025) 35
<<https://eena.org/wp-content/uploads/Emergency-Communications-in-Australia-a-NECWG-White-Paper.pdf>>

³⁰ Ibid 12.

3.8. Progress on Bean Review recommendations

ACCAN encourages the Committee to include as part of its report, a progress update of the actions towards the recommendations of the Bean Review. Recent outages of traditional telephone and Triple Zero (000) services underscore the need for Government and industry stakeholders to provide transparency on the actions taken towards these recommendations.

ACCAN commends the work undertaken by Government and industry towards the completion of the Bean review recommendations to date and welcomes further updates on outstanding items. ACCAN notes the following recommendations of the Bean Review which may be outstanding or only partially actioned.

- **Recommendation 7** - Combine and expand existing disruption protocol instruments to cover all matters relevant to outages in any element of the Triple Zero ecosystem.
- **Recommendation 8** - The Department should review the contract under which Triple Zero is delivered, with a specific focus on the central role of the ECP within the ecosystem.
- **Recommendation 13** - An industry wide standardised approach to the form of resolutions available to consumers affected by a crisis or large-scale outage should be implemented.
- **Recommendation 14** - Work currently being undertaken on roaming during natural disasters should be followed by work on temporary roaming during outages caused by other events, such as those which occurred on 8 November 2023.
- **Recommendation 15** - The Australian Government should require mutual assistance arrangements to be established between telecommunications service providers during outages to assist in managing and resolving those outages, learning from international experience (for example, similar to the Canadian MOU).
- **Recommendation 17** - The Australian governments should review arrangements for maintaining their operations during outages including telecommunications redundancy for critical government services. Consideration should also be given to maintaining this information in a central repository.³¹

Reporting on the progression of the Bean Review recommendations is an important step in improving consumer trust in the telecommunications sector and government processes. We expect that such an inclusion in the Committee's reporting will provide valuable transparency on a topic which has seen significant prominence since the September Outage.

³¹ Transport Department of Infrastructure, 'Review into the Optus Outage of 8 November 2023 – Final Report' (Report, 30 April 2024) <<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/departments/media/publications/review-optus-outage-8-november-2023-final-report>>.

3.9. Revisiting domestic mobile roaming for consumer benefit

In our submission to the Department's consultation on the UOMO draft legislation, ACCAN recommended that the Department actively consider revisiting the case for domestic mobile roaming arrangements.³² The policy and competition implications of the UOMO once D2D technology has matured to the level of mobile data functionality may provide a substantial case for revisiting domestic mobile roaming.

A mobile roaming service allows mobile subscribers of one network to use their mobile phones for calls, text messages and to access data services by means of another network in Australia when outside the coverage area of the network to which they subscribe. Domestic mobile roaming can enhance the use of existing and emerging infrastructure and improve coverage, particularly in RRR areas where competitive infrastructure investment is less likely.

The ACCC last considered the economic case to declare mobile roaming services in 2016 and decided against it.³³ The ACCC concluded that there would be competitive benefits from mobile roaming services but that these benefits could be achieved through a competitive market and did not require regulatory intervention.

The mobile telecommunications market has changed significantly since 2016 and Mobile Network Operator's expansion of their terrestrial networks has been limited.³⁴ Decreasing rates of mobile network infrastructure investment, including reduced carrier participation in programs such as the Mobile Black Spot Program may warrant a reconsideration of the state of the market almost a decade after the ACCC's latest rejection of domestic mobile roaming.

Domestic mobile roaming would promote competition in RRR areas where competition for mobile services would normally be limited to infrastructure-based competition. Further, domestic mobile roaming may require Mobile Virtual Network Operators to compete on other aspects of service delivery outside of mobile coverage such as price and customer service.

Therefore, rejecting domestic mobile roaming on the basis that it distorts investment incentives in RRR areas may no longer be warranted. Combining domestic mobile roaming arrangements with the UOMO could strengthen network resilience and ensure that consumers receive optimal coverage, service continuity and choice of telecommunications provider.

³² ACCAN, 'ACCAN's Submission to the Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation (UOMO) Draft Legislation' (Submission, October 2025) <[https://www.accan.org.au/accan-submission/accan%E2%80%99s-submission-to-the-universal-outdoor-mobile-obligation-\(uomo\)-draft-legislation](https://www.accan.org.au/accan-submission/accan%E2%80%99s-submission-to-the-universal-outdoor-mobile-obligation-(uomo)-draft-legislation)>.

³³ Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, 'Domestic Mobile Roaming Declaration Inquiry 2016' (Report, 5 May 2017) <<https://www.accc.gov.au/by-industry/telecommunications-and-internet/mobile-services-regulation/domestic-mobile-roaming-declaration-inquiry-2016>>.

³⁴ Australian Telecommunications Alliance, *SIAA Policy and Strategy Forum Panel* (Media Release, July 2025) <<https://www.austelco.org.au/siaa-policy-and-strategy-forum-panel/>>.

Despite these benefits, mobile roaming may constrain mobile network capacity in some areas and can risk network congestion if not implemented appropriately. ACCAN recommends the Government revisit the case for domestic mobile roaming taking into account the public safety implications of telecommunications outages and the current and future competitive settings of the mobile telecommunications market.

4. Conclusion

The effective operation of the Triple Zero (000) service is crucial to facilitating public safety. Triple Zero (000) relies on the effective and reliable operation of mobile networks which are not regulated with the express aim of being reliable. Reforms to telecommunications statutes which improve mobile reliability are needed to ensure consumers can access Triple Zero (000) during emergencies. Further, reforms which improve the accessibility, transparency and robustness of the Triple Zero (000) system and account for increases in demand for emergency call services should be progressed. ACCAN would welcome the opportunity to provide evidence to this important Inquiry.

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is Australia's peak communication consumer organisation. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Commonwealth of Australia under section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997. This funding is recovered from charges on telecommunications carriers. ACCAN is committed to reconciliation that acknowledges Australia's past and values the unique culture and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

5. Appendix A

Telecommunications Legislation Amendment Telecommunications Amendment (Enhancing Consumer Safeguards) Bill 2025

(Amendments to be moved by _____ on behalf of _____)

(1) Schedule 3, page 28 (line 4), after subsection 570(3), repeal the subsection (3B)(a), substitute:

(a) 60,600 penalty units;

(2) After Schedule 4, item 6, page 31, insert:

Schedule 5 – Modernising Objects and Regulatory Policy

Telecommunications Act 1997

After paragraph 3(1)(a)

Insert:

(aa) investment in, and the efficient operation and use of, carriage services; and

(ab) better price, quality, reliability, safety and security of supply of carriage services for end-users of those services; and

(ac) the reliability, safety and security of Australia's telecommunications; and

(ad) the availability of accessible and affordable carriage services that enhance the welfare of Australians.

Section 4

Repeal the section, insert:

4 Regulatory policy

The parliament intends that telecommunications be regulated in a manner that:

(a) promotes the long-term interests of end-users of carriage services or of services provided by means of carriage services; and

(b) is consistent with a recognition that telecommunications, in particular emergency call services, are essential to the welfare of Australians; and

(c) supports the achievement of the objects set out in section 3.

Section 112

Repeal the section.

Schedule 6 – Strengthening service reliability

Telecommunications (Consumer Protections and Service Standards) Act 1999

After paragraph 115 (1)(f)

Insert:

- (g) the reliability of carriage services; and
- (h) the quality or performance of carriage services; and
- (i) the action or actions a carriage service provider must take to address reliability, quality or performance of carriage services affecting a telecommunications network; and
- (j) the terms and conditions of the supply of carriage services.

Section 115 (3)

After “unless it is directed to do so by the Minister”, insert “or the Minister confers a power to the ACMA”.

Section 117 (3)

Omit “\$25,000”, substitute “\$100,000”.

Section 117A

Repeal the section, insert:

- (1) The Minister may, by written instrument, make standards to be complied with by carriage service providers in relation to:
 - (a) the time for payment of damages for breach of standards under section 115; and
 - (b) the assessment of a carriage service providers’ liability to pay damages; and
 - (c) information provided to a customer in relation to a carriage service providers’ liability to pay damages; and
 - (d) the methods for discharging liability to pay damages; and
 - (e) how a customer may challenge a carriage service providers’ liability to pay damages; and
 - (f) public reporting to the ACMA, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman of metrics in relation to compliance with the standard, including reliability, quality and performance metrics; and

- (g) any other matter concerning carriage service providers' compliance and liability with standards under this Part.

- (2) The Minister may direct the ACMA to make standards under this section.

Section 117D (1)(a)

After “of wholesale carriage services to a wholesale customer;”, omit “and” and substitute “or”.

Section 120

Repeal the section.

Section 120A

Repeal the section.

Section 123

Repeal the section.

After paragraph 124 (1)

Insert:

- (1A) The Minister may confer a power on the ACMA to make a legislative instrument under this Part.

After Section 125

Insert:

125A Transitional arrangements

- (1) Upon the commencement of this Part, the ACMA must undertake a review of standards under section 115 and amend, revoke or remake the standards to ensure compliance with this Part.
- (2) Standards under section 115 apply until the conclusion of the review in subsection (1).
- (3) The review in subsection (1) must include a minimum period of public consultation of 60 days.

