

Committee Secretariat, inquiry submission to "Triple Zero Service outage" from Kevin Cooper Advanced Life Support Ambulance Paramedic

It's pretty clear that it's needed to **urgently** introduce a back up telephone number of "**131440**" for the public to the "**000**" Ambulance line, this will also provide a redundancy system if "**000**" goes down with a "**131440**" number similar to the Police "**131444**" and that the use or reintroduction of such a number Nationally will save lives by also freeing up "**000**" for genuine serious life threat emergencies & provide an immediate redundancy if "**000**" goes down for any reason.

The introduction of the 3 emergency telephone numbers in the 1980s "**11440**" Ambulance; "**11441**" Fire; "**11444**" Police additional to work hand in hand with "**000**" were a great idea to back up the "**000**" emergency call system. I trained in ambulance communications in the 1980s with both these numbers in place and I believe the system worked well.

But a Government review in the 1990s had all these numbers removed due to "? too confusing to have all these emergency numbers" listed as the reason said the enquiry (copy of excerpts below), but the system worked well. I think it is more likely that it was purely a cost cutting exercise by the Government of the day rather than confusion, ie we don't need this additional "**000**" back up system at additional cost, we can probably get by without it and save money.

It's not rocket science because we have done it before, it's not hard to implement "**131440**" Ambulance telephone number to compliment and back up "**000**", we need to follow the Police who have worked out that they were unable to keep up with the volume of calls to "**000**" so have recently gone full circle and introduced "**131444**" as a back up to "**000**" so police have a back number but Ambulance not! Introducing Ambulance "**131440**" telephone number will save lives immediately & ongoing.

Historically all callers to AV "**000**" believe their call is an emergency, but most are not, by introducing "**131440**" people are encouraged to in general to call "**131440**" for their ambulance emergency unless they believe the patient is at risk of immediate loss of life then call "**000**". In Ambulance adds we give no Ambulance phone number to call but "**000**" leaving no alternative to call.

In the 1980s I was trained in the Ambulance Communications operations course where the "**000**" & "**11440**" ambulance emergency numbers worked well together hand in hand, when the switchboard lit up "**000**" calls flashed a different colour to "**11440**" and "**000**" calls were always the priority to answer 1st there by allowing "**000**" to be answered quicker.

It does not matter how many additional call takers you employ in the current "000" system there will always be delays answering when many calls come in at the same time in peak times and with no alternate phone number to call you cannot differentiate between the call coming in as "someone has a broken toe" to a call with "CPR in progress."

The present "000" system format is overwhelmed. If you immediately implemented a new ambulance emergency number of "131440" (or similar) as a back-up to "000" then the Govt could show the public that they have taken immediate and appropriate action to save lives in doing so.

Having said that, this will in no way fix the systemic problem of the total amount of calls to answer between the 2 numbers i.e. is there perhaps understaffing issues or better communication systems that could be used is another story. My story is about creating a 2-tier system of "000" & a back-up of "131440" (which did actually work together well in the past) (similar to police) where additionally using this tel no' will allow "000" call takers answer quickly anyone who is under immediate threat of the loss of their life.

As much of the "000" workload will be absorbed by "131440", I believe the recent stats showing apx a third of all calls to Ambulance "000" did not actually need an ambulance then "131440" should be able to absorb many of these calls freeing up "000"

We have already had the big inquiry into "000" Vic - Auditor General of Vic. Special report No : 53 No : 78 Session 1996-97
Vic multi Agency approach to Emergency Services **"A Focus on Public Safety"** Issues relating to telstra & 000 the National Emergency number. pge
127 Part 9 Issues relating to Telstra & 000 the National Emergency number.
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- of the estimated 9 million non emergency calls received Nationally through "000" about half are considered to be accidental mis-dialling and the balance attributable to nuisance or hoax calls (pge 127 para 9.25)

- Because of the availability to the public of many emergency numbers can create confusion as to the most appropriate number to call, the phasing out of the 3 emergency service access numbers 11440 Ambulance; 11441 Fire; 11444 Police introduced in the 1980s, should be regarded as a high priority. (page 127 paras 9.30-9.33)

Blind freddy & myself can see that over time in Ambulance ideas can go full circle, this is one of them, police have worked out that they are having the same issues with difficulty responding to the volume of "000" calls they receive and have re-introduced the "131444" tel number with the advertising blitz of :- ***"If you need the Police but not the***

lights & Sirens then please call "131444" (used to be 11444) and save "000" for dire active Police emergencies"

So "000" should Nationally immediately implement **"131440"** as an Emergency number for Ambulance and copy the Police theme:-***"If you need an Ambulance but not the Lights & Sirens then please call "131440" (used to be 11440) and save "000" for dire ambulance emergencies"*** (You would need to see what numbers telstra has to offer you if 131440 is already in use)

You can re-edit our existing ambulance add campaign by adding save **"000"** for active serious emergencies such as CPR is in progress; the person is unconscious; currently choking or seizing; severe asthma ; having a heart attack or stroke or has been seriously injured. **"If your emergency is not an immediate threat to life please call for an ambulance on "131440"** (used to be 11440), if your calling about a medical issue that is not urgent then please talk this over with nurse on call on tel no; your local pharmacist or contact your Gp for advice.

By re-introducing the **"131440"** concept this will free up **"000"** and should immediately allow **"000"** to respond in a faster manner. The KPI time for answering **"131440"** can be then set with a longer time frame than **"000"** to answer ? say under 1 minute, instead of **"000"**'s 5 second response time and call takers instructed to answer all **"000"** calls before the **"131440"** number. **"000"** & **"11440"** emergency calls flashed a different colour to the **"11440"** calls on your console.

Just put a recording on the **"131440"** line ***"if this is an immediate threat to life then hang up and call "000" otherwise hold the line for the next available operator"***

I'm happy to talk through my **"131440"** & **"000"** idea how it would best work. If implemented quickly this idea would immediately pull **"000"** out of its current crisis by providing a safer working system for the people of Australia.

Sincerely Kev Cooper, an Advanced Life Support Ambulance Paramedic, a 50 year veteran paramedic in Victoria