



Opening Statement

Chair, Senators — thank you for the opportunity to appear today.

My name is **Katarina Carroll**. I am the **Deputy Coordinator-General for Emergency Management and Response** with the **National Emergency Management Agency**. With me is **David Long**, the **Assistant Coordinator-General for National Crisis Operations** – the area within NEMA that is responsible for the **National Situation Room**, or **NSR**.

At the outset, I want to acknowledge the **seriousness of this incident**. The **tragic outcomes** associated with this outage reinforce the **critical importance of a reliable and well-coordinated Triple Zero system**.

I want to begin by clearly setting out **roles and responsibilities**, because that is critical to understanding where NEMA fits in relation to **Triple Zero** and **telecommunications outages**.

Under Commonwealth arrangements, **policy, regulatory and industry coordination responsibility for telecommunications sits with the Minister for Communications**, supported by the **Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts — DITRDSCA**. **ACMA** is the independent regulator, responsible for regulatory oversight, compliance, and formal notification of telecommunications outages.

Consistent with legislation passed by Government, the **Triple Zero Custodian sits with DITRDSCA**, reflecting the responsibilities of the **Minister for Communications under the Australian Government Crisis Management Framework**, or **AGCMF**.

That framework clearly delineates roles.

Under the AGCMF:

- **DITRDSCA is the Lead Coordinating Agency for telecommunications outages**
- **NEMA is an enabling agency**, supporting national coordination where the **consequences of a hazard are nationally significant**

As per the AGCMF, then, NEMA **does not bear responsibility for operating networks, regulating telcos, managing devices, or notifying the public**. We also do not have the direct industry engagement mechanisms with telecommunications providers that DITRDSCA holds.

Our role is different.

The **National Situation Room** is a **24/7 situational awareness and coordination capability**. Its purpose is to ensure that, when events threaten life and safety, **information is shared early, risks are escalated appropriately, and governments and agencies are aligned**.

In the case of a **nationally significant telecommunications outage**, such as the **September 2025 Optus and Triple Zero outage**, NEMA's role is not to address the technical fault, but to support coordination around the **consequences of the hazard** — in this case, a telecommunications outage impacting access to Triple Zero.

In practical terms, where requested, the **NSR would**:

- support whole-of-system situational awareness
- notify relevant Commonwealth stakeholders consistent with our coordination role
- and prepare to convene a **National Coordination Mechanism**, or **NCM**, at the request of **DITRDSCA**

If an NCM were activated, **NEMA would co-chair it with the lead agency**. Importantly, this could involve:

- relevant Commonwealth agencies
- impacted states and territories
- and relevant industry partners, including telecommunications providers.

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