

**HOME AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
NATIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Senate Environment and Communications References Committee

Inquiry into the Triple Zero Service Outage

26 February 2026

QoN Number: 1

Subject: Briefing notes and minutes from meeting

Asked by: Sarah Henderson

Question:

Just going back to your discussion exercise, your meeting, could you please provide on notice any briefing notes or any notes or minutes taken out of that meeting or any other materials used during that meeting, to support your discussion exercise?

Answer:

- The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), through its National Crisis Exercising and Lessons Capability (NCEC), was asked by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCA) to provide support for the design and facilitation of a Triple Zero outage exercise titled 'Exercise Disconnect and Reconnect'.
- In support of Exercise Disconnect and Reconnect, NCEC developed a slide deck which included the exercise scenario at **Attachment A**.
- To further support DITRDCA's development of the exercise report, NCEC took observations during the exercise, which were provided to DITRDCA for analysis. Observations taken by NEMA have been included at **Attachment B**.
- Additionally, NEMA drafted a Participant Guide at **Attachment C** and proposed Agenda at **Attachment D** which was provided to DITRDCA for consideration for use during the exercise.

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PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Senate Environment and Communications References Committee

Inquiry into the Triple Zero Service Outage

26 February 2026

QoN Number: 2

Subject: Action taken on National Significant Alerts

Asked by: Sarah Henderson

Question:

Since the 1st of November, when you're getting those alerts, have you got any examples of where there has been national significant alerts where you have been able to act immediately and what action have you taken?

Answer:

National significant alerts since 1 November 2025:

- The Australian Government National Situation Room (NSR) has received two alerts from telecommunication carriers on national significant outages since 1 November 2025. These are:
 - *Telstra – 'Satellite to Mobile Text Messaging' impacting 13,624 services – Received 11/02/2026 – Restoration complete.*
 - The National Situation Room did not send out a notification as the service was restored at the time of notification, and nil triple zero impacts were reported in the notification.
 - *NBN – 'A network outage impacted Satellite services in Western Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia' impacting 1505 services – Received 30/01/2026 – Restoration complete.*
 - The National Situation Room did not send out a notification as the service was restored at the time of notification, and no triple zero impacts were reported in the notification.

The NSRs role in outages:

- When alerted to a significant triple zero outage with major impacts or major anticipated impacts, the NSR will send out an SMS to notify internal NEMA executive stakeholders.
- A summary may be provided in the Daily All Hazards Report depending on classification of information and availability on open source.

- Depending on the impacts and details of the outage, a Flash SMS may be sent to internal and external Australian Government stakeholders.
- The Crisis Coordination Team dashboard may be distributed to attendees of the National Coordination Mechanism, with details of triple zero outages during a nationally significant crises.
- The NSR does not notify the public of outages.

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Senate Environment and Communications References Committee

Inquiry into the Triple Zero Service Outage

26 February 2026

QoN Number: 3

Subject: Papers or submissions on the allocation of spectrum for emergency services and NEMA

Asked by: Sarah Henderson

Question:

Senator Henderson: Obviously the allocation and the purchasing of spectrum is a very big issue right now and so have you produced any papers or submissions in relation to the allocation of spectrum just for emergency services and NEMA? How are you progressing because this decision is due to be made pretty soon?

Mr David Long: I don't know where it sits in terms of how much we have taken this forward only because I've been in the agency for four months, but I'll take it on notice and get back to you.

Senator Henderson: If you could please. Because I do know that a number of organisations and various emergency services are very concerned about the amount of spectrum that they receive and the overcrowding of spectrum and they are seeking for a reservation of spectrum for emergency services, so I would be very grateful if you could provide us with any other information in that regard.

Answer:

NEMA is aware of the views of states and territories relating to spectrum allocation, and this topic has been formally considered at the National Emergency Management Ministers Meeting (NEMMM) held on 12 December 2025. The relevant section of the public communique from this meeting is provided below:

Emergency Services Spectrum Allocation

Members noted the increased need for Long-Term Evolution (LTE) mobile broadband capability to meet the evolving capacity and data requirements of emergency services organisations that should complement existing Land Mobile Radio. Members agreed to engage, where they consider appropriate, with the

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Senate Environment and Communications References Committee

Inquiry into the Triple Zero Service Outage

26 February 2026

QoN Number: 4

Subject: Spectrum reservation - biggest groups of other competitors

Asked by: Sarah Hanson-Young

Question:

Just on that spectrum reservation matter, can you give me a sense of what other services or users are in that particular band? What I'm trying to work out is who are the biggest groups of other competitors?

Answer:

NEMA has consulted with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCA) as the lead agency on radio spectrum to provide the following response to the Committee:

Public Safety Mobile Broadband (PSMB) would involve the provision of a mobile broadband service. While dedicated spectrum is one way by which PSMB could be implemented, successive reviews, including the Productivity Commission in 2015 and the 2022 PSMB Strategic Review have examined options for PSMB in detail. They have concluded that direct allocations of spectrum to deliver PSMB are not the most appropriate or effective mechanism of delivering PSMB, and that the focus should be on arrangements with MNOs. As noted in IQ26-000016 NEMA is engaging with DITRDCA and ACMA on exploring options.

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PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Senate Environment and Communications References Committee

Inquiry into the Triple Zero Service Outage

26 February 2026

QoN Number: 5

Subject: Size and width of the cost of the spectrum

Asked by: Sarah Hanson-Young

Question:

I'm not sure if this is picked up in the question on notice from Senator Henderson, but just to be clear, obviously the cost of spectrum is quite topical at the moment. We've got the big telcos having to work out how we deal with that. But also, the size of that spectrum or the width of that spectrum I would like to understand as well in terms of if it's going to be reserved, how much are we talking, what are we talking?

Answer:

NEMA has consulted with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCA) as the lead agency on radio spectrum to provide the following response to the Committee:

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is the primary decision-maker responsible for spectrum planning and licensing arrangements and is guided by a policy and decision-making framework for expiring spectrum licences (ESLs) developed in consultation with stakeholders, including public interest criteria informed by Australian Government communications policy objectives.

On 17 December 2025, the ACMA released its preferred views on ESL renewal outcomes, including that renewing ESLs held by telcos that provide mobile broadband services promotes the long-term public interest.

Australian Communications and Media Authority to explore opportunities to secure dedicated spectrum. Provision of dedicated spectrum is an option, amongst others such as Licence Conditions, to deliver critical LTE public safety communications, particularly in times of emergencies and disasters.

Attachment A - Exercise Disconnect October 2025 - Presentation

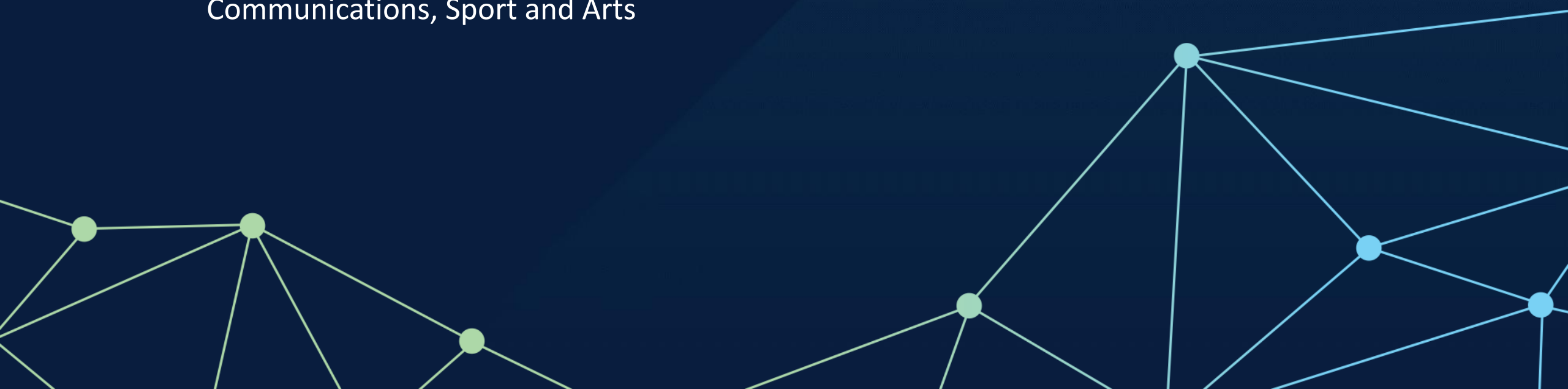


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Communication Outage Exercise 2025

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development,
Communications, Sport and Arts





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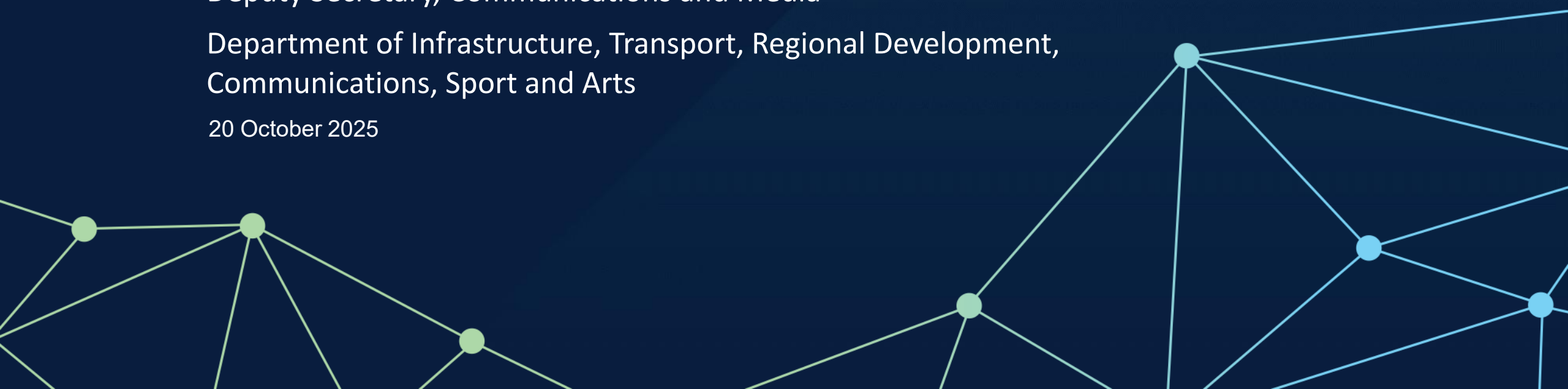
Introduction

James Chisholm

Deputy Secretary, Communications and Media

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development,
Communications, Sport and Arts

20 October 2025



Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Government acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and acknowledges their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past and present.





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Welcome and Overview

Hon Anika Wells MP

Minister for Communications and Minister for Sport





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Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

Opening Remarks

Hon Kristy McBain MP

Minister for Emergency Management and Minister for Regional
Development, Local Government and Territories





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Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

Exercise Disconnect

Joe Buffone

Deputy Coordinator General, Emergency Management and Response Group

National Emergency Management Agency



Housekeeping



The Stretton Room is a **Zone 4** area, no electronic devices are permitted



Chatham House rules apply



Don't fight the white, facilitator has poetic licence. The scenario is fictitious, however the events and impacts depicted are plausible



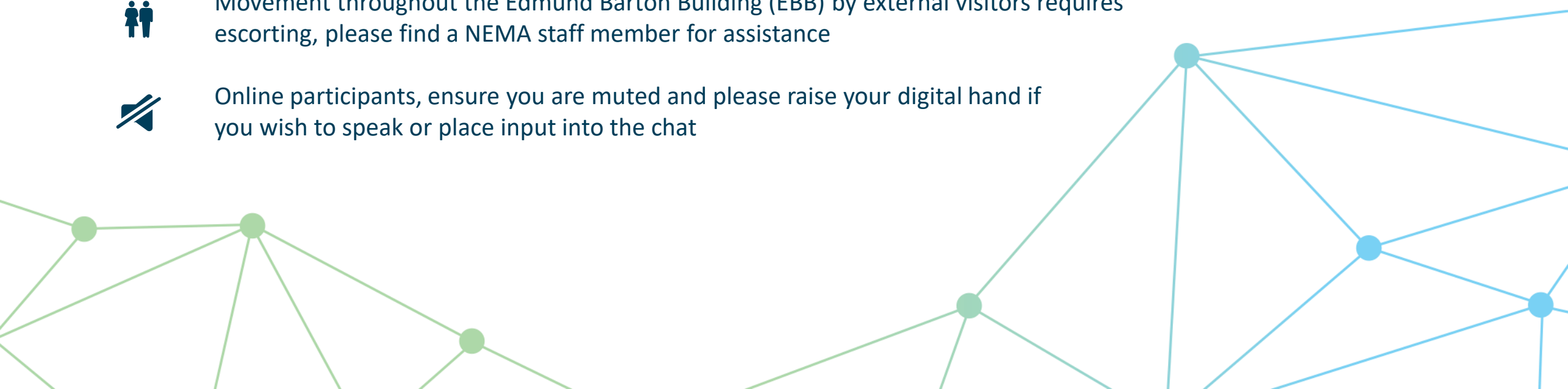
The term **"No Duff"** will be used in the event of a real-life incident. In case of an emergency for those in the room NEMA staff will provide you with directions



Movement throughout the Edmund Barton Building (EBB) by external visitors requires escorting, please find a NEMA staff member for assistance



Online participants, ensure you are muted and please raise your digital hand if you wish to speak or place input into the chat





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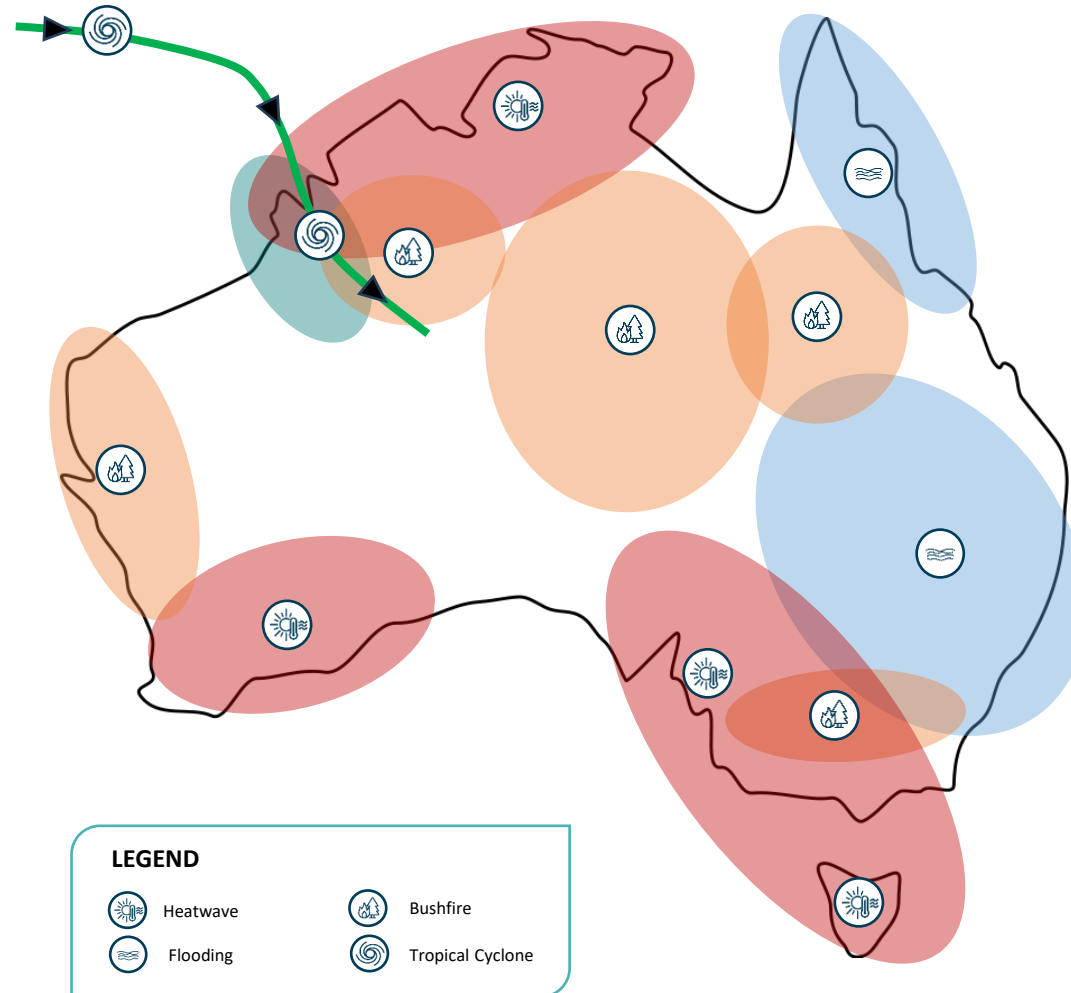
Session One – Setting the Scene

2025 - 26 Higher Risk Weather Season Outlook



Antecedent Conditions

- Wetter than average conditions likely for much of Australia in the lead up to the HRWS.
- Neutral to dry signal in west Western Australia and Tasmania for some models.
- Likely earlier than usual northern rainfall onset in Queensland and the Northern Territory.
- Drier in the north-west in spring with possibly later than usual northern rainfall onset. This could prolong oppressive heat in the lead up to the wet-season.
- Increased chance of negative Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) and weak La Niña in spring.
- Very warm sea surface temperatures in the Coral and Tasman seas, and across the maritime continent to Australia's north.





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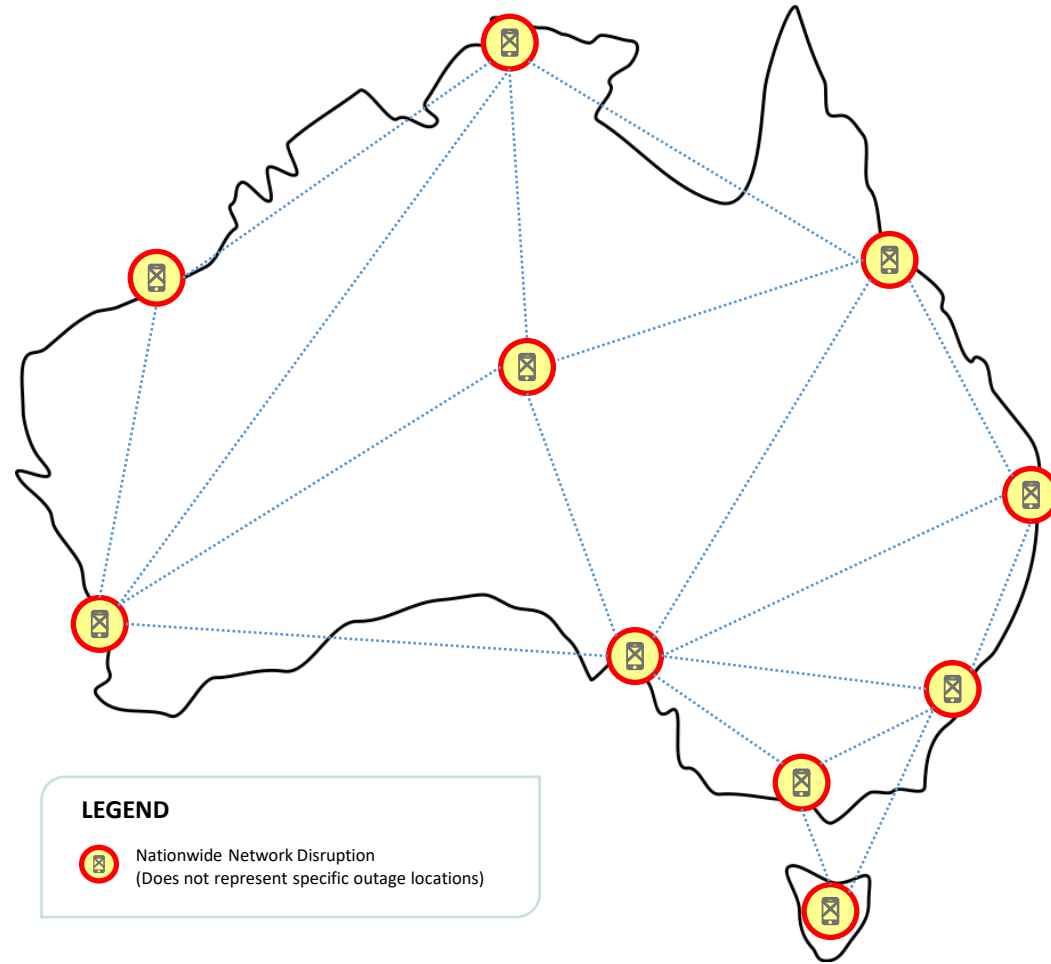
Session Two – Technical Outages

16 – 23 December 2025



Telstra Outage (16-19 December)

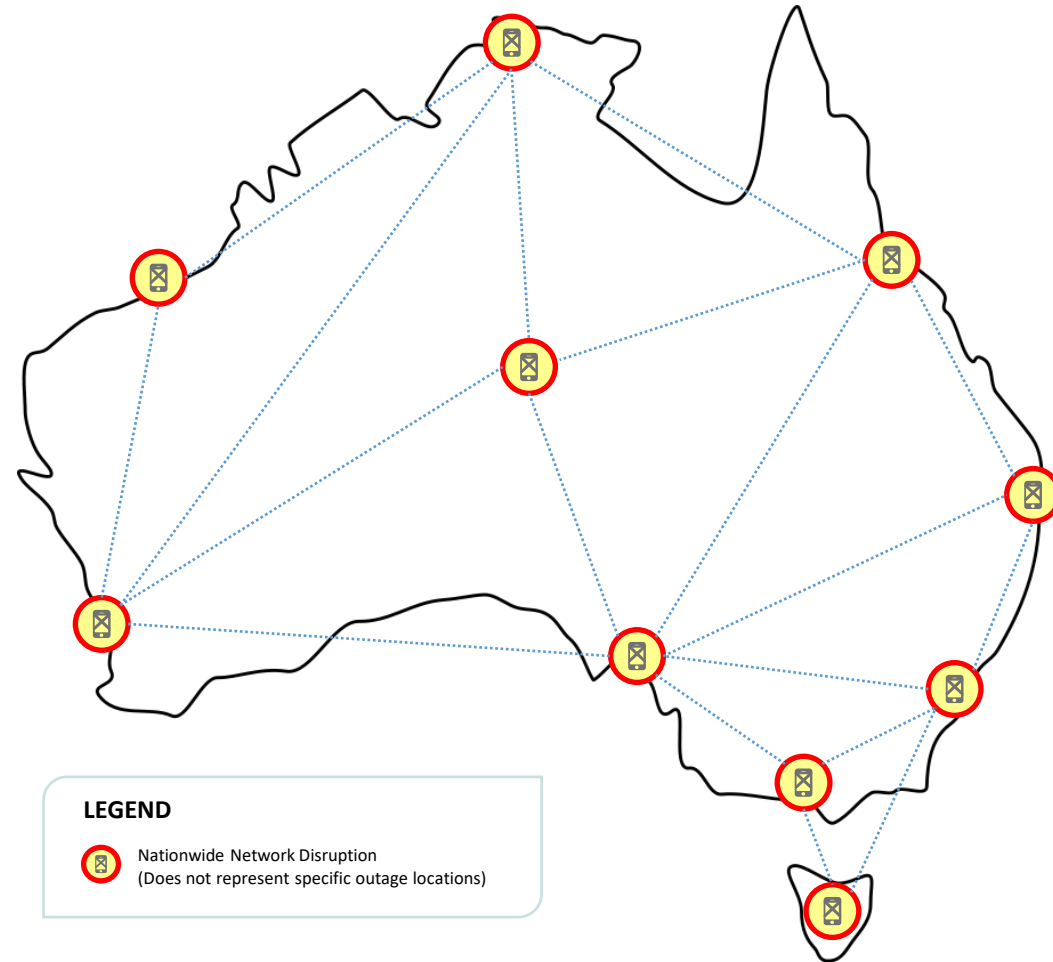
Telstra implemented a nationwide software update overnight, targeting improvements to its core routing and signaling systems to enhance overall network performance and cybersecurity. However, a critical fault in the update caused significant degradation across Telstra's mobile and data services. This led to widespread service outages across the country, including direct impacts on access to Triple Zero (000) emergency services.



Optus and TPG Outage (19 – 23 December)

Optus experienced a technical issue that initially affected services in South Australia and Victoria. In an effort to resolve the issue, a software patch was applied; however, the intervention resulted in unintended consequences, triggering widespread service outages across the country. These disruptions significantly impacted access to Triple Zero (000) emergency services.

Concurrently, TPG customers across metropolitan and regional areas are reporting sporadic internet outages. The disruptions are unpredictable—lasting anywhere from a few minutes to several hours—and affect both residential and business users. The intermittent nature of the outages proves particularly disruptive. In certain regions, the outages are causing delays in connecting to Triple Zero (000).





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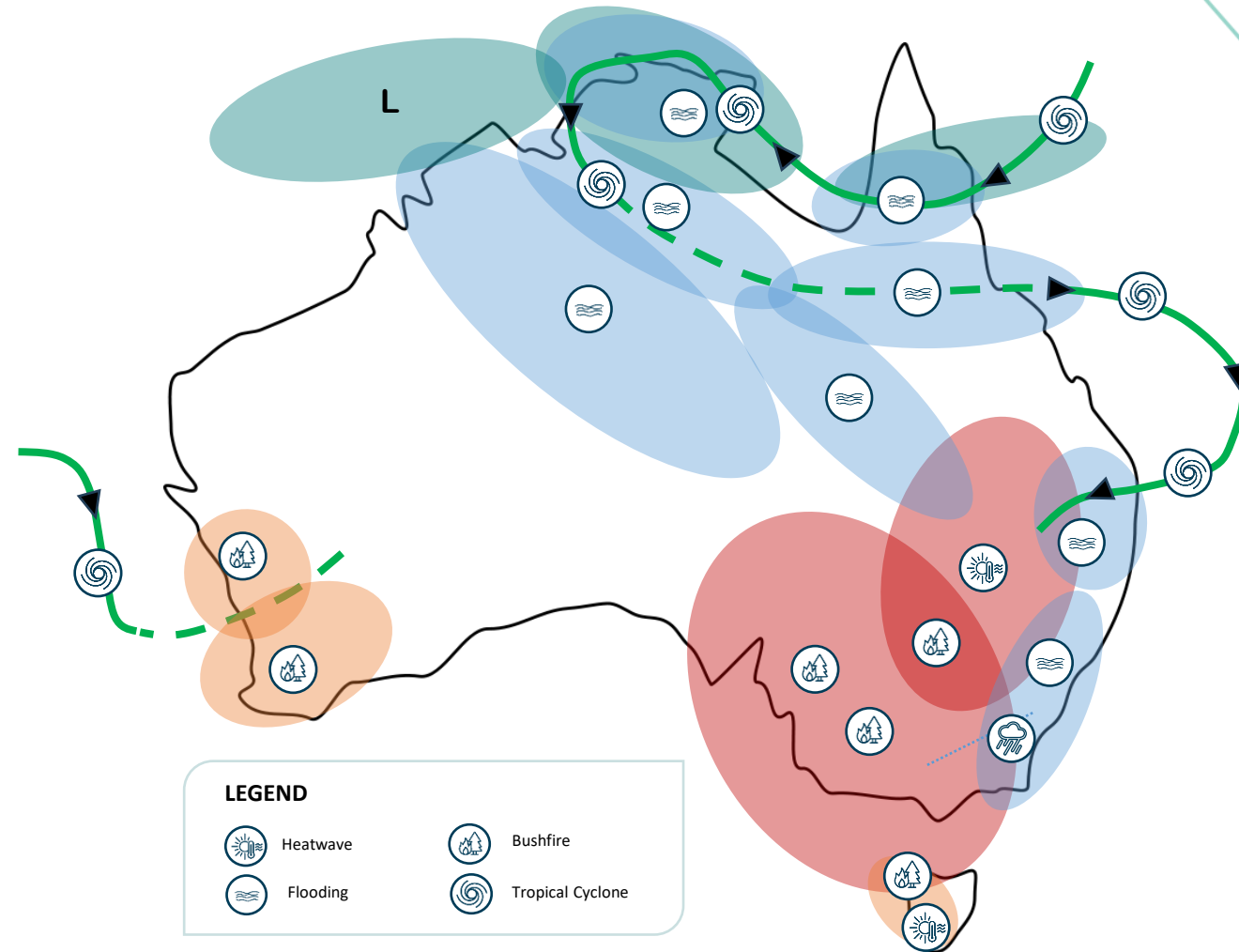
Session Three – Natural Hazards Impacts (Infrastructure)

23 December 2025 – 06 January 2026



Natural Hazards Impact Scenario

- Tropical Cyclone – TC Lola impacts Queensland and the Northern Territory causing major damage, flooding, and isolation across northern Australia.
- Floods - Flooding spreads inland and Lola's remnants bring heavy rain and flooding to Northern Territory, north-west Queensland, and inland New South Wales.
- East Coast Low - Low hits New South Wales and Victoria. Separate systems cause wind damage, coastal erosion, and major flooding from Coffs Harbour to Gippsland.
- Extreme heat and bushfires – Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania, and the Australian Capital Territory face severe heatwaves, fires, and resulting health impacts; infrastructure and air quality deteriorate.
- Storms and flooding have resumed, with a tropical low and stalled trough causing renewed flooding in the Townsville, Northern Rivers, and Perth regions.
- Power companies have advised that full restoration of electricity services may take up to 14 days



Consequences (Infrastructure)

QLD (25 Dec – 30 Dec)

- TC Lola causes widespread and prolonged power outages
- Extensive flooding
- Landslides close the Bruce Highway
- Cairns airport closed
- Widespread telecommunication outages impacting Triple Zero in the Gold Coast and spreading south across the border into NSW

NSW (28 Dec – 06 Jan)

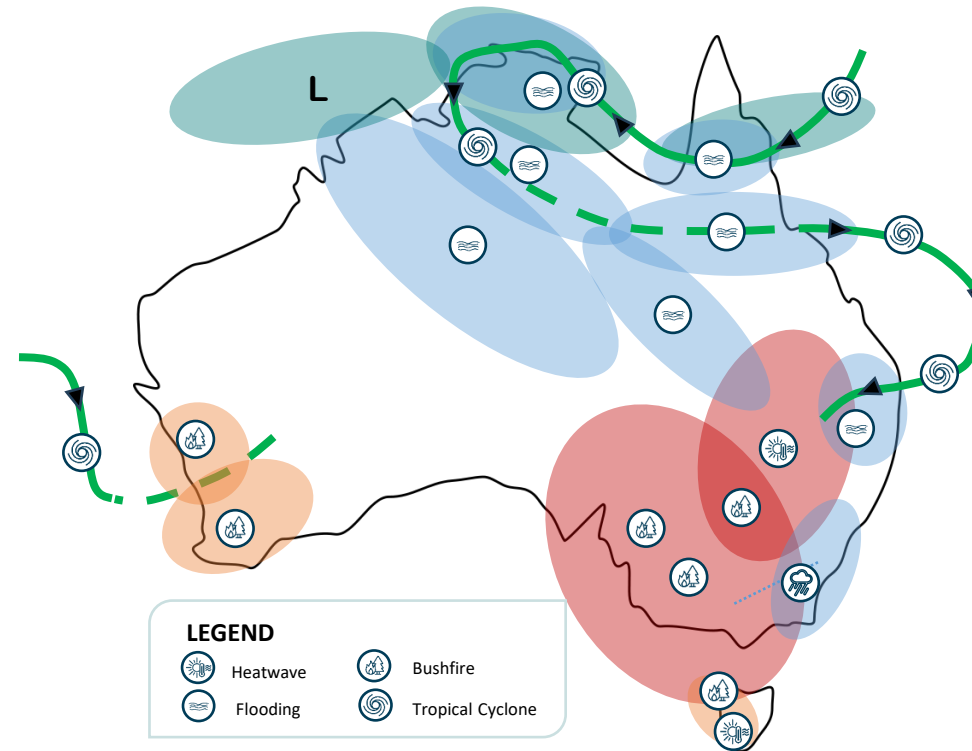
- Damage to substations resulting in power outages along coastal regions
- Heatwave stresses power grids, load shedding in progress
- Flooding causes widespread power outages and damage to road and rail
- Widespread telecommunication outages impacting Triple Zero in Far north NSW from Byron Bay to the QLD border

VIC (23 Dec – 29 Dec)

- Fires causing power outages in western Victoria and the Great Ocean Road
- Coastal low causes damage to substations resulting in power outages and damage to road and rail
- Heatwave stresses power grid, load shedding in progress
- Widespread telecommunication outages impacting Triple Zero in southern Victorian towns along the Great Ocean Road

NT (26 Dec – 05 Jan)

- Flooding causes extensive and prolonged power outages
- Widespread telecommunication outages impacting Triple Zero across the territory



WA (23 Dec – 02 Jan)

- Fires and extreme heat impacting cell network and placing strain on energy grid
- Perth airport closed
- Bussell and Great Eastern Highways closed
- Widespread telecommunication outages impacting Triple Zero in Perth and surrounds

SA (24 Dec – 29 Dec)

- Fires and heatwave conditions stress power grids, load shedding in progress
- Widespread telecommunication outages impacting Triple Zero in the Adelaide Hills

TAS (27 Dec – 30 Dec)

- Fires and heatwave conditions stress power grids, load shedding in progress
- Damage to hydro infrastructure limiting power generation
- Extensive damage to power transmission lines
- Widespread telecommunication outages impacting Triple Zero across the state

ACT (01 Jan – 06 Jan)

- Heatwave stresses power grid, load shedding in progress
- Hospital generators are overwhelmed
- Widespread telecommunication outages impacting Triple Zero across the territory



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Session Four – Open Discussion





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Exercise Disconnect Summary & Actions

Joe Buffone

Deputy Coordinator General, Emergency Management and Response Group

National Emergency Management Agency





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Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
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Closing Remarks

James Chisholm

Deputy Secretary, Communications and Media

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development,
Communications, Sport and Arts



Attachment B - Exercise Disconnect October 2025 - NEMA Observations

Observation

Observations

Telstra monitors call volumes across the network to identify and monitor outages.

The monitoring process identifies locations and differences in impact between areas across the country.

Initial alerts are distributed via the leadership team. A crisis management team is stood up while technical investigations continue, with a focus on managing customer service impacts.

Crisis communications principles apply across incidents; communications will not wait until all details are known and will be issued as soon as possible.

In addition to formal notifications, local Members of Parliament and Ministers are notified of what is known about the incident.

It is unclear how notifications are managed at different times of day, for example during early morning hours, including who is notified and within what timeframe.

A Triple Zero (000) protocol has been in place since 2019 and is reviewed every 12 months.

Approximately 30 minutes post-issue, alerts are issued following an observe, analyse, and communicate process, which then triggers notifications.

All 000 calls pass through the Telstra network before being routed to specific areas.

In the event of a nationwide outage, each independent network has contingencies to divert calls to emergency service organisations.

An incident response team is stood up and draws on other parts of the Optus business to address the issue, including prioritising urgent software patches.

Crisis communications and stakeholder engagement plans are activated, with a range of stakeholders notified of the issue. A communications outreach team is also stood up to support stakeholder engagement.

Political and departmental stakeholders are engaged as part of the response.

From a network perspective, the outage and its impact are assessed within a 30-minute timeframe, after which communications commence.

Optus aims to provide as much information as possible as early as possible, with updates issued as further information is uncovered.

Communications operations need to function on a 24-hour cycle.

Systems must be capable of receiving messaging; a gap exists where telcos do not always have correct government contacts for notifications.

The first and immediate concern is 000 reachability, with any failures managed by the Network Management Centre.

A predefined list of contacts from emergency service organisations is notified.

Communication templates are used, including the scope of the problem and the impacts being observed.

Expectations of notifications within 30 minutes may be unrealistic; typical notification windows range from 30 minutes to one hour.

Some communication is better than none, notifying Ministers about potential impacts and limitations is important even with incomplete information.

There may be an opportunity for pre-warning notifications or testing updates based on defined thresholds.

Public expectations for notifications need to be managed. If information is not available within 45 minutes, trust must be built through clear expectation-setting.

Interdependencies must be assessed, including impacted customers, enterprise government customers, critical infrastructure sectors, and their interconnections.

Welfare calls are required, with follow-up conducted for each customer who was unable to reach 000.

The Northern Territory was not adequately prepared. The dynamic operating environment means notifications from EMR need review, as outages are not actively monitored via email.

Timely notifications are critical to enable agencies to enact their own response measures.

There is a need for more practice and collaboration across bridging arrangements, not just with Telstra but with all telcos.

Notification delays place agencies behind the response curve and reduce available time to act.

ACMA would not stand up an operational role but would act as the custodian.
For notifications to be effective, there must be both a sender (telcos) and a receiver capable of actioning the information.
Weather-driven events often result in operating rooms already being stood up, with ABC radio and alternative communications prepared for evacuation centres.
Telcos need to clearly define the outage, including what services are working or not, availability of alternatives, diversion of 000 calls, and timing of welfare checks.
The risk associated with individuals attempting to call 000 determines urgency and response requirements.
Alignment is required between telco media messaging and agency messaging to ensure consistency.
Preparation for welfare checks follows outage definition and can be shared with fire, police, and ambulance services.
The ESO partner bridge is critical and should be used proactively rather than reactively, with shared situational awareness.
Information synchronisation is a priority, first for 000 outages and then for implementing practical workarounds.
The ESO platform is not appropriate for media communications; a separate platform is required.
The ESO bridge can be activated by any party end-to-end, presenting an opportunity for a dedicated 000 disruption coordination centre.
Emergency service organisations should be informed first, with a primary focus on timely advice.
Messages across agencies and telcos must be synchronised.
ECP is not an outage manager; this responsibility should sit with the designated custodian.
There is a disconnect between states regarding shared understanding of expectations.
Clear communications are required around network outages and welfare check processes.
During an outage, telcos are obligated to conduct welfare checks on any calls that fail to connect to 000; unresolved cases are referred to police in the relevant state.
Notification and communications must consider not only those directly affected but also those potentially affected.
The primary objective is operational life-saving activities, with other response elements managed concurrently.
If services are down, access to bridges or inter-network joining may also be impacted, broadening the overall effect.
From 1 November, telcos are required to assess tower status during outages so that, if the Telstra network goes down, calls can be routed to other networks.
Carriers need to provide real-time notifications about outages.
Recommendations from the last outage highlight the need for carriers to conduct remote diagnostics to understand network issues.
Network successes have masked vulnerabilities, particularly as the shift from landlines to mobile-only services increases systemic risk.
Public tolerance for general outages can be managed, but 000 outages require a different, community-focused approach rather than a compliance-driven one.
The role of coordination bodies is to bring together networks, network management systems, and data.
Notifications are not currently standardised across the industry, with inconsistencies between emails, websites, and text messages.
Consistency in notifications is required to enable like-for-like comparison and clear understanding of impacts and implications.
The use and capture of intrusive notifications needs further consideration.
For emergency service organisations, clarity is critical when outages reach a defined level of severity.
Consideration should be given to using the NCM rather than the ESO, in close coordination with NEMA.
Accuracy of messaging is critical, with agreed talking points needed to maintain public trust; language choice is important.
There is a potential opportunity for public education on what actions to take when services are down.
Clear identification of the leading agency is required, including whether the incident is a cyber event or a network outage.
Providing confidence through clear articulation of the issue and resolution approach is critical for community reassurance.
Bringing all stakeholders together supports consistent understanding and response.
NEMA is not responsible for public notification for this type of outage and is not the primary notification point, even if issues are identified early.
Have powers but not first port of call, we would work with ACMA and the department.
It would be beneficial to hold a workshop on what telco's responsibilities are and better understand what the are the additional impacts and interdependencies

If people don't have power, they may not be able to use NBN so if they're subject to power outage they may not be able to make calls to 000.
Need power at both ends (network and user)
NBNco are integrated into each state and territory state emergency management policies. Decisions that are made prior to an event may change depending on the severity and the upper/lower peoples decisions on the day.
People rely on the network to connect during crisis as well as day to day. How we get shared situational awareness and building public trust.
Notifications into jurisdictions becomes most critical so the rest of the system can work properly.
Thresholds for reporting, being able to have this in a consistent format to understand severity and duration and impacts to the network. If people can't get access to the network vs the 000 system being impacted and being clear on which is which.
Telstra faced significant challenges in defining the problem clearly to understand the requirements for stabilisation and restoration.
Internal communications within Telstra were maintained through SMS and email during the outage.
Telstra has an emergency service partner bridge process that sends out notifications to all emergency service organisations and convenes a meeting on the bridge within 10 minutes; this process is tested every 3 to 6 months.
All triple zero calls initially route through the Telstra network, and if Telstra's emergency system fails, there is a redundant line available to ensure calls can still be received.
Optus uses Down Detector software to monitor real-time issues and key words related to outages.
Alerts are sent out 30 minutes after an issue is detected by Optus.
Down Detector has a five-minute delay compared to social media, and real-time statistics are delayed by 30 minutes.
Optus monitors real-time dashboards for triple zero call volumes, where a decrease in calls may indicate an issue with the triple zero system.
The Network Operations Centre at Optus is responsible for identifying issues.
Rectification of issues at Optus requires board approval, but time-sensitive issues can be escalated for faster resolution.
Optus conducts complete service checks on a jurisdictional basis.
Optus has crisis communication plans in place, and a communications outreach team is activated to notify key stakeholders.
Alternative contact numbers should be identified and shared during outages.
TPG prioritises triple zero reachability as the most critical concern, which serves as a key indicator of issues with the Optus or Telstra networks.
TPG focuses on defining whether the problem is isolated or part of a broader issue.
TPG notes that communicating within 30 minutes of identifying an issue is unrealistic.
There is value in linking government to anticipated telco upgrades to improve visibility.
Welfare checks must still be conducted for individuals who experienced failed calls during the outage.
The Northern Territory does not have 24/7 connectivity with telcos, which limits timely responses.
Notifications in the NT are sent via email, which is not an effective method and needs to be reconsidered.
Standard operating procedures should be developed locally in the NT and considered at the national level.
Timely notifications are critical for effective response coordination in the NT.
The NT should practice coordination with all telcos and partners to improve response readiness.
Due to delays in notification, there was no time to set up an effective response in the NT.
Western Australia had already disseminated pre-emptive communications before the outage.
The ESO partner bridge is essential in WA, particularly the notification process for activating the bridge.
WA emphasised the importance of defining the problem, understanding what works, and identifying available services.
WA questioned whether calls could be diverted to other carriers during an outage.
WA prepared for welfare checks, acknowledging that while resource-intensive, they are critical.
WA would establish an Incident Management Team (IMT) in response to such outages.
South Australia prioritised informing emergency service organisations as the most critical action.
SA highlighted the need for timely advice on problem definition.
SA stressed that key messaging must be consistent across all telcos and carriers.
SA has contingency plans in place, including alternate contact numbers and in-person reporting options.
Tasmania noted that notifications from telcos are often vague and lack clarity.
Tasmania emphasised the importance of maintaining accurate and up-to-date contact information.

Victoria focused on managing the volume of welfare checks and the delays caused by the outage.
The ACT identified communications and timely notifications as the most important aspects of outage response.
In NSW, if an outage occurs, the response agency may lose all communications and be unable to join ESO bridges.
NSW stated that email notifications are not a fit-for-purpose method for alerting agencies.
Queensland found email notifications insufficient and emphasised the importance of timely and coordinated notifications.
ACMA stated that telcos need the capability to power down towers to allow calls to reroute to other networks.
ACMA emphasised the need for real-time information and notifications during outages.
Telcos must have remote diagnostics to understand network issues if the core system goes down.
ACMA conducts post-event compliance investigations with telcos.
ACMA participates in National Coordination Mechanisms (NCMs) to enhance situational awareness and resource sharing
PM&C raised the question of who leads under the Australian Government Crisis Management Framework (AGCMF).
PM&C is responsible for informing ministers and understanding information from departmental communications.
NEMA emphasised the importance of confidence in messaging to communities, government, and ministers.
NEMA focused on understanding the problem and its impact, including timeframes and next steps.
NEMA is responsible for disseminating notifications and amplifying messaging.
Home Affairs highlighted the need to understand the impacts and broader consequences of outages, including timeframes.
Home Affairs stressed the importance of recognising other threats and vulnerabilities.
Home Affairs raised the concept of intrusive notification and mutual obligation, questioning what this should look like
The timing of incidents is crucial for notification purposes, especially if they occur outside business hours when contacting government is more difficult.
Home Affairs continues to consider public disclosure requirements during outages.
Greater awareness of the nature and scope of the outage is required for effective response
Systems must be in place to manage the impact of outages across jurisdictions and on the ground.
Media messaging should follow a separate process from the ESO bridge communications, from the telco perspective.
There is a misalignment between state and territory expectations and telco expectations regarding roles and responsibilities.
Telcos are required to conduct welfare checks for callers who could not get through; if contact cannot be made, the responsibility is passed to the jurisdiction.
Synchronised standard key messaging should be pre-developed to ensure consistency.
Limited information availability during outages poses a challenge for effective response.
Notification processes must be clear and timely to support coordinated action.
Regulatory requirements must be considered in planning and response efforts.
Coordination across agencies, jurisdictions, and telcos is essential for effective outage management.

Attachment C - Exercise Disconnect Participant Guide



Australian Government

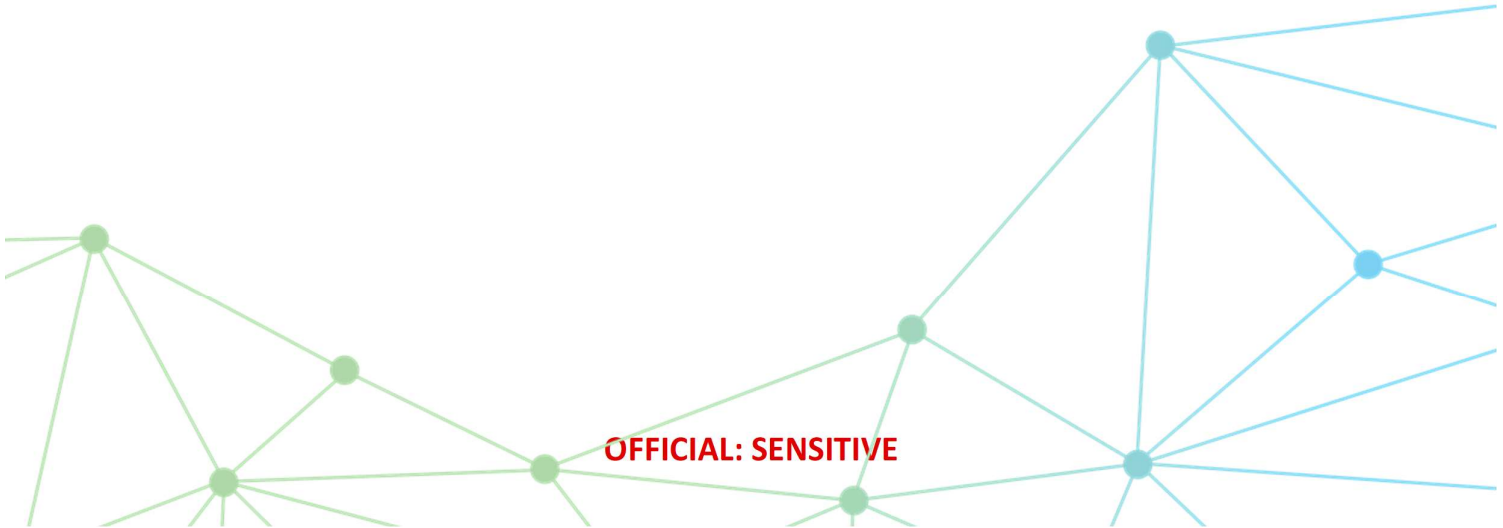
**Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts**

COMMUNICATIONS & MEDIA GROUP / EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS & RESILIENCE

Exercise Disconnect

Participant Guide

October 2025



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Background

In response to the Triple Zero outage on 18 September 2025, the Minister for Communications, Anika Wells, requested the participation of key industry stakeholders and government agencies in a simulated outage exercise. The exercise will be led by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCA) and facilitated by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

Introduction

Communications Outage Discussion Exercise

Hosted by:	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (the department)
Facilitated by:	National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)
Location:	Stretton Room, NSR, Edmund Barton Building, 4 National Circuit Barton (Note: Zone 4) OR Microsoft Teams (Interstate Participants)
Duration:	3 hours
Facilitator:	Deputy Coordinator-General Joe Buffone

Purpose of the Exercise

Exercise Disconnect is a discussion-based exercise that brings together key stakeholders from the telecommunications sector, emergency services, and government to explore and strengthen national preparedness and response to communications service outages and direct impacts to the Triple Zero network.

Aim

To strengthen emergency response to telecommunications outages including Triple Zero by identifying gaps, testing coordination, assessing alternatives, and addressing impacts and restoration barriers.

Objectives

1. Stress test the Triple Zero and telecommunication system when there is a significant outage, including impacts on triple zero service.
2. Practice coordination, notification, stabilisation, rectification and deployable emergency communications resources, and public messaging for a major systems outage.
3. Identify immediate areas for improvement, sustainment or change for the higher risk weather system.
4. Prepare a report on the exercise and outcomes.

Agenda

Agenda item	Presenter	Time / duration
Welcome & Acknowledgement of Country	James Chisholm, Deputy Secretary, DITRDCA	8:30-8:35am (5 min)
Opening Remarks	The Hon Anika Wells MP, Minister for Communications	8:35-8:50am (15 mins)
Opening Remarks	The Hon Kristy McBain MP, Minister for Emergency Management	8:50-9:00am (10 mins)
Session 1: 2025/26 Higher Risk Weather Season (HRWS) Outlook	Deputy Coordinator-General Joe Buffone, NEMA	9:00-9:20am (20 mins)
Session 2: Technical Outage	Deputy Coordinator-General Joe Buffone, NEMA	9:20-10:05am (45 mins)
Session 3: Natural Hazards Impacts	Deputy Coordinator-General Joe Buffone, NEMA	10:05-10:50am (45 mins)
Session 4: Open Discussion & Summary	Deputy Coordinator-General Joe Buffone, NEMA	10:50-11:20am (30 mins)
Closing Remarks	James Chisholm, Deputy Secretary, DITRDCA	11:20-11:30am (10 mins)

Scenario Overview

Scenario events present over a three-week period. Events are to be considered in the context of the 2025/26 HRWS and the Bureau of Meteorology's climate outlook.

16 – 23 December 2025

A major telecommunications provider experiences a critical fault during the rollout of a nationwide software update. This fault leads to widespread disruptions across mobile and data services, including significant impacts on the ability to access Triple Zero (000) emergency services.

In a separate incident, another major provider encounters technical difficulties while implementing a software patch. The issue escalates, resulting in extensive service outages across multiple states and further affecting access to 000 services.

23 December 2025 – 6 January 2026

Severe weather events, including a coastal low, heatwave, and bushfires, have caused widespread power outages, telecommunications disruptions including impacts to triple zero, road and rail damage, and disruptions to transport and emergency services across multiple regions.

A tropical cyclone, flooding, and landslides have caused widespread and prolonged power outages, major transport disruptions including the closure of the Bruce Highway, and the temporary closure of a major international airport.

Discussion Themes

- Roles and responsibilities
- Lines of effort
- Crisis communications
- Deployable resources
- Coordination, stabilisation, restoration
- Continuity of service
- Immediate improvements, changes or sustainment actions
- Public messaging

Order of Response

1. Telecommunication Organisations
2. State and Territory Agencies
3. Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)
4. Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and Arts (DITRDCA)
5. Whole of Government (PM&C/NEMA/Home Affairs)

Participant Expectations

- Engage actively in discussions and share insights from your organisation's perspective.
- Reflect honestly on challenges and opportunities for improvement.
- Collaborate with other stakeholders to identify practical solutions.
- Consider the broader impact on public safety, especially for vulnerable communities.
- Document key takeaways for internal follow-up and future planning.

Evaluation

To support ongoing evaluation and improvement, participants are asked to submit observations from the Communication Outage Exercise. These inputs assist in generating evidence-based insights and contribute to the development of the final evaluation report.

You may submit multiple observations as appropriate and we ask that you please submit your observations individually. A broader data set enables more comprehensive analysis and supports informed decision-making.

Please provide your observations to cialerts@communications.gov.au

Thank you for your cooperation.

Post-Exercise Outcomes

Following the exercise, the department will:

- Compile a report summarising key findings and recommendations.
- Identify priority actions for industry and government.
- Inform future policy, planning, and capability development efforts.

Attachment D - Exercise Disconnect - Agenda



Australian Government

**Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts**

COMMUNICATIONS & MEDIA GROUP / EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS & RESILIENCE

Agenda item	Presenter	Time / duration
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