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17 November 2025

Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Subject: Submission to the 'Triple Zero service outage' Senate Inquiry,

To the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications,

Thank you for establishing an Inquiry into the recent Triple Zero service outage. The triple zero system is crucial and it's important that any issues that impact access are thoroughly investigated.

I am writing to this Committee & Inquiry to highlight issues around the 3G Network Shutdown that occurred last year in October 2024 and how access to mobile services and Emergency Calling to Triple Zero was severely impacted.

Last year changes to Emergency Calling Rules (Emergency Call Service Determination) by the (then) Communications Minister and ACMA resulted in hundreds of thousands of newer 4G & 5G phones being artificially blocked from the mobile networks. Including some phones being used by tourists.

This new direction from the Minister included a requirement for the network carriers to block phones if the carrier has determined the phone cannot call 000.

As not all 4G phones that support calling on 4G can make Emergency Calls to 000 on 4G.

ABC - Millions of Devices Caught out by 3G Shutdown - 8 April 2024

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-04-08/million-iphone-android-devices-caught-out-3g-shutdown/103673864>

While the amendments aimed to ensure access to emergency services, they had severe consequences for consumers, competition, and the overall accessibility of mobile services.

Whilst also not addressing the core technical issues with 4G VoLTE Calling and Emergency Calling.

Some of the impacts around the shutdown and blocking were covered in the below articles.

IA - Australia's 3G shutdown: Why your 4G/5G phone is now blocked - 12 November 2024

<https://independentaustralia.net/politics/politics-display/australias-3g-shutdown-why-your-4g5g-phone-is-now-blocked,19159>

ABC - Customers report basically new phones suddenly blocked from making calls - 3 November 2024

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-11-03/brand-new-phones-unable-to-make-calls-3g-shutdown/104541440>

ABC - Australia's 3G network has shut down, so why are 4G and 5G users being cut off? - 4 November 2024

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-11-04/australian-4g-5g-users-cut-off-after-3g-network-shutdown/104559096>

I am one of hundreds of thousands of impacted consumers that found my newer 4G/5G phone artificially blocked from all mobile services starting from the 28th of October 2024.

The shutdown and artificial 4G phone blocking created significant out of pocket costs for people, and during a time of extreme cost of living pressures.

I have signed a Change.org Petition created by James Parker about this issue, it has over 10,000 signatures. (He was also a witness at the 3G Shutdown Senate inquiry in July last year.)

Stop Telco 4G/5G Device Blocking & VoLTE Restrictions:

<https://change.org/StopTelcoDeviceBlocking>

The Government's blocking policy essentially penalised customers for using devices that work for 000 Calls on 4G, but were not purchased directly from the telcos or their handset partners.

It has only further concentrated profits and market control to the telcos & major handset brands, severely limiting competition & choice in the market.

We need a universal standard that ensures any phone, no matter where it's bought, can work on any 4G network for Calls & Emergency Calls and without artificial blocks or technical restrictions.

Just like what we've had for the last 20-30 years with 2G and 3G technologies.

These issues around 4G Emergency Calling compatibility & standardisation were covered in-depth at an EENA (European Emergency Number Association) Conference in 2022.

EENA 2022: Access to emergency services is being impacted by the lack of VoLTE interoperability
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHjyLmFt-eg>

The technical issues with 4G Calling should have been resolved before the networks were shutdown.

It's clear Australia should have waited until Europe and much larger markets addressed the compatibility issues with 4G Calling & Emergency Calling.

This is a global issue and requires a coordinated effort to resolve.

Many European countries have delayed their 2G/3G shutdowns due to the compatibility and safety issues with 4G Calls and Emergency Calls.

Blocking devices was to do nothing but try and sweep the problem under the rug.

As referenced in the below ABC article, the telcos are also inconsistently blocking phones and the regulator (the ACMA), at least at the time of the release of the article in May, didn't know how many.

ABC - Telstra & Optus are inconsistently blocking phones. The regulator doesn't know how many - 27 May 2025
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-05-27/telstra-optus-inconsistent-blocking-phones/105319626>

That ABC article includes a reference to a website called isthisphoneblocked.net.au

Looking through the comparative blocking and support lists on the website it's clear that there are major contradictions and inconsistencies with what devices are being blocked on the networks.

4G Phones that require 3G for Emergency Calls now just get stuck on calling 000, yet as shown in the above ABC Article the telcos won't unblock phones that are shown to still work for Emergency Calls.

Even if the device was sold by or supported by another telco.

There is a clear conflict of interest with what has occurred, as referenced by ACCAN.

The telcos should be forced to publish their device blocking and support lists in a publicly accessible spreadsheet. They should also be required to provide all of the historical lists and include the exact technical reasons why a phone should be blocked or not.

There must be transparency from the carriers as to what is blocked and why.
This is important both for public safety and consumers.

The public should also be provided an automated way to test 000 calls on their device to check for any call quality or coverage issues. This is especially needed for regional areas where there is significantly reduced coverage post 3G Shutdown.

Recent ABC & 7.30 reports have highlighted numerous stories about people unable to call 000 on their 4G & 5G devices post 3G shutdown.

Optus customers left angry after more failed triple-0 calls | 7.30 - 6 October 2025
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qRKwnmr2eA>

ABC - More Optus triple-0 call failures on new dates, customers reveal - 6 October 2025
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-10-06/more-optus-triple-zero-fails-outside-of-confirmed-times/105856172>

ABC - Calls for system overhaul after more people say they were unable to call triple-0 - 30 October 2025
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-10-30/triple-0-failure-optus-network-robbery-emergency/105938218>

Based on the above reports it appears the telcos **are not** putting in sufficient resources in determining the real world 000 capabilities of devices.

Given the other recent unconscionable conduct findings with Optus this issue should be thoroughly investigated as there appears to be a systemic issue at Optus and the industry.

It should not require consumers like myself to try and join a Class Action lawsuit, or try and take other legal action to get transparency & accountability from the network carriers.

I strongly request that the Committee consider these issues as part of the Inquiry.
I would also like to see the ACMA, ACCC, Minister and Federal Government take immediate action on this issue.

Completely blocking devices is not a real solution, it merely shifts the burden of the industry's failure to address these issues onto consumers.

We need policies that respect the rights of consumers, ensure accessibility to telecommunications services and require the industry to actually fix the problems.

The provider's commercial interests **must not** be put ahead of the broader public interest and public safety.

Australian consumers need protection from these practices and fair access to telecommunications.

Regards,

Gani Tio