



Australian Government

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

# Review into the Optus outage of 8 November 2023 – Recommendations

March 2024



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# Recommendations

## TOR 1 – Functioning of Triple Zero

1. Mandatory requirements should be put in place, by augmenting existing requirements or otherwise, to:
  - More clearly and explicitly articulate precisely what is expected of network operators in regard to ensuring calls are delivered to Triple Zero
  - Include specific obligations that network operators wilt towers in the event of loss of connectivity to a core network, ensuring calls to Triple Zero can be carried by other networks.
2. Establish a Triple Zero custodian, with oversight of and overarching responsibility for the efficient functioning of the Triple Zero ecosystem, including monitoring the end-to-end performance of the ecosystem.

There are a number of ways this could be achieved, including by establishing a new body or enhancing the role of an existing body. It would not be a regulatory function: where matters were identified for change, existing bodies would be responsible for implementation.

3. To ensure (to the extent possible) continuous access to Triple Zero, carriers must conduct 6-monthly end-to-end testing of all aspects of the Triple Zero ecosystem within and across networks. The end to end detection testing should include:

- Network functionality and capability during outages of various types
- Behaviour of all known devices in different circumstances
- Interoperability of all parts of the ecosystem (from originating carrier, to ECP, to ESO answering point) during outages.

Any identified deficiencies must be reported to the ACMA and be accompanied by a remediation plan with timetable.

This requirement should be mandated in a standard or determination.

4. If this testing does not include devices supplied by the customer (i.e. 'Bring your own device') then information should be provided to those customers warning that those devices may not have been tested in emergency scenarios.
5. Require carriers, through a standard or determination, to share real time network information detailing outages with relevant emergency services organisations and other appropriate entities, including the body referred to in Recommendation 2.
6. Require providers, through a standard or determination, to report to the ACMA and the Department, within a mandated timeframe after a major outage, detailing its causes, steps taken to resolve it, the impact on Triple Zero, and a clear and detailed plan, with timeline, to address issues identified and avoid similar outages in the future.
7. Combine and expand existing disruption protocol instruments to cover all matters relevant to outages in any element of the Triple Zero ecosystem.

There are currently multiple obligations related to actions taken during and after network disruptions. Combining these obligations in one document and ensuring they cover the system from end to end would greatly improve understanding and clarity of responsibility.

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.

The review should consider, in light of the recommendations of this Review relating to the Triple Zero ecosystem, including Recommendation 2, governance structures, and separating financial matters from other ECP obligations.

## TOR 2 – Role of government in managing and responding to a national service outage

9. The Protocol for Notification of Major Service Disruptions (the Protocol), should be improved and augmented with clear and detailed requirements for Government communication and collaboration during telecommunications outages through a central coordination point in Government.

This should cover communication and collaboration with carriers, relevant Ministers, Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies, TIO, the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission (ACCC), ACMA, Emergency Service Organisations (ESOs) and other relevant parties.

The Protocol should also be closely aligned with the Australian Government Crisis Management Framework (AGCMF) and the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM).

## TOR 3 –The adequacy of requirements for customer communication in national service outages

10. The ACMA should develop a standard or determination requiring carriers to communicate specific information to customers during and about outages. The Communications Alliance Emergency Communications Protocol – Industry Guideline G663:2022<sup>1</sup> or one or more of the carriers' existing internal communications protocols could be used as a base but there needs to be an explicit focus on communications between the affected network provider and its customers as well as other stakeholders.
11. The Department should develop further and promote the educational initiatives developed in 2020-2022 to assist the public, businesses and other organisations to prepare for and recover from outages as a result of natural disasters. These materials should be reviewed and enhanced to apply to a broader range of scenarios including major network outages. The Department should promote these materials to the community.

## TOR 4 – Complaints and compensation

12. The Complaints Handling Standard and related Record Keeping Rules should be amended to ensure they account for the impacts of network outages and that the definition of complaint in the Standard meets community expectations in relation to crisis events.
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.

This standardised approach should address the possible forms of compensation and penalties applicable to loss of service during outages, enabling the TIO to address mass events without requiring large numbers of individual complaints, investigations and resolutions. While it is not intended that this measure replace the Customer Service Guarantee (CSG), it could provide a similar framework through which outages affecting more than fixed line voice services are considered.

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<sup>1</sup> See [G663 2022 \(commsalliance.com.au\)](https://commsalliance.com.au)

## TOR 5 – Other: Resilience and interdependencies

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. That work should be undertaken with reference to international experience as to cost and feasibility.
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).
16. Network operators should be required to establish the ability to remotely access and activate network management tools, and have sufficient network redundancy to deploy them, in the event of a core network outage.
17. 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.
18. The Department and the ACMA should institute a review of all legislation and regulation relating to Triple Zero, with a clear focus on the recommendations of this Review and the outcomes of the ACMA's investigation regarding the Optus outage.