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# Triple Zero Legislative and Regulatory Review

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

*30 June 2026*

## Recommendations

This submission recommends the Government:

1. Implement minimum mobile service standards to improve mobile service reliability and quality, reduce outages, and safeguard access to Triple Zero.
2. Require carriers to publicly report comprehensive data on network performance, service delivery, and operational metrics, including detailed information on the emergency call service, and mandate transparent Emergency Call Person reporting.
3. Reform the objects and regulatory policy of the *Telecommunications Act 1997* (Cth) to recognise the essential nature of telecommunications services.
4. Adopt a technology-neutral approach to the delivery of Triple Zero to ensure the legislative and regulatory framework can respond to evolving technologies and consumer expectations.
5. Expand the functions and powers of the Triple Zero Custodian to uplift consumer education and awareness and improve the delivery of Triple Zero across the telecommunications sector.
6. Enhance accountability for the Emergency Call Person for 000 and 112 by reviewing and expanding performance standards to ensure standards are fit-for-purpose and appropriately reflect the Emergency Call Person's functions.

## About this submission

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (**ACCAN**) is pleased to provide this submission to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (**the Department**) on the Triple Zero Legislative and Regulatory Review—Consultation Paper. ACCAN welcomes the opportunity to represent the views of communications consumers in this consultation to support ongoing public safety outcomes.

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ACCAN is the peak national consumer organisation advocating trusted, accessible, inclusive, affordable and available communications and digital services.

# 1. Introduction

Triple Zero is an essential community service, and all Australians must have confidence they can reach emergency services when in need.<sup>1</sup> Triple Zero failures and disruptions directly threaten public safety, undermine confidence and – in the most serious cases – tragically contribute to fatalities.<sup>2</sup>

The Triple Zero ecosystem is fundamentally outdated. Significant, holistic reform is needed to account for major advances in communications technology and evolving consumer expectations and needs. The current telecommunications legislative and regulatory framework does not reflect the modern-day essentiality of telecommunications or set minimum standards for the mobile services that the vast majority of communications consumers use to access emergency services. Reforms to improve the reliability and quality of telecommunications services overall would bolster the reliability of the Triple Zero system, by ensuring that consumers' access to Triple Zero is not hampered by outages, poor service, or network failures.

In parallel, reforms to uplift the accessibility, robustness and accountability of the Triple Zero system would support ongoing public safety, safeguard access to emergency services, and improve equitable outcomes across those seeking help in urban and regional, rural, and remote (**RRR**) areas. Critically, ensuring access to Triple Zero is technology-neutral and can be reached by a variety of means, such as SMS, rather than solely via voice call, is vital to modernising the system, and ensuring equitable and agile access for all consumers.

ACCAN urges the Government to consider the following reforms as part of the Triple Zero Legislative and Regulatory Review (**the Review**):

1. Implement minimum mobile service standards to improve mobile service reliability and quality, reduce outages, and safeguard access to Triple Zero.
2. Require carriers to publicly report comprehensive data on network performance, service delivery, and operational metrics, including detailed information on the emergency call service (**ECS**), and mandate transparent Emergency Call Person (**ECP**) reporting.
3. Reform the objects and regulatory policy of the *Telecommunications Act 1997* (Cth) to recognise the essential nature of telecommunications services.
4. Adopt a technology-neutral approach to the delivery of Triple Zero to ensure the legislative and regulatory framework can respond to evolving technologies and consumer expectations.
5. Expand the functions and powers of the Triple Zero Custodian (**the Custodian**) to uplift consumer education and awareness, and improve the delivery of Triple Zero across the telecommunications sector.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, 'Triple Zero Custodian' (Webpage, 26 May 2026) <<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/media-communications/phone/triple-zero-custodian>>.

<sup>2</sup> ACCAN, *Inquiry into Triple Zero Service Outages* (Submission, 2025) 4 <<https://www.accan.org.au/accan-submission/inquiry-into-triple-zero-service-outages>>.

6. Enhance accountability for the ECP for 000 and 112 by reviewing and expanding performance standards to ensure standards are fit-for-purpose and appropriately reflect the ECP's functions.

ACCAN's submission outlines consumer sentiment towards the delivery of Triple Zero and details our priority issues for the Review, including the challenges faced by communications consumers accessing emergency services across Australia.

ACCAN welcomes the opportunity to participate in the Review to represent the interests of communications consumers. The legislative and regulatory framework underpinning the delivery of emergency services should ensure that access to the emergency services is reliable, transparent, meets the needs of all Australians, and establishes strong accountability measures for service providers.

## 2. Background

The Custodian, an oversight entity within the Department, is undertaking a review of all Commonwealth legislation and regulation related to Triple Zero.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of the Review is to identify whether the current regulatory and legislative framework remains effective in supporting delivery of Triple Zero now and into the future.

The Review will also identify opportunities for improvement across the following areas:

- Public access to Triple Zero.
- Industry's delivery of, and access to, Triple Zero.
- The impact of the legislative framework on emergency services.
- Government oversight of Triple Zero.<sup>4</sup>

On 17 March 2026, the Hon Anika Wells MP, Minister for Communications, announced the Terms of Reference for the Review.<sup>5</sup> The Review implements recommendation 18 of the 2023 Optus Outage Review (**the Bean Review**) and will provide a final report to the Government in March 2027.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, 'Triple Zero Legislative and Regulatory Review' (Webpage, 26 May 2026) <<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/have-your-say/triple-zero-legislative-and-regulatory-review>>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, 'Review Beginning into Triple Zero System' (Media Release, 18 March 2026) <<https://minister.infrastructure.gov.au/wells/media-release/review-beginning-triple-zero-system>>.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, 'Triple Zero Legislative and Regulatory Review' (Webpage, 26 May 2026) <<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/have-your-say/triple-zero-legislative-and-regulatory-review>>.

The Review also considers, but is not limited to, the following issues in relation to Triple Zero:

- The effectiveness of implemented relevant Bean Review recommendations.
- The adequacy of the Australian Communications and Media Authority (**ACMA**)’s current regulatory functions and powers.
- The effectiveness and appropriateness of rules requiring that customer equipment to be capable of contacting Triple Zero.
- The feasibility of introducing new minimum mobile network performance standards, and other performance standards as applicable.

### 3. Consumers expect action on Triple Zero reform

Mobile communications, including access to the ECS, are essential to the daily lives of Australians. In emergency situations, an inability to access Triple Zero can have dire consequences for consumers’ personal safety.

As of the writing of this submission, multiple fatalities are believed to be linked to failures to access Triple Zero in 2025 due to a combination of network and device issues.<sup>7</sup> It is understandable that these failures have contributed to reduced consumer trust in the Triple Zero service and low trust in telecommunications providers overall.<sup>8</sup>

Research from ACCAN’s Consumer Sentiment Tracker (**the Tracker**), published in July 2026, found that ‘twenty-two percent (22%) of Australians say their trust in Triple Zero has declined over the past two years, compared to only 12% whose trust has increased’.<sup>9</sup>

In March 2026, the telecommunications sector was the most distrusted sector in the Australian economy and Optus was the most distrusted brand in Australia.<sup>10</sup> To rebuild trust in Triple Zero, urgent action from government and industry is needed to improve access to Triple Zero for all Australians and ensure its reliability.

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<sup>7</sup> Jenny Wiggins, ‘How a mind-numbing acronym became a matter of life and death’, Australian Financial Review’ (Online, March 27, 2026) <<https://www.afr.com/companies/telecommunications/the-billion-dollar-blame-game-behind-australia-s-deadly-phone-fiasco-20260126-p5nwym>>.

<sup>8</sup> ACCAN, *Consumer Experiences Contacting Triple Zero: Snapshot Report*, (Report, June 2026) 3 <<https://www.accan.org.au/consumer-sentiment-tracker/consumer-experiences-contacting-triple-zero%3A-snapshot-report->>>; Roy Morgan Research, ‘Australia’s Most Trusted and Distrusted Brands + Reputation & NPS Are Sub-Optimal - Roy Morgan Research’ (Webpage, 2 June 2026) <<https://www.roymorgan.com/findings/australias-most-trusted-and-distrusted-brands-reputation-nps-are-sub-optimal-webinar->>>.

<sup>9</sup> ACCAN, *Consumer Experiences Contacting Triple Zero: Snapshot Report*, (Report, June 2026) 3 <<https://www.accan.org.au/consumer-sentiment-tracker/consumer-experiences-contacting-triple-zero%3A-snapshot-report->>>.

<sup>10</sup> Roy Morgan Research, ‘Australia’s Most Trusted and Distrusted Brands + Reputation & NPS Are Sub-Optimal - Roy Morgan Research’ (Webpage, 2 June 2026) <<https://www.roymorgan.com/findings/australias-most-trusted-and-distrusted-brands-reputation-nps-are-sub-optimal-webinar->>>.

Research from the Tracker published in July 2026 also found that:

- 'Eight percent (8%) of Australians reported they or a family member could not contact Triple Zero due to a mobile network outage in the past 12 months'.<sup>11</sup>
- 'Forty-three percent (43%) of Australians are concerned their Triple Zero call could fail in an emergency'.
- Fifty-two percent (52%) 'believe the current reliability of mobile networks for emergency calling is adequate'.<sup>12</sup>

Research from the Tracker in March 2026 found that 23% of respondents said that 'they, or someone in their household, have a medical condition that would place a life at risk if access to Triple Zero services via a mobile phone was lost'.<sup>13</sup> As part of the Tracker, ACCAN asked consumers to share thoughts or experiences they have had with their mobile phone service or contacting emergency services in Australia. A sample of responses includes:

- 'There was a time I was called from work that my boy is sick in school, the network failed, it took me a while to reconnect before getting through the call'.
- 'I was having heart issues and call 000 but my mum could not as she was with [A major telecommunications provider] and lost all connection'.
- 'I live in a very bad neighbourhood and am ringing 000 weekly. 99% of the time the calls go through but there is always a 1- or 2-minute delay'.
- 'The call was answered within the first few seconds of calling so it was a straightforward experience'.
- 'Ideally, would prefer to do video calls or even text an emergency department as it would be quicker and more efficient than waiting on the phone. They will also be able to see the patient in need'.<sup>14</sup>

Consumer concern around Triple Zero is also reflected in complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO). In the period 1 July 2024 to 31 October 2025, the TIO 'received at least 567 complaints from consumers who expressed concern that they may not be able to access the Triple Zero emergency service as needed'.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> In March 2026, ACCAN's Consumer Sentiment Tracker found that 10% reported they or an immediate family member could not contact Triple Zero due to a mobile network outage in the last 12 months. The difference from the original 10% is within the margin of error and is not statistically significant. Pooling both surveys gives a combined estimate of approximately 9% out of a sample of 2,041 participants. ACCAN, *Consumer Experiences Contacting Triple Zero: Snapshot Report*, (Report, June 2026) 3 <<https://www.accan.org.au/consumer-sentiment-tracker/consumer-experiences-contacting-triple-zero%3A-snapshot-report>>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Participants were asked: Do you, or someone in your household, have a medical condition that would place a life at risk if access to Triple Zero services via a mobile phone was lost? Base: All participants (n=1,014). ACCAN, *Consumer Sentiment Tracker – Wave 3: Reliability* (Report, March 2026) 7 <<https://www.accan.org.au/consumer-sentiment-tracker/consumer-sentiment-tracker-wave-3-reliability>>.

<sup>14</sup> Participants were asked: Before we ask a few final questions about you, please share any other thoughts or experiences you have had with your mobile phone service or contacting emergency services in Australia. ACCAN, *Triple Zero Experience Survey* (Report, unpublished).

<sup>15</sup> Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, *TIO submission on the Triple Zero service outage* (Submission, 2025) 10.

In June 2026, the TIO noted that in Quarter 3, that they ‘received over 340 complaints relating to Triple Zero and emergency services’.<sup>16</sup> Of these complaints, it was noted that ‘approximately 60 were about people unable to reach or maintain a clear and stable call with Triple Zero or emergency services due to issues such as network outages, poor mobile coverage, or handset compatibility issues’.<sup>17</sup>

The delivery of Triple Zero and the broader legislative and regulatory framework of the telecommunications sector now cover technologies vastly different to those used when the delivery of Triple Zero began in 1961 – when phone connectivity was limited solely to landlines.<sup>18</sup>

As technologies and consumer expectations evolve, so should the legislative and regulatory frameworks that underpin service delivery. It is now clear that consumer sentiment reflects the need for change. Research from the Tracker found that:

- ‘Ninety-one percent (91%) of Australians agree telcos have a responsibility to ensure Triple Zero calls connect even during a network outage’.
- ‘Eighty-nine percent (89%) support government-mandated minimum standards for emergency call reliability’.<sup>19</sup>
- Seventy-six percent (76%) of ‘consumers are supportive of the introduction of minimum reliability requirements for mobile phone networks to match requirements like those in the electricity and water sectors’.<sup>20</sup>

ACCAN welcomes the opportunity to represent the interests of consumers in the Review. It is clear that Australians have serious concerns about the reliability of the Triple Zero system and believe the Government should do more to improve network performance and underwrite public safety.

Research into the consumer experience of critical public safety services is vital at a time when confidence in Triple Zero is experiencing significant declines following a series of high-profile industry failures and the lack of a timely and effective regulatory response by the ACMA.

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<sup>16</sup> Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, *Complaints data insights Quarter 3 Report January to March 2026* (Report, June 2026) 6.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Department of Communications, *Review of the National Triple Zero (000) Operator* (Report, 2014) 4.

<sup>19</sup> ACCAN, *Consumer Experiences Contacting Triple Zero: Snapshot Report*, (Report, June 2026) 3 <<https://www.accan.org.au/consumer-sentiment-tracker/consumer-experiences-contacting-triple-zero%3A-snapshot-report>>.

<sup>20</sup> Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Consumer Sentiment Tracker Wave 3: Reliability* (Report, March 2026) 3 <<https://www.accan.org.au/consumer-sentiment-tracker/consumer-sentiment-tracker-wave-3-reliability>>.

## 4. Key Issues

ACCAN considers that the following reforms would improve the reliability, transparency and robustness of the Triple Zero system to the benefit of all communications consumers.

### 4.1. Mobile services underpin public safety, but providers are not subject to minimum service standards

Unlike when the system was originally set up in 1961, public access to Triple Zero services is now increasingly reliant on mobile connectivity. In 2025, about '85% of Triple Zero calls are now made from mobile devices'.<sup>21</sup> Importantly, for the majority of Australians (75%), mobile phones are their sole method for contacting Triple Zero.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, it is clear that the reliability and quality of mobile services are key to public safety.

#### Mobile service outages risk public safety

Currently, the reliability and quality of mobile services is not regulated or comprehensively reported by telecommunications providers. In relation to Triple Zero access, a lack of service standards and transparent reporting means that the frequency, duration, and impact of incidents or outages that affect Triple Zero is not clear. Access to the ECS can be impacted by different types of incidents, including:

- Disruptions to the ECP and/or the Triple Zero platform.
- Failures of mobile tower wilting and camp-on arrangements during mobile network outages.
- Mobile network outages where no alternative network is available and camp-on arrangements do not apply.
- Failures within individual networks which may, for various reasons, prevent connection with emergency services.

There is varying data on the number, type, and impact of such incidents impacting Triple Zero access. In material provided to the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee (**the Committee**) in 2025, the ECP noted that between 2022 and 2025, there were two Triple Zero outages from carriage service providers (**CSPs**) and only one ECP outage.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ministers for Communications, *Commsday Regional and Policy Forum 2026* (Speech, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, 24 February 2026) <<https://minister.infrastructure.gov.au/wells/speech/commsday-regional-and-policy-forum-2026>>.

<sup>22</sup> Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Experiences and Barriers in Contacting Triple Zero: Full report* (Report, July 2026) 3.

<sup>23</sup> Telstra, *Senate Environment and Communications References Committee Inquiry into Triple Zero Service Outage: Telstra Response: Questions on Notice* (Response, December 2025) 33.

The ACMA also revealed to the Committee that since November 2023, it has investigated Triple Zero outages totalling 67 hours and 30 minutes.<sup>24</sup> However, industry-reported data indicates that mobile network outages that impact Triple Zero access are much more common than ECP and CSP-related Triple Zero incidents. In further material provided to the Committee, Telstra noted that in 2025, there were 5,221 outages greater than 10 minutes in areas where Telstra is the only mobile provider.<sup>25</sup> This represents a sharp increase from 3,641 outages in 2024.<sup>26</sup>

In areas where telecommunications services are provided by only one carrier, a network outage by that carrier can effectively result in consumers losing access to Triple Zero services. This is because camp-on requirements cannot apply if there is no other available network. Therefore, the data suggests there were at least 870 hours of mobile outages on the Telstra network in 2025, in areas where Telstra was the sole provider, which impacted Triple Zero access from a mobile phone.<sup>27</sup>

This severe public safety risk is predominantly faced by people living in RRR areas who are at greater risk due to their geographic isolation and reduced access to redundancy measures. For people in RRR areas, 'poor connectivity means that having no reliable way to reach emergency services or assistance can be an everyday reality'.<sup>28</sup>

The National Farmer's Federation notes that:

'In many rural areas, only one mobile network operator provides coverage, making camp-on arrangements ineffective during outages. In addition, redundancy (or alternate methods of contacting Triple Zero) is often lacking'.<sup>29</sup>

For remote First Nations communities which may have access to only one network and limited or no redundancy options, mobile outages can restrict entire communities from accessing Triple Zero.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> ACMA, 'Response to Questions on Notice from the Senate Environment and Communications Committee's Inquiry into Triple Zero Outages - Answers to written questions on notice' (received 8 May 2026) (Response, 2026). Response to question 12.

<sup>25</sup> Telstra also noted that 'where there are NBN/Fixed services, customers will be able to call Triple Zero'. Telstra, *Telstra Response – 'Questions taken on notice: Senate Environment and Communications References Committee Inquiry into Triple Zero service outages'* (Response, December 2025) 34.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> The figure is derived from Telstra's reporting of 5,221 outages of a minimum duration of 10 minutes, totalling 52,210 minutes, or 870 hours 10 minutes. Given the minimum duration is used in the calculation, the figure is a conservative estimate. See Telstra, *Telstra Response – 'Questions taken on notice: Senate Environment and Communications References Committee Inquiry into Triple Zero service outages'* (Response, December 2025) 34.

<sup>28</sup> National Farmers Federation, *NFF submission to Triple Zero service outage inquiry* (Submission, November 2025) 4 <<https://nff.org.au/submission/triple-zero-service-outage-inquiry/>>.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid 5.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel Featherstone et al, *Mapping the Digital Gap: 2025 Outcomes Report* (Report, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society, 3 December 2025) <<https://apo.org.au/node/333014>>.

## **Mobile service issues are common and can impact Triple Zero access**

In addition to mobile service outages, mobile service issues present a public safety risk to consumers. Issues can include intermittent service, dropouts, weak signal, and poor audio quality, which can impede access to Triple Zero and contribute to connection failures. Despite widespread reliance on mobile services, ACCAN's Tracker found that mobile service issues are common, with 31% of consumers experiencing a situation where they wanted to make any call but were unable to do so because of a problem with their mobile service in the past 12 months.<sup>31</sup>

Critically, the Tracker found 'that of the 17% of consumers who had genuine reason to contact Triple Zero in the past 12 months, 18% report they could not connect on their first attempt. This equates to approximately 3% of consumers who had BOTH a genuine reason to contact Triple Zero AND experienced a connection failure on their first attempt'.<sup>32</sup> Further, the Tracker found that 16% of consumers or members of their households were able to connect to the emergency service only after one or more failed attempts.<sup>33</sup>

Consumers also reported various experiences of Triple Zero connection failures, including:

- 12% there was no dial tone, the call did not appear to attempt to connect.
- 12% the audio was unclear or cut in and out during the call.
- 12% the phone showed it had a signal, but the call would not connect.
- 11% the call connected but then dropped before anyone answered.<sup>34</sup>

The data on failed Triple Zero connections and consumer-reported service issues demonstrate a systemic pattern of consumers experiencing mobile service inadequacy, with direct consequences for accessing emergency services. These failures are often concentrated in RRR areas where alternative means of accessing Triple Zero are limited or unavailable, compounding existing isolation and vulnerability. The evidence therefore indicates that both mobile service quality and reliability are critical issues impacting the delivery of Triple Zero.

## **Mobile services are not subject to minimum service standards – despite widespread reliance on mobile to access Triple Zero**

Despite the increasingly essential role of mobile services in day-to-day life, but most critically to facilitate public safety, mobile services are not subject to minimum service standards.

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<sup>31</sup> Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Experiences and Barriers in Contacting Triple Zero: Full report* (Report, July 2026) 10.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid 3.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid 11.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid 11. Among consumers who contacted Triple Zero in the last 12 months using a mobile phone. Note, directional only as sample size is n=143 (MoE +/-2-8%).

The telecommunications sector falls significantly behind regulatory developments in other sectors, such as energy, where reforms have uplifted service reliability. Under the telecommunications framework, no regulator or body is currently responsible for the reliability or quality of mobile services, and nor is the Minister for Communications currently empowered to set minimum mobile service standards.

In contrast, the energy sector has well-developed reliability service standards that incentivise energy providers to maintain their networks and meet consumer demand. At a market level, the Australian Energy Market Operator (**AEMO**) sets a reliability standard that requires sufficient generation and transmission interconnection, such that 99.998% of annual demand for electricity is expected to be supplied.<sup>35</sup>

At a state-level, regulators set standards under licence conditions and mandate periodic reporting on reliability metrics.<sup>36</sup> Reliability standards are complemented by Guaranteed Service Level schemes which provide automatic compensation to consumers in recognition of poor service.<sup>37</sup> Reliability performance also informs the Australian Energy Regulator's (**AER**) revenue determinations and Service Target Performance Incentive Scheme, with distributors financially rewarded or penalised according to performance.<sup>38</sup>

Overall, regulatory interventions in energy have effectively uplifted the provision of services. For 2006-2020, improvements to service reliability delivered an estimated \$3.1 billion in consumer benefits from fewer interruptions and \$0.4 billion from shorter outages.<sup>39</sup> In 2006, the average consumer experienced 146 minutes of outage time and 1.77 interruptions per year.<sup>40</sup> This declined to a record low in 2023, and in 2024, the average consumer experienced 115 minutes of outage time and 0.97 interruptions per year.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Australian Energy Market Commission, 'Reliability' <<https://www.aemc.gov.au/energy-system/electricity/electricity-system/reliability>>; Australian Energy Market Operator, *Reliability Standard Implementation Guidelines* (Final, April 2023) <[https://www.aemo.com.au/-/media/files/stakeholder\\_consultation/consultations/nem-consultations/2023/reliability-forecasting-guidelines-and-methodology-consultation/final/reliability-standard-implementation-guidelines.pdf](https://www.aemo.com.au/-/media/files/stakeholder_consultation/consultations/nem-consultations/2023/reliability-forecasting-guidelines-and-methodology-consultation/final/reliability-standard-implementation-guidelines.pdf)>.

<sup>36</sup> Energy providers must report and meet reliability standards regarding the frequency and duration of sustained and momentary outages (known as SAIDI/SAIFI reporting), among other reliability measures. See National Electricity Rule 6.28; Australian Energy Regulator, *Distribution Reliability Measures Guideline* (Guideline, December 2024).

<sup>37</sup> For example, see Essential Services Commission, 'Guaranteed Service Level Payments for Energy Outages and Voltage Claims' <<https://www.esc.vic.gov.au/electricity-and-gas/information-for-electricity-and-gas-consumers/guaranteed-service-level-payments-energy-outages-and-voltage-claims>>.

<sup>38</sup> Australian Energy Regulator, 'Service Target Performance Incentive Scheme V6' (17 April 2025) <<https://www.aer.gov.au/industry/registers/resources/schemes/service-target-performance-incentive-scheme-v6>>; Australian Energy Regulator, *Better Resets Handbook - Towards Consumer-Centric Network Proposals* (Report, July 2024).

<sup>39</sup> HoustonKemp, *Consumer Benefits Resulting from the AER's Incentive Schemes* (Report, 8 March 2022) 10.

<sup>40</sup> Australian Energy Regulator, *Electricity Distribution Network Service Provider Operational Performance Data* (Data workbook, 21 July 2023) Sheet 5 and 6 <[https://www.aer.gov.au/system/files/AER\\_-\\_Electricity-DNSP-Operational\\_performance\\_data\\_2006-2022.xlsx](https://www.aer.gov.au/system/files/AER_-_Electricity-DNSP-Operational_performance_data_2006-2022.xlsx)>.

<sup>41</sup> Australian Energy Regulator, *Operational Performance Data - Electricity distribution networks* (Data workbook, 18 December 2025) Sheet 6 and 7 <<https://www.aer.gov.au/documents/aer-operational-performance-data-2025-electricity-distribution-networks-public>>; Australian Energy Regulator, *State of the Energy Market 2024* (Report, 7 November 2024) 11 <<https://www.aer.gov.au/publications/reports/performance/state-energy-market-2024>>.

This represents a 21.2% decrease in outage duration and 45.2% decrease in outage frequency. This level of granular data, provided under mandatory, prescriptive reporting obligations, means Government, regulators, advocates and the broader public can hold energy providers to account for outages and interruptions to a significant level of precision.

By contrast, as telecommunications providers are not subject to minimum mobile service standards, there is no equivalent granular data in the telecommunications sector that can be used to analyse network and service reliability at this level.

Similar interventions to those in the energy sector should be made to improve the reliability and quality of mobile services, reduce the frequency and duration of outages, and impose robust requirements on the telecommunications sector to respond to network and service issues in a timely and efficient manner.

Implementing minimum mobile service standards would:

- Safeguard public access to Triple Zero services.
- Improve reliability and reduce incidences of outages.
- Incentivise network maintenance and timely resolution of faults.
- Strengthen digital inclusion, particularly in RRR areas.
- Uplift national economic productivity.
- Hold telecommunication providers accountable for the essential services they deliver.

The introduction of minimum mobile service standards is supported by consumers. Responses to the Tracker reveal 94% of consumers who had a firm view supported the introduction of minimum reliability requirements for mobile phone network providers.<sup>42</sup>

On a more granular level, insights from the Tracker reveal consumers expressed support for minimum mobile service standards in respect of the following areas:

- 85% ability to call Triple Zero services.
- 85% stable phone call connections.
- 82% accurate timely reporting of outages.
- 81% time taken to repair an outage.
- 80% time taken to reconnect a mobile service.
- 78% frequency of outages.
- 78% duration of outages.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> That is, excluding responses 'undecided' or 'unsure'; (n=826). Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Consumer Sentiment Tracker Wave 3: Reliability* (March 2026) 13 <<https://www.accan.org.au/consumer-sentiment-tracker/consumer-sentiment-tracker-wave-3-reliability>>.

<sup>43</sup> (n=1,014). Ibid 14, 15.

In addition, 74% of consumers support financial penalties being handed out to mobile phone network companies who fail to meet minimum service standards.<sup>44</sup> To incentivise compliance and drive material benefits to consumers, service standards should be mandatory, subject to civil penalty provisions, and enforceable by a strong and proactive regulator.

### **Other methods of contacting Triple Zero do not have fit-for-purpose minimum service standards**

While mobile services are the primary method relied upon to reach Triple Zero, the Tracker shows that 28% of consumers contacted Triple Zero using a landline service.<sup>45</sup> ACCAN has long advocated for uplift and modernisation of the Universal Service Obligation (**USO**), including reform to the outdated performance standards that apply to USO services.<sup>46</sup>

ACCAN has also called for the development of Statutory Infrastructure Provider service standards to ensure equitable access to broadband and voice services (where applicable).<sup>47</sup> Advancing these reforms would ensure all consumers are protected by fit-for-purpose minimum service standards to safeguard access to Triple Zero (including where they call via a landline), regardless of the type of telecommunications service they use.

## **4.2. There is a lack of transparent public reporting on Triple Zero and mobile services**

Transparency and accountability should be core principles of the Triple Zero service. To reflect these principles, the public should be kept informed about Triple Zero delivery, and the Government must be equipped to oversee its operation and the delivery of mobile services.

Without appropriate accountability measures, and mandatory and comprehensive reporting requirements, the Triple Zero system as a whole is effectively unaccountable to both the public that it exists to support, and the regulator that oversees it. Currently, there is a lack of transparent network-wide reporting, and a lack of regular, public Triple Zero reporting.

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<sup>44</sup> (n=1,014). Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Consumer Sentiment Tracker Wave 3: Reliability* (March 2026) 13 <<https://www.accan.org.au/consumer-sentiment-tracker/consumer-sentiment-tracker-wave-3-reliability>>.

<sup>45</sup> Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Experiences and Barriers in Contacting Triple Zero: Full report* (Report, July 2026) 6.

<sup>46</sup> Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *ACCAN Submission to Better Delivery of Universal Services Consultation* (Submission, 8 March 2024); Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Extending the Customer Service Guarantee Instruments* (Submission, 25 March 2026) <<https://www.accan.org.au/accan-submission/extending-the-customer-service-guarantee-instruments>>; Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, *Thematic Review of the Customer Service Guarantee (CSG)* (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, 22 May 2024) <<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/have-your-say/thematic-review-customer-service-guarantee-csg>>.

<sup>47</sup> Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Extending the Customer Service Guarantee Instruments* (Submission, 25 March 2026) <<https://www.accan.org.au/accan-submission/extending-the-customer-service-guarantee-instruments>>.

This absence of reporting overall obscures a holistic view of the Triple Zero system and its operations, as well as the public safety, economic, and social harms caused by unreliable mobile services and Triple Zero issues for consumers, small businesses, and the broader community.

Implementing comprehensive, public reporting for carriers and the ECP would equip the regulator and Government with the information needed to identify systemic issues with the ECS, ensuring telecommunications policy settings are fit-for-purpose and appropriately meet community expectations, particularly regarding public safety.

### **There is a lack of granular network, services, and operational reporting**

As outlined in section 4.1, mobile networks now underpin public safety and the delivery of the Triple Zero service. It is therefore critical that minimum mobile service standards are accompanied by transparent reporting of network performance and operational data.<sup>48</sup>

The telecommunications sector should draw upon the regulatory precedent for periodic reporting of network data in the energy sector.<sup>49</sup> The AER's Annual Information Orders require electricity distributors to report detailed data on interruptions, outages, asset profile, income, capital and operational expenditure, among other categories.<sup>50</sup>

Such interventions should be replicated in the telecommunications sector to provide appropriate Government oversight of carrier networks, services, operations and delivery of Triple Zero.

To enhance public transparency and accountability, carriers should be required to publicly report network, service and operational metrics on a periodic basis to the ACMA and Custodian. Carrier reporting should include data on:

- Network information, including sites, assets, and network maintenance.
- Network performance metrics, including the frequency and duration of outages.
- Service delivery and quality.
- Operational metrics, including capital expenditure and operational expenditure.
- Compliance with minimum service standards.
- Detailed ECS reporting, including:
  - Call attempts and volumes.
  - Call failures.
  - Welfare checks volumes, circumstances and outcomes.

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<sup>48</sup> Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Proposed Public Register of Telecommunications Outages* (Submission, 18 February 2026).

<sup>49</sup> Australian Energy Regulator, 'Annual Information Orders 2024-25 to 2027-28' (5 April 2024)

<<https://www.aer.gov.au/industry/registers/resources/instruments/annual-information-orders-2024-25-2027-28>>. There is also regulatory precedent within the communications sector. NBN Co is required to report service performance data under the *NBN service quality and network performance Record Keeping Rule 2024*.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

- Outages and incidents that affect the ECS.
- Identification of systemic issues.

To enhance accountability, carrier reporting requirements should specify:

- Standardised reporting formats.
- Standardised data extractability.
- A basis of preparation document.
- Executive sign-off.
- Independent auditing.

### **Unclear Triple Zero reporting obfuscates public accountability for the ECP**

The ECP, under its regulatory obligations and contract with the Government to provide the ECS, is subject to minimal and substandard reporting requirements. Currently, there is disparate and unclear data regarding the delivery of and response to Triple Zero calls, which limits its accountability and transparency to stakeholders and the public. For example, responding to questions on notice from the Inquiry into Triple Zero service outages in February 2026, the Custodian noted that:

- ‘In 2025, 14.8 million calls were “offered” to the Emergency Call Service and 11.7 million of these calls were “answered” by the ECP’.
- ‘The 3.1 million delta between the “offered” and “answered” categories, are calls that are largely made up of accidental calls or test calls. This is consistent with historical data and is within the expected range for accidental and non-genuine calls to the Emergency Call Service’.
- ‘Of the 11.7 million calls that were answered by the ECP, 8.7 million were connected to Emergency Services for response’.<sup>51</sup>

ACCAN considers this data, made available to the Custodian, may have a number of limitations, including:

- Limited transparency on the nature of the 3.1 million delta between calls offered to the ECP and calls answered by the ECP.<sup>52</sup>
- A lack of granular breakdown to support the assertion that the difference is largely made up of accidental or test calls.
- A lack of detail on the calls that fail due to a complete absence of coverage due to an outage or a user being outside of any coverage footprint.

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<sup>51</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, ‘Answers to questions taken on notice, public hearing 26 March 2026 (received 17 April 2026)’ (Response to Questions on Notice from the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee’s Inquiry into Triple Zero service outages, April 2026) 2.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

- A lack of detail on the difference in calls answered by the ECP and those connected to Emergency Services for response.

Additionally, Telstra noted to the Committee that between April 2025 and March 2026:

- '4369 calls were unable to reliably connect to Triple Zero at one point in time. Some of those callers would have made a retry and were successful'.<sup>53</sup>
- 'Of the 4369 calls that failed on the Telstra network, 1648 callers received a welfare check'.<sup>54</sup>

Research from the Tracker published in July 2026 can offer insight into the consumer experience of calls to Triple Zero. For example, the Tracker found that 8% of Australians reported accidentally or unintentionally calling Triple Zero in the past 12 months.<sup>55</sup> The rate of accidental or unintended calls to Triple Zero reported in the Tracker does not align with the data released by the Custodian. This points to a need for further investigation and greater transparency in Triple Zero reporting.

The Tracker also showed that where consumers surveyed were unsuccessful in contacting Triple Zero, they repeatedly attempted to establish contact through a number of methods.

Research from the Tracker, published in July 2026, found that:

- 45% of consumers moved to a different location to try to get a better signal after their first unsuccessful attempt to contact Triple Zero.<sup>56</sup>
- 37% of consumers asked another person to make the call after their first unsuccessful attempt to contact Triple Zero.<sup>57</sup>
- 33% of consumers tried calling Triple Zero again from the same location after their first unsuccessful attempt to contact Triple Zero.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Telstra 'assumed that "unable to connect": (a) includes any voice call that is terminated unexpectedly (rather than where a caller takes an active action to hang up). This can include instances such as sudden loss of network connectivity, signalling interruptions between network elements, or abrupt device-side failures; and (b) excludes scenarios for where a caller misdials or is outside terrestrial network coverage. Telstra, 'Answers to written questions on notice from Senator Hanson-Young, sent 16 April 2026 (received 23 April 2026)' (Response to Questions on Notice from the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee's Inquiry into Triple Zero service outages, April 2026) 2.

<sup>54</sup> Telstra notes that the difference in calls unable to reliably connect to Triple Zero and welfare checks undertaken is because Telstra 'used the caller identification information to confirm that those callers had not called back to reconnect to the emergency call service after an initial call attempt'. Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Participants were asked: In the past 12 months, have you accidentally or unintentionally called Triple Zero (000)? 3% of participants answered 'Unsure' and 89% of participants answered 'No'. (n=1027). ACCAN, Triple Zero Experience Survey (Report, unpublished).

<sup>56</sup> All participants who experienced an issue contacting Triple Zero were asked: After your first unsuccessful attempt to contact Triple Zero, what did you do? (n=83). Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Experiences and Barriers in Contacting Triple Zero: Full report* (Report, July 2026) 12.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

These consumer experiences suggest that some Triple Zero calls may be repeated calls from consumers after a failed initial attempt. To improve transparency, data clarity, and public accountability, the ECP should be subject to periodic public reporting requirements.

ECP-specific reporting should include:

- Operational metrics, including the delivery of the ECP contract.
- Compliance with performance standards.
- Granular detail on the difference between calls offered to the ECP, calls answered by the ECP and those connected to emergency services.
- The number of ECP disruptions, incidents and outages.<sup>59</sup>
- All welfare checks conducted or organised by the ECP, including the volumes, circumstances and outcomes, as well as the reasons triggering the welfare checks (such as a failure to connect, a dropped call, or other reason).

The ECP's role as a contracted function in the Triple Zero system warrants greater public scrutiny over its operations, and consistent and coherent reporting requirements placed upon the entity acting as the ECP at any one time. The Government should place mandatory, transparent and consistent reporting requirements on the entities fulfilling the role of the ECP for 000 and 112 and the ECP for 106. The *Telecommunications (Emergency Call Service) Determination 2019 (ECS Determination)* should be amended to give effect to these reporting requirements.

### **There is no oversight of unrecorded failed emergency call attempts**

Where there is no access to mobile coverage, or an outage impacting existing mobile coverage in areas with one carrier, unsuccessful mobile calls to Triple Zero do not reach the ECP and are not recorded.<sup>60</sup> This currently represents an unknown number of calls to Triple Zero that are not answered or catalogued, creating an unreported source of consumer harm. Reforms to the legislative and regulatory framework are urgently needed to seek to address this gap in data collection.

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<sup>59</sup> ACCAN notes that disruptions to the ECP are reported to the ACMA, the Department, the Home Affairs Department, and members of the public whose ability to access the emergency call service is affected by the disruption. However, to increase accountability, ACCAN considers that ECP disruptions should be publicly reported.

<sup>60</sup> Responding to questions on notice from the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee's Inquiry into Triple Zero service outages, Telstra noted that 'it does not have any data of calls that failed on another network before reaching the termination point for Emergency Call Person, or calls that could not be initiated at all due to lack of coverage and would therefore not reach any network to allow for detection'. Telstra, 'Answers to written questions on notice from Senator Hanson-Young, sent 16 April 2026 (received 23 April 2026)' (Response to Questions on Notice from the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee's Inquiry into Triple Zero service outages, April 2026) 2.

Additionally, the Tracker has revealed several seemingly different types of Triple Zero failures including 'delays before reaching an operator, no dial tone, unclear audio, phantom signal where the phone showed coverage, but the call would not connect, calls dropping before anyone answered, and complete silence with no indication of what was happening'.<sup>61</sup>

These issues – which may also relate to the device used by the consumer, in addition to network or service issues – can impact consumers' ability to access Triple Zero when needed during an emergency. The Review should actively seek and collect consumer experiences, as well as all available data on calls both connected and not connected and consider these issues in determining reforms to Triple Zero call performance.

### **4.3. The objects and regulatory policy of the Telecommunications Act 1997 do not match the essential nature of emergency services**

Telecommunications are not currently regulated as an essential service, despite recognition by the community, government, industry and regulators of the essential nature of telecommunications services in underpinning public safety and the operation of other essential services.<sup>62</sup> This absence is reflected in the legislative and regulatory settings of the telecommunications sector and has real consequences for all consumers but can disproportionately impact communities in RRR areas.

The *Telecommunications Act 1997* (Cth) (**the Act**) does not:

- Prioritise the interests of the Australian public.
- Reflect the modern-day essentiality of telecommunications services and particularly its role in ensuring public safety.
- Set minimum standards of reliability for telecommunications services.
- Establish effective minimum protections for consumers.
- Empower an effective regulator.
- Establish effective and real-time oversight of Triple Zero.<sup>63</sup>

Instead, the Act makes it clear that:

The Parliament intends that telecommunications be regulated in a manner that:

- (a) Promotes the greatest practicable use of industry self-regulation; and

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<sup>61</sup> ACCAN, *Consumer Experiences Contacting Triple Zero: Snapshot Report* (Report, June 2026) 3 <<https://www.accan.org.au/consumer-sentiment-tracker/consumer-experiences-contacting-triple-zero%3A-snapshot-report>>.

<sup>62</sup> ACCAN, *Inquiry into Triple Zero Service Outages* (Submission, 2025) 5 <<https://www.accan.org.au/accan-submission/inquiry-into-triple-zero-service-outages>>.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

- (b) Does not impose undue financial and administrative burdens on participants in the Australian telecommunications industry;

but does not comprise the effectiveness of regulation in achieving the objects mentioned in section 3.<sup>64</sup>

It is clear the regulatory policy of the telecommunications legislative framework prioritises the interests of industry over those of consumers.<sup>65</sup> This regulatory policy is not suitable for a modern essential service which facilitates access to life-saving emergency services through Triple Zero. While this may have seemed appropriate in an era of payphones and landlines in 1997 when the Act was developed, this is no longer fit for purpose in a world where all Australians rely on connectivity for their safety and social and economic wellbeing.

We consider that the essential nature of communications services in daily Australian life and their critical role in facilitating the delivery of Triple Zero warrant an urgent reconsideration of the manner in which telecommunications is regulated. Communications services should be expected to become more important to the welfare of Australians over time, and the legislative and regulatory framework of the sector should be reconsidered to reflect this ongoing increase in consumer reliance.

Without reforms to the regulatory policy and objects of the Act, the sector's legislative and regulatory framework will not reflect modern Australia's view of telecommunications services as essential to public life and safety.

ACCAN proposes the repeal of Section 4 (Regulatory Policy) and Section 112 Statement of Regulatory Policy from the Act. ACCAN recommends Section 4 (Regulatory Policy) is replaced by the following:

The parliament intends that telecommunications be regulated in a manner that:

- (a) promotes the long-term interests of end-users of carriage services or of services provided by means of carriage services; and
- (b) recognises that telecommunications, in particular emergency call services, are essential to the long-term welfare of Australians; and
- (c) supports the achievement of the objects set out in section 3.

ACCAN also proposes amendments to the objects of the Act to modernise the telecommunications legislative and regulatory framework to ensure it is fit-for-purpose for how Australians currently use essential communications across several technologies including fixed landline, mobile and broadband.

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<sup>64</sup> *Telecommunications Act 1997* (Cth) s.4.

<sup>65</sup> *Telecommunications Act 1997* (Cth) s.4.

ACCAN recommends elevating the substance of clause 5(2)(a) of the ECS Determination to an object of the Act to reflect how integral access to the ECS is to the delivery of carriage services in Australia.<sup>66</sup>

Reforms to the objects of the Act should include (proposed amendments **in red**)

### 3(1) Objects

(a) the long-term interests of end-users of carriage services or of services provided by means of carriage services; and

(b) the efficiency and international competitiveness of the Australian telecommunications industry; and

(c) the availability of accessible and affordable carriage services that enhance the welfare of Australians.<sup>67</sup>

**(d) the highest levels of access, integrity and service continuity of the emergency call service.**

## 4.4. Triple Zero access is outdated and must be technology-neutral

The Triple Zero legislative and regulatory framework is outdated and reflective of a time when Australians were dependent on landlines. The Independent Report into the 18 September 2025 Optus Triple Zero Outage prepared by Dr Kerry Schott AO (**the Schott Report**) noted that 'it is possible that standards and regulations – and the system as a whole – have not kept up with the changes in the network since then and the greater sophistication of devices'.<sup>68</sup>

Today, the system remains fully reliant on voice service access, despite considerable advancements in communications technologies, including but not limited to, mobile voice, SMS and data services, terrestrial and satellite broadband, and increasingly direct-to-device connectivity. These developments have fundamentally changed consumer expectations regarding the delivery of the Triple Zero service, with the rate of technological change outpacing Triple Zero's legislative and regulatory framework.

It is critically important that reform to the Triple Zero framework is made to ensure it is technology-neutral and capable of being updated in line with consumer expectations, such that future users will be able to best take advantage of more advanced technologies as they emerge. A technology-neutral approach would prioritise *what* is delivered through Triple Zero (i.e. access to emergency assistance) instead of *how* Triple Zero is delivered (i.e. via voice calls).

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<sup>66</sup> Telecommunications (Emergency Call Service) Determination 2019. s.5.

<sup>67</sup> Telecommunications (Emergency Call Service) Determination 2019. s.3.

<sup>68</sup> Dr Kerry Schott AO, *Independent Report The Triple Zero Outage at Optus: 18 September 2025* (Report, December 2025) 18.

A modern Triple Zero service should be underpinned by a dynamic institutional framework to ensure its delivery can be uplifted over time to respond in an agile manner to changes in the technical capacity of industry and consumer expectations.

Under the framework, the Minister for Communications should be empowered to mandate new ECS access technologies to ensure the regulatory framework remains fit-for-purpose over time (see below response to consultation question 4). The first key step in updating the Triple Zero system is making text-to-000 available for all Australians.

### **Mandate text-to-000 as the first step to modernising the ECS**

Australians deserve a national emergency system that reflects how people live, communicate, and connect today. A voice-only system fails to meet the needs of Australia's diverse population. This may include people with disabilities, people who are unable to use English to communicate with Emergency Services Organisations (**ESOs**), those in RRR communities, people who may be in danger and unable to speak, those who primarily rely on SMS for communication, people experiencing domestic and family violence, in situations where the mobile connection can only support an SMS message and many others for a variety of reasons across a diverse range of circumstances.

Mandating text-to-000 as a first step in the Triple Zero modernisation process would align Australia with international best practices, promote equitable access to emergency assistance, and enhance the resilience of our public safety systems.<sup>69</sup>

Mandating text-to-000 would align closely with consumer preferences and usage behaviours. For example, the Tracker in June 2026 found that '80% of consumers agree text messaging to Triple Zero should be available to all mobile users'.<sup>70</sup> As mobile coverage is likely to expand, pending passage of the Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation legislation, Australians will increasingly expect to be able to contact Triple Zero through SMS.

In implementing text-to-000, emergency SMS should be treated with the same urgency and reliability as voice calls, and telecommunications providers should establish priority routing of SMS to Triple Zero. Implementing text-to-000 should be the first step in a broader modernisation strategy for Triple Zero. Over time, Triple Zero should also incorporate real-time text, video relay, and other digital channels to ensure that emergency services can reach more Australians in various situations.

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<sup>69</sup> United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. 2009. Article 9.

<sup>70</sup> Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Experiences and Barriers in Contacting Triple Zero: Full report* (Report, July 2026) 26.

By taking action now, the Government can ensure that all Australians have a safe and reliable way to contact emergency services, regardless of their location or situation. A modern emergency system must meet people where they are, which includes providing the option to send an SMS message when voice communication is not possible.

#### **4.5. The Triple Zero Custodian's functions and powers should be expanded**

ACCAN supports the work of the Custodian in overseeing the Triple Zero ecosystem.<sup>71</sup> We welcome the Custodian's outlined priorities and the publication of a progress report in February 2026.<sup>72</sup> ACCAN looks forward to updates from the Custodian concerning the pilot for SMS to Emergency Services Relay and work on a device compliance database.<sup>73</sup>

ACCAN is concerned that the Custodian's existing powers may not be suitable to meaningfully address harms during an outage in an agile and time-sensitive manner. To support the Custodian fulfilling recommendation 2 of the Bean Review, ACCAN recommends the Government expand the powers and functions of the Custodian to support its ongoing role within the Triple Zero ecosystem through the following reforms:

- Resourcing the Custodian to facilitate meaningful real-time 24/7 response capabilities and channels, informed by information sharing related to Triple Zero.
- Expanding the information gathering and direction powers of the Custodian to better support its role as a systemic, best-practice authority within the ecosystem.
- Expand the functions and powers of the Custodian to support the Custodian improving the delivery of Triple Zero across the telecommunications sector.

#### **A Triple Zero consumer education campaign could improve access to emergency assistance**

The Custodian should urgently commence a consumer education campaign on Triple Zero call behaviours. This campaign should include information on the following:

- Information on abnormal call behaviours when accessing Triple Zero.
- How consumers can respond to issues they may encounter when calling Triple Zero, such as call dropouts and calls not going through.
- Camp-on functionality and how long devices can take to camp-on.
- Clear information about device compatibility issues, and how consumers can address these issues.

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<sup>71</sup> ACCAN, 'Consumers Want Stronger Action to Shore up Triple Zero Certainty' (Media Release, 2025) <<https://www.accan.org.au/accan-s-media-releases/consumers-want-stronger-action-to-shore-up-triple-zero-certainty>>.

<sup>72</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, *Triple Zero Custodian—Progress Report—March 2025 to 31 January 2026* (Report, February 2026) <<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/media-communications/phone/triple-zero-custodian>>.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid 3-4.

- The importance of regularly updating device software to ensure Triple Zero compatibility.

Research from the Tracker reveals limited consumer knowledge about the Triple Zero system and supports the need for such a consumer education program or campaign. For example, the Tracker found that '73% of consumers are unaware their mobile may attempt to connect via a different network when calling Triple Zero during an outage'<sup>74</sup> and 70% of consumers have not heard of the emergency number 112.<sup>75</sup> This indicates a significant gap in consumer understanding of the Triple Zero system and its present capabilities and features.

The Tracker found that over half of consumers (51%) wait less than a minute before hanging up and trying to call again when experiencing disruptions to mobile services.<sup>76</sup> As calls that need to camp-on can take longer than usual to connect (see response to Question 6 below), this data may demonstrate a lack of awareness about Triple Zero call behaviour – potentially delaying access to Triple Zero during an emergency. Without appropriate education and information on the capabilities of the ECS and Triple Zero, consumers may also believe that they can access emergency services through technologies which are not currently applicable for contacting Triple Zero.

Concerningly, the Tracker also found that 20% of consumers would be most likely to try to send an SMS to 000 if they ever needed to contact Triple Zero.<sup>77</sup> This technology, while ubiquitous in general life, cannot currently be used to contact Triple Zero. Attempts to contact Triple Zero via SMS, rather than a voice call, would not be successful, and could delay potentially life-saving assistance in emergency situations.

Issues contacting Triple Zero intersect telecommunications networks, devices, geographies and consumer behaviour. Accordingly, a trusted Government body such as the Custodian is best placed to coordinate the expertise needed to build a comprehensive and ongoing public information campaign on Triple Zero call behaviour. For any future expansions to Triple Zero capabilities, the Custodian should undertake additional, targeted proactive consumer education campaigns to inform communications consumers of new capabilities.

#### **4.6. Accountability for the Emergency Call Person is lacking**

The ECP's performance standards for ECS call response times have not been updated since 2002. These standards, which have been in place for 24 years, are currently restricted to one function with two performance standards and have no requirements for public reporting.

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<sup>74</sup> Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Experiences and Barriers in Contacting Triple Zero: Full report* (Report, July 2026) 19.

<sup>75</sup> Participants were asked: Have you heard of the emergency number 112? (n=1,027). Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Experiences and Barriers in Contacting Triple Zero: Full report* (Report, July 2026) 21.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid 20.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid 7. Participants were asked: If you ever needed to contact Triple Zero (000), which of the following methods would you be most likely to try? (n=1,207).

In reviewing the ECP's performance standards, ACCAN encourages the Government to expand and update these standards as a matter of urgency.

According to recent Telstra material provided to a Senate Committee, the ECP has exceeded its targets, 'answering 97% of calls within 5 seconds and 98% within 10 seconds on all days other than 31 October 2025'.<sup>78</sup> Due to an absence of granular data on ECP performance, there is no public information on calls offered to the ECP but not picked up within the above timeframes. ACCAN recommends these targets be improved, and reporting and accountability metrics broadened (see below response to consultation question 6 below).

The Module E of the Telstra USO Performance Agreement (**Module E**) covers Telstra's role as the ECP.<sup>79</sup> Under Module E, 'Telstra has a contractual obligation to supply the Emergency Call Service in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements for up to 20 years'.<sup>80</sup> The current contract value of Module E is up to \$22 million per annum (GST inclusive).<sup>81</sup>

In addition to the annual payment under Module E, the Department also meets 'the reasonable costs of any major upgrades to Telstra's Emergency Call Service platforms and systems'.<sup>82</sup> Since 2012, the Department has undertaken 3 reviews of Module E with variations occurring in 2018 and 2024.<sup>83</sup>

There is minimal public transparency on several important aspects of Module E related to the delivery of the ECS. These include the ECP's performance, processes, intervals of review, consequences for failure to comply with contract terms, and contract selection and evaluation processes. Accordingly, it is critical that these aspects of Module E are considered by the Review and subject to greater transparency and public reporting requirements (see section 4.2 above).

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<sup>78</sup> Telstra, *Telstra submission Environment and Communications References Committee inquiry into the: Triple Zero service outage* (Submission, 2025) 5.

<sup>79</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, 'Telecommunications contract and grant registers' (Webpage, n.d.).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, 'Answers to questions taken on notice, public hearing 26 March 2026 (received 17 April 2026)' (Response to Questions on Notice from the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee's Inquiry into Triple Zero service outages, April 2026) 2.

## 5. Responses to consultation questions

**Question 1: What principles should guide Triple Zero service regulation in the contemporary telecommunications environment? How should these be reflected in the legislative and regulatory framework?**

Telecommunications services, including the ECS and Triple Zero, should be viewed as an essential community service which provides access to critical public safety services. This viewpoint should be the core guiding principle of the reforms made by the Government through the Review.

The principles of reliability, public safety, accountability, transparency and equitable access to emergency services should be integrated formally into the Triple Zero legislative and regulatory framework. These reforms should account for the experiences of communications consumers who disproportionately rely on these services for their personal safety and cohorts who will suffer disproportionate harm from inadequate access to emergency services as well as those with accessibility challenges.

These principles should be reflected in future reforms by implementing minimum mobile service standards to improve reliability, reforming the objects of the Act, expanding access to emergency services through text-to-000, and expanding the powers and functions of the Custodian.

**Question 2: Are there any barriers in the current legislative and regulatory framework blocking access to the benefits of new delivery technologies which could be used to contact Triple Zero? If so, what aspects of the legislative and regulatory framework need to be amended to increase flexibility?**

ACCAN recommends that the Government support a technology-neutral approach to accessing emergency services. A technology-neutral approach would ensure that help is available to everyone, including those who cannot – for any reason – contact Triple Zero via a voice call, during an emergency. As a first step to modernising the Triple Zero service, the Government should mandate text-to-000. ACCAN also encourages the Government to conduct a broad review of how consumers could access Triple Zero including video relay to 000, text-to-000 and real time text-to-000.<sup>84</sup> This review should take into account consumer preferences for methods of accessing Triple Zero.

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<sup>84</sup> ACCAN, *Inquiry into Triple Zero Service Outages* (Submission, 2025) 10 <<https://www.accan.org.au/accan-submission/inquiry-into-triple-zero-service-outages>>.

Research from the Tracker found significant consumer support for access to Triple Zero across multiple technologies. For example, '82% of consumers agree a video relay service for Triple Zero should be available for deaf and hard of hearing people'.<sup>85</sup> Further, '77% of consumers would be interested in using a location sharing app if one was available'.<sup>86</sup> Accordingly, the Review should consider the widespread support for multi-technology access to Triple Zero.

Text-to-000 functionality is not supported by the current legislative and regulatory framework, blocking access to a crucial support pathway in emergencies. For example, the 106 TTY service requires specific equipment that is no longer widely used and cannot be accessed via text messaging from a mobile phone.

Although the National Relay Service offers relay services, it is not designed for real-time emergency communication.<sup>87</sup> As a result, many Australians remain excluded from emergency assistance, despite access to mobile devices and SMS.

Implementing a national text-to-000 service would create essential redundancy in accessing emergency assistance. It would support equitable access for all Australians and modernise Australia's emergency system to align with contemporary communication methods.

This obligation should apply to the ECP and all carriers that facilitate Triple Zero calls, including carriers and satellite providers. This measure will ensure Australia is compliant with international standards that recognise the right of all citizens to access emergency services through accessible means.<sup>88</sup>

**Question 3: How should the legislative and regulatory framework balance multi-modal access to Triple Zero, when compared to reliability and redundancy?**

ACCAN does not consider that there is a trade-off between multi-modal access to Triple Zero and reliability and redundancy. Reliability and redundancy should be determined with respect to individual technologies and their materiality to public safety outcomes within the framework of broader multi-modal access to Triple Zero.

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<sup>85</sup> Participants were asked 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about contacting emergency services in Australia?' - % Somewhat + strongly agree (5pt scale, including neutral and don't know options) Base: All consumers Triple Zero Experience Survey n=1,027. Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Experiences and Barriers in Contacting Triple Zero: Full report* (Report, July 2026) 26.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid 22. Participants were asked: If a location-sharing app was available, how interested would you be in having it installed? (n=1,207).

<sup>87</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, 'How to make an emergency call using the NRS', *Access Hub* (Web Page, n.d.) <<https://www.accesshub.gov.au/about-the-nrs/how-to-make-an-emergency-call-using-the-nrs>>.

<sup>88</sup> United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. 2009. Article 9(1)(b).

Multi-modal access should seek comparable levels of reliability across access technologies. Absent comparable levels of reliability across technologies, imbalances in consumer experiences and expectations across different access technologies may facilitate serious consumer harm. For example, technologies used by Australians to access emergency services must be reliable and avoid significant disparities in reliability.

**Question 4: Should the legislative and regulatory framework allow for the ACMA, and/or the Minister, to determine which class of devices or technologies should or should not be able to reach Triple Zero, in order to safeguard the integrity of access for the system?**

ACCAN would support amendments to the legislative and regulatory framework to allow for the Minister to determine which class of devices or technologies should or should not be able to reach Triple Zero. Such a power would support reform to the Triple Zero framework guided by a technology-neutral approach and underpinned by a dynamic institutional framework.

Providing this power to the Minister, with a delegation power to the ACMA and Custodian, should also allow for the Minister to set minimum performance and service standards for the class of devices or technology prior to wider use. This ability would mirror the ability of the Minister to determine standards for the delivery of mobile services under the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation) Bill 2025.<sup>89</sup> A delegation power to the ACMA and Custodian would also mirror the issuance of ECS directions under the *Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999* (Cth) (**the TCPSS Act**), in which the ACMA and the Custodian are both able to issue ECS directions.<sup>90</sup>

The ACMA and Department should periodically review the classes of devices or technologies that should or should not be able to reach Triple Zero in line with community expectations and technological capabilities to ensure that community welfare is maintained. The Custodian should maintain a public register of the devices or technology types capable of reaching Triple Zero on its public website to support awareness of emergency service access. This register should be accompanied by relevant and useful information for users of these devices and technologies to facilitate greater public knowledge of emergency service access capabilities.

Prior to the determination of a class of devices or technologies being declared as able to reach Triple Zero, the Custodian should undertake public consultation and meaningful and ongoing consumer education activity, to ensure that all stakeholders are appropriately made aware of changes in access.

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<sup>89</sup> Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation) Bill 2025. s.12Q.

<sup>90</sup> *Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999* (Cth). Division 3—ECS Directions.

**Question 5: Should mobile device manufacturers be considered more centrally in the Triple Zero legislative and regulatory framework (such as under the ECS Determination)? What, if any, additional requirements should apply to mobile device manufacturers to ensure mobile devices can reliably contact Triple Zero on Australian networks?**

The 3G network shutdown fundamentally altered the role of device manufacturers in the delivery of communications services, including Triple Zero. Since the 3G shutdown, several types of devices have experienced disrupted access to emergency services due to a combination of network and device incompatibilities which has resulted in significant consumer harm.<sup>91</sup>

The 3G shutdown process should be taken as a key learning, not only regarding the impact that technology transitions can have upon access to Triple Zero, but also the need for device manufacturers to be closely engaged in matters of Triple Zero governance and regulation, given the critical role devices can play in facilitating – or sometimes impeding – access to emergency services.

Broadly, ACCAN calls for device manufacturers and carriers to regularly cooperate and undertake regular monitoring of devices' ability to access emergency services through Triple Zero. Stronger and more formal requirements are needed, as well as regulator oversight. Industry should harmonise best practice and testing frameworks between networks, device manufacturers and regulators.<sup>92</sup> Communications consumers expect to be able to access Triple Zero through their mobile devices and expect that devices purchased from international vendors will access Triple Zero. ACCAN supports the Government considering the role of device manufacturers in the Triple Zero legislative and regulatory framework, including the imposition of requirements to ensure devices sold in Australia can reach Triple Zero.

ACCAN welcomes the device testing undertaken by the UTS Controlled Testing Facility (CTF), however we note that the CTF may not offer preventative solutions to device compatibility issues impacting access to the ECS. The Australian Telecommunications Alliance notes that the CTF will be able to test between 10-20 devices per year out of the 40,000 handset models currently in Australia.<sup>93</sup> Accordingly, the CTF cannot be solely relied upon to ensure proactive device compliance across the board, however, the work of the CTF is highly valuable as a blueprint for testing device compatibility issues and ACCAN encourages industry participants' cooperation with the CTF.

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<sup>91</sup> The Guardian, 'Second Death Linked to Triple-Zero Connection Failure Revealed as Explosive Inquiry Hears Minister Was Not Informed' (Online Article, December 2025) <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/dec/09/second-death-linked-to-triple-zero-connection-failure-revealed-as-explosive-inquiry-reveals-minister-was-not-informed>>.

<sup>92</sup> Bryant, A., Owen, R. and Sillari, K., 2025. From Outage to Opportunity: Building Robust Telecommunications Standards for Emergency Services. 2025 International Wireless Communications and Mobile Computing (IWCMC), pp.1292.

<sup>93</sup> Australian Telecommunications Alliance, *Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications Re: Inquiry into Triple Zero service outage* (Submission, 2025) 5 <<https://www.austelco.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/251125-ATA-Submission--Senate-Inquiry-into-Triple-Zero-Service-Outage.pdf>>.

There is a strong need for ongoing comprehensive consumer education programs detailing:

- The need to keep software updated to ensure that devices can reach Triple Zero.
- Where and how consumers can check their mobile devices' compatibility to reach Triple Zero.
- Where consumers can go for support when they need a new mobile device.

ACCAN recommends cooperation between the Custodian, carriers and device manufacturers to facilitate these programs.

**Question 6: What outcomes should carriers, CSPs and ECPs be accountable for in delivering Triple Zero calls, and what minimum requirements are needed to achieve those outcomes?**

### **Minimum mobile service standards to improve reliability**

Carriers must be required to meet minimum mobile service standards and held accountable when those standards are not met.

The reliability, quality and performance of mobile networks underpin the delivery of the ECS. Carriers should be incentivised to maintain, invest and improve their mobile networks to ensure the public safety of Australians is protected. Therefore, ACCAN strongly recommends the Government implement minimum mobile service standards to improve the reliability of mobile services and safeguard access to Triple Zero.

### **Camp-on**

Camp-on arrangements are critical to keeping consumers connected to Triple Zero when their home network is unavailable. However, the time taken to camp-on during an outage can cause confusion and distress to consumers in emergency situations and disrupt their ability to receive help. The Tracker found that over half of consumers (51%) wait less than a minute before hanging up and trying to call again when experiencing disruptions to mobile services.<sup>94</sup> Without understanding the reason for the delay in connection, consumers in emergency situations may hang up the call and assume they are unable to connect.

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<sup>94</sup> Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Experiences and Barriers in Contacting Triple Zero: Full report* (Report, July 2026) 20.

Currently, the timing of how long it takes for a device to successfully camp-on is unclear. The Schott Report found that ‘for many calls it may take 40-60 seconds to camp-on’.<sup>95</sup> In an interview with ABC insiders, Australian Telecommunications Alliance CEO Luke Coleman noted that the camp-on ‘process can take 15 to 30 seconds to occur’.<sup>96</sup>

According to Telstra’s website, the camp-on process can take ‘typically less than 60 seconds to occur’.<sup>97</sup> The Schott Review added in relation to camp-on failures, that ‘this is a technical matter that the industry and government must investigate further – and as soon as possible’.<sup>98</sup>

ACCAN recommends that Government, carriers and device manufacturers cooperate to identify and act on opportunities to reduce camp-on times of mobile devices accessing Triple Zero, ensure that there is a capability on the call to signal to the user that the call has been received (for example, a hold message) and in parallel, increase consumer awareness and education of the camp-on process and experience as a consumer.

### **Welfare checks**

Where a consumer makes an unsuccessful emergency call, carriers, CSPs and ECPs must be accountable to conduct a welfare check. Welfare checks requirements under the ECS Determination are inadequate and pose a significant risk to public safety.

Currently, welfare checks are only required for major outages that impact 100,000 services or all services in a State or Territory.<sup>99</sup> This is an unacceptably high number and neglects the risk that outages less than 100,000 services can pose to public safety.

The ECS Determination also sets a presumption that welfare checks are not required if the CSP cannot identify that an end-user has made an unsuccessful emergency call.<sup>100</sup> ACCAN considers this presumption is ambiguous and fails to prioritise public safety outcomes. Further, there is little accountability on the role, function, responsibilities and cooperation between carriers, CSPs, ECPs, and ESOs for the purposes of conducting welfare checks.

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<sup>95</sup> Dr Kerry Schott AO, *Independent Report The Triple Zero Outage at Optus: 18 September 2025* (Report, December 2025) 3.

<sup>96</sup> Australian Telecommunications Alliance, ‘ABC Insiders 11/10/25’ (Interview, October 2025) <<https://www.austelco.org.au/transcript-abc-insiders-11-10-25/>>.

<sup>97</sup> Telstra, ‘How Triple Zero works: the ecosystem behind a call for help’ (Webpage, 5 May 2026).

<sup>98</sup> Dr Kerry Schott AO, *Independent Report The Triple Zero Outage at Optus: 18 September 2025* (Report, December 2025) 13.

<sup>99</sup> Telecommunications (Emergency Call Service) Determination 2019 s 28.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid* s 28(2)(1).

Together, these deficiencies present an unacceptable risk to the safety and wellbeing of the Australian public. ACCAN recommends the Custodian urgently considers welfare check requirements. Serious consideration should be given to:

- The circumstances when a welfare check is required.
- Standardised welfare check procedures (including cooperation among different entities in the emergency call system).
- Minimum training standards, frequency and attendance requirements.<sup>101</sup>
- Appropriate levels of staff trained to undertake welfare checks.
- The adequacy of welfare check requirements to uphold public safety.

### **Emergency call service performance standards**

ACCAN considers performance standards should apply to the entire emergency call journey. In the first instance, we have outlined above (section 4.1) that carriers should be subject to whole-of-network services standards to improve reliability and consumer outcomes. However, there is also a key role for ECS-specific performance standards to ensure the ECS meets community expectations and promotes positive consumer outcomes and public safety.

#### *Performance standards for the transiting of Triple Zero calls*

The ECS Determination requires carriage service providers to carry emergency calls with the highest priority within its network.<sup>102</sup> While we support this broad obligation, ACCAN considers that enhanced scrutiny of transiting Triple Zero calls is required to ensure the Government has comprehensive oversight of the complete ECS journey. Carriage service providers should be obligated to meet (and report on) performance standards regarding the transit of emergency calls across their networks. This will ensure that each actor within the Triple Zero system is appropriately accountable for their role in ensuring the effective operation of the ECS.

#### *Performance standards for ECPs*

Section 48 of the ECS Determination details the requirements for speed, efficiency and reliability for numbers 000 and 112.<sup>103</sup> This section requires that:

- (a) 85% of the calls are answered by a call-taker within 5 seconds of reaching the relevant answering point for the call; and

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<sup>101</sup> There are strong regulatory precedents for minimum training standards already in existence, for example under the Telecommunications (Financial Hardship) Industry Standard 2024 and the Telecommunications (Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Consumer Protections) Industry Standard 2025.

<sup>102</sup> Telecommunications (Emergency Call Service) Determination 2019. s.21.

<sup>103</sup> Telecommunications (Emergency Call Service) Determination 2019. s.49.

(b) 95% of the calls are answered by a call-taker within 10 seconds of reaching the relevant answering point for the call.<sup>104</sup>

Following several high-profile failures of Triple Zero in recent years, transparency not only around calls that are successfully answered, but also those that do not make it through to being picked up, is critical to achieving more effective regulation and oversight of this system and broader public confidence. The current performance standards should be reviewed and expanded to ensure requirements on the ECP are fit-for-purpose and appropriately reflect the ECP's functions and community expectations of the ECS.

Critically, performance standards should be expanded beyond time-based metrics to include outcome-based requirements. This will ensure that achieving appropriate consumer outcomes of the Triple Zero call service are appropriately prioritised in ECP operations. ACCAN also encourages the Government to revisit performance standards under section 49 of the ECS Determination, in consultation with representative consumer groups, to determine if they remain fit-for-purpose.

**Question 7: How could the framework be amended to further provide obligations to support the proactive identification and rectification of systemic issues? What mechanisms (for example, incident learnings, mandatory improvement plans, directions, audits) are most effective, and why?**

### **Establishing an independent and regular statutory review of the Triple Zero ecosystem**

ACCAN recommends that the Triple Zero legislative and regulatory framework be amended to facilitate proactive identification and rectification of systemic issues through a regular, independent review, similar to the Regional Telecommunications Review (RTR).<sup>105</sup> Provisions for a regular review should be added to the TCPSS Act in a similar form to the RTR. These new provisions should provide for a regular independent statutory review into Triple Zero, covering matters including modes of delivery, demand for emergency services and legislative and regulatory settings underpinning access to Triple Zero. The Department last undertook a review into the changing technologies and consumer expectations of the Triple Zero service 12 years ago, in 2014.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid. s.49 (2) details that the emergency call person for 000 and 112 will not be in breach of subsection (1) if a failure by it to reach a daily target set out in that subsection is due to a matter beyond the control of the person and which could not have been reasonably foreseen by the person.

<sup>105</sup> Under Part 9B of the TCPSS Act, reviews must be completed within 3 years after the last day on which a copy of a statement setting out the Commonwealth Government's response to the recommendations of the previous review was tabled in a House of the Parliament. *Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999* (Cth). s.158P (4).

<sup>106</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, 'Triple Zero (000) Review' (Consultation Page, n.d.) <<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/have-your-say/triple-zero-000-review>>.

Ensuring that an independent and regular review of Triple Zero is undertaken will provide ongoing benefits to government, consumers and industry.

Provisions similar to Part 9B of the TCPSS Act, which provide for the RTR, could be replicated to support an independent and regular statutory review of the Triple Zero ecosystem with similar timeframes in place (every five years), and with reviews made available to the public and formally tabled in Parliament. Reviews should be undertaken by an independent individual(s) with expertise in emergency service delivery and extensive knowledge of the Triple Zero system.

The statutory review should:

- Have its terms of reference and establishing legislation subject to consultation.
- Review the adequacy of existing legislative and regulatory instruments in delivering equitable access to Triple Zero for people living in all areas of Australia.
- Have regard to systemic issues impacting access to Triple Zero.
- Empower engagement with state and territory emergency services to ensure coherent and nation-wide assessment of the Triple Zero system.
- Provide for public consultation and specific consultation with people in RRR parts of Australia as a cohort particularly affected by Triple Zero access issues.
- Consider evolving and emerging technologies in the context of the Triple Zero ecosystem.
- Produce a report containing recommendations which improve equitable access to Triple Zero for all Australians and detail the adequacy of existing legislative and regulatory instruments in delivering equitable access to Triple Zero for Australians.

### **Comprehensive reporting to support the proactive identification and rectification of systemic issues**

As outlined in section 4.2 above, proactive identification and rectification of systemic network and ECS issues can also be addressed through comprehensive reporting requirements on carriers, the ECP, and CSPs where applicable. This should include standardised reports on mobile network performance, services, and operations, and detailed information on the ECS.

These reports would enable the Custodian and the ACMA to regularly review data on mobile network performance, services, operations and ECS, and issue ECS directions where necessary to improve outcomes related to the delivery of Triple Zero.<sup>107</sup> These audits enable the Custodian to better prepare for an outage, improve preparedness within the sector for outages and overseeing the functioning of ECSs.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> The power to issue ECS directions is provided to the ACMA under section 151A of the TCPSS Act and to the Custodian under section 151L of the TCPSS Act where the Custodian may request the ACMA to make ECS directions. *Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999* (Cth). Section 151A, 151L.

<sup>108</sup> *Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999* (Cth). s.151K.

Where a distinct incident occurs, ACCAN considers that the Custodian should be empowered to request that incident learnings, mandatory improvement plans, directions and audits be created and fulfilled by carriers, relevant to any Triple Zero service issues that may have contributed to the incident. These administrative processes should be required under ECS directions issued by the Custodian or the ACMA.

### **Revisiting Industry Codes and Guidelines which relate to Triple Zero**

Compliance with Industry Codes is currently voluntary under the Act.<sup>109</sup> Should the Telecommunications Amendment (Enhancing Consumer Safeguards) Bill 2025 (**the TECS Bill**) be passed by the Parliament, compliance with industry codes will be made mandatory, although industry guidelines will remain voluntary.<sup>110</sup> Several currently voluntary industry codes and guidelines relate the delivery of Triple Zero.<sup>111</sup> These Industry Codes and Guidelines include:

- Emergency Call Service Requirements (C536:2020 Incorporating Variation No.1/2025).
- C674:2025 Emergency Calling – Network and Mobile Phone Testing Industry Code.
- G557:2025 Location Information for Emergency Calls.
- G596:2013 Communication Support for Emergency Response.
- G663:2022 Telecommunications – Emergency Communications Protocol.

The Review should consider the appropriateness and robustness of the contents of all industry codes and guidelines within the Triple Zero system, and consider where it may be appropriate that industry codes or guidelines be elevated to industry standards or industry guidelines be elevated to industry codes.

It is deeply concerning that currently important aspects of the delivery of Triple Zero are found in instruments that require only voluntary compliance, drafted by the industry itself. Whilst the passage of the TECS Bill would, importantly, make industry codes mandatory, the content of the codes themselves must be reviewed urgently to ensure they contain fit-for-purpose obligations to govern the delivery of this critical service.

Most urgently, where critical obligations are contained in voluntary guidelines, these should be moved into a mandatory instrument to ensure the Triple Zero system is consistently overseen by the regulator. Compliance with obligations governing the delivery of one of the most critical public services in the country must be strongly enforced by a proactive, agile and efficient regulator.

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<sup>109</sup> *Telecommunications Act 1997* (Cth) s.106.

<sup>110</sup> Telecommunications Amendment (Enhancing Consumer Safeguards) Bill 2025. Schedule 2—Mandatory compliance with industry codes.

<sup>111</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, *Triple Zero Legislative and Regulatory Review Consultation Paper* (Consultation Paper, May 2026) 8 <<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/department/media/publications/triple-zero-legislative-and-regulatory-review-consultation-paper>>.

**Question 8: Should new and ongoing performance reporting for carriers and/or CSPs providing access to Triple Zero be introduced? If yes, what metrics should be reported and how often?**

Reporting on the performance of networks is an important and necessary step to understand how unreliable mobile networks facilitate consumer harm. However, for consumer harm caused by mobile networks to be adequately addressed, carriers must also be subject to minimum mobile service standards to improve the reliability of their networks and consequently safeguard access to Triple Zero. This measure is contemplated in the Terms of Reference of this review, which refer to the feasibility of introducing new minimum mobile network performance standards.

Disappointingly however, this question only refers to performance *reporting*, which does not contemplate any improvement or uplifted obligations on the actual *performance* of mobile networks themselves.<sup>112</sup> ACCAN supports comprehensive performance reporting by carriers and the ECP, including comprehensive network, service, and operational metrics and granular information on the delivery of Triple Zero (outlined at section 4.2 above), but performance reporting and minimum mobile service standards must go hand in hand. Without the more significant oversight provided by minimum mobile service standards, we consider performance reporting alone would do little to tangibly improve and uplift the ongoing functioning of mobile networks and consequently Triple Zero.

Mandatory minimum mobile service standards are needed to provide strong economic incentives to carriers to uplift service reliability, promote public safety, and positive consumer outcomes. Minimum mobile service standards must be enforceable by the regulator, include appropriate penalties for breaches, and ensure adequate consumer protections and compensation.

**Question 9: What information is and should be shared across industry and/or ESOs to support the proactive, reliable and future-proof delivery of Triple Zero. What governance arrangements are needed to enable timely, secure and usable information sharing?**

As outlined above in section 4.2, there is a lack of transparent reporting on the delivery of mobile services and Triple Zero. The lack of regulatory reporting requirements restricts accountability for these services and restricts the ability of the Government to appropriately regulate services to ensure public safety.

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<sup>112</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, 'Terms of Reference – Triple Zero Legislative and Regulatory Review' (Terms of Reference, 2026) 2 <<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/media-communications/phone/triple-zero-custodian/triple-zero-legislative-and-regulatory-review>>.

ACCAN recommends that requirements are placed on carriers to publicly report network performance, service delivery, and operational metrics including detailed information on the ECS. Carrier reporting should be complemented by ECP reporting to provide holistic oversight of the Triple Zero ecosystem.

**Question 10: Does the objective of the single national emergency call system encourage, or hinder, the ability for state and territory organisations to innovate in their delivery of emergency calling and dispatch services?**

No response. We consider state and territory emergency services organisations are best placed to respond to this question in detail.

**Question 11: Is there information that carriers, CSPs, and ECPs hold which is not currently, but should be made available to ESOs through regulation to support the delivery of emergency services?**

No response. We consider carriers, CSPs and ECPs are best placed to respond to this question in detail.

**Question 12: Are there any additional regulatory powers and mechanisms the ACMA requires to regulate Triple Zero, especially to support a framework which is proactive and future-focused?**

ACCAN's recommendations to this Review include reforms to reporting, standards, information sharing and the ECS Determination. The ACMA has a central role to play in ensuring that carriers and other stakeholders comply with important and often life-critical instruments.

The ACMA was recently allocated additional funding to lift its 'capacity to undertake regulatory oversight and compliance activities and support the work of the Triple Zero Custodian'.<sup>113</sup> ACCAN welcomes this allocation of additional capacity to the ACMA.

Broadly, we consider that providing the ACMA with greater information gathering and direction powers would assist the regulator in improving systemic outcomes, by allowing it to proactively address Triple Zero issues before they facilitate greater consumer harm. As we detail in Question 15, greater information gathering and direction powers afforded to the Custodian, and therefore the ACMA, will improve preparedness for Triple Zero outages and provide system-wide benefits.

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<sup>113</sup> Australian Communications and Media Authority, 'Speech by Nerida O'Loughlin PSM, ACMA Chair, CommsDay Summit – 2 June 2026' (Speech Transcript, 2 June 2026).

It is also important for the Review to consider the contents of industry codes related to the delivery of Triple Zero. These codes, drafted for voluntary – not mandatory – compliance, by industry participants and not the regulator, should be reviewed and considered for uplift into industry standards by the ACMA. Review and assessment should be undertaken on an ongoing basis to ensure they remain fit-for-purpose over time and as technology evolves.

Instruments that relate to Triple Zero should, overarchingly, be mandatory, given the criticality of the service. These instruments should also be regulator drafted, not compiled by the industry, to ensure obligations are clear, enforceable and appropriately robust, and compliance action can be taken when needed.

**Question 13: Are there barriers to the ACMA considering systemic Triple Zero issues, or linking related infringements, to ensure issues indicating broader problems are addressed appropriately? If yes, what should change?**

A key barrier to the ACMA considering systemic Triple Zero issues is the inadequate level of data related to Triple Zero calls overall, and the absence of data on calls to Triple Zero made outside of existing mobile coverage areas or during mobile network outages where only one provider is present. This currently represents an apparently unknown number of Triple Zero calls annually going unrecorded and presumably unanswered because of an absence of coverage due to a mobile outage or a complete absence of mobile network infrastructure.

ACCAN recommends the ACMA, Custodian, carriers and device manufacturers work together to address this issue. Additionally, reporting obligations must be significantly uplifted, and mandatory information sharing should be enforced. Without taking measures to address this undetected source of missed Triple Zero calls, consumer harm, especially in RRR areas will likely continue to occur and public safety will continue to be at risk.

More broadly, we note that the involvement of both federal and state and territory agencies and organisations in the delivery of the ECS and Triple Zero means that cross-jurisdictional engagement between federal and state authorities, including emergency services, is critical to uplifting the system as a whole. ACCAN considers that regular and meaningful engagement between the ACMA and state and territory authorities is critical to reducing information gaps and improving how systemic issues are addressed.

**Question 14: Do recent changes to the TCPSS Act effectively balance the role of the ACMA as a regulator with the role of the Custodian as an entity which oversees the Triple Zero ecosystem as a whole?**

ACCAN supported the establishment of the Triple Zero Custodian and the expanded information gathering powers provided to the Custodian and the ACMA by the *Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Triple Zero Custodian and Emergency Calling Powers) Act 2025* (Cth).<sup>114</sup> We also support the Custodian's publication of a register of ECS directions.<sup>115</sup>

ACCAN has concerns that the Custodian's current functions may be unsuited to an entity designed to oversee the Triple Zero ecosystem as a whole. Such an entity should have functions explicitly related to the improvement of the system, the promotion of public confidence in the system and the identification of risks to the system.

Ensuring these factors are reflected in the functions of the Custodian would provide a statutory basis for deep consideration of systemic issues – in keeping with the current powers and capabilities of the Custodian. Further, as the Custodian is neither a regulatory body nor an operational body, the current functions and powers of the Custodian risk it being unable to actively coordinate the resolution of future Triple Zero service issues during an outage context (such as the 18 September Optus Triple Zero outage).

ACCAN suggests the functions of the Triple Zero Custodian in Section 151K (1) of the TCPSS Act should be amended to expand its capabilities and powers, and provide more meaningful, ongoing benefit to the Triple Zero system.

The following additional high-level purpose-statements should be added to the Custodian's existing functions, under Section 151K(1) of the TCPSS Act:

- (f) identifying and advising the Commonwealth on strategic opportunities to improve and progress the Triple Zero call service;
- (g) establishing and maintaining relationships across the various stakeholders across the Triple Zero ecosystem and government (including the National Emergency Management Authority and the DITRDSCA), participating in relevant working groups and committees, and engaging with agencies outside of the Triple Zero ecosystem as needed;

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<sup>114</sup> ACCAN, 'Consumers Want Stronger Action to Shore up Triple Zero Certainty' (Media Release, 7 October 2025) <<https://www.accan.org.au/accan-s-media-releases/consumers-want-stronger-action-to-shore-up-triple-zero-certainty>>.

<sup>115</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, 'Custodian Requests Register' (Webpage, 19 May 2026) <<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/media-communications/phone/triple-zero-custodian/custodian-requests-register>>.

(h) promoting public confidence in the Triple Zero Emergency Call Service.

(i) identifying risks to the Triple Zero Emergency Call Service and taking action to mitigate risks where necessary within the scope of the Custodian's powers and functions;

These functions would significantly uplift the Custodian's ongoing role in the Triple Zero system and solidify the body as a source of ongoing systemic expertise. These reforms would ensure that the Custodian is more appropriately empowered to inform the ACMA's regulatory actions by efficiently preparing for and responding to Triple Zero issues. A Custodian which is meaningfully established as a whole of system oversight body would better support the ACMA undertaking its regulatory activities to ensure compliance with the Triple Zero legislative and regulatory framework.

**Question 15: Does the Triple Zero Custodian have all the powers needed to fulfil its functions under the TCPSS Act?**

Section 151K (1) of the TCPSS Act details the Custodian's functions. These functions include:

(a) aiding preparation for, response to or recovery from an ECS outage event;

(b) improving preparedness for ECS outage events;

(c) overseeing the effective functioning of emergency call services and the proper functioning of the ECS matters;

(d) any other function conferred by this Act in relation to emergency call services;

(e) any other function specified under subsection (2).

(2) For the purposes of paragraph (1)(e), the Minister may, by legislative instrument, specify an additional function of the Custodian if the Minister is satisfied that the function is related to emergency call services.

Under Section 151A of the TCPSS Act, the Custodian is empowered to:

- Give ECS directions to telecommunications providers in relation to ECS matters, including requiring providers to:
  - take specified actions, for the purpose of developing policies, procedures and processes relating to an ECS matter.
  - providing information on ECS matters to specific persons or bodies.
  - consult with, or take specified action in relation to consulting with, a specified person or body in relation to ECS matters or ECS directions.
- Request the ACMA to give ECS directions to telecommunications providers.
- Requesting information or advice from the ACMA.

- Referral of matters to the ACMA for investigation or delegate its functions to the Department.<sup>116</sup>

Expanding the specifics of the Custodian's scope and function would better place it to meaningfully improve the delivery of Triple Zero across the telecommunications sector on an ongoing basis.

At present, the Custodian is limited in its ability to affect change in carriers' Triple Zero processes as it can only require recipients of ECS directions to 'take specified action for the purpose of developing policies, procedures and processes relating to an ECS matter'.<sup>117</sup> This unnecessarily restricts the Custodian's ability to rapidly improve the delivery of Triple Zero and proactively address inadequacies in keeping with the Custodian's existing powers. To give effect to this, section 151A(5)(a) of the TCPSS Act should be amended to allow ECS directions to require recipients to 'take specific action relating to an ECS matter'.<sup>118</sup>

ACCAN considers that, to ensure that the Custodian has the powers needed to fulfil its functions under the TCPSS Act, the Government should consider a number of reforms to the Custodian's powers and functions, including:

- Introducing a provision enabling the ACMA or Custodian to verbally require carriers to inform them of everything they know about an ECS matter and allow the ACMA or Custodian to follow this verbal communication with a formal request. The ability to request all known information in an outage situation within 1 hour could assist to facilitate communication to other government bodies such as the ACMA and the National Emergency Management Authority.
- Resourcing the Custodian to facilitate meaningful real time 24/7 response capabilities and channels informed by information sharing related to Triple Zero.

These reforms provide a strong base for the Custodian to improve practices and oversight of ECSs without introducing a regulatory function to its operations. Expansions to the Custodian's powers to facilitate effective responses to outages would ensure that the Custodian fulfils its functions and responds to the most critical problems that occur in the Triple Zero system.

## 6. Conclusion

Reliable access to emergency services facilitated through the ECS and Triple Zero is a foundational public safety expectation of Australians. However, the ECS is facilitated through networks which are not regulated with the express aim of reliability.

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<sup>116</sup> *Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999* (Cth), s.151A(5).

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

This can affect Australians anywhere in the country, at any time, but disproportionality impacts people living in RRR areas who are often further from help, geographically more isolated, and often have fewer redundancy measures and alternative means of calling for help when an emergency arises.

Accordingly, reforms are urgently needed to improve the reliability and accessibility of the ECS through the introduction of minimum mobile service standards, and mandate text-to-Triple Zero to ensure its availability to all Australians. The current call-based Triple Zero system restricts or even prevents the ability of many consumers with a disability and specific accessibility needs from contacting emergency services when needed. The Review should recommend expanding the functions and powers of the Custodian and improve the standards and accountability of the ECP.

Without urgent action to address these issues, ongoing harm to consumers will likely continue to recur. Reforms to the reliability, accessibility and transparency of the Triple Zero legislative and regulatory framework should be progressed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all Australians.

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is Australia's peak communication consumer organisation. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Commonwealth of Australia under section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997. This funding is recovered from charges on telecommunications carriers. ACCAN is committed to reconciliation that acknowledges Australia's past and values the unique culture and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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