

To the Triple Zero Custodian Operations Branch - Triple Zero Custodian Division,
DITRCSA

Thank you for opening the submissions for the Triple Zero Legislative and Regulatory Review.

The Triple Zero System and the laws & regulations that underpin its function are of utmost importance and this review is very welcome given recent incidents related to Triple Zero.

I note the within the Terms of Reference of this review and one of the matters for consideration is 'The effectiveness and appropriateness of rules requiring that customer equipment to be capable of contacting Triple Zero'.

In addition to being concerned about Triple Zero Access in an Emergency, I am writing to this Consultation to highlight issues around the device blocking requirements, that has personal has effected me, family and friends, prior to the 3G Network Shutdown in October 2024 and is still an ongoing issue.

Changes to Emergency Calling Rules (Emergency Call Service Determination) in late 2024 by the (then) Communications Minister and ACMA resulted in hundreds of thousands of newer 4G & 5G phones being artificially blocked from the mobile networks.

Including some phones being used by tourists, despite being exempt under the new rules.

As the Department would be aware the new direction from the (then) Minister included a requirement for the network carriers to block phones if the carrier has determined the phone cannot call 000.

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

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

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

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

Whilst also not addressing the core technical issues with 4G VoLTE Calling and Emergency Calling, or issues around industry adherence to best practice global standards for VoLTE.

Some of the impacts around the shutdown & device blocking have been covered in the below articles.

IA - Australia's 3G shutdown: Why your 4G/5G phone is now blocked - 12 November 2024 <https://independentaustralia.net/politics/politics-display/australias-3g-shutdown-why-your-4g5g-phone-is-now-blocked,19159>

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

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

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

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

Australia's 000 Failures: Why your phone may fail to Call Triple Zero - 13 April 2025 <https://medium.com/@jamesdwho/australias-000-failures-why-your-phone-may-fail-to-call-triple-zero-af8e505d58fc>

<https://independentaustralia.net/business/business-display/australias-000-failures-why-your-phone-may-fail-to-call-triple-zero,20923>

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

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

I have signed a Change.org Petition created by James Parker about this issue, it has over 10,800 signatures.

He was also a witness at the 3G Shutdown Senate inquiry in July 2024 and has been quoted in a number of national media reports regarding this issue, including from late last year.

Change.org - Stop Telco 4G/5G Device Blocking & VoLTE Restrictions:
<https://change.org/StopTelcoDeviceBlocking>

Outside of blocking genuinely incompatible devices, the 'device blocking' changes to the determination and the implementation by the carriers essentially penalised customers for using devices that work for Triple Zero Calls on 4G networks, but were not purchased directly from the telcos or their handset partners. My Fairphone 5 mobile has since been blocked from Telstra and Optus now, I was previous able to make legitimate (000) emergency calls and both provided have given no creditable evidence as to why this device has been blocked.

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

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

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

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

EENA 2022: Access to emergency services is being impacted by the lack of VoLTE interoperability

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHjyLmFt-eg>

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

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

Letting the carriers block 'incompatible' devices of their choosing did nothing other than let them sweep the problem under the rug.

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

ABC - Telstra & Optus are inconsistently blocking phones. The regulator doesn't know how many - 27 May 2025

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-05-27/telstra-optus-inconsistent-blocking-phones/105319626>

It appears there has not been sufficient regulatory oversight of these matters since the 3G shutdown, especially given the events of late last year.

ABC - Industry experts say TPG Telecom should have done more to address Triple Zero issue - 19 November 2025 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-11-19/tpg-telecom-contact-customers-triple-zero-death/106022250>

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

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

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

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

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

The telcos should be forced to publish their device blocking and support lists in a publicly accessible spreadsheet. They should also be required to provide all of the historical lists and include the exact technical reasons why a phone should be blocked or not. I personally have been told by the TIO they can't force telcos to provide this information and I have also been told by the ACMA they can't investigate without prove. As a consumer I have no power here.

There must be full transparency from the carriers as to what is blocked and why.

This is important both for public safety and consumers.

Now more than a year later since that story there have been no meaningful improvements regarding transparency of information, or any real recourse for consumers.

The current policy settings have allowed (and continue to allow) the mobile carriers to be the sole arbiters about what is allowed and what isn't, with no obligations on them to provide any public proof or transparency about what phones are blocked any why.

These changes have been extremely corrosive for consumers.

It has harmed consumer rights, undermined competition in the handset market, generated excessive e-waste & new device sales, all whilst not genuinely addressing the fundamental compatibility and safety issues the determination changes were meant to solve.

The current blocking policy and inconsistent approaches implemented by the carriers are not fit for purpose and are an overly blunt instrument for what is something that requires a nuanced and proportionate response.

The carriers should not be allowed to be judge, jury and executioner solely deciding what phones their customers are allowed to use.

As part of this review I would ask that these matters are given very careful consideration and the interests of consumers & the public are at the forefront of any decision making.

Furthermore, given recent Triple Zero Call Failures, the public should be provided an automated way to test 000 calls on their device to check for any call quality or coverage issues. This is especially needed for regional areas where there is significantly reduced coverage post 3G Shutdown.

ABC & 7.30 reports from last year have highlighted numerous stories about people unable to call 000 on their 4G & 5G devices post 3G shutdown, and recent survey data from ACCAN has highlighted potential further issues.

Optus customers left angry after more failed triple-0 calls | 7.30 - 6 October 2025

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qRKwnmr2eA>

ABC - More Optus triple-0 call failures on new dates, customers reveal - 6 October 2025

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-10-06/more-optus-triple-zero-fails-outside-of-confirmed-times/105856172>

ABC - Calls for system overhaul after more people say they were unable to call triple-0 - 30 October 2025

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-10-30/triple-0-failure-optus-network-robbery-emergency/105938218>

ACCAN - Triple Zero failures affect one in ten – system reform is now urgent - 3 June 2026 <https://www.accan.org.au/accan-s-media-releases/triple-zero-access-failures-and-concern-confirmed-in-further-research->

Based on the above reports it appears the telcos are not putting in sufficient resources in determining the real world 000 capabilities of devices and ensuring all calls are carried.

Given the other recent unconscionable conduct findings with Optus, all of this issue should be thoroughly investigated as part of this review.

This should also be fully investigated by the regulator (ACMA) as there appears to be a systemic issue at Optus and the industry.

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

I would also like to see strong engagement with impacted consumers around these issues to ensure all regulatory settings related to device blocking and triple zero are fit for purpose.

It's important that policy settings work in the interest of the public & consumers, not carrier interests.

Letting carriers block 4G & 5G devices of their choosing from all network services is not and was not a real solution. That policy change merely shifted the burden of the industry's failure to address these issues onto consumers.

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

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

Australian consumers need protection from these practices, fair access to telecommunications and reliable methods to be able to contact Triple Zero.

Network carriers must be held accountable for any and all failures in regards to these matters, it should not require legal action or lengthy ombudsman disputes from consumers for this to change.

As part of this review, I also support and would encourage consideration of the following reforms:

Full Public Data Disclosure

Immediately require all of the MNOs to publicly publish (in a downloadable Spreadsheet format) their current device blocking and support lists, including all of the historical blocking and compatibility lists from prior to the shutdown (and to date).

That data must also include what they categorised each device as and the observed call volumes for each model that led to them determining if something should be blocked or not.

The carriers need to prove why a certain model should be blocked.

That data needs to be public. Device Categories at minimum need to specify '3G Only, 4G but 3G for calls, 4G for Calls but 3G for 000' etc.

Real World Triple Zero Call Data for Models

The providers must provide a public list of all the device TACs (Makes & Models) that have placed anonymous 'camp-on' Emergency Calls on their network both for the year prior to the shutdown and since the shutdown (including to date). That list will include a large number of VoLTE 000 Capable phones that have been blocked in error. This information and the list of TACs must be public.

An Automated Public 000 Test Line

Consumers must have the right and ability to carry out an automated 000 call test on their device. Telco customers can be provided information and instructions from their carrier that allows them to carry out an automated 000 'call quality and audio test' on their device.

This would allow for better identification of both device issues and coverage issues, particularly in regional areas with limited mobile coverage.

Standardisation & Compliance with Global Standards

Immediately ensure that all carriers are following best practice GSMA standards for VoLTE Emergency Calling, including support for both IPv4 and IPv6 and any other settings or industry protocols available to ensure maximum interoperability with as many devices as possible.

Improve Consumer Protections & Require MNOs to supply free like-for-like replacements

The Determination should be modified to ensure not just information on 'low or no cost' handsets is available for impacted consumers, but consumers can obtain devices at no cost that are fit for purpose for their needs.

There should also be stronger consumer protections for individuals adversely affected by regulatory or carrier-driven blocking decisions.

These should apply irrespective of hardship circumstances. Such requirements would put the burden on carriers to ensure they invest in the right tools to validate the capabilities of devices in use by customers, rather than block anything they didn't test or sell.

Targeted Alternatives to Full Network Blocking

Consider whether more proportionate and nuanced measures could achieve public safety objectives without allowing the telcos to block what they see as 'incompatible' devices from all network services. For example forced outbound messages or 'outbound call blocking' when making calls rather than blocking devices from all network services. Allowing devices to connect in some form again will allow for better 'real-world' post shutdown analysis of device capabilities.

Publish Device Testing Results

Both carrier and device testing facility data should be made public so consumers can be better informed about the capabilities of their devices in given failure situations. Various makes and types of devices should be tested to ensure a representative sample.

Future Emergency Communications Capability & Alternative Methods for Triple Zero

Consider future emergency communications models that support additional methods of contact beyond traditional voice calling, including messaging, data-based and accessible communications options where appropriate. This could include enabling access to Emergency Services via alternative contact methods such as via SMS, Mobile Data/Mobile Apps.

I once again strongly request that these issues are very carefully considered as part of the review and prompt action is taken to provide real transparency & accountability.

Thank you for your time.

Kind regards,

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