

To the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP,

I am writing to you to raise urgent and very serious concerns regarding the recent planned changes to the Emergency Call Service Determination (ECSD), set to take effect on 1 Nov 2024.

While the amendments aim to ensure access to emergency services, they will have severe consequences for consumers, competition, and the overall accessibility of mobile services. Whilst also not addressing the core issues with VoLTE Calling and Emergency Calling.

Under the new rules, telcos will be required to block 4G and 5G devices that are not on their official 'supports lists' as supporting calls to 000, even if those devices may work perfectly for emergency calls or accessing other 4G services (i.e. calls, data or SMS).

This policy essentially penalises customers for using devices that work but were not purchased directly from the telcos or their partners. Once in effect, this would further concentrate profits and market control to the telcos and major handset brands, severely limiting competition & choice in the market.

This policy is very concerning because many consumers, including myself, own fully functional devices that can make VoLTE calls *and emergency calls*, yet are deemed "incompatible" by the telcos.

These are devices with the exact same type of hardware and software as 'officially supported' devices, the only difference is the telcos didn't sell them.

The SMS 'check' **is not reliable** and does not accurately report back the status of calling on all devices.

We need a universal standard that ensures any phone, no matter where it's bought, can work on any network without artificial blocks or restrictions. Just like what we've had for the last 20–30 years with 2G and 3G.

Telstra needs to be forced to support as many devices as possible, by either supporting the most widely used Open VoLTE standards, or by providing VoIP calling apps to customers that work as a dialler replacement.

Ultimately, it's important we wait until Europe and much larger markets actually address the compatibility issues with 4G Calling & Emergency Calling. This is a global issue and requires a coordinated effort to resolve. Blocking devices is to do nothing but sweep the problem under the rug.

Beyond just phones, other equipment and devices that only require 4G data & SMS would also likely be impacted, making this policy a significant threat to mobile connectivity.

Blocking devices is not a solution, it merely shifts the burden of the industry's failure to address these issues onto consumers. The telcos must be forced to resolve these compatibility issues and provide updates and apps to existing devices, rather than be allowed to disconnect working 4G/5G devices.

I strongly urge the current amendments to the ECSD be reconsidered. ACMA should draft a solution that respects the rights of consumers, ensures accessibility to telecommunications services and requires the industry to actually fix the problem!

Can you please provide certainty and guarantees that consumers will be able continue to use any 4G & 5G devices they own for whatever purpose they desire on any 4G network in Australia post shutdown. Whether they do or do not support VoLTE calling, emergency calling or only data & SMS, **and without** any artificial device blocks or restrictions being imposed.

Known affected devices can continue to receive daily text messages and outbound call messages notifying of the possible issues with Emergency Calling over 4G. To me it's clear the industry has no real idea what exactly will work post shutdown. The Providers Commercial Interests must not be put ahead of the broader Public Interest.

Customers with fully working devices that are '*unsupported*' **must not be blocked** from using them and **must not** be subjected to repeated false & misleading text messages and outbound call recordings, (especially if they can demonstrate the device works).

The industry also needs to be required to correct their messaging and stop telling customers with perfectly working phones they need to upgrade.

The industry should be required to implement real technical fixes that allow all consumers to access the networks, regardless of where they purchased their device.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this issue. I hope you will act to protect consumers and ensure fair access to telecommunications for all Australians.

Regards

Yuval Kumawat

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