



Tasmania Fire Service

Office of the Chief Officer

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Australian Competition & Consumer Commission  
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Dear Mr Whitehand Willick

### **Input to the ACCC's Regional Mobile Infrastructure Inquiry**

Thank you for your email regarding the inquiry into towers used in the supply of mobile telecommunications and other radiocommunications services in regional, remote and peri-urban areas and the feasibility of enabling temporary mobile roaming during natural disasters or other emergencies.

We are appreciative of the efforts of the Commonwealth to involve Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) in the Inquiry's consultation process.

The Emergency Management Unit (EMU) under the direction of the TFS consulted with representatives within the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management (DPFEM) and emergency management partners in the preparation of this response. From this consultation process we submit the attached document as our response to questions posed.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this response please contact Matt Brocklehurst on [REDACTED] or [matthew.brocklehurst@ses.tas.gov.au](mailto:matthew.brocklehurst@ses.tas.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]  
Dermot Barry ESM  
**CHIEF OFFICER**

3 February 2023

Encl. Response from TFS

Copy to ACCC Inquiry Team: [rmii@acc.gov.au](mailto:rmii@acc.gov.au)

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## Response from the Tasmania Fire Service

### 1. What telecommunications services are used and/or needed for emergency services organisations?

Tasmania is dependent on a broad range of telecommunications services, each supporting the variety of communications needs. These include communications internal to the various emergency service organisations and those external to the community.

The primary service providers include NBN, Telstra, Optus and TPG.

- The NBN is used for MyNetFone which is the service used for phones in the emergency dispatch centre as well as the State Operation Centre. It is also used for retrieving and receiving intelligence data.
- Telstra, Optus and TPG all provide cellular service to both the emergency services and the general public across Tasmania.

A variety of satellite services are also available within Tasmania with Iridium being one of the leading service providers.

Another element of the Tasmanian emergency services telecommunications architecture is TasmaNet, which provides telecommunications services to the Tasmanian government.

### 2. How emergency services personnel communicate with each other and the general public during emergencies?

Emergency services personnel communicate through a combination of IT systems, radios, mobiles, landlines, pagers and satellite phones. These platforms are used throughout the command and control hierarchy with mobile and portable systems being more prevalent at the operational and tactical level, and fixed infrastructure systems being more common at the strategic level.

Of note, Tasmania is delivering a new Government Radio Network (TasGRN) that will transition eight core Tasmanian Government organisations currently using five disparate radio networks onto one unified, digital and interoperable radio network. The TasGRN project is in its implementation phase and will deliver a digital, whole-of-government P25 Land Mobile Radio network.

The Tasmanian general public are kept informed through the TasALERT and TasRECOVERY websites. These sites provide a centralised online platform helping Tasmanians to know what to do before, during and after an emergency event.

During an emergency TasALERT is Tasmania's primary source of clear and consistent emergency warnings and information from emergency services and other government agencies, with a real-time map display and easy-to-use, high performing interface. TasALERT also provides access to emergency preparedness information, assisting you to 'Get Ready' for an emergency event. After the emergency response period, TasRECOVERY will connect those impacted with all the support, advice and services available.

TasALERT and TasRECOVERY are administered by The Department of Premier and Cabinet and is the Tasmanian Government's official and primary source of emergency warnings, information and Recovery information. Individual Government agencies also provide public communications via their websites and social media and where appropriate this is linked to the TasALERT website.

The Emergency Alert system is available to all Tasmanian emergency response authorities on a 24/7 basis through Central Fire Communication Facility of the Tasmania Fire Service. Emergency Alert can send voice messages to landline telephones and text messages to mobile telephones within a specific area defined by the emergency response authority issuing the warning message. Tasmanian Emergency Alert messages will often refer the public to a website and/or ABC Local Radio for further information.

Of note, Tasmania has previously recommended the Telecommunications Act 1995 be amended to require telecommunication carriers to provide the Emergency Alert telephone warning system on their network as a community service obligation. Tasmania maintains this position.

Tasmania Emergency Information Service (TEIS) is the State's emergency call centre capability. This service provides an initial point of contact for the community to access self-help information during and following an emergency.

ABC Radio remains is a trusted partner for broadcast communications with the community.

## Response from the Tasmania Fire Service

### 3. What forms of telecommunications are most used or needed during a natural disaster or emergency (e.g. voice, SMS, data)?

There is no form of telecommunication that is more important than any other during a natural disaster or emergency. Data and voice services are used concurrently and support the response and the recovery.

It is however very important the infrastructure for these services is resilient and reliable, in particular the NBN backbone will not work when the power is disrupted so the protection/restoration of this system is very important.

### 4. Do emergency services personnel and volunteers rely on their private mobile phone services, as well as established emergency service radio networks, and why?

Yes, a number of the emergency services personnel and volunteers do use their private mobile phone services. Often this is due to convenience however it is cost-prohibitive to provide each emergency service personnel and volunteer with a mobile phone.

### 5. The time taken to restore telecommunications services after a natural disaster event?

There are many factors that would need to be known before a time to restore can be estimated, these include:

- The location of any assets and access to those sites (ie remote or subject to ongoing risk);
- The extent to which an asset has been damaged;
- The availability of temporary services such as Cell on Wheels (COWs), Satellite Cell on Wheels (SatCOWs) and Mobile Exchange on Wheels (MEOWs); and
- The prioritisation of restoration effort

Of particular note for Tasmania is that much of the emergency equipment owned and maintained by the various telecommunications service providers is based on mainland Australia. The movement of these items will add a degree of complexity and additional time to the deployment of these assets.

### 6. Potential emergency management protocols around activating a state of temporary emergency roaming during natural disasters and emergencies, including liaising processes with telecommunications service providers?

In Tasmania there are no protocols in place for activating a state of temporary emergency roaming during natural disasters and emergencies. Tasmania does however maintain a good working relationship with the telecommunications sector, and Telstra and NBN Co in particular are very active in Tasmania's regional emergency management arrangements.