



**Friday, 31 May 2024**

Committee Secretariat  
Senate Standing Committee on rural and Regional Affairs and Transport  
Via email: [rrat.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:rrat.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Members of the Senate Committee,

On behalf of the National Retail Association, Australian Association of Convenience Stores, and the Shopping Centre Council of Australia, we thank you for the invitation to provide feedback in relation to the cessation of 3G services through the Telstra, and Optus networks, respectively.

Collectively, our associations represent small and medium businesses, franchisees, and industry stakeholders from supermarkets to convenience and service stores and shopping centre owners and managers. We provide insights and concerns on behalf of a broad range of stakeholders, particularly in remote, regional, and rural Australia.

We understand Telstra has established a timeframe for switching off 3G services by June 30, 2024, and Optus will switch off 3G services by the end of 2024. Our concern is that these timings are fast approaching and that there is the potential for unanticipated consequences for small business owners. We also understand there will be cost implications to upgrade to 4G or 5G services and devices.

Telstra services providers including ALDI mobile, Belong, Boost Mobile, MATE, Tangerine, Numobile, Lycamobile and Exetel - businesses and customers will no longer be able to access a Telstra network beyond June 30, 2024. Critically, unless a device has Voice over LTE (VoLTE) technology, businesses and customers will not be able to make an emergency call to 000 from the Telstra network, nor can they make voice calls, outlined on the [Telstra website](#).

Devices may be incompatible with 4G and 5G services and this is a real risk to the operations and function of businesses. There will be a requirement to replace current phones if they do not receive 4G or 5G services and is an additional, and unnecessary cost burden for businesses to consider.

As you are aware, 3G towers currently service rural, regional, and remote small businesses, including malls, centres, retailers, and service stations and convenience stores, and without adequate infrastructure, this could risk the income and livelihoods of businesses relying on these services, particularly during natural disasters.

This can potentially impact EFTPOS terminals, industrial routers, scanners, telematics, asset tracking, and security monitoring and will place unnecessary financial pressure on many small and medium businesses across Australia. Additionally, we do not believe this has been adequately communicated and will inevitably create confusion for businesses who are often low on resources and time.

The cost of owning and operating businesses continues to increase dramatically, especially for small to medium family businesses. Any unnecessary additional costs will continue to place immense pressure on these businesses and therefore, we request to meet with both Telstra and Optus representatives to discuss the potential impact on our members and tenants.

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