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Reference: A2332899

Committee Secretary  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs  
and Transport References Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House,  
ACT, 2600.

Dear Committee Secretary,

## SENATE SUBMISSION

The South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on *"Inquiry into the shutdown of the 3G mobile network and telecommunications services accessibility"*

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### 1. About the MFS

The MFS is the primary provider of structural firefighting services to the state of South Australia. The MFS was established in 1862, and is based in the city of Adelaide, with a state population approximately 1.37 million, and is the capital of south Australia. The MFS is a fully professional organisation, recognised for excellence of service provision and employs more than 1200 staff across 37 stations (20 metropolitan and 17 regional) in South Australia.

### 2. Summary

The MFS is the call receipt and dispatch centre for the MFS, CFS and SES for the whole state of South Australia.

The MFS communications call centre also directly monitors approximately 3500 premises fire alarms across metropolitan and regional South Australia. In 2022/23 FY, the MFS responded to nearly 7500 Fire Alarm activations, with nearly 1000 of them situated in regional areas.

The Fire "Alarm Signalling Equipment" (ASE)'s that send the fire alarm signal to the MFS are currently being upgraded by Telstra from the current 3G network to utilising the 4G/5G network.

In this submission, we will discuss:

- The Impact on access to triple zero emergency calls;
- The number of devices and customers affected by the shutdown;



Government  
of South Australia

- The absence of 4G services in rural and regional areas previously covered by 3G;
- Any other related matters

### **3. The Impact on access to triple zero emergency calls.**

The MFS communications call centre receives approximately 20,000 triple zero (000) emergency calls annually and dispatches MFS, Country Fire Service (CFS) and State Emergency Service (SES) resources to emergency incidents across the whole state of South Australia. Approximately 13% of these are for regional response.

As such, any person making an emergency call from a 3G network mobile phone may not have their call connected to the MFS. Should this occur, this may impact the response of the MFS, CFS or SES to emergency incidents.

### **4. The number of devices and customers affected by the shutdown.**

The MFS directly monitors close to 3500 premises fire alarms in metropolitan and regional areas, in both MFS and CFS response areas. These alarm systems use a dual sim mobile phone technology to communicate fire alarms and faults to the MFS communication centre. Some of the older alarm systems use 3G technology but are in the process of being upgraded.

Any monitored alarms that are not changed over to the 4G network prior to the shutdown will immediately lose their Telstra signalling capability and will become unmonitored if the second sim is also disconnected, affecting the protection and response of the MFS or CFS to the alarmed premises.

This alarm system changeover has been occurring over the last two years, with approximately 500 devices yet to be replaced (about 60 in MFS and CFS regional areas.) It is expected that all devices will be transitioned by the proposed date of 31 August 2024 for the shutdown of the 3G network.

### **5. The absence of 4G services in rural and regional areas previously covered by 3G.**

The absence of a 4G network in regional communities will result in monitored alarms losing their Telstra signalling capability. The monitored alarms will become unmonitored if the second sim is also disconnected, affecting the protection and response of the MFS or CFS to the alarmed premises. Mobile phone triple zero (000) calls and monitored alarms in these areas rely on mobile phone networks.

### **6. Any other related matters.**

Should a monitored alarm system become disconnected, this may affect the premises certificate of occupancy if the building is required to have a monitored active alarm system as part of their essential safety provisions (ESP's).

Yours faithfully.

J. Swann, AFSM MBA  
**CHIEF OFFICER and  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

21 May 2024