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Media Release

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Consumers welcome Industry Working Group to ensure safe shutdown of 3G networks

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) welcomes the establishment of an industry working group by the Minister for Communications, the Hon Michelle Rowland MP, to ensure the planned switchover from 3G to 4G happens in a safe way.

The working group will include representatives from Telstra, Optus, Vodafone/TPG and the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association, with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts participating with an observer status.

ACCAN Acting CEO Dr. Gareth Downing said that the formation of an industry working group is an appropriate response by the Minister given concerns about device compatibility, Triple-Zero connectivity, and low public awareness of the shutdown.

"We are concerned by reports indicating that up to 740,000 older 4G handsets will be unable to call Triple Zero due to their use of legacy 3G networks. These devices will however work for regular phone calls on 4G networks, making it unclear to consumers that in the event of an emergency they will not be able to call Triple Zero," Dr Downing said.

"Industry should be providing consumers with clear information about which devices will and won't work with Triple Zero and can be relied on to access emergency services. The working group and the major telcos must clearly communicate to consumers how they can identify if their device will work after the 3G shutdown, or whether they need to upgrade their device."

"If the 3G network is to close as planned in coming months, it is essential that industry works jointly to deliver clear messages to consumers. Immediate action is needed to ensure that those with impacted devices receive appropriate notices across several mediums."

"ACCAN thanks the Minister for convening this working group, and industry for recognising the need for action. We look forward to supporting the working group in the sharing of key information with the public." Dr. Downing concluded.

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is Australia's peak communication consumer organisation. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Commonwealth of Australia under section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997. This funding is recovered from charges on telecommunications carriers.
