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Media Release

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ACCAN calls for modern emergency alert tech for natural disasters

With the recovery from ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred underway—and many parts of Australia's east coast still experiencing significant rain and flooding—attention must soon turn to how new communications technology that can support those in emergency situations due to natural disasters, says peak communications consumer body ACCAN.

Following the 2020 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, the government committed funding to develop a National Messaging System (NMS).

The NMS will use cell-broadcast technology to deliver highly targeted emergency messages to Australians during disasters. Unlike traditional SMS alerts, it is faster, more reliable, and unaffected by network congestion. The system also offers enhanced privacy protections and can override "Do Not Disturb" and silent settings on mobile devices. The NMS is still under development, with a projected delivery date of 2027.

ACCAN CEO Carol Bennett highlighted the urgency of implementing modern emergency communication solutions.

"The severe weather events on the east coast have been serious, but with climate change accelerating, we can expect even worse in the years ahead. Governments must embrace new technologies to ensure public safety as a matter of urgency," Ms Bennett said.

"Connectivity loss is a real threat to health and safety. Emerging technologies—such as Direct-to-Device connectivity and the NMS—offer practical solutions to keep Australians informed when it matters most."

During Cyclone Alfred, hundreds of mobile towers were taken offline due to widespread power outages. Future events will likely see similar disruptions. The NMS and Direct-to-Device connectivity supported by the Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation (UOMO) announced by Minister Rowland recently, can provide a vital safety net by delivering emergency updates even when mobile networks fail.

"We call on policymakers to urgently unlock the benefits of LEO satellite (LEOSat) mobile connectivity, ensuring all Australians can access critical communications when they need it most," Ms Bennett said.

"We commend Australia's telecommunications companies for their diligent efforts in restoring mobile networks after ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred but ideally we could avoid restoration efforts by investing more in reliable and resilient infrastructure to prevent outages in the first place," Ms. Bennett concluded.

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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.

ACCAN is committed to reconciliation that acknowledges Australia's past and values the unique culture and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. [Read our RAP](#)
