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Safety concerns mean 3G shutdown must be delayed

Australia's peak communications consumer body, ACCAN, is calling on the Communications Minister Michelle Rowland to exercise her discretionary powers and delay the 3G shutdown due to unacceptable public safety concerns.

The Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee last week released an Interim Report into the shutdown of 3G networks. It found that up to 77,000 mobile phone users would be unable to call triple zero emergency services when the nation's 3G networks were switched off.

Another significant safety issue is medical and monitoring devices. It's estimated that approximately 200,000 medical alert devices rely on Australia's 3G mobile network.

ACCAN CEO Carol Bennett said that, despite assurances from industry that consumers will be ready for the network transition, the unresolved safety risks involved mean that a continuation of 3G connectivity is needed.

"Our primary concern is that public safety will be impacted by the shutdown of 3G networks," Ms Bennett said.

"ACCAN is a strong supporter of the 3G closure. We are very aware of the benefits that will flow from increased 4G/5G capacity. However, we need reassurance that those who are reliant on 3G medical devices, low-income and vulnerable consumers, as well as farms and businesses are not exposed to harm or left behind."

"While mobile network operators have taken positive steps to prepare consumers for the forthcoming switch-off, a broader approach is needed. Device manufacturers beyond the mobile phone sector need to step up to ensure that all 3G consumers are aware of the imminent disconnection of critical devices including medical alarms," Ms Bennett continued.

"The government's first obligation must be to keep Australians safe and not undermine health and safety, or the viability of farms and businesses. We believe the best way to do this is to delay the shutdown of 3G," Ms Bennett 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.

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](#)
