



THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP
Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

MEDIA RELEASE

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Supporting our emergency service organisations

Today the Morrison Government commenced consultation on a range of updates to the *Telecommunications (Low-impact Facilities) Determination 2018* and the *Telecommunications Code of Practice 2018* designed to make it easier for mobile carriers to deploy temporary facilities, including temporary mobile phone towers, in the event of an emergency.

The Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, said the severity of the recent bushfires highlight the importance of keeping Australians connected during natural disasters.

“Reliable telecommunications services are vital for our emergency service organisations to effectively respond to a critical event or natural disaster,” Minister Fletcher said.

“With an early and intense start to the fire season this year, mobile carriers have rolled out a number of temporary facilities to provide critical communications services to our firefighters and affected communities.”

The proposed changes will provide greater certainty that mobile carriers will be able to deploy temporary towers in an emergency.

“This will ultimately mean that carriers are able to restore, and secure the delivery of essential telecommunications services quickly and efficiently in times of emergency,” Minister Fletcher said.

Exposure drafts of the proposed amendments to the *Telecommunications (Low-impact Facilities) Determination 2018* and the *Telecommunications Code of Practice 2018* are now available on the Department of Communications and the Arts’ website and interested parties are encouraged to have their say.

The consultation period will run until 23 December 2019 (5.00pm AEDT).

To view the package and have your say visit: <https://www.communications.gov.au/have-your-say/consultation-possible-amendments-telecommunications-powers-and-immunities>

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Background

The *Telecommunications (Low-impact Facilities) Determination 2018* (the Determination) specifies low-impact facilities, which include radiocommunications and emergency facilities.

These low-impact facilities are needed for telecommunications networks to provide wider coverage and services. There are strict limitations on the type, size, colour and location limitations of low-impact facilities.

A Cell on Wheels (CoW) is a portable base station used to provide temporary cellular network coverage for emergency situations where existing base stations become damaged, or during natural disasters such as bushfires and floods.

In February 2019, the Morrison Government passed the *Telecommunications Legislation Amendment Act 2019*. The Act made changes to enable temporary telecommunications towers to be specified as low-impact facilities in certain circumstances. This allows carriers to more efficiently provide better services during events (e.g. major sports events or festivals), peak holiday periods, emergencies or routine maintenance, or when replacing a facility.

The Determination is made under the *Telecommunications Act*. The purpose of this consultation is to ensure the changes to the Act made in February 2019 are appropriately translated into the Determination.