



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

MEDIA RELEASE

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Maintaining resilience and repairing telecommunications in bushfire-affected areas

The Morrison Government is supporting telecommunications operators to maintain network resilience and repair connections in bushfire-affected areas of the country.

“Our telecommunications operators are working to fix network outages as soon and safely as possible. I commend the network operators’ efforts in responding, which has included deploying temporary facilities to restore communications services for impacted communities, particularly those that are isolated,” Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, said.

“Many of the outages are due to power supplies being cut off, and in some cases are the direct impact of fire on network infrastructure. The current fire situations across Australia have made access difficult and unsafe at some sites to assess and restore services.

“As and when it is safe for technicians to access infrastructure sites, restoration work is getting underway. The extent of fire impact to power and communications infrastructure in some regions means work to repair and rebuild will be ongoing.”

Telecommunications operators, including NBN Co, are working around the clock in coordination with State and Territory emergency management authorities to determine when it is safe to access bushfire affected areas – including under escort conditions where necessary – to restore services and maintain backup generators with fuel to keep services operational where possible.

In addition to resilience and repair initiatives, temporary facilities have been deployed, including:

- NBN Co deploying a Road Muster truck to Batemans Bay, providing Wi-Fi connectivity to evacuees via the NBN satellite and local ABC bushfire updates which are being played on the Road Muster truck speakers, helping to keep evacuees informed.
- NBN Co deploying a Road Muster truck to Somerville on the Mornington Peninsula to provide connectivity services and a charging station for evacuees from Mallacoota.
- NBN Co installing Sky Muster satellite dishes at several evacuation centres around the NSW South Coast and the Gippsland region in Victoria providing free Wi-Fi.
- Telstra deploying a Satellite Cell on Wheels in Mallacoota, a Cell on Wheels to Corryong in Victoria to support emergency services operational communications, providing satellite phones for emergency services, setting up charging stations and hotspots and distributing pre-paid sim cards at a number of evacuation centres across NSW and Victoria.
- The ABC was able to install a temporary radio transmitter in Batemans Bay on an adjacent tower, with the cooperation of Grant Broadcasters, to restore crucial ABC Radio coverage following the destruction of its transmission tower.

NBN Co and telecommunications carriers are prepared to deploy additional resources, including NBN Road Muster trucks, in close coordination with emergency services authorities where conditions permit.

The Australian Government's Crisis Coordination Centre is providing national oversight and coordination of the operational response, with State and Territory emergency authorities leading the on-the-ground response. Efforts are being supported by the Australian Defence Force.

"It is important to remember that no form of telecommunications is one hundred per cent resilient, and people should not be relying on a single means of communications," Minister Fletcher said.

"In many cases, a portable transistor radio with a spare set of batteries is a vital way to receive emergency information, in the event there is a loss of mains power or mobile coverage."

The ABC and other local radio stations are doing an excellent job transmitting vital emergency information to Australian communities.

Telstra and Optus are offering targeted relief packages in affected regions in NSW and Victoria, including free use of payphones, call diversions from affected lines and other financial assistance.

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