



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

MEDIA RELEASE

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Supporting Australians’ access to telecommunications services

The Australian Government has this week amended the *Telecommunications (Low-impact Facilities) Determination 2018* and the *Telecommunications Code of Practice 2018* to enable carriers to deploy temporary facilities, including temporary towers, as low-impact facilities in certain circumstances including emergencies.

Temporary facilities include a Cell on Wheels which provides temporary cellular network coverage, and a Network on Wheels which can be deployed by NBN Co Limited to provide temporary NBN services.

The changes will enable telecommunications carriers to better manage their networks and provide telecommunications services to families and communities in Australia.

The Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, said: “This summer’s severe bushfires demonstrated the importance of telecommunications carriers making use of their temporary network assets to provide quality services to Australian families and businesses.”

“In the aftermath of the bushfires, when safe to do so, the telcos deployed temporary facilities to keep impacted communities connected. These changes to telecommunications regulations make it more efficient for them to do so in future and provide the telcos more flexibility to respond quickly in rapidly changing circumstances,” Minister Fletcher said.

“The new amendments will also enable carriers to continue to provide emergency services such as fire, police and ambulance services access to essential telecommunications services, particularly in emergency situations.”

The amendments will enable carriers to deploy temporary facilities, including temporary towers in a cost-effective, efficient and nationally consistent way.

Strong safeguards and conditions apply to carriers deploying these types of facilities, including time limits on how long a facility can be deployed, height limits and rules on where the facility can be located. These conditions balance the interests of carriers to meet increasing customer demands whilst protecting the community and landowner interests.

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Background

Telecommunications carriers have certain specific legal powers under the *Telecommunications Act 1997* (the Act) to undertake inspections and to install and maintain facilities. These powers primarily relate to low-impact facilities which are specified in the *Telecommunications (Low-impact Facilities) Determination 2018*.

Amendments made in the *Telecommunications Legislation Amendment Act 2019* (TLAA) enabled the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts to include temporary towers in the Determination as a low-impact facilities in certain circumstances such as during events, peak holiday periods, emergencies, and for maintenance or replacement of a facility.

Amendments to the *Telecommunications Code of Practice 2018* set out strict conditions that carriers must comply with when installing temporary facilities. In addition to the usual processes and conditions that apply to all low-impact facilities, temporary facilities are also subject to additional conditions such as time and height limits.

Other amendments have also been made to clarify the definition of a radiocommunications facility and enact recommendations made by the now Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Delegated Legislation.