

Question on Notice No. 797, Tuesday 17 August 2004

**Ms NELSON CARR** asked the Minister for Emergency Services (Mr Cummins)

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- (1) When Telstra's services collapsed in all locations north of Rockhampton for up to four hours on Thursday 22 July and triple 0 emergency calls were at first unavailable and then diverted to Brisbane, how did this affect emergency services?
- (2) Is his department well prepared to deal with this in the future?

**Mr CUMMINS:**

I would like to thank the Member for Mundingburra for her interest and ongoing strong support for Emergency Services within her electorate.

At 0027 hours on 22 July 2004, the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) Cairns Communications Centre advised AFcom, which is the Brisbane Communications Centre, that Telstra's triple zero network was down.

The implementation of established procedures for events of this kind, and the establishment of the Major Incident Room, ensured the effective and efficient management of this incident by the QAS.

Emergency Service Operations were supported because of the availability of satellite telephone services in the communications centres and some vehicles, and mobile telephone services from Optus, where available. Calls to triple zero were re-routed to the Brisbane Communications centres following Telstra's outage.

The Department of Emergency Services has reported to the Australian Communications Authority on the impact of this life threatening outage.

The QAS continues to upgrade its communications centres, incorporating the replacement of older technology to improve Statewide standardisation and operational support. The QAS has committed \$1 million in 2004-05 to ongoing improvements and upgrades.

I am pleased that the Member is interested in Telstra's triple zero phone service. As I said in parliament on 1 September 2004, the breakdown of Telstra's triple zero phone services for North and Far North Queensland in July was "life threatening" and "an absolute disgrace".

It was only due to the Queensland Ambulance Service's contingency plans that our communications continued to be provided to the people in North and Far North Queensland

A genuine question therefore remains – how could the Federal Government possibly think of selling off the rest of Telstra when they cannot even guarantee basic telecommunications for Emergency Services in North Queensland?

The loss of any Telstra service to Queenslanders is bad enough, but the loss of the triple zero service could have been life threatening, even tragic. The Federal Government should not be thinking of selling off the rest of Telstra when it cannot even guarantee basic telecommunications for our Emergency Services.