

Question on Notice No. 810, Tuesday 17 August 2004

**Mr ROWELL** asked the Minister for Emergency Services (Mr Cummins)—  
With reference to his response to Question on Notice No. 724 and the number of calls to communication centres abandoned—

For each of the last two financial years and for the year to date (a) what is the number of callers that have hung up and (b) what number of calls have rung out?

**Mr CUMMINS:**

I provided some of this information to the Member for Hinchinbrook, in my previous response to Question on Notice 724.

The manual call answering system utilised by Telstra for taking calls from the public and passing them to the Department of Emergency Services (DES) communications centres, requires the Telstra operator to stay on the line and ensure that the call is passed to an emergency services communications centre operator. The impact of this intervention by Telstra in the triple zero call delivery, is that the telephone system call statistics record each call representation as an abandoned call, however, they are not actually abandoned. Due to Telstra's intervention of all calls and procedures, calls are re-presented until they are answered by an emergency services communications centre. In the event that a triple zero caller hangs up, Telstra provides the telephone number identified by the Call Line Identification to the appropriate communications centre for follow up.

Represented calls and a caller that hangs up are recognised by the telephone systems as the same event. It is not possible to distinguish between a call that terminates due to caller frustration or a mobile phone that drops out due to network coverage limitation, or a flat battery.

It is, therefore, not possible to provide a breakdown of the number of calls that ring out and the number of callers that hang up due to the way in which the system records the data.

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

I ask the Member this – how could your Federal Counterparts 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.