

3 August 2026

The Hon Anika Wells MP
Minister for Communications
Minister for Sport
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Email: Anika.Wells.MP@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Dear Minister'.

HEAVY VEHICLE INDUSTRY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS RESILIENCE

HVIA is the peak industry group for Australian manufacturers of heavy vehicles, as well as the dealerships, repairers, suppliers and service providers that support the sector.

I write to you following the recent Telstra outage and urge your consideration of the importance of the resilience of telecommunications services that now underpin safe, compliant and efficient heavy vehicle operations across Australia, and proposed policy directions in this area.

Background

Our members operate within a freight system that has rapidly evolved into a highly connected, technology-enabled network, where mobile telecommunications are no longer simply a means of communication but an essential operational input.

Fleet operators increasingly rely on continuous connectivity to meet regulatory obligations, monitor driver welfare and fatigue, manage vehicle performance, transport dangerous goods, coordinate freight movements and maintain real-time visibility across complex supply chains. Technologies such as Electronic Work Diaries, Telematics Monitoring Applications and On-Board Mass systems have delivered important benefits and have been actively encouraged by governments and regulators.

However, the July 2026 nationwide Telstra outage exposed a significant gap between Australia's telecommunications framework and the operational realities of modern freight transport.

Telstra Outage

While public discussion understandably focused on phone calls, EFTPOS transactions and consumer impacts including safety and welfare with the 000 network, far less attention was given to the thousands of commercial vehicles whose safety oversight, compliance systems and operational visibility depend on reliable mobile connectivity.

During a major outage, transport operators can lose visibility of driver fatigue events, welfare alerts, vehicle location and status, dispatch movements, dangerous goods oversight, Electronic Work Diary synchronisation, On-Board Mass data and other compliance-related information.

For organisations managing hundreds or thousands of vehicles simultaneously, the ability to intervene before a safety event occurs is often far more valuable than after communications have resumed. Time-sensitive alerts such as rollover warnings, duress alarms and vehicle-generated collision notifications are not ordinary business communications; they operate much closer to emergency response systems in terms of operational criticality.

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Policy implications

HVIA is concerned that telecommunications policy has not kept pace with the transport sector's reliance on connected technologies. As governments continue to promote digital compliance systems through the Heavy Vehicle National Law, the National Telematics Framework and related regulatory programs, more consideration must be given to the communications infrastructure that supports those systems.

Regulatory frameworks provide limited guidance on how operators are expected to maintain equivalent oversight when widespread network failures prevent real-time communications with connected vehicles.

The outage also demonstrated that enterprise communications during major telecommunications incidents must improve. HVIA members reported that they were often forced to rely on mainstream media, customer reports or informal channels to understand the nature and extent of the outage.

In HVIA's view, **outage information should be treated as critical operational data**. Telecommunications carriers should be required to provide enterprise customers with real-time, machine-readable outage information, including automated notifications, geographic impact mapping, affected technologies, restoration timeframes and regular updates until services are fully restored.

This information should be provided as part of the telecommunications service rather than offered as an additional paid product. Where businesses already depend on carrier networks to operate safely and meet regulatory obligations, charging for access to information about the status of those same services is inconsistent with the expectations placed on providers of critical infrastructure.

HVIA also recommends that the Australian Government examine an emergency domestic roaming framework that could be activated during declared major telecommunications outages. Where technically feasible, devices supporting critical infrastructure sectors should be permitted to temporarily utilise alternative carrier networks when their primary network experiences a widespread failure.

Such an approach would significantly improve operational resilience across freight transport, dangerous goods movements, emergency logistics, regional freight operations and other nationally significant industries without altering normal commercial competition between telecommunications providers.

Telecommunications should now be recognised as an essential component of Australia's transport infrastructure. Mobile networks support many of the national outcomes traditionally associated with roads, bridges, ports and electricity networks. Without reliable connectivity, operators lose visibility of vehicles, compliance systems become impaired and the efficient movement of freight is compromised. This will become even more significant as 5G-enabled cooperative vehicle technologies, vehicle-to-infrastructure services, automated driving functions and connected emergency call services become more prominent in heavy vehicle operations.

HVIA therefore recommends that the Australian Government recognise telecommunications supporting connected freight and heavy vehicle operations as nationally significant critical infrastructure. This would include:

- Introducing minimum standards for enterprise communications during major outages
- Requiring free access to real-time outage information through standardised reporting and machine-readable interfaces
- Requiring carriers to publicly report against outage communication obligations following major incidents
- Investigating emergency domestic roaming arrangements for declared outages affecting critical infrastructure sectors
- Reviewing the interaction between telecommunications failures and heavy vehicle compliance obligations; and
- Establishing a joint Government–Industry Transport Telecommunications Resilience Working Group involving the Department of Communications, the Department of Infrastructure, the

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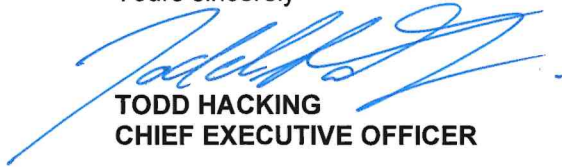
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National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, ACMA, telecommunications carriers, HVIA and telematics providers.

Australia's freight industry has embraced digital technologies that have improved safety, productivity and regulatory compliance. The July 2026 Telstra outage demonstrated that mobile network failures are no longer solely a telecommunications issue; they have direct implications for road safety, freight efficiency, regulatory compliance and national economic resilience.

We would welcome your consideration and response to these issues and recommendations. For further discussion, contact is via Aaron Johnstone (Chief Advocacy Officer) on 0423 481 951 or email a.johnstone@hvia.asn.au.

Yours sincerely



TODD HACKING
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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