

Understanding your Mobile Phone's VoLTE and Emergency Calling Capabilities ahead of 3G Network Closures

The three national Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) – Telstra, Optus, and TPG Telecom – will close down their 3G networks across Australia in 2023 and 2024. As mobile technology continues to evolve, it is essential for consumers to stay informed about advances in mobile networks and how this may impact your ability to make calls, including emergency calls.

This article explains the 3G network closures, VoLTE capable phones, and VoLTE Emergency Call capability, which is important to understand so that you can continue making calls, including to Triple Zero (000), when 3G networks are switched off in Australia. **It is essential you have a phone capable of VoLTE Emergency Calls, otherwise you will not be able to make calls to Triple Zero (000) when the 3G networks are closed down.**

What is VoLTE?

VoLTE stands for Voice over Long-Term Evolution (LTE), which is another term to describe a 4G network. VoLTE refers to a technology that allows voice calls to be transmitted over a 4G network instead of relying on traditional 2G or 3G networks. By utilising the data network, VoLTE offers sharper and clearer call quality, faster call connection times, and the ability to simultaneously use voice and data services, meaning you can be on a call while browsing the internet and your call quality and data speeds are not affected. VoLTE network users can also access more services, such as video calling, instant messaging, and file sharing.

3G Closures

Australia and countries around the world are closing down 3G networks to make way for 4G and 5G technology. To advance mobile and wireless technology, and to meet growing demand for data, mobile network operators need to upgrade mobile network technology so that they can offer faster and more reliable mobile services using 4G and 5G networks.

The closure of 3G networks means you will no longer be able to send texts or access the internet if you have a 3G-only phone. **Most importantly, anyone with a phone that uses the 3G network for voice services will not be able to make any calls, including emergency calls. Therefore, once 3G networks are switched off, you will need a phone or device that operates only on 4G/LTE and/or 5G networks.**

If you are uncertain about the capabilities of your device, then it is important to contact your device manufacturer or service provider for further information. Other devices, such as tablets, internet routers, mobile broadband models, smart watches and wearables, home security systems, and other connected devices that are only capable of using 3G networks will also be impacted.

When are 3G networks being closed down in Australia?

All three mobile network operators in Australia – Telstra, Optus, and TPG Telecom – will switch off their 3G networks on the following dates:

- [TPG Telecom - 15 December 2023](#)
- [Telstra - 30 June 2024](#)
- [Optus - September 2024](#)

Customers of Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNOs), which are service providers that buy network access from the three mobile network operators and then sell their own mobile plans to customers, will also be affected by 3G closures. The three mobile network operators are providing information to their MVNO partners to assist them in communicating to customers. Customers of

MVNOs and/or subsidiaries of the three network operators (e.g. Amaysim, Boost, Dodo, Belong, iiNet, Aldi, AGL and others) should contact their service provider for more information.

The importance of having a VoLTE capable phone

Most recent makes and models of 4G and 5G mobile phones purchased in Australia support VoLTE capability. However, refurbished and old surplus stock is still being sold, so it pays to check whether your device is VoLTE capable.

If your phone does not support VoLTE, you will not be able to make traditional voice calls once your mobile network operator closes their 3G network. This is because phones that do not support VoLTE can only use the 3G network for traditional voice calls.

Please contact your device manufacturer or service provider to check if your device is VoLTE capable.

Note: If your 4G mobile device does not support VoLTE, when your mobile network operator closes their 3G network you will still be able to access data but will not be able to make traditional mobile voice calls.

If you are currently using a personal medical device or security device that relies on 3G, then it will stop working once your mobile network operator closes their 3G network. We recommend that you check your personal medical device or security device compatibility directly with your device manufacturer or service provider and upgrade affected devices now.

The importance of having a phone capable of VoLTE Emergency Calls

In addition to checking that you have a VoLTE capable phone, you will also need to check that your phone has the **VoLTE Emergency Call capability**.

Emergency calls are given the highest priority in mobile networks to ensure they receive the necessary resources and bandwidth for clear and uninterrupted communication. This requires support for the VoLTE Emergency Call capability in your handset as well.

Once all three of the 3G networks are switched off in Australia, you will need a phone with VoLTE Emergency Call capability to make an emergency call (000). If your mobile phone does **not** support the VoLTE Emergency Call capability, then you will **not** be able to make an emergency call.

Most recent makes and models of 4G and 5G mobile phones purchased in Australia support VoLTE Emergency Call capability; however, it is important to check with your device manufacturer or service provider if your device is VoLTE capable and supports VoLTE Emergency Call capability.

If you have a 3G-only mobile phone, then once all three of the 3G networks are switched off you will not be able to make any calls, including emergency calls. You will need to contact your device manufacturer or service provider to find a new device that supports VoLTE and the VoLTE Emergency Call capability.

Please check with your device manufacturer or service provider for more information about the VoLTE Emergency Call capability.

The importance of having a phone capable of VoLTE and VoLTE Emergency Call when travelling overseas

If your phone does not support **VoLTE** and you travel to a country where both the 2G and 3G network(s) have been closed down, you will **not** be able to make voice calls. Further, if your phone does not support the **VoLTE Emergency Call** capability (even though it may support VoLTE), and

you travel to a country where both the 2G and 3G network(s) have been shut down, you will **not** be able to make an emergency call (e.g. to 911 or 112). Please see this AMTA article [*insert hyperlink*] for more information on calling capabilities when roaming internationally.

How to check if your phone supports VoLTE and VoLTE Emergency Calls

Here is how to verify if your mobile phone supports both VoLTE and VoLTE Emergency Calling capabilities:

1. **Contact your service provider or mobile network operator:** Check your service provider's or mobile network operator's website (links below). If you did not purchase your device from your mobile network operator, then you should check with the device manufacturer.
2. **Review your device's specifications:** Look up your device's specifications, either in the user manual or on the manufacturer's website, to check the inclusion of VoLTE and VoLTE Emergency Calling capabilities. The manufacturer's website and their customer support teams may also provide you with information on how to check and potentially enable these capabilities on your phone or advise if you need to upgrade your device.
3. **Update your phone software:** Manufacturers may release software updates that add or enhance VoLTE and VoLTE Emergency Calling functionality. Check for updates regularly and install them to ensure your phone is fully compatible.

Remember, ensuring your mobile phone supports VoLTE and VoLTE Emergency Calling capabilities not only provides a seamless transition as legacy 3G networks are switched off, but also ensures you can make emergency calls.

Further information

Please see links to the three mobile network operators for more information:

TPG:

3G - <https://www.vodafone.com.au/support/network/3g-closure>

VoLTE - <https://www.vodafone.com.au/support/network/volte>

Optus:

3G - www.optus.com.au/3g

VoLTE - <https://www.optus.com.au/prepaid/explore/a-guide-to-volte>

Telstra:

3G - <https://www.telstra.com.au/support/mobiles-devices/3g-closure>

VoLTE - <https://www.telstra.com.au/support/mobiles-devices/enable-volte-mobile-phone>