

I live in the locality of The Dawn, Gympie Regional Council area, Queensland. In our area, we are familiar with regular flooding events, and in 2022 had a once in a 100 year flood. Electricity was cut for several days. The local mobile phone towers have limited battery back up and we were left without communications for several days. The local fixed wireless NBN tower also does not have long on battery back up, so no use for internet and accessing emergency services even though we have a generator.

My safety plan for my family and my local community is to have handheld 2 way radio so that in an emergency, we can still access emergency services by getting to the nearest hill (we basically become a very large flooded island). In addition, I am a general practitioner, and anticipate that in local disasters that my neighbours and other local residents may call on me to help. Therefore, I need to have a reliable way of communicating with emergency services.

Whilst I understand the new communications act is not specifically looking at emergency channels, I implore those in any discussions around maintaining the emergency channels 5 and 35 to consider that Australia is a land of extreme weather events (flooding to bushfires). We cannot solely rely on private telecommunication providers to access emergency services. There have been multiple examples of this in fires and floods, not to mention when telecommunications companies (eg Optus and Telstra in recent times) do IT updates and Triple 0 services are lost.

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