

Dr Marisa Paterson MLA

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services

Minister for Women

Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence

Minister for Corrections

Minister for Gaming Reform

Member for Murrumbidgee

RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Questions on Notice Paper No 3

7 March 2025

Question No. 173

MR CAIN: To ask the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services —

1. How often do incidents of failed calls and extended wait times of over (a) 15 minutes, (b) 30 minutes, (c) 45 minutes and (d) 60 minutes, occur on the ACT Policing non-emergency phone line?
2. What procedures are currently in place to regularly review and assess the effectiveness of the ACT Policing non-emergency phone line service.
3. What steps are being taken to review and confirm whether the current system in place for non-emergency calls is user-friendly and functioning as it should.
4. What (a) issues, (b) technical issues and (c) staffing and personnel issues, are attributable to failed calls and extended wait times on the ACT Policing non-emergency phone line.

MARISA PATERSON MLA - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. **How often do incidents of failed calls and extended wait times of over (a) 15 minutes, (b) 30 minutes, (c) 45 minutes and (d) 60 minutes, occur on the ACT Policing non-emergency phone line?**
 - ACT Policing's Communications Team strives to answer every call in a timely manner to ensure all callers are afforded the opportunity to speak with police.
 - Regrettably, there are times when ACT Policing Communications receives a high volume of calls and requests for service, and this will impact the waiting times.

- Calls for police assistance must be prioritised and triaged. Emergency Triple Zero calls are always taken first, with calls for 131 444 and then Crime Stoppers answered and triaged after that. ACT Policing Communications is constantly triaging calls, even while existing calls are on hold.
- While ACT Policing's phone system is unable to provide data on the length of waiting for the requested timeframes of 15, 30, 45 and 60 minutes or more, ACT Policing can provide the following data.
- Between 1 January and 31 December 2023, ACT Policing answered 100,060 calls to 131 444. On average, calls during this period were answered in one minute and 50 seconds.
- Between 1 January and 31 December 2024, ACT Policing answered 105,038 calls to 131 444 (equating to about 72 per cent of all calls made to ACT Policing's Communications centre). On average, calls during this period were answered in one minute and 57 seconds.
- In 2024, 37,924 calls were abandoned or failed to connect through to an available operator on 131 444, with calls being abandoned after an average waiting time of two minutes and 50 seconds.
 - It is important to note this data does not portray the reasons why these calls were abandoned and there can be multiple reasons apart from wait times, that would affect whether a person decides to terminate a call prior to an operator answering.
 - There should also be consideration as to whether the person called ACT Policing multiple times to make a report, or just the once, and whether that initially failed call resulted in a report being made to police via the online portal or other means.

2. What procedures are currently in place to regularly review and assess the effectiveness of the ACT Policing non-emergency phone line service.

- ACT Policing has to manage its resources appropriately in line with operational priorities, which impacts police response times, with life threatening emergencies remaining the priority.
- The Sergeant in charge of each ACT Policing Communications Team conducts quality assurance on calls taken throughout every work shift. This includes reviewing call lengths, the quality of response from each phone operator, the efficiency of information gathering by the call taker, and customer service in general.
- This constructive real time feedback provides all call takers the chance to learn from and improve on their skills in a supportive environment throughout the shift and also ensures ACT Policing Communications is operating to the highest standards it can be, at all times.
- In addition, ACT Policing's Communications produce regular weekly data reports on the number of complex calls, call length times, and reviews the response and process practices of individuals, teams and area as a whole.

3. What steps are being taken to review and confirm whether the current system in place for non-emergency calls is user-friendly and functioning as it should.

- ACT Policing has increased the range of channels for the community to report minor crimes and other matters, through the implementation of an Online Reporting Portal which is accessed via the ACT Policing website.
- The Online Reporting portal complements, not replaces, ACT Policing's existing reporting channels.
- ACT Policing will always maintain Triple Zero (000) and 131 444 police assistance telephone lines and the ACT community will continue to be able to report crime in person at their local police station.
- On 30 June 2023, the online reporting portal was made public to the ACT community for the reporting of minor, non-urgent property damage and vandalism incidents.
- On 8 May 2024 ACT Policing expanded its online reporting capability to include dangerous driving, providing the community with a new mechanism to report bad driver behaviour to police. Importantly, this new functionality allows people to upload digital material of the poor driving behaviour.
- The focus for the 2024-25 financial year is the expansion of the online platform to include the reporting of minor theft and lost property. This expansion will also aim to include the functionality implemented for dangerous driving whereby the complainant can upload their digital material to police (after triage), for all available online reporting crime types.
- In 2025, ACT Policing is also reviewing the benefits of processes its law enforcement partners have implemented and considering implementing these into ACT Policing's own telecommunication systems, which will likely increase the quality of service to the community and improve the working environment for ACT Policing call takers.

4. 4. What (a) issues, (b) technical issues and (c) staffing and personnel issues, are attributable to failed calls and extended wait times on the ACT Policing non-emergency phone line.

- Triple zero calls will always be answered first. Due to the nature of this work, ACT Policing cannot attribute failing to answer calls on any one issue.
- Calls received by ACT Policing can peak at any time on any day. Internally, unplanned leave can also affect staffing levels, thus contributing to a team's ability to function at optimum levels.
- Environmentally, a rapid increase in the requirement to respond to socially complex issues such as family violence and mental health is placing increasing pressure on policing resources. Family violence and mental health incidents remain key drivers for demand in terms of number, complexity and time to resolve.

- The impact of increased levels of high-priority calls and time intensive incidences has been exacerbated by the growth and expansion of Canberra's suburbs meaning ACT Policing is servicing more people, with more complex needs, over a larger area.
- In effectively responding to these more complex calls for service, the time required to develop and deliver an effective response is also increasing. It is taking longer for police to resolve incidents, investigate and prosecute matters, or divert people to alternative pathways.
- Establishing partnerships and working system-wide requires greater investment of time and resources to respond holistically to these crime trends and produce better outcomes for partners and the ACT community.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.

M. Paterson

Marisa Paterson MLA

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services

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This response required 7hrs 15mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$355.45