



SUBMISSION TO THE COMMERCE COMMISSION ON THE DRAFT 111 CONTACT CODE

5/07/2020

1. Introduction

1.1 This submission is made on behalf of the **Grey Power New Zealand Federation Inc.**

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1.3 The Grey Power New Zealand Federation (Inc) is a non-sectarian and non-party political, advocacy organisation that aims to advance, promote and protect the welfare and well-being of older people.

1.4 The Grey Power New Zealand Federation (Inc) is made up of some 76 individual Associations with an overall membership of approximately 68,000.

2. Summary:

2.1 Grey Power agrees generally, (as we did in our 2018 submission to the Emerging Views paper on the 111 contact code), with the Commission's draft 111 contact code focus to ensure that vulnerable people have an appropriate way to call 111 in a power outage as stated in the draft code's purpose (C,3.)

2.2 Older people are more likely to be vulnerable consumers

2.3 Cognizance needs to be taken of the fact that some older people do not use modern technology

3. Comment on Clauses of the Draft 111 Contact Code

We do not provide a clause by clause analysis of the draft code but we will comment on areas in the draft which we think require more thought and will provide recommendations where they are applicable.

3.1 In the section 'defined terms' (D & clause 12.3.2, a & b), a definition of a person of standing in the community is an interesting concept; it raises the question of why/how the Commerce Commission decided these persons, apart from a District Health Board, private hospital or G.P have such authority to enable them to complete part B of the 111 Contact Code customer application form certifying that the vulnerable person requires the 111-emergency service (draft appendix A).

Grey Power questions if all the categories of persons of standing in the community are a necessary part of the certification process for the provision of support. Surely the most likely person to know if a consumer is at particular risk would be medical professionals, apart possibly from social workers, police etc. who may be able to certify for older people in abusive relationships. The correlation between the use of pilots, engineers etc. to certify is difficult to understand.

3.2 Grey Power agrees, in general, with clauses 5, 6, 7 & 8 which requires providers to inform vulnerable consumers about options available to them in the event of a power cut.

3.3 We recommend, with regard to clause 8.1, that consumers be advised that information about the 111-contact code can be accessed via phone calls to a customer service representative or a visit to relevant retail stores as well as the website. This is important because Grey Power knows that approximately 50% of people 85 years old + do not use digital technology at all (<http://www.superseniors.ms.govt.nz/about-superseniors/ageing-population/better-later-life-report/index.html>).

This is also the group who are more likely to need an emergency service and therefore continuous access to 111 in the event of power failure.

3.4 With regard to the clauses on the requirement to provide appropriate means for vulnerable consumers to contact 111 in an emergency during a power outage, we believe a basic mobile voice and/or text connection for those who have cell phone coverage with battery back-up and are able to operate them is reasonable.

Grey Power is unable to offer any other alternative non-mobile suggestions because we do not have the technical expertise. We do however, caution that if the decision of what to supply is to be the responsibility of the provider our older, older people may not be well catered for and even if they are offered choices of appropriate alternatives may not understand what options are available and how to use them.

3.5 Clause 12.4 regarding the provider's ability to require a vulnerable consumer application to be recertified after 12 months is of concern because, it appears that if the vulnerable consumer does not respond the provider can decide the consumer is no longer vulnerable and can remove their appropriate means of contacting the 111-emergency service during a power failure.

Grey Power recommends that the code does not give the provider the right to cease service because vulnerable consumers do not up-date their 'Notice of Potentially Medically Dependent Consumer Status' forms; surely all avenues to contact vulnerable consumers must be explored by providers before their service is discontinued.

3.6 Grey Power agrees with the draft code's clause 16 that a vulnerable consumer must not bear any costs relating to the supply of an appropriate means for contacting the 111 emergency services

3.7 In clause 9.2 we note reference to the minimum time period an alternative device in the event of a power cut is required to operate. The draft code's definition of a minimum period is 12 hours which may be feasible for urban dwellers but during significant events e.g. the Christchurch earthquakes and in rural communities' power outages can last much longer. We therefore recommend that the Commission re-visits this clause because some of Grey Power's members may not be covered for long enough, therefore what happens if the device (mobile phone etc.) is inoperable in the event of a prolonged power outage?

3.8 Grey Power agrees with most of G1, G2 and G3 including the requirement to monitor vulnerable customers at least annually. However, the comments above which refer to clause 12.4 also apply to clauses 19.2, 20.2 and 20.3.

3.9 Grey Power mainly agrees with the purpose of the draft 111 Contact code

'to ensure that vulnerable consumers, or persons on their behalf, have reasonable access to an appropriate means to contact the 111-emergency service in the event of a power failure' Grey Power recommends that the use of the word reasonable be deleted – all people should be able to access the 111 emergency in a power outage.

4. Conclusion:

The Grey Power Federation thanks the Commerce Commission for the opportunity to send in a submission re the draft 111 contact code and we ask that our recommendations be considered favourably; it is now obvious that copper is to be phased out, with a few exceptions, as a consequence older people do not have the option to use a corded phone and they may have difficulty using new digital technology which they may be offered to enable them to access the 111 emergency service .

Every older person must have the means to contact the emergency 111 system during power outages.