

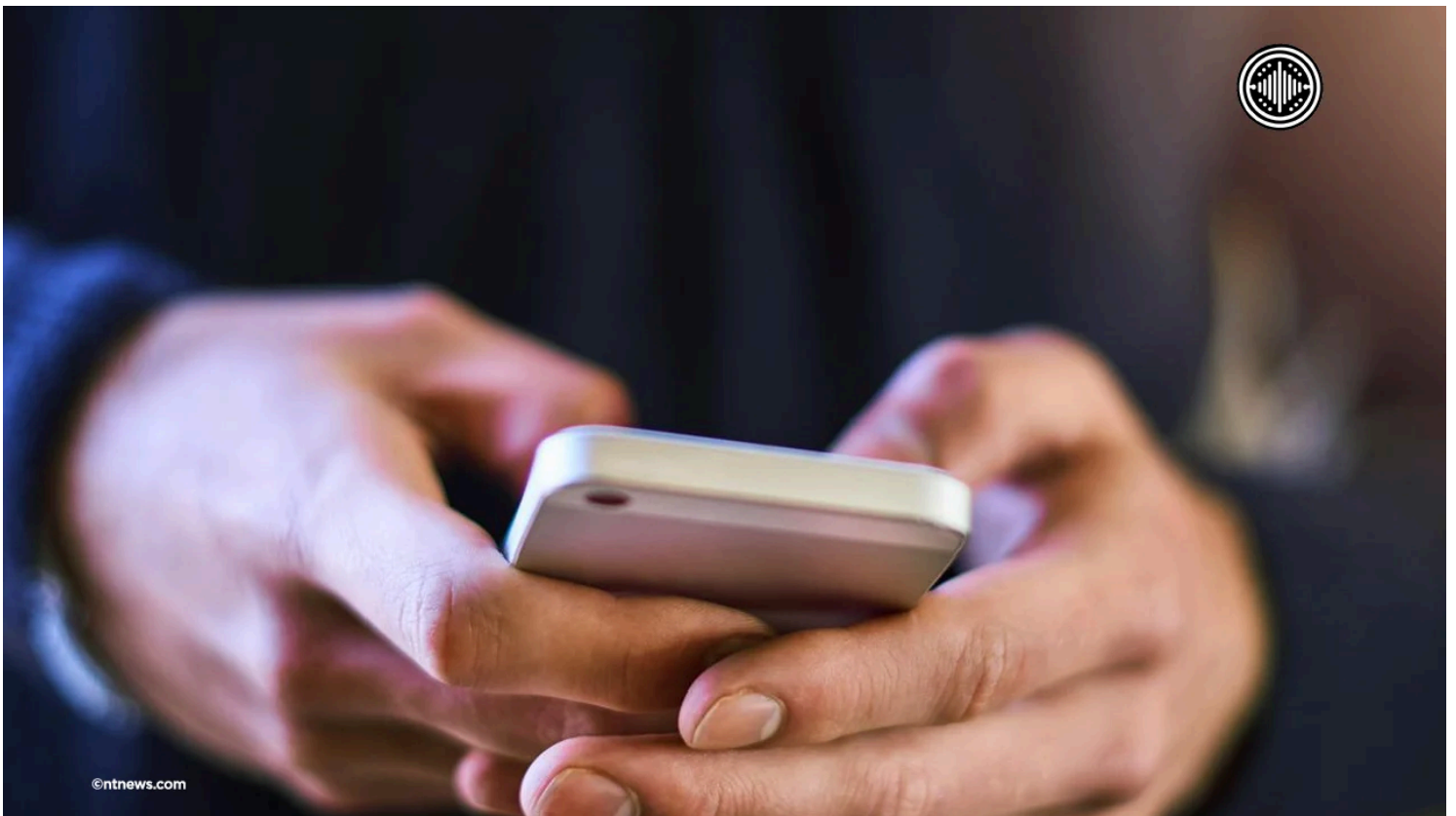
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Adelaide Man Jailed for Allegedly Flooding Police Line with 251 Calls

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– Categories: *Breaking News*



On August 8, 2025, 45-year-old Robert Branch was arrested in Adelaide for allegedly making 251 harassing calls to the South Australia Police (SAPOL) assistance line in eight hours, severely disrupting public services. Charged with using a carriage service in a harassing or offensive manner, Branch's actions, reported by 7News, highlight the misuse of taxpayer-funded emergency resources and the need for harsher consequences to deter such behavior, as authorities struggle to maintain operational efficiency.

The barrage began at 4:45 p.m. on August 7, with Branch allegedly calling the 131 444 police assistance line approximately every two minutes until 1:00 a.m. on August 8. SAPOL stated that this non-emergency line, intended for citizens needing officer assistance, was overwhelmed, diverting resources from genuine calls. The disruption strained a system already burdened by staffing shortages, with SAPOL's 2024-2025 budget of \$1.1 billion, per South Australian government records, stretched to cover overtime and recruitment. Taxpayers bear the cost of such misuse, which undermines public safety by delaying responses to legitimate emergencies.

Branch, arrested at his home and remanded in custody after a court outburst claiming "police are out of control," faces significant penalties if convicted, including potential imprisonment. Police Minister Stephen Mullighan condemned the behavior as "idiotic" and "unthinking," emphasizing that the charge's severity sends a "clear message" to deter others, per 7News. However, critics argue that existing penalties fail to prevent repeat offenders, noting Branch's prior online videos of police station visits, though unrelated to current charges. The absence of stricter laws or preemptive measures allows such disruptions to persist, costing taxpayers further.

The misuse of public services like SAPOL's assistance line reflects a broader issue of inadequate consequences for abusing critical infrastructure. In 2024, SAPOL handled over 700,000 calls, with 10% deemed non-urgent or abusive, per internal reports, diverting officers from addressing serious crimes like the 15% rise in assaults reported in Adelaide, per Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data. Taxpayers fund these services expecting efficient emergency responses, yet incidents like Branch's clog the system, potentially delaying help for victims. A similar case in 2023 saw a man fined \$2,000 for 100 nuisance calls, a penalty critics on X called too lenient to deter future abuse.

Reform is needed to impose harsher consequences and protect public resources. Proposals include escalating fines, mandatory community service, or longer jail terms for repeat offenders, as suggested by public safety advocates in The Advertiser. Enhanced call-filtering technology, costing \$5 million annually per SAPOL estimates, could reduce non-emergency call volume, but funding requires taxpayer approval. Without action, the misuse of services like the 131 444 line risks eroding public trust in law enforcement's ability to prioritize genuine needs.

Branch's bail hearing, set for next week, will test the judiciary's resolve to hold offenders accountable. As SAPOL grapples with operational strain, the incident underscores the

urgent need for legislative reform to impose stricter penalties and safeguard taxpayer-funded services. Ensuring consequences match the disruption caused by such behavior is critical to maintaining public safety and restoring confidence that emergency lines serve their intended purpose, rather than becoming outlets for reckless abuse.