Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2010-2011, 23 February 2011

Question:E11-066

OUTCOME 10: Health System Capacity and Quality

Topic: NATIONAL EHEALTH TRANSITION AUTHORITY (NEHTA)

Written Question on Notice

Senator Boyce asked:

a) There is in existence a document that outlines a plan to eliminate 'Argus Connect', a supplier of medical messaging software from the Northern Territory market. Is it true that the chief executive of NEHTA, Peter Fleming, initially denied its existence?

b) Is it true that when shown the document he then claimed it wasn't a NEHTA document?

c) What proof can you provide to support his claim?

d) If the document is indeed a NEHTA document would its contents be sufficient to warrant an investigation by the ACCC?

Answer:

NEHTA has advised the Department that:

a) NEHTA is aware of the project plan prepared by Northern Territory Department of Health and Families (NTDHF), (and documented by NEHTA) pertaining to the Web Services Messaging Application, (WSMA), Project which did state that NTDHF would replace the Argus secure messaging systems in the Northern Territory, and would replace Argus secure messaging systems for the Shared Electronic Health Record Service (SEHR) with NEHTA specification compliant web services. It also stated that as part of the expected outcomes that future release of the NT WSMA project would replace Argus Messenger in all NTDHF sites for the same reason.

The WSMA Project is a NTDHF project initiative to replace non compliant messaging product with product that is compliant with NEHTA specifications for secure messaging.

It should be noted that the project plan is a joint document that reflects the NTDHF requirements for this project. The information contained in the WSMA project plan was supplied by the NTDHF.

b) In regard to the NTDHF project plan for the WMSA project as referred to in part a), whilst this document was co-authored by a NEHTA employee using a NEHTA template, the information contained in the document, including the project plan itself, was provided by the NTDHF.

c) The document itself clearly talks about the WMSA project being a NTDHF project and it also talks about the expected outcomes of the NT secure messaging project. This detail in the document clearly delineates the articulated desire by the NTDHF to move to a NEHTA specification compliant product. The project plan also clearly describes NEHTA's role as providing technical expertise and knowledge transfer to inform and assist so that the NTDHF product is compliant with NEHTA specifications.

d) The desire by the NTDHF to move from a non-compliant to a NEHTA specification compliant product that would also address administrative and performance issues associated with the Argus Messenger Product would appear to be a legitimate strategy for a jurisdiction to adopt.