

**Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology & the Arts
Legislation Committee**

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Portfolio

Department – Broadcasting and Intellectual Property

Additional Estimates 2000-2001, (21-22/2/01)

Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 043

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 043

Senator Harradine asked: When was NetaAlert established? How much funding will it have received by the end of this financial year?

Answer: NetAlert Limited (NetAlert) was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in the Australian Capital Territory on 6 December 1999 and gazetted as the designated body under subclause 58(1) of Schedule 5 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* the following day, 7 December 1999.

NetAlert will receive a total of \$4.5m in Government funds over four years consisting of \$3m in social bonus funds and \$1.5m in funds transferred from the ABA.

NetAlert will receive \$2.5 million by the end of the 2000-2001 financial year consisting of \$1m in 1999-2000 and \$1.5m in 2000-2001.

Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 044

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 044

Senator Harradine asked: What services has it provided to the public in that time?

Answer: The Board of NetAlert Limited has adopted four priority programs for its work plan:

- create a help line for parents and families;
- create an information resource for Internet users, including support for research;
- collaborate closely with industry, the user community and relevant regulatory agencies; and
- initiate a program of community education.

The Board has prepared a detailed work plan describing the objectives, details and performance measures for each of these programs.

NetAlert has provided the following services to the public to date:

- established a help line to provide a high quality advisory service to users and prospective users of the Internet – the help line is accessible via email and a toll free telephone number;

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- established a web site (www.netalert.net.au) to provide practical information for Australians who wish to manage their own and their children's Internet experience;
- engaged the CSIRO Division of Mathematical and Information Sciences to conduct a technical evaluation of filtering software available in Australia;
- produced an information kit and distributed copies through several channels (e.g. persons and organisations who contact the help line or the NetAlert Secretariat, interested Members of Parliament, schools, community groups, computer retailers);
- commenced a community education campaign – a national launch was held in Canberra in September 2000 and State launches in Melbourne and Brisbane in November and in Hobart and Sydney in December; an event will be held in Perth on 13 March 2001 and additional events will be held in Adelaide and Darwin this year; and
- provided speakers for various conferences and community groups on request.

In addition, NetAlert has appointed a consultant to develop and publish an information manual and conduct a national program of seminars to explain the co-regulatory regime for Internet content to Internet Service Providers and Internet Content Hosts, to assist them to meet their obligations under the registered industry codes of practice. The information manual will be available in April 2001. The national seminar program is scheduled to run from late April to July 2001.

Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 045

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 045

Senator Harradine asked: How have the services been promoted and by whom?

Answer: NetAlert services have been promoted by:

- Launch events in Canberra, Brisbane, Melbourne, Hobart and Sydney in the period September to December 2000; additional events will be held in Perth, Darwin and Adelaide in the first half of 2001.
 - the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts officially launched NetAlert in Canberra on 6 September 2000.
 - the NetAlert Ambassador, Ms Noni Hazlehurst, participated in the State events.
- Media activities – advertising, media releases, interviews (radio, television, newspapers and magazines); a major advertising campaign has been arranged with

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the *Australian Women's Weekly* from April to December 2001; feature on *Better Homes and Gardens* on 1 May 2001.

- the NetAlert Chair, Ms Karyn Hart, has participated in a number of interviews.
 - the NetAlert Ambassador features in NetAlert's advertising material.
 - communications strategy and general public relations activities are managed by GBA Communications Pty Ltd, in consultation with the NetAlert Secretariat. The Board advertised for expressions of interest to provide professional public relations services. The Board received 9 proposals and conducted a formal evaluation and selection process. Following this process, the Board appointed GBA Communications to provide public relations services for a period of 12 months.
- Information mailouts and other contacts with Members of Parliament, schools and education co-ordinating groups, libraries, community groups, parents organisations, computer retailers.
 - many Federal MPs have inserted articles about NetAlert in their electorate newsletters and distributed NetAlert information kits in their electorate.
 - a number of Government departments (e.g. the Australian Broadcasting Authority, education, consumer affairs) have provided information on NetAlert to their clients and the general community by having links on their websites to NetAlert's website, placing articles in newsletters, displaying posters, etc
 - Government and private schools, libraries and parents' organisations have distributed NetAlert information kits.
 - computer retailers (e.g. Harvey Norman, Retravisio) have distributed NetAlert information materials to customers and referred customers to NetAlert for advice.
 - Other promotional activities (e.g. networking and liaison with relevant organisations, distribution of information mailouts, database development, etc) are managed by the NetAlert Secretariat.

Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 046

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 046

Senator Harradine asked: What has been the total expenditure on promotion of NetAlert, ie, both by the in house staff person and by contracted agency?

Answer: As at 28 February 2001, expenditure on promotional activities was:

- advertising \$69,540

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- public relations services (for development of communications strategy, media liaison, launch and State events, etc) \$133,136

Information on the commitment of budget funds can be derived from the answer to question on notice 060.

Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 047

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 047

Senator Harradine asked: What has been the public's response to the services?

Answer: As at 28 February 2001, NetAlert had received the following response from customers:

- web site – 214,547 hits
- help line – 429 contacts and requests for 11,507 NetAlert information kits
- information materials distributed – 75,484 brochures, 31,440 posters, 42,397 fridge magnets, 43,384 mouse mats, 28,751 full information kits.

Anecdotal evidence of positive public support for NetAlert's services is strong and includes feedback from members of Parliament, schools and computer/retail stores.

Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 048

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 048

Senator Harradine asked: How has the public's satisfaction/or otherwise with the services been measured?

Answer: See question on notice 047. The NetAlert Board considers that NetAlert should establish an adequate presence before conducting any surveys but does intend to conduct relevant studies in the future. At this stage, public satisfaction can be gauged on the basis of service statistics, comments received from the public and from the number of requests for additional supplies of the information kit.

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Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 049

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 049

Senator Harradine asked: When was the Helpline established?

Answer: The help line commenced on 6 September 2000 on a 3-month pilot project basis until 6 December 2000. A second 3-month pilot project commenced on 7 December 2000 and finished on 7 March 2001.

Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 050

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 050#

Senator Harradine asked: Who has been operating the Helpline?

Answer: Both pilot projects were operated by CPM Australia, professional call centre operators. CPM Australia was chosen from an open tender process. As of 8 March 2001 the NetAlert Secretariat located in Hobart has assumed responsibility for the operation of the help line.

Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 051

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 051

Senator Harradine asked: How has the Helpline been promoted?

Answer: See question on notice 050. The help line has been promoted as part of the package of NetAlert services, through the NetAlert information kit, web site, mailouts, launch and State events, media releases and advertising. It has not been promoted separately from the other NetAlert services.

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Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 052

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 052

Senator Harradine asked: What has been the response from the public? How many phone calls has it received?

Answer: In the period 6 September 2000 to 28 February 2001, the help line received 429 contacts, comprising 418 telephone calls and 11 emails.

Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 053

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 053

Senator Harradine asked: How many of these calls were genuine calls for Netaalert information? What were the majority of the calls about?

Answer: The most common calls were queries about:

- general Internet matters - 159 calls – these were usually from people who had little knowledge of the Internet or who were thinking about connecting to the Internet
- family protection - 49 calls – these were usually from people who were concerned about protecting their families from offensive material on the Internet
- filtering and labelling - 26 calls
- use of credit cards and banking on the Internet – 19 calls
- privacy matters – 9 calls
- chat rooms – 6 calls
- safety zones – 5 calls
- computer viruses – 5 calls
- other matters – 113 calls – these calls covered a wide range of issues, such as requests for technical PC support, complaints about ISPs, requests for NetAlert to provide a speaker for an event, etc.

There were some prank calls and hangups during the summer school holidays. The operators believe that these were children on school holidays, based on the tone of voice and giggles.

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Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 054

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 054

Senator Harradine asked: Did the NetaAlert Board ensure that the advice provided by the Helpline was accurate, relevant to Australian conditions, of high quality, and was able to be monitored?

Answer: Yes. NetAlert contacted other organisations with an interest in the Internet (both in Australia and overseas), prepared an information manual for the CPM Australia operators and trained a pool of CPM Australia operators. CPM Australia provided detailed weekly reports to NetAlert.

Outcome 2, Output #2.1

Question: 055

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 055

Senator Harradine asked: What has been the total cost of operating the Helpline for the period of operation, both in terms of the actual cost of the Helpline operator and the cost of promoting the helpline service?

Answer: As at 28 February 2001, the cost of the help line pilot project was \$89,920. This includes payments to CPM Australia for call centre services and payments to Telstra Corporation Ltd for the toll free telephone service and call costs.

The help line is not promoted separately from the package of NetAlert services.

Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 056

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 056

Senator Harradine asked: What was the average cost per call to run and promote the service during the period of operation?

Answer: People who contact the help line often represent larger groups and request multiple copies of the information kit. The help line is by far the largest source of requests for kits and 11,507 kits have been distributed through the help line.

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Consequently, it is appropriate to consider both the cost per contact to the help line and the cost per contact made through the distribution of information kits requested. The relevant data is:

- cost per contact made by calls/emails to the help line - \$209; and
- cost per contact made through information kits requested - \$7.80.

These costs include establishment, training and system development costs and reflect the relatively low utilisation of the service.

Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 057

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 057

Senator Harradine asked: What remedies is Netalert going to put in place to make the Helpline service both more cost effective and provide the sort of service that the public want and that parents feel comfortable to ring?

Answer: Following a review of the pilot project, the NetAlert Board has decided to transfer the operations of the help line to the NetAlert Secretariat with effect from 8 March 2001. This will reduce costs. The hours of service will also be reduced from 8 am to 10 pm (Eastern time) seven days per week to normal office hours (9 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday), as few people contacted the help line outside these hours during the pilot project.

We have no evidence that the type of information already provided needs to be “remedied”. Comments from callers demonstrate that they find the information provided helpful and appropriate, and they are comfortable with NetAlert’s “plain English, no jargon” approach.

Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 058

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 058

Senator Harradine asked: How has Netalert gone about determining the sort of information that parents need in relation to the Internet? What research/consultation has been conducted to find this out and to determine the focus of Netalert’s information and services?

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Answer: NetAlert has consulted with other organisations with an interest in the Internet, both in Australia and overseas, and studied similar programs offered in other countries. This has mostly been done via the Internet and by telephone contact. Some examples of organisations contacted are:

- Australian Broadcasting Authority
- Childnet International (UK)
- Internet Watch Foundation (UK)
- INHOPE (European Commission)
- Cyberangels (USA)
- America Links Up (USA)
- Netsafe (NZ)
- Connect for Kids (USA)
- Children's Partnership (USA)
- National School Board Foundation (USA).

Individual Board members with particular expertise or contacts in a specific area have contributed information and advice.

NetAlert has recently advertised for expressions of interest in conducting a detailed information survey of current research and studies on children and the Internet and in providing ongoing monitoring of such projects. This will provide further input to the NetAlert information services. The closing date for expressions of interest was 28 February 2001. Nine proposals were received. There will be a formal evaluation and selection process during March 2001.

Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 059

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 059

Senator Harradine asked: Has NetAlert been seeking co-operative ventures with other organisations who have experience in the field, or who have a particular stake (such as school and parents' organisations) in ensuring that NetAlert services meets the consumers' needs?

Answer: Yes. NetAlert is building its services through working co-operatively with existing organisations and networks where possible and drawing on their experience and programs. NetAlert has no wish to duplicate existing services. Some examples of co-operative activities are:

- Both the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) and the Office of Film and Literature Classification have official observers at NetAlert Board meetings. The

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ABA and NetAlert have recently advertised for expressions of interest in a joint project to evaluate filters from the user viewpoint.

- Parents organisations – liaison, advertising in parent organisations’ newsletters, providing speakers for their functions on request
- Schools and education co-ordinating bodies – liaison with relevant groups has resulted in several enthusiastic offers to co-operate and assist NetAlert with matters such as distribution of information kits, provision of publicity (e.g. articles in their newsletters, links from their web sites to the NetAlert web site) and invitations for NetAlert to address parents’ meetings. Co-operative offers had been received from: ACT Ethnic Schools Association, Australian Association of Christian Schools, St Michael’s Collegiate School - Hobart, Australian Secondary Principals’ Association, Lutheran Church of Australia - Office of National Director of Schools, Association of Heads of Independent Schools - Victoria, South Australia Department of Education, Federation of P & C Associations of NSW, Tasmania Department of Education, TAFE Tasmania, Council of Catholic School Parents, ACT Department of Education, Unity College - South Australia, Association of Independent Schools - Queensland, Federation of Parents & Friends Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, Education Queensland, Catholic Education Office – NSW, Catholic Education Office – Victoria, Catholic Education Office – Eastern Region NSW, NSW Department of Education and Training, Marist Education Centre – NSW, Whitefriars Catholic School – South Australia.
- Other organisations – we have received similar offers of co-operation and assistance from the following organisations: all State Consumer Affairs/Fair Trading Offices, all State RTIF Offices, National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, Queensland Department of State Development Communication and Information, Networking the Nation – Banana Shire - Queensland, Plexus Computing – Tasmania, and numerous libraries across Australia.
- Internet Industry Association – the Executive Director of IIA is also a Director of NetAlert and provides a link to the industry.
- Australian Parents’ Council Inc – the Executive Director of the APC is also a Director of NetAlert and provides a link to parents’ organisations.
- Young Media Australia – the Executive Director of YMA is also a Director of NetAlert and provides a link to people who are concerned about the impact of media on children.
- Overseas groups with an interest in children and the Internet – Internet Watch Foundation (UK), Cyberangels (USA), Childnet International (UK) , INHOPE (European Commission), Connect for Kids (USA), Children’s Partnership (USA), National School Boards Foundation (USA), Netsafe (NZ), America Links Up (USA).

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When considering the provision of new services, NetAlert considers existing organisations which might have the capacity to provide the service for NetAlert on a contract basis.

Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 060

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 060

Senator Harradine asked: Has Netaalert seen the need to use consultants for any area of its endeavours? If so, in what specific areas, and at what cost for each consultancy? When were the consultancies undertaken? What percentage of the Netaalert budget do these consultancies represent?

Answer: The Board has decided to engage consultants to provide specialist advice and services in areas which require a high level of specialised knowledge and skill which are not available within NetAlert. When seeking a consultant for a particular project, NetAlert normally advertises for expressions of interest and may also send invitations for expressions of interest direct to consultants or organisations which are likely to have the necessary expertise.

The NetAlert Secretariat currently has only three employees who co-ordinate the Board's approved work plan and manage a variety of contracts to implement NetAlert activities.

Details of consultancies to date are:

- Stanley and Milford – engaged to develop a corporate image for NetAlert. This involved market research, workshops and focus groups. The project ran from April to July 2000. Total cost was \$17,355 (plus GST).
- Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) – engaged to conduct technical evaluations of filtering software and provide detailed quarterly reports to NetAlert. The current contract runs from May 2000 to March 2001 and provides for four reports (May, August and November 2000 and February 2001). The total cost is \$30,000 (plus GST).
- Guy Barnett and Associates Pty Ltd (trading as GBA Communications) – engaged to develop a corporate communications strategy and to provide public relations services. The contract runs from July 2000 to July 2001. The total cost is \$150,000 (plus disbursements and GST).
- CPM Australia – engaged to provide call centre services on a pilot project basis. The contract ran from September 2000 to March 2001. The total cost will be \$92,671 (plus GST).

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- KPMG Consulting Australia Pty Ltd – engaged to conduct a workshop for the Board on corporate governance and to provide ongoing advice to the Board on corporate governance matters as required. The main consultancy ran from September 2000 to February 2001. Total cost to 28 February 2001 was \$26,737 (plus GST). There will be some additional costs if the Board requests further advice on specific matters of corporate governance.
- Lionheart Productions Pty Ltd – engaged to provide promotional services, media services, community service television announcements, voice-overs and radio announcements. The contract will run from October 2000 to October 2002. The total cost will be \$300,000 (plus GST).
- Communications Law Centre Ltd – engaged to prepare an information manual on the Internet content regulatory scheme and to conduct a national program of seminars around Australia. The consultancy will run from December 2000 to August 2001. The total cost will be \$213,225 (plus GST), including consultancy fees and all costs of producing and publishing the information manual and arranging and conducting the seminars.
- Murchison Productions Pty Ltd – will be engaged to further develop the NetAlert web site. We are currently considering a range of options proposed by Murchison and the total cost will depend upon which options we choose. The consultancy will probably run from March to June 2001. Total cost will be approximately \$40,000.

NetAlert has also engaged several firms to provide professional services from time to time. These arrangements operate on a normal commercial fee for service basis. These firms include:

- Anning & Associates, Chartered Accountants – engaged to provide professional accounting services as required.
- Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) – engaged to provide professional audit services as the company auditor.
- Wise Lord & Ferguson, Chartered Accountants – engaged to assist the ANAO with professional audit services, as the ANAO does not have an office in Hobart.
- Peter Worrall Lawyers – engaged to provide professional legal services (e.g. prepare contracts).
- Searson Buck – engaged by DCITA for recruitment of employees – NetAlert has continued to use Searson Buck for recruitment and provision of casual employees.

In summary, the costs to date of these consultancy contracts and arrangements as 28 February 2001 are:

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Stanley & Milford	17,355
CSIRO	22,282
Guy Barnett & Associates Pty Ltd	96,250
CPM Australia	92,671
KPMG Consulting Australia Pty Ltd	26,737
Lionheart Productions Pty Ltd	75,000
Communications Law Centre Ltd	0
Murchison Productions Pty Ltd	0
Anning & Associates	9,440
Wise Lord & Ferguson	2,000
Australian National Audit Office	1,818
Peter Worrall Lawyers	8,308
Searson Buck	18,811
Total costs to 28/2/2001	370,672

The total amount paid for these consultancies and professional services to 28 February 2001 comprises 18% of the grant to NetAlert on a pro-rata basis:

	\$
Grant for 1999/2000	1,000,000
Grant for 2000/2001 year to date (\$1,500,000 pro-rata to 28/2/2001)	1,000,000
Total	2,000,000

We have advertised for expressions of interest to conduct an information survey and provide an ongoing information service to NetAlert. Expressions of interest closed on 28 February 2001 and a consultant has not yet been selected.

We have advertised jointly with the Australian Broadcasting Authority for a consultant to evaluate filtering software from the user viewpoint. Prospective consultants have been short-listed but a final selection has not yet been made.

NetAlert has also obtained other services from external providers in a range of areas (e.g. travel and accommodation services; telephone and internet services; web hosting; postage and freight services; artwork, printing and photocopying services; technical services). These do not involve consultancies or contracts. Where there are multiple providers available (e.g. printers), we seek quotes and select the optimum deal available. Where this is not feasible because there is only one provider available

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(e.g. postal services), we operate on the normal commercial fee for service basis offered by that provider.

Outcome 2, Output 2.1

Question: 061

Topic: NetAlert

Written Question on Notice: 061

Senator Harradine asked: Given that NetAlert has a well-defined task and a limited budget, what is the justification for these consultancies and their cost?

Answer: See question on notice 060. The Board has decided to engage consultants to provide specialist advice and services in areas which require a high level of specialised knowledge and skill. The NetAlert Secretariat is a small administrative Secretariat consisting of three employees who co-ordinate the Board's approved work plan and manage a variety of contracts to implement NetAlert activities.