

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Program 1.2 NSRPD

Question No. 53

Senator Humphries asked the following question at the hearing on 14 February 2012:

1. What is the cost of the contract for the 'Location Based Number Store' used by both *Emergency Alert* and *StateAlert*?
2. Are there alternative systems that function in the same manner as the LBNS? If so, what are they?
3. Has the Department considered using these alternative storage systems? Why was the LBNS system chosen over the alternative systems?
4. What impact, if any, will the upgrade of the Emergency Alert warning system have on the use of the LBNS?
5. Will the system require upgrading? If so, what will be the costs of upgrade?
6. In regards to Emergency Alert, will there be any operational outages during the system upgrade? If so, for how long is the outage anticipated for?
7. What negotiations have taken place with telecommunication providers regarding the enhanced system upgrade?
8. How many of these telcos are still to agree to the upgraded system? Who are they?
9. What is the close of negotiation dates for the telcos?

The answers to the honourable senator's questions are as follows:

1. The cost of the Location Based Number Store (LBNS) contract is \$6.9 million. The period of the contract is from 18 November 2009 to 18 November 2013.
2. The LBNS is the central data source of geo-coded telephone numbers and address information on which Emergency Alert and StateAlert relies. The LBNS was purpose built because there was no such system available in 2009.

3. As stated, in 2009 there was no alternative system to the LBNS, which was purpose built following an open tender process.

Following that open tender process, the Attorney-General's Department awarded a contract in 2009 to design, develop, implement, commission, host, administer, manage, support, maintain (and as required further develop), a mission critical secure database of telephone numbers extracted from and synchronised with the Integrated Public Number Database, with the geo-coded location details associated with each number, together with other relevant data - the LBNS. The LBNS is used to derive and deliver essential telephone number data to Emergency Alert and Western Australia's StateAlert to enable the delivery of geographically targeted warnings.

4. There will be no impact on the use of the LBNS as a result of the system upgrade to Emergency Alert.
5. The Attorney-General's Department, States and Territories and other key stakeholders have determined that, at this stage, the LBNS does not require a system upgrade to accommodate the location based mobile telephone emergency warning capability. This issue will continue to be monitored as the project progresses.
6. During the design phase of the location based warning system project, Victoria conducted extensive and thorough design workshops with carriers and jurisdictional technical representatives to ensure that each carrier's system is designed with full redundancy.

The system upgrade is designed to have minimal operational impact on Emergency Alert. As with any technology project, any operational impact will be at the time of least risk, communicated, managed and mitigated with stakeholders.

7. Following the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) April 2009 agreement to establish Emergency Alert, the Commonwealth committed \$1.35 million for research into the feasibility of establishing the Location Based Solution (LBS) as an enhancement to Emergency Alert.

In June 2009, Victoria commissioned a Request for Information (RFI) study to assess the feasibility of developing the LBS. RFI submissions from carriers closed in October 2009. Results from the study showed that: using network data to locate mobile handsets was likely to best suit government requirements; and, direct engagement with all three telecommunications carriers (Telstra, Optus and Vodafone Hutchison Australia (VHA)) and further work was required to determine feasibility and cost.

A feasibility study was completed by July 2010 and concluded, among other things, that a mobile telephone location based emergency warning capability was technically feasible.

On 14 September 2010, the Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard MP and the then Attorney-General, the Hon Robert McClelland MP, jointly announced that the Commonwealth would assist the States and Territories to fund the establishment costs associated with the development of the LBS. As with Emergency Alert, Victoria leads the negotiation process for LBS on behalf of States and Territories.

Between September 2010 and January 2011, prior to the release of a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) to the three telecommunications carriers, Victoria conducted a number of project activities and determined governance arrangements for the LBS capability.

In January 2011, Victoria issued a RFP to all three mobile telephone carriers. An extensive evaluation process followed, including formal clarification of key aspects of the proposals and initial face-to-face workshops. The RFP evaluation process concluded in March 2011, and in April 2011, Victoria suspended the RFP for approximately eight weeks. During the suspension period, between April and June 2011, governments conducted a number of project activities, including the commissioning of research into new and emerging technologies as currently understood. This research confirmed that progressing with the location based warning capability project with the carriers' current technical solutions was warranted. This period also allowed the Victorian project team to revisit the technical requirements, service levels, and risk of the capability.

In June 2011, the RFP process resumed. Revised proposals were evaluated, negotiation briefs were prepared, and preliminary meetings were held with the three carriers. Separate formal negotiations between Victoria and each of the carriers then began.

On 23 December 2011, on behalf of States and Territories, Victoria executed a contract with Telstra to provide location based emergency warnings to its mobile phone customers.

Victoria, on behalf of States and Territories, continues to progress negotiations with the other two carriers (Optus and VHA).

8. Negotiations with Optus and VHA are continuing with Victoria.
9. It is hoped that each of the three carriers will be contracted to deliver the location based emergency warning capability to their respective subscribers. Ideally, negotiations with Optus and VHA should be finalised and contracts executed in time to have the capability available for the 2012/13 disaster season.

There is not an absolute date for closing negotiations. The final date is totally contingent on these negotiations meeting the technical, commercial and legal requirements of governments.

The Victorian Department of Justice is available to provide the Senator with a private briefing on the LBS.