

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

Sub Program 2.1.2

Question No. 33

Senator Barnett asked the following question at the hearing on 25 May 2009:

In relation to the follow-up study to the Gibson Quai-ASS Pty Ltd analysis;

- a) provide the current status of the study,
- b) what information has been made available to the States and Territories as part of the report, and
- c) provide an executive summary of the report.

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

- a) The Gibson Quai-AAS report (Emergency Warning System Network Congestion Review) was completed on 2 May 2009.
- b) The full report was made available to Victoria on 14 May 2009 as the Victorian Government is conducting the National Emergency Warning System (NEWS) tender on behalf of all States and Territories.
- c) On 5 June 2009 the report was provided to all States and Territories, for their consideration in designing the NEWS. In the case of Western Australia, the report was provided for its consideration in operating the existing 'StateAlert' system.

Due to the commercially sensitive nature of the material it contains, the report was provided to all recipients on a Commercial-In-Confidence basis.

- d) The Executive Summary is provided at **Attachment A**.

Executive Summary

Utilisation of the fixed and mobile telecommunications networks for delivery of emergency warnings has the potential to save lives, and is of interest to the Commonwealth and State Governments.

This report presents the outcomes of a consultancy conducted by Gibson Quai-AAS (GQ-AAS) during January – April 2009 pertaining to the potential for a telephony-based Emergency Warning Delivery System (EWDS) to cause congestion in the fixed and mobile telecommunications networks. The report also canvasses measures directed at reducing such congestion, and presents rules reflecting these possible measures.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The major recommendations of the report are produced below in logical order (rather than sequential order). References to relevant parts of the report where the recommendations are to be found are also provided.

- It is recommended that EWDS be situated in the carrier network for all future emergency warning platforms (Section 3.3.4, 3.3.3).
- As a matter of principle, injection of emergency warnings into telecommunications networks (both fixed for voice calls and mobile for SMS) should be undertaken by telecommunications network carriers on behalf of operators of EWDS. Telecommunications network carriers are best-placed to monitor the extent of congestion being caused by emergency warnings, and adjust the injection rate to minimise congestion problems (Section 3.3.3).
- Operators of an EWDS which injects directly into the network should observe general rules and guidelines in order to minimise network congestion (Section 3.3).
- As a partial solution to local exchange contention issues, operators of existing EWDS that do not rely upon carrier injection should be aware of Telstra's exchange area numbering plan and should sequence outgoing calls to remain within the constraints that it imposes (Section 3.2.4).
- It is recommended that mobile networks not be utilised for mass emergency voice calling. Instead, SMS-based alerts are recommended to reduce congestion (Section 4.3.3, 4.3.4).
- SMS alerts should be limited to a single message of no more than 160 characters (Section 4.3.4).
- It is recommended that an E1 or higher speed connection be used for transfer of files between the LBNS and EWDS (Section 5).
- The Attorney General should convene regular reviews of these guidelines. These reviews should be conducted annually and after each major incident and the outcomes of these reviews should be incorporated into the guidelines (Section 6.2.2).