

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Output 1.3, 2.1

Question No. 25

Senator Stott Despoja tabled the following question:

- a) Why has there been no independent and published Privacy Impact Assessment on the recently commenced Document Verification Service?
- b) Can the Department provide a precise list of which agencies will be involved in the operation of the DVS;
- i) at what time will they be involved;
 - ii) exactly what information is being exchanged; and
 - iii) how is the information being exchanged?

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

a) A privacy impact assessment (PIA) for the prototype document verification service (DVS) is being undertaken by the Attorney-General's Department. This is a dynamic process which will be continually updated as the pilot progresses and additional impacts are identified. It was not considered necessary for an independent PIA. The prototype DVS will only operate for a short period of time (6 February 2006 to 30 June 2006) and involves a limited number of agencies in jurisdictions which have existing privacy regimes. The key findings of the PIA will be considered as part of the evaluation of the prototype DVS.

The Office of the Privacy Commissioner released an Introductory Guide to Privacy Impact Assessments for Australian Government and ACT Government agencies. The Guide states that a PIA "may consist of different stages and personnel as the project evolves. Generally, a PIA process has a team approach and makes use of various in-house experts available in the agency".

- b) The agencies involved in the operation of the DVS are:
- Attorney-General's Department
 - Office of the Privacy Commissioner
 - Centrelink
 - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
 - Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
 - Registries of Births, Deaths & Marriages in NSW, ACT and Victoria
 - Austroads (on behalf of NSW Roads and Traffic Authority, ACT Department of Urban Services and VicRoads)
- i) All agencies have been involved since the announcement of the pilot on 7 May 2005.

ii) Agencies use the DVS prototype to check key proof of identity documents. DFAT and DIMIA input details that appear on the document; the document issuing organisations which receive a DVS request respond with a simple yes/no response.

The details from the document input by DFAT and DIMIA will consist of the document serial number and the name and date of birth of the person described on the document.

iii) The information is sent via a secure communications pathway to the document issuing organisation where an automated check of the organisation's register will verify whether the information provided is identical to the information on the document.

If the information provided matches the information held by the issuing agency, a YES response will be transmitted to the inquiring agency informing them that the document has been verified. Otherwise, a NO response is returned indicating that the document details were not verified. If the service is not able to conduct the verification due to a system error or other reason, an ERROR message is returned.