



QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

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Our Ref:

Your Ref:

20 May 2005

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

Inquiry into Crimes Legislation Amendment (Telecommunications Interception and Other Measures) Bill 2005

This submission addresses those aspects of this Bill relating to the interception of communications to and from certain declared emergency services facilities which are under consideration by your Committee. It is made on behalf of the National Emergency Communications Working Group (NECWG) consisting of senior representatives of all Emergency Services Organisations (Police, Fire and Ambulance) within Australia, Telstra and Australian Communications Exchange (as Emergency Call Persons), Australian Communications Authority and Emergency Management Australia. NECWG concentrates its efforts on the development and operation of the Emergency Call Service (Triple Zero) in Australia. The ESO representatives are invariably those people responsible for the operation of emergency call centres in their particular ESO.

NECWG strongly supports the proposed legislation in respect of what is proposed for emergency service facilities and would argue that it be passed into law as is.

The emergency services communications facilities being identified are invariably established specifically to deal with calls from the public for assistance. Those are dedicated facilities operated by well trained operators, supported by varying degrees of technology. In the larger ESO centres, they field calls from large areas of population, operating 24x7 hours.

Over time, very high levels of accountability for those operations have developed. There are requirements from many areas such as general public, Regulatory Authorities, Ethical Standards, Integrity Commissions, Coroner Courts, Complaints Management Organisations, internal inquiry or incident follow-up and Royal Commissions for the details of actual call proceedings in relation to the handling of emergency events.

Therefore, the need for a formal record of all activity including conversations is essential, so that matters can be factually and accurately resolved.

Details of communications both in and out dealing with the business of these centres are essential to meet this need.

The essence of operations in these centres is simplicity of operation, cool-headedness and careful procedure to ensure maximum throughput and accuracy of outcome. When an emergency is on, the caller is often not logical nor relaxed. Potentially any impediment to rapid accurate handling of calls always has the potential to be at most life threatening.

Rather than make a detailed written submission to the Committee, NECWG would welcome the opportunity to appear in order to clarify for the Committee reservations it may have. Appearance would provide the opportunity to emphasise the importance of these provisions to emergency operations and the measures used to ensure that procedural fairness and privacy requirements are protected. We understand Committee members may seek certain assurances or protection in respect of how these centres operate. We would be in a position to do that.

Yours sincerely

Denis Luttrell
Director
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT DIVISION