

**Question on Notice  
No. 1478  
Asked on 8 October 2009**

MR MALONE asked the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services (MR ROBERTS) -

QUESTION: With reference to the disastrous Victorian bushfires nearly a year ago, which claimed more than 170 lives -

- (1) Will the Minister advise on progress with the public emergency warning system that he alluded to during Estimates?
- (2) What form will the communication system be using in terms of email, SMS, radio broadcasts and sirens?
- (3) When will the communication system be fully operable?

ANSWER:

The Bligh Government has been working closely with the Commonwealth and other State and Territory Governments, through our participation in COAG (Council of Australian Governments) to implement a new National Emergency Warning System (NEWS).

The NEWS will deliver warning messages by recorded voice or text to landline and mobile phones in the event of an emergency. Current technology limits the system to sending alerts to mobile phones based on billing addresses, rather than to handset locations at the time of an emergency.

NEWS will complement existing warning arrangements in Queensland, including the Standard Emergency Warning Signal, broadcast before an emergency message is delivered over radio or television, and the warnings issued by the Bureau of Meteorology.

The Commonwealth has allocated \$15 million to fund establishment costs and States and Territories will be responsible for incident charges for use of the system and facility charges for upkeep and support.

There are two phases to the development of NEWS. The first phase involves delivering emergency warning alerts to telephones based on owner billing addresses. The second phase will include the capability for sending warning messages to the locations of mobile phone handsets.

Victoria is leading the procurement of NEWS, phase one. On 30 September 2009, the Victorian Government signed a contract with Telstra to build the system. Comprehensive testing is taking place throughout November 2009, ahead of a national roll-out.

The Commonwealth has allocated \$1.35 million for the development of capability for sending warning messages to the locations of mobile phone handsets. On 7 September 2009, the Commonwealth Attorney-General, advised Federal Parliament that proposals will be presented to COAG for consideration in early 2010.

Telstra are under contract to provide a NEWS capability to Victoria to deliver telephone based emergency warnings by billing address from 30 November 2009. Upon receipt of this technology, including software and hardware from Victoria and Telstra, Queensland will commence testing and finalise the protocols consistent with the national protocols for use in Queensland.

The Bligh Government's objective in introducing the National Emergency Warning System is to make Queenslanders more aware of and resilient to the impact of disasters. Warnings have a crucial role to play in building disaster awareness and resilience.