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## **NATIONAL PHONE WARNING SYSTEM UPGRADE PROCUREMENT**

The contract signed on 23 December 2011 between the Victorian Government and Telstra Corporation to procure location-based warning capability for the national Emergency Alert telephone warning system for the Australian community is the result of months of intensive negotiations led by the Victorian Government with telecommunications carriers on behalf of all States and Territories. Telstra is the first carrier to sign and ongoing negotiations are taking place with Optus and Vodafone Hutchison Australia.

Developed after Black Saturday, the Emergency Alert system provides warnings to landlines and mobile phones based on a customer's registered service address. The new location-based warning capability, to be rolled out in November 2012, will significantly enhance the Emergency Alert system by allowing messages to be sent to mobile telephone handsets that are identified as being physically within the emergency zone. The technology is the first of its kind, both nationally and internationally and the contractual arrangements demonstrate how procurement can be undertaken by government on a national and shared service basis.

In a first, the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office (**VGSO**) and the Australian Government Solicitor's Office (**AGS**) worked closely together as legal adviser for the Emergency Alert project. The contract model was developed from the shared service arrangement the Victorian Government uses to procure communication services for Victorian emergency service organisations. The Emergency Alert project also raised important legal questions about a State government contracting for and on behalf of other State and Territory governments, including risk management and liability issues, such as the duty to warn the community of impending emergencies, as well as having detailed governance arrangements between the Australian jurisdictions to make the contract workable for Victoria as the contracting party.

"The contracts underpin a national warning system for all States and Territories which is the first of its kind", says Joe Buffone, Deputy Emergency Services Commissioner, Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner. "This form of contract model, negotiated on behalf of all States and Territories, is rare, complex, intensive and time-consuming. I would like to thank VGSO and the AGS as well as my team, for their significant contribution to a highly successful outcome".

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For further information, contact Sue Nolen, AVGS: Tel: + 613 9947 1404