

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, MOBILE TELEPHONE CHARGES

3094. Mrs C.L. Edwardes to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services; Justice; Community Safety

I refer the Minister to the answer to question on notice No. 2380 of 2003 and ask -

- (a) what was the reason given for the 108% increase in mobile phone charges, for the Fire and Emergency Services, between the financial years 2000/2001 and 2002/2003; and
- (b) what was the reason given for the 34% increase in mobile phone charges, for the Department of Justice, between the financial years 2000/2001 and 2002/2003?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:

- (a) The Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) advise the increase in mobile telephone usage provides an improvement in community safety through more effective use of available communication facilities. The improved mobile phone access has meant that they can keep in closer contact with their offices and with remote communities in times of emergency.

Increases can be attributed to the mobile phone network expansion, multiple communications facilities for emergency response personnel, and the removal of Telstra Paging and introduction of SMS paging. As a result, FESA has virtually doubled its mobile phone fleet over this period and the associated costs have increased in the same proportion. As the mobile phone networks expand and offer additional data services, FESA will need to continue to take advantage of these services in order to improve the safety of both emergency response personnel and the community in general.

- (b) The Department of Justice advise the increase in mobile phone charges was due to an increase in the number of handsets from 615 in 2000/01 to 830 in 2002/03. The increase of handsets was to address the following:

- The 24 hour per day, 7 days per week operational requirements of the Department.
- Duty of care, particularly for field staff.

The Department of Justice further advise that the majority of mobile phones are allocated to staff in Community Justice Services, Courts and Prisons.