

Premier's Department



Ref: A8615016
18 June 2026

Pat Hetherington
Coordinator General
National Emergency Management Agency
GPO Box 133
Canberra ACT 2601

Re: Implementation of AusAlert– critical and outstanding issues

Dear Coordinator General Hetherington,

We write on behalf of NSW government agencies involved in AusAlert implementation to seek further information and advice on the system, its capabilities, and actions being taken to address risks and issues related to community-based trials and the planned national test.

It is important that the NSW community can rely on AusAlert as a central means of providing time-critical emergency warnings to people and communities at risk of emergencies and disasters, and that our emergency services have assurance that the system will act as expected once it is operational.

We are grateful for, and appreciate, the resources and effort the Commonwealth continues to provide to ensure the delivery of AusAlert.

The National Emergency Management Agency's (NEMA's) further guidance on the below questions and requests will support consistent expectations, effective risk management, and system assurance ahead of AusAlert going live.

Community Based Trials

We note that the NSW AusAlert Community based trials (CBTs) are now underway. We have previously requested and would still welcome copies of the **CBT technical test plans**, to understand the **proposed scope and purpose of the CBTs** and success criteria from NEMA's perspective, including qualitative and quantitative measures. We would welcome **comprehensive data on results** of the CBTs – this would assist in better understanding risks related to the national test and whether further testing is required ahead of the national test or AusAlert becoming operational in October.

AusAlert National Test

We note the National Test will use the 'critical alert' and that use of this alert type carries additional risks compared to the use of the priority alert. We seek your advice on the following matters:

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- the **proposed scope and purpose of the national test** – what are NEMA's success measures from both a technical and social perspective? Again, a copy of the **technical test plan** would be appreciated.
- as individuals will not be able to opt out of **critical alerts**, clear national guidance is required. How will NEMA's **national messaging campaign** address actions – such as turning phones off ahead of the test – that can be taken to avoid critical alerts playing on a device? This includes any additional detail or actions being undertaken to address risks related to **domestic and family violence** and **road safety** that are exacerbated through use of the critical alert.
- Confirm NEMA's proposed shared approach to **managing execution risks** including public misinterpretation, road safety, and interaction with real incidents. Include stop-test protocols and escalation pathways.
- Clarify **expectations for carrier participation** in test-related communications, including channels, timing and responsibilities.
- further action is needed to **reach and raise awareness among diverse communities**, including through translated material and via community channels.

Device Compatibility, Device Behaviour and Delivery and Receipt Data

NSW remains concerned regarding the lack of detail and data available on device compatibility, behaviour, and alert delivery and receipt. Having sufficient assurance regarding device compatibility and behaviour remains a key consideration in NSW operational adoption of AusAlert.

Clear definition and dissemination of **delivery and receipt data from community-based testing** will be crucial to ensure jurisdictions can determine how many devices were present in a test area compared to how many successfully received an alert, and to accurately interpret testing outcomes and assess system performance.

NSW would appreciate clarification on what delivery and receipt data will be provided to jurisdictions following community-based testing, including the scope and format of metrics to be reported.

We would also be grateful for the following information:

- Detail on the **delivery and receipt data** that will be available to jurisdictions, including estimated number of devices in test areas, number/proportion receiving alerts, and format of reporting.
- **Expected variability in delivery** due to device capability, network conditions and location, and how this should be interpreted.
- The national position on **device compatibility, limitations, and whether user action (e.g. software updates) is required**. Device compatibility data provided on the website is insufficient. We would welcome greater efforts from NEMA to obtain additional detail on device compatibility, including through engagement with carriers.
- We note your advice regarding the **behaviour of some Google phones** that have not received the latest updates and that messaging will be issued to encourage phone updates. As discussed, we would appreciate further advice on the number of devices impacted by this issue.
- Available **carrier data on device readiness levels**.
- Expected **delivery performance benchmarks and known limitations** (including lack of device-level reporting).

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Commonwealth use of AusAlert

Further, we note a number of discussions have taken place – through various consultative groups and including consultation on the draft Inter-Governmental Agreement and Operational Protocols – regarding the Commonwealth’s intended use of AusAlert and the potential for **inconsistency with state and territory emergency management coordination and control arrangements**. The Commonwealth has been reluctant to agree to limit its use of the system, and has included clauses in the draft Operating Protocols that suggest the Commonwealth may unilaterally use the system during emergencies without consulting the relevant state or territory emergency controller.

NSW wishes to avoid the potential for such situations to result in public confusion or poor operational or community outcomes, and we seek your advice on how NEMA’s intended use of AusAlert will align with Commonwealth and State legislation and emergency management arrangements.

Final system acceptance and transition from Emergency Alert

We look forward to continuing to work with the Commonwealth to ensure a smooth transition from Emergency Alert to AusAlert once the system becomes operational later this year. With respect to that transition, we would be grateful for your advice on:

- the **criteria and evidence NEMA have set for final system acceptance** following the national test.
- **current state and expected milestones for device compatibility**, including actions undertaken by NEMA to increase this over time.
- expectations for how **risks identified during testing** will be addressed prior to go-live – including how learnings from the CBTs and national test have been integrated into the system.

We look forward to your advice on these important questions and to continuing to work with you to deliver AusAlert in a manner that improves the safety of all Australians.

Sincerely,

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Trent Curtin
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NSW Rural Fire Service

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A/Managing Director
NSW Telco Authority

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Executive Director,
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