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Our legal obligation to provide information

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We provide assistance and information every day to a range of government agencies, including law enforcement agencies and emergency services.

We publish figures on how many requests for assistance we receive each year.

Who can request my information?

Like all telecommunications companies operating in Australia, we are required by law to assist a range of Government agencies who request customer information for purposes such as enforcing criminal law and laws imposing financial penalties, protecting public revenue and safeguarding national security.

We also provide assistance to emergency services organisations in life-threatening and time-critical situations.

What kind of information can be requested?

Agencies can request a range of information including a customer's name, address, phone number, email address, service number and connection dates, date of birth and previous address.

Records of communications such as calls, SMSs and emails can also be requested, including the source, the destination, and the date, time and duration of a communication. Certain information about the location of the equipment you use to communicate can also be requested, such as the residential address associated with your fixed phone service or the location of the cell tower you were connected to when you made a mobile call.

Internet records can be requested, including the date, time and duration of internet sessions as well as email logs from the services we provide.

How are request made to Telstra?

There are a variety of ways for requests for customer information to be made.

We receive court orders such as subpoenas and coronial requests which require us to provide customer information.

We also receive warrants, which can require us to provide access to the content of stored communications, or real-time access to communications as they are carried over our network.

Some agencies are able to access the Integrated Public Number Database (IPND) which holds information on every phone number from every service provider in Australia, including the service and directory addresses provided by the customer. This database is managed by Telstra as part of our carrier licence issued by the Australia Government.

How are requests for information reviewed?

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tra carefully assesses each request and

only discloses customer information if the request is in accordance with the law.

An agency requires a warrant to intercept content in real-time. For other information, agencies do not require a warrant but must meet the relevant legislative conditions. In the case of law enforcement agencies investigating a crime, they must be satisfied that the disclosure is reasonably necessary for the enforcement of criminal law and they must also consider the privacy implications of the disclosure.

When responding to lawful requests for customer information from agencies, we aim never to interfere with our customers' legitimate use and enjoyment of our services.

Will I be informed if a requested has been made for my information?

We are prohibited from providing details of specific requests made by law enforcement or national security agencies. Additionally, Telstra does not want to jeopardise the work of these or other agencies.

Telstra provides annual figures on the total number of requests we receive for customer information. These figures do not include requests by national security agencies, as the reporting of that information is prohibited.

The Australian Attorney-General's Department and the Australian Communications and Media Authority produce annual reports that provide some details of information requests made by agencies at an industry-wide level. Enquiries about the actions of specific agencies should be directed to the agencies themselves.

How many requests do we receive each year?

Between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2019, Telstra responded to 74,782 requests for customer information.

- 65,564 involved providing customer information
- 5,415 involved life-threatening situations and emergency calls
- 524 were DNS Blocking requests
- 2,871 were warrants for interception or access to stored communications
- 408 were court orders

Protecting our networks and infrastructure

We have a legal obligation to do our best to prevent our network and facilities from being used in the commission of a crime. Government agencies can request we take action at an infrastructure level to prevent a crime. For example, Telstra blocks the Interpol generated 'worst of the worst' list of child abuse sites.

Network or infrastructure level requests are infrequent and generally do not involve disclosing customer information.

Telstra also provides managed network services; data, voice and satellite services; and operates submarine cable networks and assets in over twenty countries and territories. In these places our focus is on providing services to large enterprise customers, rather than individual consumers. As such, we received less than 100 requests for customer information outside of Australia in 2018-19.

Where can I get more information?

For information on national security, telecommunications interception and access arrangements, contact the Attorney-General's Department at www.ag.gov.au

For information on assistance to agencies under the Telecommunications Act 1997, contact the Department of Communications at www.communications.gov.au

For information on the IPND and Emergency Services, contact the Australian Communications and Media Authority www.acma.gov.au

For information about Emergency Alerts go to www.emergencyalert.gov.au

For information on Australia's privacy regime, contact the Office of Australian Information Commissioner www.oaic.gov.au

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