

11/28303-04

26 November 2012

Mr Roger Clarke
Chair for the Board of the
Australian Privacy Foundation

Dear Mr Clarke

RE: The PIA Report on the DVS Extension Project

Thank you for your letter and e-mail of 18 November 2012 in which you sought further information on the Document Verification Service.

The DVS was established by the Council of Australian Governments in 2007. It has been fully operational since the middle of 2011. It is currently processing around 100,000 transactions per month and has nine government users. It was designed with the objectives of improving identity security within the Australia's national system of identity and also protecting personal information. The system is operating in accordance with the operational parameters described in the original DVS privacy impact assessment of June 2007 (this is on the Attorney-General's Department website).

The 2007 report to COAG on identity security foreshadowed "it may be possible to extend the scope of the DVS to include access by sensitive areas of the private sector, such as the financial and transport sectors, subject to suitable safeguards." As you noted in your letter, the Commonwealth has committed to provide access to the DVS to private sector use. It is our intention to provide access to the same system that is used by government users. However, as we wish to provide access to the national system, we need the agreement of States and Territories as well. The Commonwealth is actively engaged with State/Territory governments at present to finalise the design of the offering for the private sector. One of the benefits identified for the private sector is that the DVS design is privacy enhancing and has the potential to reduce the amount of personal information collected and stored by the private sector.

We have a package of governance provisions with the States and Territories for consideration. Foremost amongst these are additional contractual and procedural provisions to ensure that any private sector users of the system protect personal information. Amongst the discussion items is the privacy impact assessment to which you refer. We are yet to receive final sign off of the complete package. For that reason, any suggestions you may have about privacy protections that might be afforded to the service would be welcome.

We have advised our intention to open the service to selected private sector users in a number of public fora and it has been the subject of some media reporting since the middle of 2011.

If you would like to take up the offer of a comprehensive briefing on both the existing DVS and the nature of the offer we will make to the private sector, please contact my office on (02) 6141 2704

Yours sincerely
Andrew Rice