



5 September 2023



Ref: OIA-2023/24-0099

Dear 

Official Information Act request relating to the use of Signal by officials and Ministers

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 8 August 2023. You requested:

Can you please provide me with copies of any policies or protocols that the department (and NEMA or PMO) has in place relating to the use by officials and ministers of Signal to communicate on official business; instructions or advice provided to officials or ministers on this subject; and any privacy impact assessments that have been conducted in relation to this subject.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) policies and procedures for information technology and information management support compliance with the:

- Public Records Act (PRA) 2005 – the requirement to create and maintain records,
- Privacy Act 1993, and
- Official Information Act 1982.

DPMC and NEMA policies and procedures are not based on the individual platforms or software used, but are generic to cover all official information, as all DPMC and NEMA staff are expected to retain and file messages including emails, text messages and messages sent or received on other platforms such as Signal, where they are part of the business record.

We have completed a search of our databases for 'Signal message' to identify additional information or documents within scope of your request, and identified this text published on the staff intranet on 3 May 2019. This text was also replicated in an email from ELT to all staff on 19 May 2019:

"Want a fast, easy way to communicate to your team but worried about security online? Try out the app, Signal.

Signal is a cross-platform encrypted messaging service, where you can send high-quality group, text, voice, video, document, and picture messages anywhere in the world for free. The beauty of this messaging app is that it is been painstakingly engineered to keep your communication safe.

- *Messages are end-to-end encrypted and can only be read by the recipient.*
- *Signal uses the contact information on your phone to determine who in your list also uses Signal Messenger. It does it in such a way that your contact information is not*

identifiable, and it then deletes the information from their system once that have identified Signal users from your contacts.

- *Signal does not collect and store any of your contact's details.*
- *Your Signal messages are not backed-up in iCloud or Google.*
- *Signal does not store any message metadata, and it does not make this information available to others.*

Signal is a good, secure system we'd encourage you to use for instant messaging purposes.

Please note: Signal Messenger should only be used at DPMC for routine, non-sensitive, unclassified messaging between colleagues or within groups. For messages that require any degree of classification, or are considered sensitive, the formal secure email system should be used.”

We also found one document with instructions on how to download the Signal app but deemed this out of scope of your request as it did not contain advice or instructions about using Signal.

If you are interested in DPMC and NEMA generic corporate policies on information management or information technology usage, please let us know.

This response will be published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

Yours sincerely



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