

Part 8: Communication & awareness

How can we maintain and increase public awareness of the mutual assistance process and the mutual assistance reforms?

It is important to ensure that the public has a good understanding of the mutual assistance process. Public understanding of and confidence in, the mutual assistance process is essential to the success of a new mutual assistance system. The Australian Government will use a comprehensive communication strategy to increase the understanding and confidence of the public, including journalists, members of Parliament, lawyers and other agencies and organisations involved in the mutual assistance process.

The Australian Government will use this comprehensive communication strategy to:

- increase public understanding of what mutual assistance is and how we propose to reform mutual assistance
- increase public understanding of the differences between agency-to-agency assistance and mutual assistance, and
- increase public confidence in the mutual assistance process.

These goals could be achieved by:

- being open and accountable about mutual assistance procedures and cases without compromising operational law enforcement
- maintaining a comprehensive website that details current mutual assistance laws, procedures and reform proposals
- producing and maintaining up to date public information documents
- undertaking a ‘roadshow’ event to inform magistrates, law societies and the public in States and Territories about mutual assistance, and
- using the media as a means of relaying information by increasing journalists’ understanding of mutual assistance through targeted information packages.

In early 2006, the Australian Government Attorney-General’s Department began the implementation of a public awareness strategy on international crime cooperation, including mutual assistance and extradition. As part of this strategy, the Australian Government Attorney-General’s Department has set up a webpage which includes links to factsheets, flowcharts and Frequently Asked Questions on mutual assistance and extradition. The Australian Government Attorney-General’s Department will continue implementation of this strategy in 2006-2007.

M. Communication of reforms: The Australian Government will implement a comprehensive communication strategy to inform the general public about the mutual assistance process and mutual assistance reforms.