

## **Counter-Terrorism Response since 2002**

### **Commonwealth Counter Terrorism Co-ordination and Planning**

- 10.1 During the eighteen months since the Committee last heard from the Commonwealth agencies concerned with counter-terrorism, on 9 December 2002, there have been significant developments in counter-terrorism policy and administration.
- 10.2 The Intergovernmental Agreement on Counter-Terrorism was signed by the Commonwealth and all States and Territories in October 2002 and as a result the National Counter-Terrorism Committee was established. The National Security Division in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet was created in July 2003 'to foster coordination and a stronger whole-of-government policy focus for national security issues.'<sup>1</sup>
- 10.3 The following Chapter details the arrangements which have been put in place by the Commonwealth in counter-terrorism strategic policy and response coordination with the states and territories. The chapter headings reflect those issues reviewed by the Committee in each of the hearings held in the states and territories together with issues where the Commonwealth has a leading policy and coordination role.
- 10.4 Issues where the Commonwealth has a leading policy and coordination role include:

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<sup>1</sup> A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 220.

- National Counterterrorism Committee and Plan
  - Intelligence and Threat Assessment
  - National Exercise Program
  - International Counterterrorism Cooperation
  - National Consequence Management Coordination
  - State and Commonwealth legislative consistency
  - ADF Counterterrorism Response Capability
  - Communications Interoperability
- 10.5 Issues where both the states and Commonwealth have responsibility include:
- Infrastructure Protection
  - Maritime and Aviation Security
  - Mass Casualty Response Coordination
  - Chemical, Biological and Radiological Incident Response Coordination
    - ⇒ Terrorist Threats to Agriculture
    - ⇒ Remote Area Incident Response

## **National Counter Terrorism Committee and National Counter Terrorism Plan**

- 10.6 The Committee noted the establishment of the National Counter Terrorism Committee which oversees arrangements between the Commonwealth and the States on counterterrorism policy. The Committee was assured that there had been effective cooperation between jurisdictions during the past year as well as recognition that counter terrorism arrangements have improved at the national level 'because arrangements are flexible and developed in a highly consultative way.'<sup>2</sup> The National Counter-Terrorism Committee met on six occasions during 2003.
- 10.7 The centrepiece of the Commonwealth strategy is the National Counter-Terrorism Plan issued in June 2003 which was developed with respect to the post September 11 and Bali bombing security environment. The plan, supported by a more detailed and classified handbook, incorporates provision for:

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2 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 218.

- declaration of a national terrorist situation;
  - enhanced arrangements for sharing intelligence and information between jurisdictions;
  - enhanced arrangements for prevention [of terrorism];
  - a new section on consequence management issues which was missing from the predecessor plan; and
  - a four-level counter-terrorism alert system which allows for a more nuanced response at the higher levels of alert.<sup>3</sup>
- 10.8 The declaration of a national terrorist situation allows for policy coordination and control to move to the Commonwealth in certain well defined situations. It relies on strong cooperative and consultative relationships among all jurisdictions and their agencies.<sup>4</sup>

## Intelligence and Threat Assessment

- 10.9 The National Threat Assessment Centre within the Attorney-General's Department has been staffed from ASIO. The Threat Assessment Centre will draw on the information gathering expertise of the whole range of intelligence gathering agencies including the AFP, ASIS the Defence Intelligence Organisation, DFAT, DOTARS and ONA. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet told the Committee that:
- The objective is to have the best possible threat information and forewarnings of possible terrorist attacks both within Australia and against Australians or Australian interests overseas.<sup>5</sup>
- 10.10 The Centre is operating on a 24 hour seven days a week basis. Regular threat assessments are provided to the states and territories. By utilising a diverse range of sources for intelligence assessments it is hoped to improve on the quality of analyses produced by separate intelligence organisations.
- 10.11 Other initiatives undertaken during the past twelve months include the National Security Hotline established in December 2002 which the Committee was told had received 28,000 calls, letters and emails and of which about 15,000 have provided information about suspicious activity. In addition the AFP has formed joint counter-terrorism strike

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3 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, pp 218 – 219.

4 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 218.

5 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p.222.

teams with state and territory police forces.<sup>6</sup> With respect to the issue of ensuring a high level of co-operation between jurisdictions as well as efficient administrative co-ordination, PM & C assured the Committee that:

there is no complacency on these [anti-terrorism] issues...the arrangements that we have in place are constantly under review to ensure that they remain appropriate to the threat environment. We work closely and collaboratively without state and territory counterparts to ensure that they are aware of the arrangements and that they are working within their own systems...we seek to engender an environment where we constantly ask: are the existing arrangements adequate? Are existing measures necessary? Can we reasonably do more?<sup>7</sup>

- 10.12 After examining evidence from the Commonwealth as well as from the states and territories as to Australia's preparedness to respond to a terrorist attack, the Committee remains of the view that even the most vigilant surveillance and preparedness regimes cannot guarantee that a terrorist attack would be prevented. Effective intelligence to help detect terrorism at the planning stage and effective capacity to respond to an incident remain the objectives of anti-terrorism policy.

## National Exercise Program

- 10.13 Counter Terrorism arrangements are subject to continual testing by means of a national program of exercises where lessons learnt are fed back into the arrangements. The Executive Director of the Protective Security Co-ordination Centre, told the Committee that the exercise program included scenarios to test the ability to respond to incidents in the remotest areas:

We are testing not only multi jurisdictional incidents but also incidents within the jurisdictions which require assistance to come from other states. National counter-terrorism arrangements in this country are built in such a way that the states, the territories and the Commonwealth are capable of supporting each other no matter where there are incidents or multiple incidents around the country.<sup>8</sup>

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6 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p.222.

7 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 222-223.

8 E Tyrie, Transcript, 8 March 2004, pp. 223-224.

- 10.14 The Committee asked what had been learned from the various exercises and if there had been differences in the degree of preparedness of the larger and smaller states. PM&C noted in reply that the PSCC conducted a 'lessons learned' forum where all parties met together and discussed jurisdictional issues which may have emerged, in order to build the responses into the next exercise. A national exercise commencing on 27-28 March 2004 (Mercury 04), for example, tested arrangements put into place during the last 12 months including a simulated declaration of a national terrorist situation where the Commonwealth will exercise broad strategy and policy arrangements.
- 10.15 The national exercise, code named Mercury 04, tested the full range of preventative, response and consequence management arrangements across four jurisdictions – the Northern Territory, South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania.<sup>9</sup> Test incidents are to be staged in Tasmania and the Northern Territory where South Australian resources will be deployed in support of the Northern Territory and Victorian resources in support of Tasmania 'so these issues of interoperability, communications and command and control [are] tested in a way that they have not been tested before'.<sup>10</sup>
- 10.16 In an overview of the national counter-terrorism exercise program for the Committee, Mr Metcalfe noted that as a result of a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Agreement in December 2002, the Commonwealth was to provide \$15 million over four years to enhance the exercise program.

## International Counter-Terrorism Co-operation

- 10.17 There have been developments in international co-operation since 2002 including the appointment of an Ambassador for Counter-Terrorism to focus international efforts both in the region and with key allies. Bilateral anti-terrorism co-operative agreements have been signed with Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Fiji, East Timor, India and Papua New Guinea. In addition to formal agreements, aid packages aimed at law enforcement enhancement have been provided to Indonesia (\$38 million towards establishing an Indonesian Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation) and the Philippines.

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9 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 220.

10 E Tyrie, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 228.

- 10.18 Building on the experience of AFP co-operation with the Indonesian police during the Bali bombing investigation, an AFP international deployment group has been created to enable the strategic deployment of Australian police and support personnel undertaking peacekeeping operations, restoration of law and order missions and capacity building. PM& C told the Committee that:

The regional ministerial meeting on counter-terrorism was held in Bali in February this year, co-hosted by Australia and Indonesia, and its success underscored the growing cooperation between Australia and Indonesia on counter-terrorism issues.<sup>11</sup>

### **National Consequence Management Co-ordination**

- 10.19 The crucial difference between the National Counter-Terrorism Committee and its predecessor body (the Standing Advisory Committee on Commonwealth/State Cooperation for Protection Against Violence - SAC-PAV), is that the NCTC has a specific responsibility relating to consequence management. Effectively this means that exercises will increasingly be designed to test the response of fire and hospital and medical services in the aftermath of attacks.<sup>12</sup>
- 10.20 The new arrangements mean that counter-terrorism is no longer an issue that is wholly the responsibility of police forces. Instead there is an extension into consequence management issues involving the whole of government.<sup>13</sup> As the Committee was told at its series of hearings, state and territory governments now all follow a whole-of-government response to consequence management with overall policy and coordination controlled by the Commonwealth which facilitates inter-jurisdictional support.
- 10.21 In answer to a question about the disparity in resources and preparedness between the larger and smaller states, the Committee was told that NCTC coordination arrangements sought to ensure equitable levels of response by pooling resources where necessary:

The smaller states and territories have less capability because of their size. What this is all about is ensuring that no-one is left alone and that the national arrangements can kick in at an early stage. Sitting behind that capability and that response is a national infrastructure relating to threat information and co-ordination; the

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11 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 222.

12 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 227.

13 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 228.

resources of ASIO, the Federal Police and the Defence Department are a capability that everyone has sitting behind them.<sup>14</sup>

- 10.22 The Committee has evidence from all of the states and the Northern Territory to the effect that co-operation between the jurisdictions and the Commonwealth with respect to counter-terrorism and consequence management has greatly improved at operational levels and in the provision of intelligence. The Committee is of the view that this should be maintained by a rigorous exercise program with lessons learned fed back into policy at the Commonwealth level as has happened over the past year. The Committee notes that the National Counter-Terrorism Plan has provided for the Protective Security Coordination Centre (PSCC) to be responsible for a national anti-terrorism exercise program.<sup>15</sup>

### State and Commonwealth Counter-Terrorism legislative consistency

- 10.23 The process of ensuring consistent counter-terrorism legislation across all the jurisdictions of the Commonwealth, which was signed off under the National Counter-Terrorism Agreement, was completed by the time of the Committee's final hearing on 8 March 2004. Information on this matter was actively sought by the Committee and provided by all of the states and territories in the context of their individual evidence. The Committee was told that with respect to particular legislation isolating incident zones from access or egress:

All jurisdictions bar Western Australia – which I think is about to proclaim its own – have emergency management legislation which enables the jurisdiction to take fairly significant steps to deal with the population in terms of isolating specific areas to deal with the nature of a hazard, including quarantine specific arrangements and the like.<sup>16</sup>

- 10.24 On 19 February 2004 in a speech outlining national security initiatives, the Attorney-General noted that the Australian Crime Commission, established in January 2003, had 'an enhanced mandate to deal with crime (including terrorism) on a cooperative basis between the Commonwealth and the states and territories.'<sup>17</sup> The Attorney-General also noted other Commonwealth legislation introduced in the present

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14 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 228.

15 National Counter-Terrorism Plan, NCTC, Commonwealth of Australia, June 2003, para. 42.

16 D C Templeman, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p.217.

17 Attorney-General, Hon Phillip Ruddock MP, House of Representatives Hansard, 19 February 2004.

Parliament outlawing specific terrorist organisations, and suppressing terrorist financing.

## **ADF Counter-Terrorism Response Capability**

- 10.25 Additional funding in the 2002-3 Budget was provided for the establishment of a second ADF tactical assault group on the East coast to complement the resource of TAG West based in Perth. The Incident Response Regiment based in Holsworthy was established in 2002 to respond to the potential terrorist use of chemical, biological or radiological materials. The government also established the reserve response force, 'a short readiness capability in ADF reserve brigades in each state, to provide counter-terrorism operations and domestic security support.'<sup>18</sup>
- 10.26 The Committee inquired as to the availability for deployment of the newly created Ready Reserve Force (RRF) in case of a terrorist attack. In response the Committee was told that the RRF had not necessarily been created as a first response force when ADF support was called on. Rather it had been established as a follow-on force to support the existing higher readiness ADF force elements currently reflected in the National Counter-Terrorism Plan. One RRF had taken part in the Mercury 04 exercise scheduled for 27 and 28 March 2004.<sup>19</sup>
- 10.27 The Committee received evidence from the states and territories (see individual states chapters above) that the relationship between state police forces and the ADF with respect to terrorism response planning and exercises is operating satisfactorily at the highest levels.

## **Communications Interoperability**

- 10.28 In his opening statement to the Committee, Mr Metcalfe noted the Commonwealth's budgetary commitment to enhance secure communications between the Commonwealth and the states and territories, essentially to provide 'a far more robust secure network than we had previously.'<sup>20</sup>
- 10.29 The Committee inquired about the existing extent of communications interoperability between individual states and also between Commonwealth and states in the event of a terrorist emergency. At

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18 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p.222.

19 Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Submission No 16.

20 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p 220.



present the states have incompatible radio communications equipment and the Committee was told that the only immediate solution lay in the provision of standard radio equipment for all jurisdictions so that communications are possible on the ground in an emergency (30 radios, enough to equip the tactical response groups from each state and territory).<sup>21</sup>

This is essentially being done in a couple of ways, either by each jurisdiction guaranteeing that it will have a whole range of spare radios...or by the old interoperable common standard radios being pooled together.<sup>22</sup>

10.30 A more complete solution of providing common equipment and channel frequencies across all jurisdictions has yet to be attained.<sup>23</sup> Mr Metcalfe told the Committee:

Essentially that would require each state and territory government agreeing to a common standard. The Police Ministers Council is working on issues relating to radio operability. It involves not only the police but also emergency services. I think I am correct in saying that, even within some jurisdictions, there are different issues of interoperability. That process, which related to spectrum availability, types of equipment and so on, is being advanced at a broad level by the Police Ministers Council.<sup>24</sup>

10.31 The Committee was also of the view that there was insufficient provision of capacity for commercial radio stations to inform the public in an emergency situation occurring during those hours when most commercial stations were on automatic relay transmission. Emergency Management Australia informed the Committee that the States were pursuing memoranda of understanding with the ABC to interrupt broadcasts for messages to the community.<sup>25</sup>

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21 A E F Metcalfe, E Tyrie, Transcript, 8 March 2004, pp.224, 226.

22 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p.225.

23 E Tyrie, A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, pp. 224, 225.

24 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p.225.

25 D C Templeman, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 229.

### Recommendation 3

**The Committee recommends that the National Counter Terrorism Committee ensure, by means of a National Agreement if necessary, the interoperability of communications for police and emergency services across Australia.**

**The Committee also recommends that EMA negotiate with the states to pursue memoranda of understanding with commercial broadcasters to provide emergency messages to the community similar to those being arranged with the ABC. The Committee urges the completion of memoranda of understanding as a matter of priority.**

## Infrastructure Protection

- 10.32 The National Counter Terrorism Plan relies on a high degree of cooperation between the state and territory governments and the private sector owners and operators of critical infrastructure around the country. The Committee was told that in August 2003 the Trusted Information Sharing Network involving all levels of government and the private sector had been established to control policy and disseminate information relating to the protection of critical infrastructure.
- 10.33 The Committee inquired about the progress of the risk management of critical infrastructure across all states and territories, having been told repeatedly by the authorities in the various states that the process of identification of critical infrastructure was underway during 2003. In response, the Committee was told that the Commonwealth had published principles for critical infrastructure protection for the use of business and that the Attorney-General would be convening an industry forum to deal with security issues including critical infrastructure protection. Ultimately, apart from compiling an inventory of critical infrastructure assets, protective measures relied on a cooperative approach being adopted. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet stated:

Our essential starting point is that this is a cooperative approach. Security is part of the requirement of doing business in this day and age. It is something that businesses owe to their customers and their shareholders. Significant parts of critical infrastructure are now in private hands, so these are business decisions. At the

end of the day, if there is a lack of satisfaction about progress then it is open to governments to decide what they might do...Whether the states and territories have concerns about particular facilities is a matter for them to deal with, but we certainly prefer the path of cooperation.<sup>26</sup>

- 10.34 The Commonwealth, states and territories, through the Critical Infrastructure Advisory Council have adopted a cooperative approach to the protection of critical infrastructure in Australia. The Committee is of the view that there is an overall responsibility on the Commonwealth to ensure that arrangements in place between state authorities and owners of critical infrastructure in private hands within their jurisdictions are continually reviewed and regularly assessed for risk management purposes.

#### Recommendation 4

**The National Counter Terrorism Committee should assess and report on the arrangements put in place between state and territory authorities and the private owners of critical infrastructure within each jurisdiction to ensure the adoption of best practice security principles for infrastructure protection.**

### Maritime and Aviation Security

- 10.35 The Maritime Security Act which was passed in November 2003 implemented Australia's obligations under the new International Maritime Organisation's international ship and port facility code. The code will be operational from 1 July 2004.<sup>27</sup> The Committee was told that by 1 July:

All ports internationally handling what we call SOLAS sized vessels, which are basically vessels on international voyages, will need to have security plans in place.<sup>28</sup>

- 10.36 Participation in the International Maritime Organisation's Code allows Australian authorities to trace 10 previous port calls of any

26 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 247.

27 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 222.

28 A K Tongue, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p.243-244.

ship entering an Australian port. Security measures can be tailored to vessels which have visited any non compliant port before arrival.<sup>29</sup>

- 10.37 In answer to a question from the Committee about security checks on the foreign crew members of ships entering Australian ports, the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) noted that:

From 1 November [2003] foreign crews must present their passport as a primary form of border control, which is a change to previous arrangements. In addition, we are working with the Customs Service, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and some other Commonwealth agencies around what sort of control arrangements we would like on crews when they are in port.<sup>30</sup>

- 10.38 The Committee was told that DOTARS will, on a risk basis, conduct spot checks to see that foreign ships in Australian waters have valid international ship security certificates and is working with ASIO on a broad maritime threat assessment for Australian ports:

We have provided extensive guidance material to enable [ports] to enable them to undertake a risk assessment...and it is not just ports; it is every port facility. So the stevedoring operation and the overseas passenger terminal have to, similarly, undertake a risk assessment and provide us a plan.<sup>31</sup>

- 10.39 DOTARS has allowed 90 days for risk assessment and security plans to be developed in order that Australian ports are fully compliant before 1 July 2004:

In addition, we need to exercise with the ports, port facilities and ships for a period to ensure that the flow of information about ship security certificates, the level of security attached to a particular vessel and so on are appropriately notified both to ports and if we need to take a decision on exercising our control powers, to us in such a way that on 1 July the system is up and going properly.<sup>32</sup>

- 10.40 With respect to the issue of aviation security, the Committee was told that during the last year there had been a comprehensive review of aviation security policy by the secretaries' committee on national security and that the government had decided to establish the Office

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29 A K Tongue, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 244.

30 A K Tongue, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p.244.

31 A K Tongue, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 245.

32 A K Tongue, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 245.

of Transport Security within DOTARS. Enhanced aviation security measures were also initiated.

- 10.41 In answer to the Committee's inquiry about regional airport security PM&C noted that although aviation was the most highly regulated industry with respect to security issues, the government was applying a risk management approach which balanced risk and operational commonsense. This approach requires any airport receiving regular passenger transport to undertake a security risk assessment with Commonwealth assistance. The Commonwealth will fund 50 per cent of the work associated with the risk assessment and security program. All propeller driven aircraft seating 30 or more are to have hardened cockpit doors. With respect to remote area airports DOTARS told the Committee that current risk assessments did not indicate anything beyond planning and an understanding of security issues by local operators was required and that costs would not be high.<sup>33</sup>
- 10.42 In answer to questions from the Committee about the time frame for the assessment of regional airport security and the implementation of appropriate measures under a risk assessment plan, DOTARS noted that consultations were underway with all Australian Airports Association regions to begin risk assessments. Security planning on the basis of risk assessments should be underway by 'the middle of the year'.<sup>34</sup>
- 10.43 With respect to the large number of small regional airports located across remote northern Australia, the Committee was told that cooperation between civil authorities and the Department of Defence was the key to ensuring security plan coverage.<sup>35</sup>

## Recommendation 5

**The committee recommends that the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) should review the security arrangements in place at all airports subject to its regulation on a regular basis and report on them in DOTARS annual report.**

33 A K Tongue, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p.239 and A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p.240.

34 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p.241.

35 A K Tongue, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 241.

- 10.44 The Committee raised the issue of the threat posed to aviation security in Australia from inadequate international aviation security in Australia's immediate region. The Department of Transport and Regional Services drew attention to enhanced cooperation with regional neighbours including the Philippines, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea where officials were being deployed:

They will work with various Australian agencies to better inform our process of effectively allowing airlines to continue to operate into Australia right down to whether a particular flight should take off. It will take us some time. We have got some AusAID funding to work with our partners. It goes to equipment availability – what sort of technology is deployed- but it also goes to how that technology is used and the general security environment in and around some of those airports.<sup>36</sup>

- 10.45 DOTARS also noted that Qantas itself maintained 'a significant security resource' at airports in the region.<sup>37</sup> **The Committee is of the view that aviation security in Australia's immediate region should be the subject of on going discussions and consultations to ensure the monitoring and upgrading of airport security by our immediate neighbours.**

## Mass Casualty Response Coordination

- 10.46 The Committee was provided with evidence to show that the experience of the Bali bombing had been a formative influence in health and medical and emergency services response planning in all states and territories.

- 10.47 From the Commonwealth perspective coordination of state and territory resources had been subject to extensive testing through national exercises during 2003. The Department of Health and Ageing stated:

Coordination is the key. You can plan for certain incidents but, generally speaking, surge is something that requires a national solution. Any sort of substantial incident, even if it is present in only one state, will require national coordination.<sup>38</sup>

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36 A K Tongue, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 243.

37 A K Tongue, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 243

38 M Murnane, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 229.

- 10.48 National coordination is presently being achieved by means of a health disaster management policy committee consisting of senior representatives from state and Commonwealth health departments and the Chief Commonwealth Medical Officer. The role of the Committee is to:

Establish monitor and provide advice on health preparedness and on how deficits could be remedied. A big part of the way in which deficits will be remedied is by cooperation, by exchange and transfer of patients, equipment and experts and to an extent by improvisation.<sup>39</sup>

- 10.49 To support the strategy of the exchange and transfer of resources a national audit of equipment was being undertaken:

That provides us with information on the number of acute hospital beds there are in Australia, the number of ventilators there are in Australia, the number of isolation beds there are in Australia and the capacity of mortuary facilities within Australia.<sup>40</sup>

- 10.50 The Committee was told that the Commonwealth had established a burns subcommittee of health ministers which is currently looking at the volumes and training of burns specialist staff and transfer options not only between the Australian States but also for obtaining experts from New Zealand, the UK, North America and Europe under some circumstances.<sup>41</sup>

- 10.51 Evidence taken in all states and in the Northern Territory is that there is overall awareness of the level of resources available locally and an advanced degree of planning for intra state and inter state resource pooling to meet a mass casualty emergency. From the Commonwealth's perspective, since the beginning of 2002:

There have been significant advances in terms of understanding the issues, an empirical fix on where we are now, and the establishment of good and efficient relationships and coordination between the Commonwealth and the states.<sup>42</sup>

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39 M Murnane, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 229.

40 M Murnane, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 229.

41 M Murnane, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 230

42 M Murnane, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 230.

## Chemical, Biological and Radiological Incident Response Coordination

- 10.52 The Committee was told in response to inquiries about measures to respond to and manage the consequences of a chemical, biological and or radiological (CBR) incident that the Commonwealth had provided funds for the development of stockpiles of vaccines, antivirals and chemical antidotes in the event of chemical or biological attack. The series of emergency response exercises held around Australia throughout 2003 tested decontamination techniques at incident sites and at receiving hospitals. In September 2003 all states received equipment including analysis and detection equipment and chemical suits to be used by first responders in the event of a CBR incident. Delivery of decontamination systems to each jurisdiction is to take place by May 2004. As noted above, each jurisdiction has moved to put in place legislation which would enable control over access of persons to or from a contaminated site.<sup>43</sup>
- 10.53 The Committee received evidence from the states and territories that although there were some disparities in the amount of equipment available in some smaller states, plans for its use by police and emergency services were advanced and subject to testing.

## Terrorist Threats to Agriculture

- 10.54 The threat to Australia's agricultural sector from biological terrorism was raised by the Committee. In response the Committee was told that the National Counter Terrorism Plan provided for a response to agricultural terrorism and that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's Chief Veterinary Officer is on the National Counter Terrorism Policy Committee. With respect to cooperative arrangements, the Committee was told that 'there is close work done with state and territory governments in relation to the potential for that form of terrorism as well.'<sup>44</sup>
- 10.55 In response to Committee inquiries about whether the National Counter-Terrorism Plan envisaged the involvement of the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry as part of any response to a major agricultural disease outbreak, the Committee was told that such arrangements (AUSVETPLAN) had been formally agreed between the Commonwealth and State and Territory

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43 D C Templeman, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 231.

44 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 233.



governments (COAG) in December 2002. The arrangements could be used for any incident whether naturally occurring or deliberate and they had been tested during exercise Minotaur held in September 2002.<sup>45</sup>

### Remote Area incident response

- 10.56 The Committee inquired about the capacity to deal with incidents in extremely isolated areas of Australia and was told that the states and territories had a plan in place with the Commonwealth to deal with incidents involving such remote locations as the North West Shelf oil and gas fields or the far north west of Western Australia. The Committee was also told that incident responses involving such locations were tested in the Mercury 04 exercise.

We are acutely conscious of the economic importance of the offshore oil and gas industry of the North West Shelf and the Timor Gap. It is probably the best example of where work has been done by Commonwealth agencies, state agencies and industry in relation to developing mechanisms for the alerts, preparedness plans and responses.<sup>46</sup>

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45 Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Submission No 16.

46 A E F Metcalfe, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 232.

