

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS, DEFENCE & TRADE**

**MEDIA STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIRMAN  
SENATOR ALAN FERGUSON**

**PREPARING TO RESPOND TO A TERRORIST ATTACK**

I will be advising the Senate later today that the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade will be conducting a series of public hearings on Australia's preparedness to manage the consequences of a terrorist attack in Australia.

The hearings will allow the Committee to report to Parliament on the state of Australia's preparedness to manage the consequences of a terrorist attack.

The hearings are part of the Committee's ongoing Watching Brief on Australia's involvement in the War on Terrorism and in related actions in response to terrorism.

When we began our Watching Brief in May 2002, we viewed issues associated with Australia's commitment to the War on Terrorism from the perspective of a world changed by the terrorist attacks in America on 11 September 2001.

The bombings in Bali on 12 October 2002 have tragically demonstrated that the threat of terrorism is always present.

While we must continue to do all we can to prevent terrorist attacks, we must also do all we can to prepare for the consequences of an attack.

The Committee's hearings on the capacity of the Federal and State governments to respond to a terrorist incident are part of this prudent preparation.

The hearings are scheduled to begin in Canberra on Monday 9 December with a focus on the role of the Commonwealth Government and its agencies in coordinating the immediate response to, and managing the consequences of, a terrorist attack.

We will seek evidence from the Protective Security Coordination Centre, Emergency Management Australia, the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Defence Force and a number of non-government experts.

We will then travel to a number of States and Territories to hear from local coordinators of the National Counter Terrorism Strategy, police and emergency service agencies, health service providers and State-based representatives of key Commonwealth agencies.

Key issues for us will be:

- the response and management capabilities in each jurisdiction;
- the capabilities that can be provided at short notice to supplement local resources; and
- the nature and likely effectiveness of the mechanisms in place to ensure a swift and well-coordinated response.

Our aim is to critically examine the state of our preparedness to respond to a terrorist attack - providing a measure of confidence to the community that appropriate arrangements are in place or, if they are not, making recommendations aimed at identifying any shortcomings.

It is likely that we will report to Parliament in the 2003 Budget sittings. We will consider at this time whether to conduct further public hearings on other aspects of Australia's involvement in the War on Terrorism.

I expect to make my statement to the Senate around 5.00pm today. Copies of the statement, which contains more detail, can be obtained, after 5.00pm, from the Committee Secretariat or from the Committee's Internet site ([www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt)). The acting Deputy Chairman of the Committee, Hon Roger Price MP, will be making a similar statement in the House at about 5.50pm today.

Canberra  
2 December 2002

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