

Justice and community safety

Policing

- 3.1 The Australian Federal Police provides community policing services for the Indian Ocean Territories under an agreement with the Department of Transport and Regional Services. During its visit to the Territories, the Committee inspected the police stations on both Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands. Police officers on both Islands noted that the stations were run like typical country police stations on the mainland and that crime levels on the Islands were low.¹ On Christmas Island, police officers suggested that additional special constables drawn from the community were needed. Some residents suggested that more female special constables were needed to better cater for the community's diverse cultural composition.

Justice and other community safety matters

- 3.2 Justice and other community safety services are provided by relevant Western Australian Government agencies through Service Delivery Arrangements with the Department of Transport and Regional

¹ The AFP advised that the primary areas of concern were traffic management, domestic violence and alcohol induced offences.

Services. These include court services, legal aid, equal opportunity, Ombudsman, fire and emergency services, workplace safety and workers' compensation, and explosives and dangerous goods.² Annual performance reports produced under the provisions of the Service Delivery Arrangements indicate that these services in the Indian Ocean Territories are comparable with those in regional areas of Western Australia.³

- 3.3 The Shire of Christmas Island made the following suggestions for possible improvements in the areas of justice and community safety:
- construction of a purpose-built court house;
 - evaluation of the equipment needs of the volunteer Christmas Island Fire and Rescue Service;
 - establishment of a Volunteer Marine Rescue Group; and
 - Commonwealth funding of the ongoing costs of providing services in the new recreation centre to equip the centre as an Emergency Management Centre.⁴
- 3.4 The Council's first two suggestions depend on a projected increase in population and infrastructure associated with the Immigration Reception and Processing Centre and the Asia Pacific Space Centre on Christmas Island. As these developments have stalled, however, it would be premature for the Committee to recommend them at this time. The Committee has concluded that the establishment of a Volunteer Marine Rescue Group and an Emergency Management Centre would contribute significantly to the services available to the Christmas Island community and that the Federal Government should give serious consideration to supporting them.

Recommendation 2

- 3.5 **That the Federal Government provide ongoing funding for the additional services needed to provide for use of the Christmas Island Recreation Centre as an emergency management centre and negotiate the relevant service delivery arrangement with the Western Australian Government for the establishment of a volunteer marine rescue group.**

2 Department of Transport and Regional Services, Submissions, p. 50.

3 Department of Transport and Regional Services, Submissions, p. 50.

4 Shire of Christmas Island, Submissions, pp. 327-329.

Military exercises

- 3.6 The Committee was informed that the activities of the Australian Defence Force Christmas Island Detachment had caused some distress among Island residents.⁵ Their concerns related to the unexplained presence of armed military personnel at Flying Fish Cove, the most public and easily accessible beach on the Island, as well as the alarm caused to children and the apparent prohibition of photography.⁶
- 3.7 The Committee wrote to the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon. Robert Hill, in March 2003, seeking information about the exercise. The Minister replied in June, explaining why the Detachment was deployed to Christmas Island and describing the exercise at Flying Fish Cove. The Minister stated that the Australian Defence Force had noted residents' concerns, initiated a review of public relations on the Island and would address community concerns.

5 Ms Virginia Jealous, Submissions, p. 500. The Christmas Island Detachment consists of a Royal Australian Navy Boarding Party and an Australian Army Transit Security Element. Their role is to provide an on-shore capability to manage arrivals of suspected illegal entry vessels.

6 Ms Virginia Jealous, Submissions, p. 500.

