



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# Official Committee Hansard

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
DEFENCE AND TRADE

**Reference: Watching brief on the war on terrorism**

THURSDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2003

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## **JOINT COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE**

**Thursday, 20 November 2003**

**Members:** Senator Ferguson (*Chair*), Mr Brereton (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Bartlett, Bishop, Bolkus, Cook, Eggleston, Chris Evans, Harradine, Hutchins, Johnston, Sandy Macdonald, O'Brien and Payne and Mr Baird, Mr Baldwin, Mr Beazley, Mr Bevis, Mr Edwards, Mr Laurie Ferguson, Mrs Gash, Mr Hawker, Mr Jull, Mr Lindsay, Mrs Moylan, Mr Nairn, Mr Price, Mr Prosser, Mr Scott, Mr Snowdon, Mr Somlyay and Mr Cameron Thompson

**Senators and members in attendance:** Senators Bolkus and Ferguson and Mr Beazley, Mr Bevis, Mr Byrne and Mr Edwards

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

Watching brief on the war on terrorism.

**WITNESSES**

**CARMAN, Ms Suzanne Mary, Director of Security and Emergency Management, Department of the Premier and Cabinet ..... 189**

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**KEARNEY, Professor Brendon John, Executive Director Clinical Systems, South Australian Department of Human Services; Health and Medical Controller, South Australian Functional Services Emergency Plan..... 189**

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**Committee met at 9.30 a.m.**

**CARMAN, Ms Suzanne Mary, Director of Security and Emergency Management, Department of the Premier and Cabinet**

**HEMMING, Mr Brian Edward, Director, Regulatory Services, Department of Transport and Urban Planning**

**KEARNEY, Professor Brendon John, Executive Director Clinical Systems, South Australian Department of Human Services; Health and Medical Controller, South Australian Functional Services Emergency Plan**

**SEDUNARY, Commander Ray Lawrence, Commander Metropolitan Operations, South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service**

**WHITE, Mr John Ronald, Deputy Commissioner of Police, South Australia Police**

**CHAIR**—I declare open this public hearing on the watching brief on the war on terrorism. The committee is pleased to welcome the Deputy Commissioner of South Australia Police and representatives of the South Australian Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Metropolitan Fire Service, the Department of Transport and Urban Planning and the Department of Human Services to our hearing today. This hearing is the eighth in a series of public hearings on Australia's preparedness to manage and respond to the consequences of a terrorist attack in Australia. The committee has heard from Commonwealth agencies about the existing policy and administrative frameworks for coordinating the responses to a terrorist attack, and from agencies in Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania about managing the consequences of a terrorist incident in those jurisdictions.

Our hearing today is the next step in the committee's investigation into the response structures and the strategies that exist in all states and territories in Australia. The focus of our interest is, firstly, the response and management capabilities of each jurisdiction; secondly, the capabilities that can be provided at short notice to supplement local resources; and, thirdly, the nature and likely effectiveness of the mechanisms in place to ensure a swift and well-coordinated response. On behalf of the committee, I welcome every one of you here this morning. The format of today's hearing is a roundtable discussion, but I would ask that all comments and questions be directed through the chair.

I must advise you that the proceedings here today are legal proceedings of the parliament and they warrant the same respect which proceedings in the respective houses of parliament demand. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence on oath, you should be aware that this does not alter the importance of the occasion or that the deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The committee prefers that all evidence is given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give evidence in private you may ask to do so and the committee will give consideration to any request.

In each of our previous hearings there has been a short in camera period where we have taken evidence in relation to intelligence sharing and, with your permission, we might do the same today because there are some things that we can ask in camera that you could not reply to fully

on the public record. With your willingness, we may do that at the end of the session this morning.

I invite each of you to make a brief opening statement, signalling your area of interest and responsibility, and then we will proceed to questions.

**Ms Carman**—Thank you, Mr Chairman. I would like to thank the committee for coming to South Australia and providing us with an opportunity to discuss with you the work we have been undertaking. We would like to have the opportunity of an in camera session to talk particularly about some security intelligence aspects and we will probably have some remarks about transport security in that context.

As you have probably heard from other states, South Australia is a strongly active member of the national counter-terrorism frameworks. We believe that in this area a national framework and national cooperation are of the utmost importance. Briefly, I would like to outline the broad whole of government activities that we have undertaken in counter-terrorism, some of the unique features and challenges for us in South Australia, the potential that we see for further improvements, and a few words on the role of the Security and Emergency Management Office as a coordination point in the South Australian government. All members of our delegation would like to make some brief introductory remarks, and we have brought some pages for you to table.

As part of our Intergovernmental Agreement on Counterterrorism between all Australian governments, South Australia is progressively reviewing its legislation. In particular, we point to our review of our state disasters and our State Disaster Act, because we believe that this is the centrepiece for dealing with any emergencies. We have undertaken that review, it has been presented to cabinet, and we are currently in the process of implementing the review. We expect that new legislation will be introduced in this parliamentary session. We are examining other possible legislation in the area of policing powers and critical infrastructure, although it is too early obviously for us to be able to make any remarks to the committee in that area.

We are cooperating with the Commonwealth in various reviews of legislation. The committee would have been told of legislation reviews being driven by SCAG—the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General—in the areas of money laundering, covert surveillance, cross-border activity and the like. The South Australian government has also supported an effective process for the proscribing of terrorist organisations. Our Premier has most recently supported the banning of Hamas and LET as terrorist organisations. The Premier has advised the Prime Minister that he is willing to work with him in developing a national approach to the banning of terrorist organisations, independently of the United Nations. It is the Premier's view that any alternative process needs to include consultation with state and territory leaders. I can expand on those remarks on intelligence sharing in general and the implications of our Premier's view in that area in our in camera session.

In a very short period of time our government have undertaken other reviews that are important in this area, as have other state and territory governments. We have reviewed our critical infrastructure. That review has reported to our cabinet and we are currently implementing the review. We have undertaken a review of our government buildings security and that, too, is being implemented at the moment. Earlier this year the government committed \$2.1 million as



an urgent injection of funds to deal with some of the more urgent aspects. That is a long-term process and will require funding in a successive number of budget cycles.

Our government recognises that security is not just about cameras, gates and guards; we are working on a range of protective security policies and staff training and we are consulting with the Commonwealth government in this area. We have completed a review of the governance arrangements of our emergency services and that is being implemented. We have reviewed our South Australia Special Police services branch, which is also in the process of being implemented.

I now turn to some unique features of South Australia which we would like to bring to the committee's attention. We are a relatively benign state in terms of natural disasters and, thankfully, of security situations, or threats to our security. We are very grateful for that. Unlike some of the other states and territories that your committee has visited, this has meant that we have not been particularly challenged in this area. We have had some tragic and serious events, however, such as the Ash Wednesday bushfires, various floods in the north of the state going back some years, bushfires in the Tulka area and, of course, we assisted in the national response to the tragic bombings in Bali.

We are aware that our benign environment means that we have to work particularly hard in testing our systems and our people to deal with potential emergencies. Therefore, to this date, we have conducted various desktop exercises involving our South Australian police department, our central agencies, emergency services and the Department of Human Services in particular. We have had a major CBR decontamination exercise which Professor Kearney will talk about and we also have the report to table to the committee. The Department of Primary Industries and Resources in South Australia has undertaken quite a range of exercises to deal with possible biosecurity events.

We are engaged in the planning of exercises with other jurisdictions and the Commonwealth government and you would have heard that we have a major multijurisdictional exercise occurring in late March, early April next year. We believe this will test, in particular, our executive government decision-making systems and intergovernmental sharing of information on security.

A challenge in this state is the Commonwealth government's allocation of resources. You would be aware that the Commonwealth government has allocated few resources to South Australia. We sit in a rather unique geographical position—in the middle of Australia. Significant resources have been allocated to counter-terrorism work on the eastern and western seaboard, but we are very much aware that we are some way from these areas. We are a smallish state—a medium to small state—but we could very much benefit from other resources in this area.

Another feature of our state is that much of our critical infrastructure is controlled by the private sector, which places particular challenges on our government and agencies to work closely with private sector critical infrastructure owners and operators. We do see some potential for further improvements in our national counter-terrorism activities, in a better sharing of information and intelligence. We would like to talk to you about that at an in camera session; there are small issues.

One of the challenges of working in this area has been that all governments have had to improve their capability and understandings quite dramatically and rapidly over a short period of time. We have observed a large number of officials attending conferences, courses and so on overseas, and we believe that these are important opportunities for learning. However, we point out that, in the smaller states and territories, these opportunities are rather limited and South Australia would be interested in working with the Commonwealth government in a better sharing of the learning out of those occasions. We would see an opportunity for the Commonwealth government to contribute to such learning by the smaller states and territories, since our options are somewhat limited.

We also see some opportunities for a stronger sharing of assistance with equipment in the area of counter-terrorism. You would be aware that, under the old SACPAV arrangements, the relatively small equipment budget was usually shared equally between states and territories. There was a very good reason for this, obviously, which was to maintain an equitable minimum capacity in all states and territories to deal with a terrorist event.

However, we would like to point out that equipment particularly in this area is prohibitively expensive and, while our state is very willing to contribute the personnel and resources, there will be some sorts of equipment which will be beyond our capacity. We would seek some additional assistance for this. I point particularly to USAR—urban search and rescue—equipment. I hasten to say that we are very grateful for the Commonwealth's contribution in the area of CBR equipment for our consequence management personnel, as it has done in all states and territories.

Lastly, our government has established the Security and Emergency Management Office as a coordinating point in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. We draw this to your attention because we believe that we have it particularly right in this state, in that the office is a coordinating point both for security and counter-terrorism matters and for emergency management matters. We believe these two are inextricably linked: a terrorist event is, after all, a major emergency and we will have to deal with it in the way that we deal with our systems and plans for all major emergencies. We are aware that some states and territories are now struggling with the issue of how to better synchronise their work in the area of counter-terrorism on the one hand and emergency management on the other.

Our office currently has 11 staff members and a small operating budget. It will be a very flexible group and enable us to bring people in from agencies as required. For example, we have three senior police officers within the office who are helping us with some of our immediate work. Mr Chairman, I stress that we work in close collaboration with all agencies and with the Commonwealth. I will now hand over to my colleagues for their opening remarks.

**Mr White**—Thank you, Mr Chairman and committee members, for the opportunity of being able to speak to you this morning. I support some of the comments that have already been made: there will be some issues that we will be happy to talk about but some of those matters we prefer to do in camera, particularly in relation to police operational tactics—if we get to that sort of level and the finer details of resources, the number of resources that we have, as well as talking about the intelligence component. I will keep my opening remarks fairly brief. I have a paper which I would like to table for you. It has slightly more detail in there than I will include in my opening remarks.

**CHAIR**—If they are all written documents, we can probably table them and read them altogether as one document.

**Mr White**—I would like to emphasise that the South Australia Police has maintained a strong commitment to counter-terrorism over many years, and particularly from 1978, through our active contribution and participation in the former SACPAV arrangements. It was in that year in fact that our now highly regarded Special Task and Rescue—STAR—Group was formed. We now have some 60 members trained in police tactical operations, which is in excess of the 37 recommended number. In addition, we have four officers who are trained as bomb technicians and 30 as police negotiators.

SAPOL have always participated in training programs and national and state exercises undertaken by the former SACPAV and now the National Counter-Terrorism Committee, and regularly provide umpires for these interstate exercises. At one stage in the 1990s SAPOL members held five of the former six national training adviser positions. SAPOL have contributed, and actively continue to contribute, significantly to the progression and development of the national counter-terrorism arrangements in Australia. Likewise, in the areas of disaster victim identification, we have taken a leading role both nationally and within South Australia, and in the current development of enhanced training for DVI personnel and preparedness.

Additionally, Superintendent Telfer of our forensic services branch has been the Chairperson of the Australasian DVI Committee. He played a key national coordination role in the recent Bali tragedy. SAPOL also provided a number of DVI trained personnel to work with Australian Federal Police and other police agencies in the Bali investigations and their contributions were recently recognised with three of those members receiving national awards, including Superintendent Telfer.

Certainly the terrorism attacks of 11 September 2001 and the Bali attacks in 2002 were reason for us and governments to rethink our positions on terrorism. SAPOL has been constantly proactive in working with government and the private sector in addressing those issues that were identified. For example, after 11 September SAPOL established a Special Incident Task Force with a role of specifically monitoring South Australian vulnerability to terrorism and to coordinate activities within the state between emergency services and other key stakeholders.

There are issues in there which I have detailed in my address and which I will not go into, but it is available in my opening address which I will hand to you. In particular, following the Bali tragedy we reassessed. Whilst we have had a long commitment to disaster and emergency management planning, we reassessed our preparedness in this state from a policing perspective. That resulted in the establishment of the police State Protective Security Branch, which consists of two principal areas: our security intelligence section and our emergency and major events section. The roles and functions of those sections are spelt out in the document which I will hand up to you.

In particular, the State Protective Security Branch liaises closely with the Security and Emergency Management Office in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and provides regular counter-terrorism and state disaster briefings at senior executive and ministerial levels. The branch also has an excellent working relationship with key Commonwealth agencies.

With the establishment of the State Protective Security Branch, we committed additional resources where we increased the number of commissioned officers to a superintendent who is now in charge of that area and an additional inspector of police. Recently the state government announced the provision of an additional 200 police. Eight of those police officers will be appointed to the State Protective Security Branch to enhance the role of critical infrastructure support, as well as increasing intelligence planning and operational capability of the branch. In addition, one extra bomb technician position will also be established.

SAPOL have also committed additional resources to the establishment of the joint counter-terrorism committee with Australian Federal Police to conduct counter-terrorism investigations in this state. We have an excellent working relationship in that area, particularly with the Australian Federal Police. Additionally, South Australia Police, with the support of the state government, has undertaken an upgrade and increase in counter-terrorism equipment, including weaponry, armour protection, communications and technical support.

In closing, I am pleased to report that the South Australian Police generally always has had an excellent working relationship with all state and Australian government emergency, law enforcement and other related agencies. This has ensured a strong partnership focus in addressing emergency, disaster and counter-terrorism matters in South Australia.

**Cmdr Sedunary**—I am a commander within the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service. I am here today representing the state's emergency service organisations. In South Australia, these emergency service organisations consist of the Country Fire Service, the Metropolitan Fire Service and the State Emergency Service, supported by an administration unit.

Following the recent review of the current structure of the state's emergency service organisations, the government has decided to restructure the ESOs and has adopted a commission model titled the South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission. Currently there is a task force managing the commission implementation process. The state's emergency service organisations operational human resources consist of approximately 800 full-time uniformed staff, 250 part-time uniformed staff and 22,000 volunteers. This group will provide the majority of the consequence management response for CBR related incidents within South Australia.

The state has a good record of cooperation and teamwork between all the ESOs, SAPOL, the ambulance services and other support agencies. This cooperation has been exercised on multiple occasions over the last few years and has resulted in the modification and enhancement of agencies' operating procedures. South Australia has provided a multiagency task force support for interstate bushfires in recent years, which has practised and developed further the state ESOs capacity to work as a coordinated team. This cooperation and coordination is the basis for the state emergency service organisations CBR response.

As mentioned earlier, South Australia has a CBR Committee with a reporting link to the State Disaster Committee. The chair of the CBR Committee also represents the state on the national CBR working group. The state CBR Committee provides for a whole of state strategy and the arrangements are built on existing emergency management plans, capabilities and arrangements. The focus of the committee is on planning, preparedness, response and recovery principles. Representation on the committee is provided from both fire services, the emergency service,

SAPOL, ambulance services, department of health, hospitals, primary industries, SA Water, and other agencies provide input as required.

The state ESOs capacity for consequence management of a CBR related incident is based on existing HAZMAT resources and training, which has been supplemented by EMA courses and equipment provided by the CBR Enhancement Program from the Commonwealth. The capacity of the emergency service organisations to manage a CBR related incident was initially developed for the 2000 Olympics, and has been revised and upgraded since 11 September and the Bali incident. This capacity has been enhanced post 11 September by the establishment of a CBR unit utilising Metropolitan Fire Service station officers whose prime function is to provide specialist training and advice to all operational staff and to enhance and maintain interoperability between the agencies.

The state agencies' capacity to manage the consequence of CBR incidents has been exercised regularly. Some of these exercises have been Red Alert, Front Line, Supreme Truth and a non-ambulatory decontamination exercise in 2003. The emergency service organisations are constantly reviewing and revising existing operational procedures to ensure that any gaps are identified operationally and, through the exercise program, are addressed to ensure that there is continuous improvement in relation to our capacity to mitigate the consequence of CBR related incidents. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

**Prof. Kearney**—In support of what has been said, I would like to refer to two issues that perhaps have given us learning and experience in the health services part to play in emergency services. One was Bali, where we became aware very early in the piece of the needs there. We were able, with the approval and support of our Premier, to have burns teams and intensive care teams in Darwin prior to the arrival of the acutely ill patients that were transferred by Hercules from Bali. This ability was unique in Australia at that time in that, without the South Australian contingent, Darwin would have struggled because they do not have burns units or services and they have very limited intensive care services.

We were relieved about 36 hours later by the influx of other specialists from other states, but we learnt after that that we must have capacity to transfer expert staff to remote areas or distant areas, and we need to have very good communication systems across health and medical services within Australia. The other feature of that is we have all realised as jurisdictions that we need a national burns plan because the capacity in one state alone could not cope with the Bali incident. In fact, we were able, by coordination between all of the jurisdictions, to manage across Australia the need from Perth through to Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney, and we all shared the load. That will be essential in any major incident where there are large numbers of burns patients.

The other issue is that, as a result of that experience, my department sponsored a major chemical biological radiological test exercise of our capacity to respond. It did two things: it was a multiagency test with police, fire, ambulance and health involved, and it centred around testing the state plan that has been referred to and also the capacity of our major hospital—the Royal Adelaide Hospital—to respond to such an incident. It was based at the Victoria Park Racecourse and I think it is the most large-scale and formal test of such a plan that has occurred in Australia.

I have a report on it that I would like to give the committee. This report goes through in some detail all aspects of the exercise. The good thing about it was that, although we had a number of issues, most agencies from all other jurisdictions came and observed and gave independent critiques of the operation; not only did we learn how to do things better but we shared that experience with the rest of Australia.

There are a number of issues that we have implemented from that exercise, including the need to install decontamination facilities. The most important issue where we need some national agreement is the policy around lockdown of hospitals in the event of such an incident. Lockdown involves the closure of the hospitals. We learnt from the sarin gas event in Tokyo, because they did not lock down their hospitals, the people affected immediately contaminated the staff in the hospitals and the hospitals themselves. In fact, they lost their capacity to respond to the public requirement. It is a complex issue.

There are no clear national standards around that, but it needs to be complemented by not only fire but health and medical personnel being able to manage externally from the hospital in protective suits. The major issue is that there is not currently an agreed national approach. There are varying approaches between the states and we have agreed at the National Health and Medical Disaster Management and Policy Committee—which is a subcommittee of the National Counter-Terrorism Committee—to address those issues, to develop standards. This is an issue that is not resolved internationally and we have explored the standards as they occur in the USA, particularly after the World Trade Centre towers event. It is an issue on which I think we need not only national but also some international agreement on regarding standards and approaches.

It is important that we protect our hospitals from contamination, but we also must be able to respond to the public who are contaminated by CBR events and also to decontaminate those people quickly and get them to definitive health care as quickly as possible. It may possibly also involve redesign of emergency departments. Many of those issues are documented in this report. I will leave it with the committee.

**Mr Hemming**—I am here to present the transport perspective. The Department of Transport and Urban Planning has regulatory responsibility to varying degrees for all major transport in South Australia. As a consequence, the department is a member of the state emergency management standing committee, involved in planning counter-terrorism in transport modes and in planning for an emergency response as the result of an incident such as an oil or hazardous substance spill from shipping. I will elaborate a little on the department's involvement in intergovernment coordination and cooperation in the field of transport security.

Transport security to counter the terrorist threat is being driven by the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services—DOTARS—through the Australian Transport Council—the ATC—which consists of state and federal transport ministers. DOTARS is also represented on the National Counter-Terrorism Committee. The ATC established a national transport security working group to work on the necessary legislative framework to improve Australia's transport security and maintain overseas trading partners' confidence in the security of Australian exports. The working group and DOTARS have been primarily focused on maritime security arrangements which, by international agreement, are to be in place by 1 July 2004. Other transport modes have flowed from this work in varying degrees of preparedness, and I will touch on those shortly.

In the area of maritime security, as alluded to in the opening statement in relation to our critical infrastructure, South Australian ports are controlled by the private sector. South Australia has seven commercial ports which, whilst previously run as state government enterprises, were in 2001 leased for 99 years to a private company Flinders Ports Ltd. Other private ports are at Ardrossan, Port Stanvac, Port Bonython and Whyalla, and the government has port operating agreements with the new owners of the seven previously state-run ports and Ardrossan.

In South Australia, Flinders Ports have conducted a risk assessment of their ports and assisted the other ports in this critical stage. These are to be approved by DOTARS which will lead to the port security plans being formulated in accordance with the requirements of the new Commonwealth act.

In the area of marine emergency response, South Australia is a participant in the national plan for the protection of the marine environment from pollution from ships, otherwise known as the NatPlan. The state's emergency response is the South Australian Marine Spill Contingency Action Plan and can, if necessary, be part of the State Disaster Plan and access those resources as necessary. As a consequence, it has the capacity to respond to an oil or hazardous substance spill that may occur anywhere in state waters and has reciprocal arrangements in place to assist other states with resources and trained personnel, if needed.

The emergency response, preparedness and operational arrangements in place for the response to this type of emergency can be extrapolated to other emergency response planning requirements within the state transport arena. Port operators, as a requirement of their port operating agreements, are to have in place emergency response plans for any emergency that may occur in a port, whether this is an oil spill response or terrorist threat.

In relation to aviation, as you would be aware, security for aviation is regulated by the Commonwealth under the Air Navigation Act 1920. This allows the secretary of DOTARS to categorise airports and prescribe security requirements, according to the categorisation of security level applied. The Commonwealth has not categorised airports for security requirements unless they accommodate regular passenger transport, jet operations and/or international flights. All airports, including regional airports, are subject to this process. Adelaide airport is presently the only categorised airport in South Australia. The state has no regulatory jurisdiction over aviation security. Responsibility for the assessment of the level of security required and its subsequent regulation lies solely with the Commonwealth. This means that a decision to extend security requirements to regional airports rests with the Commonwealth.

On mass urban transport, the Commonwealth and states are addressing mass urban transport as a joint approach. A national strategy is being developed which will be submitted through the Australian Transport Council. Briefly, on container security, recommendations from the review of existing container security by the Standing Committee on Transport container security working group is the basis for consultation with the South Australian Freight Council on the identification of measures that could be adopted to improve freight security if the national security alert status goes to a higher level. South Australia is engaged in this consultation and, like other jurisdictions, is currently awaiting ASIO's land transport sectoral threat assessment in order to address any identified threats in the freight and container security area. As mentioned in the opening statement, x-ray equipment to scan containers is being acquired for the port of Adelaide. Thank you, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR**—Thank you to everyone for your contributions. The committee agrees that the report Professor Kearney has given to us can be incorporated in our records as an exhibit and all of the other written statements that you have which are more comprehensive can be tabled.

One of the issues that has arisen in each of our hearings is that the states or the territories are really the frontline in the event of any incident happening. The Commonwealth—unless it happens to be in the ACT—is not the first to know. One of the difficulties is determining when you move from what might be a criminal act, which would come under the jurisdiction of the state for all intents and purposes, to one which is identified as a terrorist act, which then involves a wider number of agencies and eventually the Commonwealth. What sorts of processes do you have in place to readily identify and differentiate between what might be seen as a criminal act and one which is a potential terrorist incident?

**Mr White**—We have now very clear guidelines through the National Counter-Terrorism Plan and the handbook. That has been a welcome addition. The handbook has been compiled in cooperation with state and territory agencies and the Commonwealth. It is correct to say that in the first instance, clearly the state or territory agencies have the primary responsibility. In dealing with any incident, we treat it, first of all, as an emergency incident, depending upon the nature of the incident. Unfortunately there is no textbook which says, ‘It’s always this, it’s always that.’ It is a matter of judgment.

When an assessment is made, we respond. We have structures in place which are clearly rehearsed. They are national standards which we all comply with—forward command posts and those sorts of things. I will not go through that sort of detail, unless you wish me to. From a forward command post we have a senior police officer at the scene. Also in that structure, we have a number of other support mechanisms—for example, the joint intelligence component. From a forward commander back to the police operations centre, we would be making immediate assessments as to the nature of the incident and what it involves. Even if it does not have any indication that it may be a terrorist related incident, we would normally advise the PSC. We have done that on a number of occasions, even though it is not an incident that is terrorist related, because we always err on the side of caution.

**CHAIR**—You alert them, in other words.

**Mr White**—Yes, through the police operations centre and also through our new structure of our State Protective Security Branch. As the incident occurred, we would be making assessments. If it were an incident which did not have an indication of a terrorist nature but where there could be some suggestion that there was, as a matter of courtesy and practice, we would advise the PSC so that they would be aware that something significant was happening in our jurisdiction.

**CHAIR**—It was brought to our attention in Tasmania, for instance, with the Port Arthur massacre, which was such a large incident that in fact, although it was a criminal act, it had the hallmarks of a terrorist act because of the size and scale of casualties. If something like that happened, you would alert your counterparts in the federal agencies?

**Mr White**—Sure. There are a number of things: even if it is not terrorist related, if it is a major disaster or emergency, we already have national plans in place to deal with it, through our



state emergency operations centre, with EMA and our state crisis centre. We already have a number of protocols to deal with major emergencies which have been in place for many years. I cannot comment particularly on Port Arthur because that is in Tasmania's jurisdiction. But we learn from any major incident that occurs and that is why we have exercises regularly.

Ash Wednesday, for example, was a situation here and we learnt a lot from that in a number of areas. We have significant debriefings from any incidents that occur, and look at what we have done and whether we can improve. We share information on a regular basis with our counterparts in the other states and territories and the Commonwealth, and in this state we pride ourselves on the excellent cooperation that we have amongst our own agencies and with the federal authorities in Customs, the Federal Police and the local office of ASIO.

What has come out of September 11 and Bali is a greater awareness of the fact that all the jurisdictions, the states and the Commonwealth have to work together. I have seen that occurring on a daily basis now, more so than perhaps it has ever occurred before.

**Ms Carman**—I do not know if the committee has had the benefit of access to the *National Counter-Terrorism Handbook* that sits under the plan. The threshold outlined in that handbook is that if there is a mere suspicion of a terrorist situation, it is the subject of a national agreement that we will communicate through the PSCC.

**CHAIR**—Most states and territories have told us that the cooperation between the state and Commonwealth agencies and the state and territory and Commonwealth governments is very good. Can you highlight any deficiencies that you think might exist, or do you think the current arrangements are operating very well?

**Mr White**—I believe it has improved significantly. I have been deputy commissioner now for just over 12 months. Even on the occasion of the Bali incident, I did not see any areas where we were not cooperating. For example, DVI made a very significant contribution in the number of personnel for a state of our size demographically. As soon as we had a call about Bali—I was acting commissioner at the time—we were kept informed of what was happening and I and my counterparts spoke to each other. We offered and provided whatever resources were needed, and I know the other jurisdictions did the same. That circumstance is an example where cooperation was very forthcoming. My experience of the last 12 months is that, if something has to be done, we are there to support each other in very much a cooperative and partnership way.

**CHAIR**—The other area is one of interoperability. If a significant event occurs, obviously assistance will be required from any state or territory, if the event is large enough. What is the current situation in relation to interoperability, particularly with communications, where we have state and territory governments often with their own systems? Would somebody like to comment on the state of interoperability?

**Mr White**—I am happy to do that. It is a question which is very much addressed at a high level by the National Counter-Terrorism Committee. First of all, talking about general equipment, which would include armoury—particularly protective equipment—through the old SACPAV arrangements, the buying of equipment was done through a central source so that there would be consistency in the equipment that was being provided to the state and territory agencies. The funding arrangements have not continued in that format but the equipment that is

being purchased for a majority of the states is still being done through PSCC. That ensures consistency in relation to bomb suits and other equipment that is required.

Secondly, we have a number of committees looking at particular equipment—for example, from a police tactical perspective—and groups that meet nationally to ensure consistency. But in relation to your particular question on communications, that is currently an area of debate nationally, and certainly with the National Counter-Terrorism Committee. In this state we have the latest technology, and the Government Radio Network—GRN—from a policing perspective has been the best radio system we could ever have imagined. It gives us far more operational capacity to be able to talk to our police generally anywhere in the state. I can talk to a patrol car on the west coast on the Eyre Highway, if I wish; I can talk to a police station in the south-east.

**Senator BOLKUS**—Are they secure?

**Mr White**—Yes, they are, very much so. The media has made particular comment on the fact that our communication equipment is now encrypted and we have secure communication. The benefit of that is that we are able also to share that communication with other emergency services—police, ambulance and fire can talk to each other. Because our radio network is unique, we have set aside a large number of radios. If we require a police tactical group or the Defence TAG to come across, we have sufficient radios available for their use.

**Mr BEVIS**—Are they radios that are interoperable with other states?

**Mr White**—No. We do have a number of common channels which are available. It is better than the old system, where the Commonwealth provided a number of radios to each state jurisdiction. They had limited capacity.

**Senator BOLKUS**—On page 23 of the document *Supreme Truth*, which has been presented to us, an item of concern is raised: lack of common communication systems amongst all emergency services. I hear what you are saying, but why was that listed as a matter of concern arising from the experience of Exercise Supreme Truth?

**Mr White**—The GRN system is currently being rolled out.

**Senator BOLKUS**—You had GRN at the time; other agencies did not.

**Mr White**—No, they did not. The metropolitan fire service came online last week; the ambulance service is coming online this weekend. Health was on GRN. It has been a very significant program which has been rolled out over a period of several years.

**Senator BOLKUS**—This was identified then and you are currently trying to fix it?

**Ms Carman**—It was a matter of the timing, I believe, of the exercise.

**Prof. Kearney**—The circumstances were that police and health were on GRN and fire and ambulance were not. We created an emergency operations centre for the day, with a representative of each of the services, to ensure smooth communications on the day. Knowing that the other agencies within a short space of time will be converted to GRN, the

communications will be enhanced even more. I do not think, in my experience—because I was responsible for health and medical services on the day—there was any real lack of communication. It worked quite smoothly. We just had different systems to operate.

**Senator BOLKUS**—In the previous point you say:

SAPOL and Fire Services reported frustration at not being able to liaise directly with the Hospital Control Room.

There must have been some frustration on the day.

**Prof. Kearney**—This is a report from the hospital. I was in an operations centre with fire, police and ambulance. I can report to you that there were quite good communications. The only complication I felt was with respect to the identification of people involved in the incident. That was something that we learnt: we need dedicated systems to do that.

**Mr BEVIS**—How do those systems interface with Commonwealth agency systems—Federal Police, Defence?

**Mr White**—They do not, generally. Federal Police in this state have access to our police communications, the same as border police—police in other jurisdictions on the border have access. We have a number of common channels, but on the GRN system it is relevant purely to South Australia.

**Mr BEVIS**—In a serious incident which might be escalated, involving federal agencies, you would need to set up a similar physical command office?

**Mr White**—Australian Federal Police have access to our communications system in this state.

**Mr BEAZLEY**—I understand the various states and the Commonwealth are now doing a study of the communications problems that exist between the states and the emergency services, police services et cetera. You are obviously contributing to that study.

**Mr White**—We are, yes.

**Mr BEAZLEY**—Is it in the intention of that study to produce a list of protocols, suggested equipment, and make an approach to the federal government for resources to implement the consequences of it, or are you anticipating that it will rationalise your own equipment programs over the next few years?

**Mr White**—That is a good question. I would not want to speculate on the outcome of the committee deliberations because there are diverse views in that committee. South Australia's view—and a number of the other jurisdictions are going the same way—is that when you start talking about communications equipment you are talking about a very big capital investment. A number of the states have invested very heavily in state-of-the-art technology and I imagine it would be difficult to adopt a system, such as in South Australia, across Australia because financially it would be very difficult. In relation to interoperability, from South Australia's perspective, if we had a major incident here we would certainly require assistance from other jurisdictions. Provided we have sufficient radio or communications equipment available—which

we do—that would meet the requirements in this state. There is still a fair bit of debate to occur and I would not want to speculate on behalf of my other colleagues on the outcomes and recommendations, apart from saying what South Australia's point of view is.

**Mr BEAZLEY**—I am a little bit worried that you are going to be constrained. Many of the states have gone through substantial equipment programs in recent times in communications—that is the nature of communications; you constantly have to readjust—and, having gone through those expenses, are not confident in a parsimonious Commonwealth, so that if there is a decision taken to establish some common protocols around the country, you may well resist the idea that that should occur by virtue of the fact that you consider that, were it to occur, you would have to pay for it. Do you detect amongst your colleagues around the other states—because this would never motivate yourselves—that there is a reluctance to arrive at a correct solution, or potentially correct solutions, because they are worried that they will be lumbered with the cost?

**Mr White**—I would like to think that, whilst finance is a significant consideration for us, we would want to look at what is best first and the financial factors would come in second. It is a factor which we certainly could not, as responsible executive management, not take into consideration but, first of all, it would be about what is best for the jurisdictions, what is best for the nation, and then obviously the costing factors would come into it. That is really more at state government to federal government level.

**Ms Carman**—I believe there is a lot of thought that needs to take place in this area. For example, we have not yet agreed what the goal of interoperability really means, particularly in the context of the rapidity with which technology develops and changes develop. What is this goal of interoperability? I think it is fair to say that we are still, on the National Counter-Terrorism Committee, grappling with that and how it would apply in the command and control systems that would need to be shared in a jurisdiction in any large-scale event.

**CHAIR**—Mr Hemming, in all of the other states and territories that we have visited, we have had a lot of discussion about airport security, but I think it is the first time that the issue of security at ports has been raised. Do we have sufficient security at our ports to ensure that an incident in any of the ports in South Australia—of which we have quite a few—would be discouraged or prevented? It does not seem it is very difficult at Portland and I wonder what it is like here.

**Mr Hemming**—I will answer that in two ways. First, on behalf of my Commonwealth colleagues who are developing the regulations under the Maritime Transport Security Bill, that is exactly the intent of that legislation and that is being driven at an international level by the International Maritime Organisation to ensure we have safe ports for trade purposes, in particular around the globe. Secondly, on your issue at the state level, we already have in our port operating agreements a requirement that our operators have an emergency response plan which picks up the security threat. That will also form part of the requirement of the regulations under the national maritime security bill. I can assure you that they do have a response plan in their current operating agreements, and one that is put into practice on a regular basis.

**CHAIR**—Do you think that security at ports is given a lower priority than security at airports?

**Mr Hemming**—In my opinion, yes, that would be the case, but certainly the intent of this new bill is to increase the preventative and response mechanisms in the port environment.

**Mr BEAZLEY**—Are you confident that you have the X-ray equipment sufficient to maintain a reasonable surveillance of cargoes here?

**Mr Hemming**—I cannot comment on that. That comes under the Australian Customs Service, who maintain that equipment, so I really could not make any judgment on that.

**CHAIR**—Professor Kearney spoke about the exercise that took place in relation to a chemical and biological incident. It would appear that in recent times the most prevalent form of terrorism is by bombing—suicide bombing, car bombing or explosives of some sort—which naturally generates a tremendous number of burns victims. Have you thought of doing the same sort of exercise in relation to your capability to handle large numbers of burns victims as a result of a terrorist incident?

**Prof. Kearney**—The scenario with this exercise was that it was a chemical bomb that caused burns and injuries. The situation in South Australia is that we have a centralised burns unit at the Royal Adelaide Hospital for adults, with 10 beds, a six-bed burns unit at the Women's and Children's Hospital, and about 70 intensive care unit beds across the metropolitan area capable of managing ventilated patients with burns. As I said in my introductory remarks, if we go beyond that need in any one incident, then we would have to activate the national burns plan, as we developed it with respect to Bali, and we would have to transport particularly seriously injured ventilated patients to other units such as Melbourne and Sydney.

After Bali, I perhaps should point out, from the health and medical point of view, on the Monday the Commonwealth initiated a regular daily teleconference between all jurisdictions where we managed the distribution of patients according to the capacity of the nation. That is how people got transported to all of the capital city burns units. That went on for some three weeks, so there was very good cooperation and coordination from all jurisdictions. We would need to activate a similar plan if the number of people seriously burnt or injured in such an incident exceeded our capacity locally.

**Mr EDWARDS**—I just want to move into a different area, Mr Chairman. I want to quote from a Defense and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy document entitled Emergency Response: Consideration in a Time of Terrorism. It is a United States publication. They say:

Redundancy and backup of data system is critical both for government and community agencies and for private sector organisations. It is of key importance for emergency response planners to look at the totality of the infrastructure in areas under their control to ensure that all elements from electric power providers to banks are vigilant about securing databases and data access capabilities off site to be available in emergencies. Equally, communities in major industrial societies have become so accustomed to stable, available electrical power that there is no provision for backup. The widespread power failures in the US north-east on August 14, 2003 demonstrated how damaging such over-dependency could be. The provision of backup power generation is widely neglected in industrial societies and yet is taken for granted in many developing areas.

Could you comment on that which I have just read out, and give us a run-down on what emergency power you have in this state and how portable and enduring that power is? Do you agree with this particular document that it is a crucial area?

**Ms Carman**—Mr Chairman, this is a very important area. Unfortunately I do not have here the people in our government who would be more expert in answering your question. I do know that certain of our key infrastructure does have the ability to have augmenting power: the Royal Adelaide Hospital, for example, and some of our key government buildings.

**CHAIR**—Ms Carman, I wonder, if you do not have the right people here, whether or not you could take the question on notice and give a detailed response?

**Ms Carman**—We could take the question on notice. I would prefer that.

**Mr EDWARDS**—I must say I just became aware of this document yesterday, but it strikes me that it is something that we need to take up with each of the states. I am thinking of the group of people that you have here this morning, and that someone from that key area is not part of your key group. That is not a criticism. It is just an observation.

**Ms Carman**—Perhaps I should say that the people within government who are responsible for both our communication networks and power generation networks are in fact part of our emergency planning networks. They are not here today, unfortunately, so I would like to take that question on notice, if I can. It is a very important question.

**Mr White**—It also is a matter which I know is being considered by the critical infrastructure review in relation to energy and the impact it has on the general community and business should such energy—whether it be gas, electricity or whatever—not be available. Just from an emergency services point of view, of course, as I would imagine with all other jurisdictions around Australia, policewise we have such emergency power supplies. I think your question is dealing more with the general community and particularly with industry.

**Senator BOLKUS**—You did make mention in your introduction of the particular focus you have to have in respect to the private sector critical infrastructure owners. You mentioned that in the context of South Australia getting a smaller share of Commonwealth moneys. What I got from what you were saying was, ‘We may get a smaller share because we’re not on the east coast or west coast, but there are particular concerns arising from the nature of the ownership,’ or the nature of the state and the spread of the facilities that are of concern to you. Could you elaborate on that particular point?

**Ms Carman**—I was firstly making the point that I suppose we have a particular challenge here in South Australia in that a large amount of our critical infrastructure is privately owned, unlike other states where a good deal of it is within government control. I was making the point that we have a particular challenge in ensuring we have appropriate and working relationships with those owners and operators in any of our emergency planning. I was then making a separate point about small state, middle sized state, whatever you like to describe us as, and how we could do with more direct Commonwealth assistance in a number of areas.

**Senator BOLKUS**—Can you identify what those areas might be?

**Ms Carman**—I have used the example of urban search and rescue equipment. A good deal of the equipment in the area of counter-terrorism is extremely expensive—for example, CBR equipment and the more sophisticated urban search and rescue equipment. That is in the equipment area. I was also talking about perhaps supporting the smaller states, the smaller jurisdictions, in the activity of going outside ourselves to learn, because that is a very expensive activity and it is, in many cases, beyond the budget of smaller states and territories to send people overseas on study tours, for example, or to international courses.

**CHAIR**—Doesn't the Commonwealth supply, for instance, chemical suits to South Australia? I know they have to some other states.

**Ms Carman**—They have, Mr Chairman, as part of a national scheme.

**CHAIR**—Do you know the number of suits? I think in Tasmania it was something like 200.

**Cmdr Sedunary**—All states received the same amount. It was evenly distributed.

**CHAIR**—It did not matter if you were a larger state or a smaller state?

**Cmdr Sedunary**—On that particular equipment issue, that is correct.

**Ms Carman**—The point is, Mr Chairman, that the eastern seaboard states are perhaps in a position to spend a good deal more than we can on topping up or enhancing that. We are very grateful for that assistance to achieve a sort of threshold of capability and we recognise that this is a very important contribution from the Commonwealth. We are saying that, for the smaller states, that could perhaps be enhanced.

**CHAIR**—Do you have a register of heavy lifting equipment and things like that within the state?

**Mr White**—Yes, we do. Certainly with the emergency services CBR equipment that was provided, yes, that was refunded I think under the old SACPAV arrangements. Under the current NCT arrangements, for example, with the current round of equipment that is being purchased, whilst it is being coordinated through the Commonwealth it is the states that are actually paying for it. That includes a whole range of equipment—Echidna, bomb detectors and so forth, protective bomb suits.

What it really means is that it does not matter whether in fact we are a small state demographically, as opposed to the eastern seaboard states, our responsibility and commitment is equally as important and we are equally at risk here. Bali is not a large primary city of Indonesia, yet that was a target for terrorism, so we cannot be complacent that because we are a smaller state, we are less likely to be a target. Perhaps we do not have the Sydney Harbour Bridge and those things, but we need to be equally well prepared in this state.

Certainly my observations are that for the smaller states, in regard to the demographics—even though geographically it is a challenge as we have a much larger area to cover—it is more challenging for the governments in terms of priorities and the amount of money that can be allocated to each of the areas. My observation is that it is harder for the smaller states to do that

than it is for the larger eastern seaboard states. Our state government has been very good in relation to the amount of funding we have received but some of that funding has come from within our own police budget as well.

My observations are that in the latest round of funding the Australian government principal funding has been towards the Commonwealth; the Australian Federal Police are setting up their own counter-terrorism infrastructure; there is certainly funding for the national exercises and for the replacement of the ASNET system, but other equipment has been left to the states to fund.

**Senator BOLKUS**—Ms Carman, you were about to make a point which I think is a critical one and could provide real problems in the overall scheme of things. You said you do not have the capacity to send people overseas to keep up to date with current intelligence information et cetera. One can only make an assessment on the level of vulnerability if you know exactly what is happening in a fast-moving world. Would you like to continue on that point, because I think you were cut off there. What sorts of international connections do you think would be critical? I do not think it just relates to South Australia; other states may be in the same position.

Secondly, flowing from that, regarding the vulnerability of South Australia to terrorism: over the last few years has there been any particular time when you felt we may have to press the button and get onto 'all systems go'? Has there been a particular time when we have found persons of concern within the South Australian community? It is a two-part question going to each of you.

**Ms Carman**—Thank you. Perhaps I should start my remarks by saying that we see ourselves working with other jurisdictions and the Commonwealth. We are very clear that we are part of a national framework in this and perhaps my comments about more assistance should be taken in that context. There has been a good deal of international connection and travel, learnings and so on, between the Commonwealth and other countries. I believe that the Commonwealth government could expand its view of who goes on those sorts of learnings to incorporate more people from states and territories so that it is a truly national approach to this problem.

I am very aware, coming from my area of a central agency and policy development area, that the United Kingdom, for example, is doing a lot of work in looking at what would need to happen to manage community alarm, to provide information to a community and advice to a community in the event of a large terrorist incident. For example, we would be very interested, as states and territories—I am sure I can speak for my colleagues in other states and territories in relation to this—to have a look at that work. It is an area of counter-terrorism response that has not really been explored yet. I say to the committee that it is those opportunities I would like to see us work together on as a whole nation and perhaps send teams of people, not just from the Commonwealth but including jurisdictions, to other places that have more experience in this area than we do so that we can really learn very rapidly, which is what has to happen here in Australia, particularly in South Australia.

**Mr White**—The question from Senator Bolkus was: had we reached a stage where we were virtually ready to press the button? The answer is certainly not that I can recall today, except to say that following September 11, and more so with Bali, the concern of the community certainly reached a high peak. We had, at the same time, the very tragic murder of Dr Margaret Tobin which occurred in Adelaide. That was a very high profile crime. The concern, on top of Bali and



the timing of when that murder occurred, caused some extraordinary public reaction and concern and we, from a policing perspective, had to try to reassure the community. For example we were to have, a week or so later, a Christmas pageant—which is well known—and all sorts of rumours started about a threat to that Christmas pageant.

I had to take the extraordinary step of holding a press conference to reassure the community. Through the media we reassured the community that we had done a lot of behind the scenes work from an intelligence perspective and we were very confident that it was nothing but a rumour. Our role was to reassure the community and we really had not seen that before. It was an opportunity for us to sit back and see how the public really felt and to see the concern and uneasiness within the community at that point of time.

**Senator BOLKUS**—Adelaide is a great town for rumours, too!

**Proceedings suspended from 10.48 a.m. to 11.10 a.m.**

**CHAIR**—I hand over to Mr Bevis.

**Mr BEVIS**—There were comments made just before the break about an equal amount of equipment being given by the Commonwealth to all states. That was something raised in Queensland as an issue they thought may need to be re-examined. I am interested in exploring that. I can understand for small and medium sized states there is clearly a concern that there is a minimum threshold of equipment required in order to function and it is necessary for that to be provided. But I must say I am at a bit of a loss to understand from the Commonwealth's perspective the rationale for every state getting an equal amount of equipment. If an incident occurs in downtown Sydney it is different to downtown Perth or downtown Adelaide or, for that matter, downtown Brisbane. I wonder what your thoughts are about that concept, bearing in mind that I am sure everybody accepts that every state and territory needs a minimum threshold level in order to function.

**Mr White**—Certainly the purchase of equipment and the quantity of equipment is discussed and coordinated through the National Counter-Terrorism Committee. It has been the subject of some discussion in that committee forum because the point you raise is a very valid one. The equipment which is provided, from my observations, is the minimum level.

You may ask: why do South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory require the same number of bomb suits as New South Wales or Victoria? There are very good reasons for that in relation to minimum levels, but I imagine some of the larger jurisdictions may well have other arguments to put forward to say their requirements are somewhat larger than a jurisdiction such as our own. The equipment being provided has been suitable for South Australia, but I am aware—perhaps I should not be commenting because New South Wales can comment on it—and in fact it is on public record that they have purchased some equipment over and above the number of items being discussed through the National Counter-Terrorism Committee forum.

That is why I believe the whole issue in relation to the purchase of equipment is critical. Whilst I acknowledge that the states have a responsibility to contribute—certainly this has been the case here in South Australia, as I am sure it has with the other states—I believe the issue in relation to the equipment and the replacement of equipment is equally a critical one for us.

It is nice to get the equipment but a lot of it has a life expectancy, particularly when you get into chemical protective equipment and so forth, of three to five years. For example, our Echidna robot machine is a very expensive piece of equipment. For us to be able to replace it on a regular basis is a very significant drain on our budget.

**Mr BEVIS**—Is there agreement for replacement?

**Mr White**—Generally, no. If we do get the equipment it is a one-off, generally. It is up to the states and territories to do their own replacements.

**Ms Carman**—I appreciate that your question is focusing on equipment, but our capacity to respond, to be prepared and to plan to deal with a terrorist event obviously is much broader than equipment. One of the hidden costs for states and territories, particularly the smaller ones, is that we must plan, we must respond, we must have systems in place at the same level as our larger counterparts. We must participate in the forums, we must do the research, we must comment on the legislation and so on. Part of the issue, in a smaller state, is the sheer range of activity that we have had to put into this.

**Mr BEVIS**—I appreciate there is a need for a critical mass in all the jurisdictions. Either now, or down the track, if there are some views you have about what constitutes that critical mass and the role the Commonwealth might play to ensure that smaller jurisdictions are able to maintain a capability to that point, that is something I would be interested in.

Earlier on we were talking about interoperability. One of the questions raised in other jurisdictions was the fire service and things like fire tenders, hose couplings et cetera, which are not the same in each jurisdiction. I know some jurisdictions are buying converter couplings. What is the situation in South Australia?

**Cmdr Sedunary**—We are different from all other states. We stand alone, yet we have been to New South Wales and Victoria with our equipment and, with adaptors, we can manage and work with all the other agencies.

**Mr BEVIS**—Do you hold those adaptors?

**Cmdr Sedunary**—I think we have some left over from New South Wales that we kept in supply. Normally the agency you are going to would be required to provide that. They can be built on site fairly quickly if necessary.

**Mr BEVIS**—Does that mean you have adaptors if there is a need for fire tenders from other states to come here?

**Cmdr Sedunary**—No. We have always provided it. We have never received that assistance.

**Mr BEVIS**—That might be something someone needs to look at. I want to preface this by saying it is easy in discussions like this to exaggerate concerns. We know there is a serious issue here and we have to be very diligent in how we respond to it, but ultimately we are all more likely to die from a car accident than we are from a terrorist accident. That said—and this goes to an earlier question, in part—some of the emergency services facilities in other larger states

mentioned that, as well as their command headquarters, they have alternate sites in the event that their major facility is not able to function for whatever reason. Are there those sorts of redundancies in South Australia?

**Mr White**—Yes, certainly from an emergency management policing perspective with a police operations centre. As part of our contingency arrangements we are very conscious in South Australia, from an earthquake perspective, that we could be quite vulnerable. We do have other plans in place so that if a major catastrophe occurred here we could relocate our police emergency operations centre to another regional centre, and our radio communications network allows us to do that. There would be some major issues for us, as with anyone, if there were a catastrophe of that nature in relation to other services, such as power and water et cetera. Also, a lot of thought went into the planning for our state emergency operations centre in relation to it being an earthquake-proof building and we have very tight security measures in place for that. We have contingencies in place and if we had something very dramatic happening, we could relocate either to another police regional centre in the metropolitan area, or to a country location.

**Mr BEVIS**—Do the other services have anything?’

**Cmdr Sedunary**—Fire services have the same arrangements.

**Ms Carman**—In our government review of critical infrastructure one of the recommendations was that all—certainly critical infrastructures within government—develop such redundancy plans, if they have not already done so.

**Mr BEVIS**—My next question follows from your last comment. Earlier you mentioned that a number of critical infrastructures have been privatised in South Australia which means they are not directly under government control. How do you ensure that the measures they take for security, maintenance and redundancy back-up capabilities are there to meet the overall planning if, as they now are in this state and a number of others, they are owned by private companies who may or may not see this as critically important to their shareholders’ value?

**Ms Carman**—You would be aware that the Victorian government has chosen to legislate to require such planning and to ensure it happens. At this stage the South Australian government has decided not to go down that path. We are still examining that issue. Our aim is that it would be through relationships and through discussion that we would encourage such planning at the moment. But whether legislation is important in this area is still an open question.

**Mr BEVIS**—Is there an outcome point? Is there a yardstick against which those private companies would be expected to or it would be hoped they would achieve?

**Ms Carman**—I suppose there is an Australian standard—which you have probably heard others talk about—in the area of risk assessment and planning.

**Mr White**—Certainly with the additional staff that we would be putting in place in the immediate future. Dealing with critical infrastructure, there has been a general review done in this state and that is still with the government at this point in time. Out of that we would see a framework being put in place where we will be able to have certain liaison and coordination roles to work with both government and private sector. We are a little way down the track to

getting that framework in place. But equally, in fairness to private industry as well, following some of the terrorist incidents occurring overseas and because a number of our industries are owned by or have international investors, including those from the United States, I think they have become far more aware themselves of their own responsibilities, more so than perhaps in the past. Certainly the contacts I have had—I do not want to name them in this open forum—from some major industries in South Australia about their vulnerability to terrorist incidents show it is very much to the fore and on their board tables as well.

**Mr BYRNE**—Professor Kearney, with respect to Exercise Supreme Truth, one of the things you identified was, fairly early on in the piece one of the paramedics attending the incident died and was then transported to the hospital and potentially contaminated other individuals. You said you have addressed this via some recommendations but if an incident like that happened in real life, would emergency service workers attending an incident—which they are not clear about to start off with—have the appropriate protection? How is that being monitored?

**Prof. Kearney**—At the time of the practice we did not have access to protective suits for health staff. The fire service was fully equipped. We have subsequently been issued with those protective suits and that is what I was referring to. Although I think lockdown is the correct procedure, we need to supplement that with some redesign of the emergency department and to equip paramedical staff, or accident emergency staff—a limited number—with protective suits, to deal with those particular problems. We are in the process of implementing that, but it is not fully established yet. As I mentioned, I think the general approach to these things is not yet fully agreed upon throughout the Australian health system.

**Mr BYRNE**—Do you think it would benefit from some sort of uniform standard? It varies from state to state. In Victoria I had a non-specific response about a question that I put to your relevant counterpart about whether or not there were appropriate decontamination facilities. Would you agree there needs to be a uniform standard applied throughout the states to respond to these incidents?

**Prof. Kearney**—Yes, I would. We have communicated with EMA—Emergency Management Australia. We have also requested the Australian health and medical disaster management policy committee to address this issue. A common and agreed approach is going to be far better for training, response and interoperability.

**Mr BYRNE**—With respect to issues like vaccines and stockpiles of medicines, is that determined state by state or is it a national issue?

**Prof. Kearney**—There are two things. There is a national stockpile which is managed by the Commonwealth in cooperation and communication with us. Then there are general pharmaceutical supplies which, as part of our critical infrastructure review, we are required as a state to assess to see that we can draw on reasonable amounts of supplies in the event of a major incident.

**Mr BYRNE**—You made some mention about legislation. You mentioned two areas that you were reluctant to comment on: policing power and some other issues with respect to infrastructure. You were saying that the government is looking at this, at this point in time. Are

you able to give us a timetable as to when the anomalies or deficiencies that have been identified in some of this legislation will be addressed?

**Ms Carman**—That is a hard question to answer, you would appreciate, because we are talking about legislation being introduced and moving through a parliament.

**Mr BYRNE**—Do you have a tentative timetable, if all went according to plan and the consultation processes met with broad approval, for the deficiencies in the legislation to be addressed?

**Ms Carman**—I would be a bit reluctant to answer that question since I do not believe it is appropriate for me to talk about what the government will do in a legislative sense. I just gave you that information in good faith, saying that we are very conscious these are two areas—

**Mr BYRNE**—But one presumes that this is also being undertaken on a state-by-state basis?

**Ms Carman**—It is.

**Mr BYRNE**—Is there some sort of national body that is looking at some of the deficiencies or anomalies state by state in legislation that might impact on some of these areas? If so, what actually happens?

**Ms Carman**—That is an important question. The National Counter-Terrorism Committee does have a subcommittee, a legislation committee, that is coordinating a review of all the key areas of legislation that might be required. But I hasten to say that the work is being done very much respecting the integrity of each state system, so it is understood that these are fundamentally state questions although there is cooperation, as you would be aware, in a couple of key areas: money laundering, cross-border surveillance and so on.

**Mr BEAZLEY**—Ms Carman, are you completely satisfied with the Commonwealth's definition of those airports in South Australia where security procedures need to be mounted?

**Ms Carman**—Could we perhaps defer this question to our in camera session?

**Mr BEAZLEY**—That is fine. Professor Kearney, you discussed the development of national burns plans in the aftermath of both your direct experience of Bali and your exercise experience. Are you satisfied that this is proceeding at a reasonable pace, that we actually now have an overall national strategy which will be able to cope with a major incident in any one place, or several places simultaneously?

**Prof. Kearney**—In general, yes. I think our response to Bali at a national level went well and Western Australia has been a leader in the provision of burns services and the development of a national plan. In terms of long-term sustainability of that plan, I think we have a lot of work to do. The development of that plan is progressing quite well and I expect that within the next few months a series of proposals will be put to the Australian Health Ministers Conference on that plan.

One difficulty is that each state has focused around providing for its community, which is reasonable, but clearly the need for burns services in a major incident is on a much bigger scale than what is normally needed, and the issues have been around the sustainability of training and development of burns surgeons and expert burns nurses. I think there is a danger that, unless we have a secure plan that is continuously monitored, we could find big gaps in those services. Right at the moment it is okay but we do need a lot of succession planning in that area.

**Mr BEAZLEY**—Are you going to identify for the health ministers substantial requirements in the direction of training of medical personnel and provision of basic equipment? Is that what your intention is with the plan?

**Prof. Kearney**—Correct. The health ministers themselves requested that there be a national effort to establish a national burns plan. Each jurisdiction is represented on this. South Australia is represented by Mr John Greenwood, who is the head of the burns unit at the Royal Adelaide. It is reporting in regularly to the Australian health and medical disaster management committee. It is developing quite well and I am hopeful it will address staffing and equipment issues fairly early in the new year.

**Mr BEAZLEY**—This is not related but assessment of the types of biological and chemical materials to which al-Qaeda and associated terrorist organisations either have or desire access to is changing all the time. We saw a recent incident, which we raised in Tasmania the other day, of a raid on JI headquarters in the southern Philippines producing a deal of material on tetanus, for example. Are you satisfied that the intelligence agencies keep your health system constantly advised of the changing character of those threats, giving you a capacity to stock antidotes to deal with them?

**Prof. Kearney**—Probably not. I think each jurisdiction keeps itself well informed of the range of CBR materials that could be used and, in that sense, in South Australia the fire service is the leader. In terms of biologicals, clearly we are significantly involved in distribution of antidotes and vaccines. The issue is that those kinds of developments are happening quite rapidly. It is fair to say we are probably not up with that as it happens, but certainly the capacity and the ability to respond, once information is available, is there within most jurisdictions. It will always be difficult, I think, to be fully prepared and have plans implemented for the new biologicals that are coming along.

In terms of infrastructure, with our laboratory capacity and secure handling facilities, we have all those things in place. We believe we have the skills in place to handle new substances but it does take some time to respond. It need not even be a biological terror. For example, influenza vaccine: even if we know of a new strain, it would take us nationally six months or more to prepare a suitable antidote to that kind of development.

**Senator BOLKUS**—Mr Hemmings, in answer to Kim Beazley's question earlier in respect to security of ports, you said it that was the quarantine service's or Customs' job to check what was inside the containers and so on. I am just trying to work out how it works, where the delineation of responsibility is. When you make an assessment as to a port being safe, how do you make that assessment? How do you know that it is safe from the outside but maybe not what is inside the containers?

**Mr Hemming**—The national threat assessment of our ports is currently being conducted by ASIO. However, some ports, such as Flinders Ports, have conducted their own threat assessments. Those threat assessments are more about the threat of shipping, the port environment itself, rather than the container area. The actual checking of containers is part of the Australian Customs Service's role at the border, so I cannot really comment on how well or badly that is conducted.

**Senator BOLKUS**—Earlier we mentioned communications systems, talking to each other. What about IT systems in these critical areas? Are they part of an overall government contract in the state or do you have your own specific priorities and requirements? Do you have a stand-alone IT interconnection system? How does that operate? Is that part of the overall whole of government contract?

**Ms Carman**—To give you a full answer to that I would like to take that question on notice, if I could, Senator.

**Mr White**—Through the chair I can say that from the SAPOL perspective there is a whole of government Internet service, which the vast majority of government agencies are part of. We are certainly part of that. We are able to, IT-wise, communicate with other government agencies in this state—state government agencies, that is.

**Senator BOLKUS**—How do you firewall it or protect it?

**Mr White**—Firewall? From a police perspective, we are extra vigilant. That is probably not the strongest word. We are very conscious about people being able to hack into our systems and we have a very elaborate monitoring system to prevent hacking into our systems. Some of our highly sensitive areas are quite often stand-alone systems for that very reason.

**Senator BOLKUS**—Has anyone cracked it?

**Mr White**—No, not that I am aware of.

**Mr EDWARDS**—Professor Kearney, given the strained relationships between the Commonwealth and the states over health issues, and given the fact that health issues in each of the states are such a priority which seem to be under immense resource pressure, how can we be confident that the ministers' health forum is the best place to deal with the national burns plan? Is that the most appropriate area for it to be, or should it be some stand-alone Commonwealth-states forum?

**Prof. Kearney**—I will try and answer that in the best way I can. What I see at that level is differences of opinion over financing and funding but, when it comes to services, there is enormous cooperation between ministers of different persuasions. Certainly on the terror bit, all I see is that there is a cooperative effort by the health ministers and a commitment to improve, respond and develop. The tests will come when the plan is presented—how we go implementing it—but I would be altruistic enough to hope that there will be a common response to that.

**Mr EDWARDS**—I think we would all be altruistic enough to hope that that is the outcome; we will wait with some optimism on that. I must say that South Australia did a tremendous job in

relation to responding to the Bali situation, as I had some constituents here who cannot speak too highly of the help they were given across the board in South Australia. You mentioned earlier that South Australia is one of the leading states in terms of putting a team together. Was that as a result of a request or was that something that you initiated yourselves here?

**Prof. Kearney**—We initiated it. A close friend and colleague's son was killed in the incident. She rang me early on the Sunday morning and that is how we became aware of it. I immediately made a number of inquiries, found out that the defence forces planned to dispatch three Hercules, and quickly worked out that, if they were going to return critically ill patients to Darwin, Darwin did not have the infrastructure to cope. We then contacted our Premier who authorised us to spend whatever was necessary in terms of securing planes and staff. By lunchtime we had about 15 staff, three mobile intensive care beds in planes, and we had them there early Sunday evening before the planes arrived.

It was very important because not only did the Royal Darwin need burns support but also intensive care specialist medical and nursing support. It did not have the capacity to transfer ventilated or intensive care type patients, because the Hercules were not equipped to do that effectively, and we had that capacity built in. We did it ourselves because we have a close relationship with services to the Northern Territory spanning many years.

As a result of that, we have established a national communications system and South Australia has initiated those things for health and medical services, so that the chief health officers can communicate with each other 24 hours a day and with the defence forces and EMA as well. Those systems were not in place at the time of Bali and we learnt that we need to improve a lot.

**Mr EDWARDS**—The other question relates to TAG team east, TAG team west, and the incident response battalion based in Holsworthy. Could you give me some idea of what liaison and communication you have had with those particular teams and, should you need to call a team, would you be calling a team from TAG East or TAG West? How are you situated here?

**Mr White**—That has been well exercised, certainly before TAG East was established. The ADF have been a critical component of our national and state exercises. We have been very used to looking at the response times, for example, for ADF to be able to come to a state such as ourselves. Now that there is a TAG East, we would still do our requests through Canberra and would leave it for ADF to determine the best way to respond. From our police tactical operations perspective, they have excellent liaison and cooperation with the ADF and, in fact, our tactical response groups have done a number of training exercises with the ADF. From that aspect, we would certainly have no criticism whatsoever. We would see it as a plus that in fact there are now two teams, because if one is not available at least there is backup support, plus what Defence has done through the reserve support as well. We factor it in when we exercise nationally and statewide, because there is the capacity for the ADF to move forward so that they can have some precautionary positioning even before we call upon their services. I suppose it is realistic to say we cannot have a resource in every state because of the geographic size of the country and the sparse population, but now that there are two resources to draw upon it is more comforting for us than it was before.

**Mr EDWARDS**—It is the same in relation to the incident response battalion for the fire services?



**Cmdr Sedunary**—We have exercised with them and have seen the equipment they have. But realistically they are 12 to 24 hours from us, so we have to sustain ourselves until they are available—and that is if they are available at the time, depending on what is happening around the country and the world at the same time. It is nice to have them as a fall-back if there is going to be an extremely long-term incident, but it does not help us in the first 24 hours.

**CHAIR**—Your first response group within the police force is the STAR force, isn't it?

**Mr White**—Yes, it is. As I said earlier, the STAR force was formed in 1978, and we pride ourselves on the professionalism of the STAR Group. They are very highly trained and have worked with the ADF in circumstances similar to what we have been talking about today.

**CHAIR**—Do other police forces around the country have a similar STAR Group?

**Mr White**—Yes, they do, but in different formats. The way our STAR Group has been organised has now been picked up by a number of other jurisdictions. In some jurisdictions their role is purely tactical, whereas with our STAR Group it is tactical and rescue. They have a broader approach to things, rather than just dealing every day with high-risk incidents—which do not happen every day anyway. They are able to have broader rescue skills which we have found have been very advantageous in this state. It has been examined by other jurisdictions and I know the Northern Territory has adopted our model.

**Mr EDWARDS**—When we were in Western Australia, the Western Australian Police Service told us that other states, particularly South Australia, were copying the stuff that they have.

**Mr White**—We have a good rivalry between our jurisdictions. I guess that talks about the very close relationships that we do have with each jurisdiction in today's environment.

**CHAIR**—Before we move to the in camera part of the hearing, I would like to thank you all for your attendance today and for your participation in this roundtable discussion. It seems as though in every state or territory that we have been to there have been some new aspects of the role of the states that have been highlighted. Each one has been very valuable, particularly your experience, Professor Kearney, with the exercise that you had. We have also had the introduction of port security, which I think is the first time it has been an issue in the hearings that we have had.

You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence, to which you can make corrections of grammar or fact. Professor Kearney and Commander Sedunary, I thank you particularly for your role this morning.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Byrne**):

That, pursuant to the power conferred by section 2(2) of the Parliamentary Papers Act 1908, this committee authorises publication of the evidence given before it and submissions presented at public hearing this day.

*Evidence was then taken in camera—*

**Committee adjourned at 12.26 p.m.**

