



Troubled Waters: Crimes at sea report tabled

The House of Representatives Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee report *Troubled Waters: Inquiry into the arrangements surrounding crimes committed at sea* was tabled in Parliament today.

Following the tragic death of Ms Dianne Brimble aboard a cruise in 2002, the NSW coroner recommended a number of changes to the cruise industry. Some of these changes have been implemented and the Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee was charged with examining the effectiveness of current arrangements for the investigation and prosecution of crimes at sea.

The cruising industry is growing globally. It is anticipated that by 2020, 1 million Australians will take a cruise annually. Despite the number of Australians involved in the cruise industry, there has been confusion around the extent to which Australia can enforce safety measures and crime response protocols on cruise ships.

Chair of the Committee, Graham Perrett MP commented 'The cruise industry appears a relatively safe environment, but nowhere is immune from crime or accidents. On board a cruise ship you may be far from home and subject to very different international laws. This report demands a proactive approach from the cruise industry in informing passengers about how to keep safe.'

'There has been ongoing debate about whether Australia can impose crime prevention measures on cruise operators, such as the Kerry Act does in the USA. This report provides legal certainty around the extent of Australia's jurisdiction – while there are some limits, there is substantial scope for Australia to impose conditions on any cruise ship visiting an Australian port.'

Mr Perrett continued, 'This is complex area of international law - but the complexity of international law is no comfort to victims of crime on cruise ships and neither should it be an excuse for government inaction. This report delivers clear action', he added; 'Action for the government to pursue in international forums and to implement domestically to raise the required standard of the cruise industry and policing arrangements in the event of a crime at sea.'

The Committee has made eleven recommendations to Government including:

- Distributing mandatory safety information brochures to all passengers as they board cruise vessels in Australian ports;
- Providing information about cruise ship safety on the government's Smartraveller website;
- Introducing a mandatory reporting system for all crimes committed on vessels, in order for vessels to access Australian ports;
- Requiring protocols around crime scene preservation for all vessels, as a condition of access to Australian ports;
- Through the International Maritime Organisation, Australia to lobby for global use of CCTV, man-over-board detection systems, mandatory reporting of alleged crimes and a mandated responsible service of alcohol code;
- More actively pursuing cruise passenger safety and crime prevention strategies within international fora including the International Maritime Organisation; and
- Establish a regular review of the police National Protocols for reporting Crimes at Sea.

Information about the inquiry and the report can be found at the Committee website www.apf.gov.au/crimesatsea

PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA
ACT 2600

Facsimile: 02 6277 4427
E-mail: spla.reps@aph.gov.au
Website: www.aph.gov.au/spla