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Question No. 51

Senator Ludwig tabled the following question at the hearing on 14 February 2006:

Further to the reply to Question 287 of 31 October 2005:

a) Given that the AGD cannot release the report can you release a summary of the recommendations?

b) Is the national security strategy which was presented for endorsement by state and territory Police Ministers at the June 01 meeting of APMC available for public release?

c) Has COAG determined the nationally interoperable biometric security measure they wish to include as part of the document verification service?

d) The AGD have established the National Identity Coordination Group, the Commonwealth reference Group on Identity Security, the identity Security Steering Committee; what are the differing responsibilities for these committees of these bodies and also outline what the five subject specific working groups will be working on?

e) Why is it that this strategy does not have a timetable for implementation, what kind of strategy doesn't have a timetable for development and implementation?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

a) The report constitutes formal advice to the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and is not available for wider distribution. The report makes recommendations in relation to:

- the development of an identity crime strategic objective encompassing effective and efficient identity crime prevention and reduction, and identity protection; and

- the development and implementation of a "whole of government" identity protection strategy.

b) Announcements were made about the national identity security strategy by the Attorney-General and the Minister for Justice and Customs on 14 April 2005 and 10 May 2005. The briefing papers presented to APMC about the strategy are not available for public release but the objectives for the strategy were included in the abovementioned press releases and incorporated:

- improved standards and procedures for enrolment and registration including identifying key proof of identity (POI) documents to be used by all appropriate organisations for the purposes of identifying and registering clients for services

- use of advanced security features, including biometric identifiers where appropriate, on identity-related documents to reduce the risk and incidence of forgery

- secure electronic mechanisms to enable participating organisations to verify data on key proof-of-identity documents or the validity of identity documents submitted by clients when registering for services

- improved integrity of personal identity information held on organisations' databases and assuring that personal information is held in accordance with privacy legislation, and

- enabling post-registration contacts between individuals and organisations to occur with the confidence that each party is accurately authenticated.

c) The COAG decision from 27 September 2005 was to investigate the means by which reliable, consistent and nationally interoperable biometric security measures could be adopted by all jurisdictions. The issues surrounding appropriate and consistent biometric identifiers that could be incorporated into documents or tokens that people commonly use to identify themselves have been referred to the Security Standards Working Group formed as part of the national identity security strategy.

The document verification service will not be verifying any biometric information appearing on key identity documents.

d) The National Identity Security Coordination Group is a high level group consisting of representatives from central agencies of the Australian and State and Territory Governments, the Council of Australasian Registrars for Births, Deaths & Marriages, Austroads and the Privacy Commissioner. The group has been established as part of the COAG commitment to develop a national identity security strategy which will be supported by an Inter-Governmental Agreement.

The Commonwealth Reference Group on Identity Security (CRGIS) comprises 31 Australian Government agencies and was formed to ensure that cross-government initiatives relating to identity security are aligned with the National Identity Security Strategy. It also provides an appropriate forum for the Commonwealth to consider and refer issues for the National Identity Security Coordination Group.

The CRGIS established 5 working groups aligned to the elements of the National Identity Security Strategy. A steering committee was formed to facilitate working arrangements and help ensure consistency across the working group agendas. The Steering Committee consists of the chairs of each of the working groups plus representatives from central agencies (Finance, Treasury and PM&C), the Privacy Commissioner, the AFP, particularly affected agencies with large client populations (ATO, Centrelink and DIMA) and the Attorney-General's Department.

The five working groups formed by the CRGIS are focussing on:

- Common Proof of Identity (POI) and Enrolment Processes;

- Security Standards on POI documents;

- a POI Document Verification Service;

- the Integrity of Identity Data; and

- Authentication of Clients.

e) The Council of Australian Governments endorsed the National Identity Security Strategy. The Australian Government is now working with states and territories to develop and implement elements of the strategy. The two current pilot projects have an 18 month timeline from July 2005 to December 2006. Other initiatives are receiving high priority and will be implemented progressively.