

SENATE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE  
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

**Output 2.2**

**Question No. 72**

**Senator Ludwig asked the following question at the hearing on 25 May 2006:**

- a) Is the Attorney-General's Department aware of the recent comments by Dr George Merridew to the effect that Australian hospitals are ill-prepared for a potential terror attack?
- b) Has the Department had communications with the ANZCA Australian Disaster Executive on these matters?
  - (i) If not, why not?
  - (ii) If so, what was the substance of the communications?
- c) What measures and programs are in place to meet the concerns of ANZCA and other bodies, and when are these likely to be finalised?
- d) Regarding Dr George Merridew's statement as reported in The Australian (15/5/2006 – Health system 'won't cope' in terror attack) that doctors are unaware of any state or federal government management plans:
  - (i) Is this a correct description of the present status?
  - (ii) What work is the department doing to correct this?
  - (iii) When is this going to be corrected?

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

- a) The Attorney-General's Department is aware of Dr George Merridew's comments reported in the press on 15 May 2006.
- b) The Attorney-General's Department has not communicated with the Australian New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) Australian Disaster Executive about Australian hospitals' levels of preparedness to deal with a terrorist attack because:
  - (i) within the Australian Government, the Chief Medical Officer and the Department of Health and Ageing are responsible for overseeing the medical response planning to a terrorist attack, and for dealing with other medical bodies regarding the status of these plans.
- c) This issue is outside the responsibility of the Attorney-General's Department and should be addressed to the Department of Health and Ageing.
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