

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

**Question No. 42**

**Senator Brandis asked the following question at the hearing on 26 May 2011:**

**Senator BRANDIS:** You corrected yourself a moment ago and said that it was not Serco, but the AFP, who made the decision to energise the electric fence. Is it not right to say that prior to the AFP taking control of the centre at 21 minutes past 10 on 17 March, the AFP advised DIAC and Serco that the electric fence should be energised and that that advice was not followed?

**Mr Drennan:** There were ongoing discussions between ourselves, DIAC and Serco in regard to security aspects of the centre. Certainly, the perspective that we took in regard to that was things that we would do to ensure maximum control of the centre, but certainly the operations of the centre were a matter for DIAC and Serco and they made the decisions in regard to the security of the centre based on their assessment of running the centre.

**Senator BRANDIS:** Do you dispute that prior to your taking control of the centre at 22:21 on 17 March, you advised DIAC and Serco to energise the electric fence? Do you dispute that?

**Mr Drennan:** I need to take that on notice because I do not have that information with me here.

**Senator BRANDIS:** Do you know?

**Mr Drennan:** No, I do not.

**Senator BRANDIS:** Deputy Commissioner Colvin, do you know?

**Mr Colvin:** No, I am not aware of the answer to that.

**Senator BRANDIS:** You will have to take it on notice.

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**Senator BRANDIS:** If you are taking that on notice, I would like you to take this next question on notice. Is it not the case that DIAC and Serco declined to follow your advice prior to 22:21 on 17 March to energise the electric fence as a measure in order to help bring the situation that was developing within the centre under control?

**Mr Drennan:** As I said, I would need to take that on notice because I do not have that information.

**Senator BRANDIS:** Yes, I am asking you to take that on notice; if you do not know the premise you obviously cannot answer the next part of the question that follows from it. I put it to you that that did happen and you will take that on notice for me, thank you.]

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

The issue of activating the Electronic Detection and Deterrence System (EDDS) was raised on 7 and 13 August 2010 within the Security Working Group forum which includes representation by DIAC, SERCO and other Commonwealth Government agencies. At the meeting, DIAC advised they would seek clarification from their Senior Executive in Canberra in regards to the issue.

Subsequent discussions were held in March 2011 where DIAC advised the EDDS would require testing and remediation prior to turning the system on to ensure its safe operation and to avoid possible false alarms.

DIAC also advised that if the EDDS was activated before full repairs to the perimeter fence at North West Point, in particular where the panels had been removed to allow egress to Lilac Aqua compounds, it would not have been effective.