

South Australia

Emergency Response Planning and Administration

- 9.1 In evidence to the Committee, South Australian officials described the State as an ‘enthusiastic participant’ in the Intergovernmental Agreement on Counterterrorism and noted that the Government had re-structured its emergency planning and response framework along the lines adopted in the other states. The Director of Security and Emergency Management from the South Australian Department of the Premier and Cabinet told the Committee:

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.¹

- 9.2 Within the South Australian Police Force a Special Incident Task Force was formed after the September 11 terrorist attacks with the function of monitoring South Australian vulnerability to terrorism and to coordinate activities within the state between emergency services and other key stakeholders. A State Protective Security Branch within the South Australia Police liaises closely with the Security and Emergency

1 S. M. Carman, Transcript, 20 November 2003, p.192.

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 maintains a working relationship with key relevant Commonwealth agencies.²

- 9.3 In South Australia, the State emergency services, including country and metropolitan fire and emergency services, have recently been restructured into the South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission:

Currently there is a task force managing the commission implementation process. The state's emergency service organisation's 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.³

- 9.4 The Committee was told by the Commander of the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service, that in operational terms, the existing agency structure was an effective one in ensuring appropriate inter agency cooperation :

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.⁴

Counter Terrorism Legislative Consistency between State and Commonwealth

- 9.5 The South Australian Government is participating in the national review of relevant legislation to ensure a uniform response to the terrorist threat. In particular, South Australia is reviewing its State Disaster Act and

2 J R White, Transcript, 20 November 2003, p. 193.

3 R L Sedunary, Transcript, 20 November 2003, p.194.

4 R L Sedunary, Transcript, 20 November 2003, p. 194.

expects the legislation to be introduced in the South Australian Parliament by the end of 2003. The Government is also examining other possible legislation in the area of policing powers and critical infrastructure. The Department of Premier and Cabinet stated:

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.⁵

Consequence Management

Response Capacity

- 9.6 In South Australia, as in the other states, there has been a concerted attempt to fulfil the terms of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Counter-terrorism. However the Department of Premier and Cabinet recognised that the demographic and resource base of the State limits its capacity to respond:

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

5 S M Carman, Transcript, 20 November 2003, p. 190.

the smaller states and territories, since our options are somewhat limited.⁶

- 9.7 From a police operational perspective, the Deputy Commissioner of the South Australian Police told the Committee that additional resources had been committed to the establishment of the joint terrorism committee with the Australian Federal Police to conduct counter terrorism investigations. He commented that 'we have an excellent working relationship in that area'. He also noted that the police had undertaken an upgrade of counter terrorism equipment including weaponry, armour protection, communications and technical support.⁷

Mass Casualty Response

- 9.8 The response of South Australian medical and hospital authorities to the Bali bombing incident provided recent experience on which to base an evaluation of the State's capacity in this area. The Executive Director of Clinical Systems, South Australian Department of Human Services, told the Committee:

We were able...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...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...and we need to have very good communications systems across health and medical services within Australia.⁸

- 9.9 Existing resources in South Australia to cope with mass casualties include 70 intensive care unit beds across metropolitan Adelaide and a centralised 10 bed specialist burns unit. Beyond this there is an identified need for a national burns plan 'as we developed it with respect to Bali' and patients would need to be transferred to other specialist units in Melbourne or Sydney.⁹

Chemical, Biological and Radiological Incident response capacity

- 9.10 The capacity of South Australian emergency authorities to respond to a chemical, biological or radiological incident was addressed at the
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6 S M Carman, Transcript, 20 November 2003, p. 192.

7 J R White, Transcript, 20 November 2003, p. 194.

8 B J Kearney, Transcript, 20 November 2003, p.195.

9 B J Kearney, Transcript, 20 November 2003, p. 203.

Adelaide hearing by the Commander of the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service who noted that South Australia had a specific CBR Committee with a direct reporting link to the State Disaster Committee:

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.¹⁰

- 9.11 The Fire Service Commander also noted that resources had been recently supplemented by the Commonwealth under the National Anti-terrorism Agreement with respect to both training provided by Emergency Management Australia and equipment purchases. He told the Committee that a specialist CBR unit had been set up within the metropolitan fire service to provide specialist training to all operational staff and to enhance and maintain interoperability between the agencies.¹¹
- 9.12 The health and emergency services in South Australia have undergone a major exercise to test their capacity to respond to a CBR incident. The Director of the South Australian Department of Human Services told the Committee that one result was an awareness of a need to install decontamination facilities in hospitals and to establish a hospital 'lockdown' plan to apply nationally. He said that it was 'agreed at the National Health and Medical Disaster Management and Policy Committee – which is a sub-committee of the National Counter-Terrorism Committee – to address those issues, to develop standards'.¹²

Intelligence and Threat Assessment

- 9.13 The Deputy Police Commissioner told the Committee that the guidelines for the sharing of intelligence with the Commonwealth under the National Counter-Terrorism Plan and related Handbook provided the standards and structures for response to a terrorist incident. Joint intelligence was an important element in the structure. From a police operational perspective, the Deputy Commissioner assured the Committee that:

10 R L Sedunary, Transcript, 20 November 2003, pp. 194-5.

11 R L Sedunary, Transcript, 20 November 2003, p. 195.

12 B J Kearney, Transcript, 20 November 2003, p. 196.

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.¹³

Infrastructure protection

- 9.14 In common with other states and territories South Australia has reviewed its 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. Of course much critical infrastructure is controlled by the private sector owners and operators and they are involved in planning and response protocols under the National Counter-Terrorism Agreement'.
- 9.15 With respect to energy and communications infrastructure, these networks have been, as in other states, integrated within the emergency planning networks. Power generation and communications resources are also currently being reviewed as part of South Australia's general infrastructure review mentioned above.¹⁴
- 9.16 On the issue of transport container security, the Department of Transport and Urban Planning told the Committee that South Australia is engaged in consultations at the national level (as part of a national strategy) through the Australian Transport Council on the identification of measures to improve freight security. The South Australian Government 'is currently awaiting ASIO's land transport sectoral threat assessment in order to address any identified threats in the freight and security area.'¹⁵

Maritime security

- 9.17 In evidence to the Committee, the Department of Transport and Urban Planning noted that the private sector operator of the State's ports, Flinders Ports, had conducted risk assessments which were to be approved by DOTARS.

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

13 J R White, Transcript, 20 November 2003, p.199.

14 S M Carman, Transcript, 20 November 2003, p. 204.

15 B E Hemming, Transcript, 20 November 2003, p. 197

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.¹⁶

- 9.18 After approval by DOTARS, port security plans based on the risk assessments would be formulated in accordance with the requirements of uniform Commonwealth legislation. At present, emergency response preparedness at South Australian ports is similar to arrangements in place in other transport sectors in the State where port operators as a requirement of their operating agreements are to have in place emergency response plans for any threat that may occur including terrorism.¹⁷
- 9.19 At the Adelaide hearing the South Australian Department of Transport and Urban Planning told the Committee that it was currently awaiting ASIO threat assessments in order to address any identified threats in the freight and container security area. The Department also noted that the port of Adelaide was acquiring x-ray scan equipment for freight containers.
- 9.20 At the Committee's final public hearing on 8 March 2004, DOTARS told the Committee that maritime risk assessments were still continuing:
- We are working with ASIO on a broad maritime threat assessment. We have provided some material to ports in the nature of what we call a risk context statement, to allow them to undertake their planning. We have provided extensive guidance material to enable them to undertake a risk assessment of the port.¹⁸
- 9.21 DOTARS expected to have its port security assessments and plans completed by 1 July 2004.¹⁹

ADF cooperation and support

- 9.22 With respect to the issue of support from the Australian Defence Force in the event of a terrorist incident that went beyond the capacity of the South Australian police and emergency services to respond, the Committee asked at the Adelaide hearing whether SA would call for assistance from

16 B E Hemming, Transcript, 20 November 2003, p. 197.

17 B E Hemming, Transcript, 20 November 2003, p. 197.

18 A K Tongue, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 245.

19 A K Tongue, Transcript, 8 March 2004, p. 245

the WA based Tactical Assault Group (TAG West) or the Holsworthy based TAG East. The Deputy Commissioner told the Committee that requests for ADF assistance would still be made centrally and the deployment decision would be made by the ADF.²⁰

- 9.23 In the Police Commissioner's view there was an 'excellent liaison and cooperation with the ADF' and it was a 'plus' that there are now two teams 'because if one is not available at least there is backup support.'²¹ Additional ADF capacity has also been a factor in joint training exercises:

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...now that there are two resources to draw upon it is more comforting for us than it was before.²²

20 J R White, Transcript, 20 November 2004, p. 214.

21 J R White, Transcript, 20 November 2004, p. 214.

22 J R White, Transcript, 20 November 2004, p.214.