

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

Group: 2

Program: Other Agency

Question No. SBE14/058

Senator Collins asked the following question at the hearing on 11 December 2014:

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: The only other area of questioning I have for AFP—and thank you for returning to what will hopefully be a shorter session of estimates on this occasion—is the training exercise in Sydney where the AFP's canine detection unit left a bag with 230 grams of plastic explosives in the lost baggage area. Mr Colvin, you will be aware of some of the reporting of that incident, but can you update me on what has subsequently transpired.

Mr Colvin: I can. I do not have any particular material before me on that, so anything further I can certainly provide to you on notice. Let me say at the outset that that was a regrettable incident that should not have occurred, and there has been a review by the AFP and by our professional standards team into the circumstances that led to that training aid being left in a suitcase. Of course, as soon as we became aware that that had occurred—and we thank the people involved who brought that to the attention of the local police—we spoke to them as well as obviously the local police, and we also spoke to the airline operator, and clearly we also have spoken to our members involved.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Okay. Just let me understand the facts of the matter firstly. It seems in some ways it was a comedy of errors. A controlled item was left behind after a training event.

Mr Colvin: That is correct. It was a quantity of explosives.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: In a bag?

Mr Colvin: Yes.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: That was then held by the lost property office, I assume?

Mr Colvin: As I understand it, the bag that was used was provided to us by the airline. It was a bag that had been handed in as a damaged piece of luggage by a previous passenger. The airline had held that, they had lent it to us for use, and then we provided it back of course to the airline after the training exercise.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Okay. That now makes it clearer why the bag was then passed onto a further passenger—

Mr Colvin: That is right.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: As far as the lost property office was concerned, it was a spare bag—

Mr Colvin: Exactly right.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: that was available for whatever purpose they felt.

Mr Colvin: Exactly.

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

Since this incident occurred, the following has taken place:

- an internal review into the incident and procedures surrounding the storage, handling and transportation of munitions conducted by AFP Technical Forensics Intelligence (TFI) is progressing.
- an AFP Professional Standards (PRS) investigation into the matter is ongoing.
- a stocktake of all explosive holdings the AFP National Canine Program possess for canine training purposes, was conducted in January 2015, which resulted in 100% compliance with current holdings.