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

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Question No. 287

Senator Ludwig asked the following questions at the hearing on 31 October 2005:

a) Is the Taskforce on Identity Crimes report referred to in this Question on Notice available?

b) Regarding the statement that the APMC endorsed the national identities security strategy in principle, does that mean there is more work to be done?

   (i)   If so in what area does work have to be done?

   (ii) If there is more work to be done how has that progressed?

   (iii) Was the original general timetable for the tabling of the report and for the development of the strategy?

   (iv) If so, what was that timetable?

   (v) Did it contain key dates?

   (vi) If so, were the key dates met?

The answers to the honourable senator's questions are as follows:

a) The Australasian Centre from Policing Research (ACPR) report was prepared for presentation to the Australasian Police Ministers' Council (APMC) on 17 November 2004. At that meeting, the APMC referred the report to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). I refer Senator Ludwig to the answer to his previous Question on Notice 45 of 23 May 2005.

The report constitutes formal advice to the Commonwealth, States and Territory governments and is not available for wider distribution.

b) The development and implementation of the National Identity Security Strategy (the Strategy) is a separate but complementary initiative. Work on the Strategy is continuing in a number of areas.

At the 1 June 2005 meeting of APMC, the Australian Government presented its National Identity Security Strategy for endorsement by State and Territory Police Ministers. AMPC endorsed the need for a national identity security strategy and endorsed in principle the objectives outlined in the supporting papers.

As a whole of government initiative, in addition to Police Ministers, the Strategy required the endorsement and support of state and territory Premiers and Chief Ministers. COAG at its special meeting on 27 September 2005 agreed to the development and implementation of a national identity security strategy to better protect the identities of Australians and that the Strategy will enhance identification and verification processes and develop other measures to combat identity crime. The strategy will be underpinned by an inter-governmental agreement.

COAG also agreed to the development and implementation of a national document verification service to combat the misuse of false and stolen identities, and to investigate the means by which

reliable, consistent and nationally interoperable biometric security measures could be adopted by all jurisdictions.

(i) and (ii) The Strategy has five major elements:

- establishing a common set of key identifying documents and standards for initial enrolment / registration

- enhancing security features on documents to reduce forgery

- establishing mechanisms so agencies can verify the data on key identifying documents

- improving the accuracy of personal identity information held on agencies' databases, and

- helping agencies authenticate individuals – particularly when they access services online.

The response to Question on Notice 87 of 31 October 2005 provides further information on the Document Verification Service (DVS) and data integrity pilots.

The Strategy requires the cooperation of key Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies and State and Territory governments. The response to Question 87 identifies all government agencies being consulted on the development of the Strategy. The following consultative fora have been established:

- the National Identity Security Coordination Group (the key State and Territory governments consultation forum) and

- the Commonwealth Reference Group on Identity Security,

- the Identity Security Steering Committee,

- five subject-specific working groups.

(iii) – (vi) The Strategy does not have a timetable for its development and implementation; that is subject to agreement with the States and Territories. The two current pilot projects have an 18 month timeline from July 2005 to December 2006. Other areas of the Strategy will be implemented progressively.