

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
CRIMTRAC

Question No. 105

Senator Barnett asked the following question at the hearing on 20 October 2008:

The PFA also sought a commitment for funding to develop and establish the Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system. The Government gave its support for this prior to the election.

- a) What is the current status of the pilot program?
- b) Has the Government begun putting in place the necessary infrastructure to support the program?
- c) How will the ANPR assist in fighting crime and terrorism?

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

- a) In 2007, CrimTrac took a leading role in conducting a scoping study on the feasibility and options for implementing a national ANPR capability. On 18 September 2008 the ANPR Scoping Study project delivered a draft final report to the CrimTrac Board of Management. The board made a number of recommendations which require further work from the ANPR project team.

Currently the ANPR project team is assessing the cost benefit analysis conducted by Access Economics, and defining a number of high level implementation options, prior to the Board's further consideration of the scoping study.

- b) The final scoping study report is scheduled to be provided to the Minister for Home Affairs early in 2009. Following his consideration of the report the next steps in respect of implementing an ANPR capability will be determined.
- c) An ANPR system has the capacity to provide better intelligence and crime prevention by monitoring, deterring and disrupting criminal activities involving motor vehicles. The key benefits of ANPR arise from being able to identify vehicles and match them against hotlists.

The scoping study indicates that the use of ANPR in Australia could provide three main benefits:

- enhanced road safety, for example, by ensuring vehicle safety, monitoring driving behaviour and heavy vehicles, and detecting unregistered vehicles and unlicensed or disqualified drivers;
- more effective law enforcement, for example, by recovering stolen vehicles and number plates; and
- improved national security, for example, by ensuring the security of protected sites, and monitoring areas that might be associated with customs or immigration risks.

Research conducted in the UK suggests that the most common forms of arrests in which ANPR played a role were drug offences, unlicensed and disqualified driving, and vehicle crime.