

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO THE PROTECTION OF CROWDED PLACES FROM TERRORIST ACTS



**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 14 MARCH 2018**

SESSION TWO

Members

Mr P.A. Katsambanis (Chairman)
Mr M.J. Folkard (Deputy Chairman)
Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup
Mr A. Krsticevic
Mr D.T. Punch

Hearing commenced at 10.51 am**Mr SCOTT ALEXANDER PARRY****Managing Director, NPB Security, examined:****Mr DAVID OLIVER BARRETT****Managing Director, NPB Security, examined:**

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you for agreeing to appear today to provide evidence in relation to the inquiry into protection of crowded places in Western Australia from terrorism acts. My name is Peter Katsambanis and I am the Chair of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee. I will introduce the other members of the committee: Mark Folkard, Deputy Chair and member for Burns Beach; Zak Kirkup, member for Dawesville; Don Punch, member for Bunbury; and Tony Krsticevic, member for Carine. It is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of this committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. If, in the course of the hearing, you believe that some of the questions require answers containing sensitive or confidential information, you can request that the committee take evidence in a closed session. We have already had an indication that you may do so. At the time, just give a brief explanation—commercial and sensitive information, or whatever the case may be—and we will then proceed to close the hearing. We will take your evidence in closed session. Hansard will continue to make a transcript but the transcript will not be publicly available unless and until the committee or the Legislative Assembly resolve to authorise its release. If we do go down that path and want to use some of that information it is the resolution of the committee that we will liaise with you and make sure that you are comfortable with that. We are not here to ambush you or anything like that. Your evidence is protected by parliamentary privilege; however, this privilege does not apply to anything that you might say outside today's proceedings. Would you please introduce yourselves for the record.

Mr PARRY: My name is Scott Parry, I share the role of managing director with my business partner David Barrett, at NPB Security. We currently provide crowd control security services for a wide and diverse range of clients across the state of WA, from WA's largest sporting venue through to pubs and clubs, asset protection, mobile patrols and other security services. We have been trading for approximately eight years and continue to do so or look to do so into the future with this business.

Mr BARRETT: My name is David Barrett. Like Scott said, I am managing director of NPB Security with Scott, and he gave you a brief description about what we do.

The CHAIRMAN: Excellent. Before we start, do you have any questions about your attendance here today or any brief opening statement that you want to make?

Mr PARRY: Not really.

The CHAIRMAN: We will commence. I do have a few questions for you. First of all, you do a lot of security work. You use a lot of people, particularly crowd controllers. On a business week or weekend or when your busy periods are, what would be the maximum number of crowd controllers that would be under your supervision or employ?

Mr BARRETT: I am probably the best one to answer that one. I guess if something like the football was on at Optus, it would probably be up to between 500 to 600 personnel on a day or night.

The CHAIRMAN: And how many of those would be at Optus?

Mr PARRY: Three to four hundred.

The CHAIRMAN: And are they employees or contractors or a combination or both?

Mr PARRY: A combination of both. We use a labour hire model. They come to us already licensed and prepared and ready to service our requirements.

The CHAIRMAN: How do you check that they are licensed?

Mr PARRY: They have to provide a current copy of their license, a paper document. We obviously check the dates and we enter it in our system. We have quite a unique database that alerts us to anyone that is coming to the end of the tenure with their license and so forth. By using a labour hire model there is also that secondary layer of protection, I guess you would say, because they monitor it as well. Anyone that comes to us—they notify us first of anyone that has come to the end of their license or expiry date. We give them a warning, probably three months out, to give people plenty of notice to renew their license because it takes sometime going through the process, up to six to eight weeks. From there we monitor it that way.

The CHAIRMAN: You actually have a computer system that allows you to alert your staff to the fact that they need to get their—that is an automatic alert.

Mr BARRETT: They will get a renewal from police licensing as well, but our system will automatically email them at certain dates just to remind them to process that renewal.

The CHAIRMAN: How do you primarily communicate with your staff? Is it through email or phone or letter?

Mr PARRY: It is email, phone and text message.

The CHAIRMAN: When your staff arrive onsite—you have a few hundred people coming to Optus Stadium—do they have to present their licence card to you or your supervisors?

Mr PARRY: That is correct. There is a dual layer in that process. They present themselves to a primary booth, where we have a list of all their names, and they have to produce their current licence that has their photo. The photo obviously needs to match the person and the number needs to match the name that we have against it. From that process they come to the secondary sign-on, where they are checked again by admin staff, and then they are issued their uniform and position.

The CHAIRMAN: Does anyone regularly audit your process? I know that with Optus Stadium it is difficult to say, because it has only just kicked off, but you are at the WACA and other places. Does WA police or some other authority come around and say, “Let’s see how you’re going with the processes”, or do they leave you to your own devices?

Mr PARRY: From time to time they come and audit our processes, usually at our head office, and we talk through how we do things. They check out our database and our processes and policies and systems that are in place.

The CHAIRMAN: Were you involved in the development of any risk assessment or risk management plan for Optus Stadium?

Mr PARRY: The short answer is that we sat in a briefing room while some of that was developed or discussed. The overall development is something that you will have to take up with the operator, I am afraid.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Mr Parry, thank you for being here today. I have done some research on your company; it seems to be very well awarded and have quite a high level of professionalism. I think an article from 2013 showed that NPB Security was going down a particular—I think you were quoted as saying that you were looking at “more educated family men” for a lot of the guards that you use. I am curious about your approach to hiring staff and how much rigour is applied in the security industry to the hiring of new guards. I understand that you did the Ed Sheeran concert as

well. That was held on 2 March, but there was an ad on your Facebook page on 20 February saying that you needed more guards. What happens from the company's perspective to make sure that those guards that you do employ are appropriately experienced and the right sort of people, noting your comments from 2013 and the professional direction NPB goes down?

[11.00 am]

Mr PARRY: As I guess you are aware, guards come to us licensed. They have been through the training courses and so forth through the RTOs that are available in Perth. By the time they come to us, they have that accreditation or that licence. They then go through, I think, it is an 18-page application process with us. They then have to sit through four to five short videos, which explain our position, what we require, our expectations and so forth. Then, after that, the third stage is that each individual sits down with one of our managers and has a one-on-one conversation. From there we decide whether they will be suitable or appropriate or an appropriate position for them.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Further to that, in your extensive industry knowledge, is that a process that is regularly applied by any other companies or is that something that is —

Mr PARRY: I cannot speak on behalf of everybody else, because I have not worked for anyone else, but it is something that we have developed and we believe it certainly assists us to get the right people in the right places.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Do you have any concerns when it comes to the accreditation model that exists in Western Australia with those training organisations and the like? The committee is looking at a lot of your subcontractors, or consultants that you would engage, who are often the frontline when it comes to observing, reporting and responding to any incident. Do you see any weaknesses in the training and accreditation environment in Western Australia?

Mr PARRY: It is a little bit tough to say. Over the years, since we have been involved in the security industry, even before NPB, there has been quite a lot of overhauls of how people gain their licences and the requirements imposed on RTOs through police licensing and so forth. From my perspective, I would have to say that they are doing a good job vetting the people that get there. The very last line of defence, for lack of a better term, I believe, once a person has finished all their training and so forth, they still have to have a final test with police licensing services before they are approved to get that licence. Obviously, a lot of the work we are not privy to, but due to the amount of time that it takes an individual, the cost involved and the personal commitment, I will assume that it is pretty rigorous and thorough.

The CHAIRMAN: So you are comfortable with the product that you get at the end of that training, accreditation and licensing process?

Mr PARRY: To a certain degree I would have to say yes, but every individual is different. By the time they come to us, they have obviously passed all the prerequisites by police licensing, so therefore we have to vet them through our own management and then we decide where they are suitable to work. You used the terminology "frontline" and some people are more suitable than others; however, we generally find there is a position for everyone within the security industry, you just have to be very specific and understand where you are placing the individual.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you do any additional training for your staff?

Mr PARRY: We often do additional training. It is probably more so to the leadership group, because due to the size and the workload, we empower our leaders to make decisions given the best information possible. From there they are responsible for their briefs underneath them, which incorporates training. The additional training is for the leadership group and from there it filters down to everyone else.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you do site induction training and stuff like that?

Mr PARRY: Correct.

The CHAIRMAN: For everyone?

Mr PARRY: For every site. For all licensed venues and sporting events.

The CHAIRMAN: You do that on an everyday basis? That is what you do at the start of any job?

Mr PARRY: That is correct. Any new guard to any new area, whether it is a licensed venue, or as a protection role, or at a sporting stadium, has to undergo, or go through, an induction which is relevant to each space.

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: Going back to your workforce itself, do you have any thoughts on mutual recognition of interstate security licences and do you use them within your structures?

Mr PARRY: I do have thoughts on that. I would like to assume—if it was a nationally recognised product across the border, where people could come from other states and work in Western Australia, and Western Australians could go to other states to work without having to get RPLs and go through the rigmarole, or whatever each individual state's process is, I think it would be very beneficial. Certainly, for some, I do not know if they are high risk, or some more specific types of events, you could possibly bring specific types of people over from interstate to assist with that, and therefore give a better overall security presence or environment.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: The member for Dawesville mentioned earlier about the ramping up that you needed to do for the recent concert, in terms of staff numbers. Do you have staff on board who have gone through your employment process who are casual that you can draw on or did you find that you had enough time in that process to go through the interview process that you recounted to us in time for the concert?

Mr PARRY: We have a staff pool of casual employees of over 1 200. It is quite a large pool to be able to draw on that have been through that process with the selection criteria. Our customised database that we use at work has a rating system per guard and all their details. Drawing on that pool to assist with those large numbers and capacity, we have a fairly good idea of the type of person we are putting in each situation.

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: Bearing in mind contract restrictions and that sort of stuff, when you tender for a particular contract, specifically with Optus Stadium, as part of the documentation for your tendering process, were there any quality assurance statements that all your service providers must be licensed, so something along those sorts of lines within that tendering process?

Mr PARRY: That is fairly standard in all the tendering documents that come across my desk.

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: So it is there specifically. Is there a difference between the quality of contracts coming out from government compared with private enterprise as to the requirements that you need to meet, or is there commonality across both?

Mr PARRY: There is commonality across both. It is a high expectation across both.

The CHAIRMAN: Did your company participate in the training exercise at Optus Stadium on 12 December?

Mr PARRY: Yes, correct.

The CHAIRMAN: Was there any live fire simulation as part of that exercise?

Mr PARRY: You are testing my memory there. From the train station I believe there was, but I would have to refer to my notes to give you the correct answer.

The CHAIRMAN: If we could seek that as supplementary information. It may need to be put under some form of cloak so let us know if that is the case.

I did notice the other night on one of the television stations that they had very graphic footage of a live fire exercise at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. I was wondering where we are with that. In your observations at either major stadiums or just at some of the pubs and clubs that you work at, are there any chinks in our armour in relation to protection that we could have from any of these potential incidents?

Mr PARRY: It is tough to say. It is a different environment. The sporting stadium environment is quite different to the pubs and clubs. I think it attracts a different type of a guard to a certain extent. What would you say, David?

Mr BARRETT: All things done by risk assessments are dependent on the risk and dependent on the answers. It varies for each venue so that question is hard to answer. According to the risk that has been given to us, we do the appropriate level of security.

The CHAIRMAN: I will finish up on this. Do you do the risk assessment or does someone else do it?

Mr BARRETT: No, that is given to us usually by the venue operator.

The CHAIRMAN: So that is the risk assessment that they do in order to get their firm to run the event?

[11.10 am]

Mr PARRY: That is correct. We supply whatever levels of security are required as per that.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you rely on that document?

Mr PARRY: Generally, and the security management plans generated by the operator as well.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Do you ever have concerns about the risk information that you get?

Mr PARRY: No, but I believe the information we receive is very solid in content and particularly with the operators liaising with WAPOL and government bodies.

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: How do you assess your own performance at these venues, particularly at Optus Stadium?

Mr PARRY: Generally the feedback that we get from the operator is a good benchmark. Minimisation of incidents and mitigation of incidents is generally a good guide.

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: Is there specific documentation at the end of each particular event? Do you go back to do a self-assessment on your performance?

Mr PARRY: There are certain KPIs that are associated with the venue and the operator. We have to maintain a minimum standard at a minimum level and providing we meet all those performance indicators, we are self-regulating by meeting those assessments.

The CHAIRMAN: I am interested in how involved you were in some of the planning for Optus Stadium, for instance, in the bag checking areas. Were you involved in the planning of the location of those?

Mr PARRY: We had some input in that, but invariably it is up to the operator and sometimes up to the hirer.

The CHAIRMAN: Do they vary depending on the hirer?

Mr PARRY: Correct.

The CHAIRMAN: So there will be different bag checking procedures —

Mr PARRY: — and different formations. The bag checking procedure is the same. So there are 100 per cent bag checks, which is common practice these days. That procedure is the same. As for the positioning or the bag checking, as opposed to ticketing and wandling, that is sometimes different.

The CHAIRMAN: So that varies.

Mr PARRY: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: I went to the AFL Women's match that was played there—I have been to many stadiums over a long period of time—and I thought that just the location of the area was better than I had seen anywhere else.

Mr PARRY: What gate did you go through?

The CHAIRMAN: The one closest to the train.

Mr PARRY: So gate B.

The CHAIRMAN: That is the one, I think.

In relation to your staff, you obviously have various models such as casuals, labour hire and some permanent or at least permanent part-time staff. Without breaching any contractual agreements, what would one of those people standing at the gate checking bags or moving the crowd around earn per hour?

Mr PARRY: As per the security award, the minimum rate is \$25.68 per hour for a baseline individual, whereas the supervisors start at a minimum of \$30 an hour and some are well in excess of that figure and closer to the high 40s.

The CHAIRMAN: I would imagine that you contract with the labour hire firms that you use on the basis of those awards as a minimum.

Mr PARRY: That is correct.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have any way of knowing whether those firms actually comply with the awards?

Mr PARRY: We do internal checks. The short answer to that is if one of the other contractors are not maintaining their legal obligations, it would be difficult for us to find out.

The CHAIRMAN: But you would need the authorities for that.

Mr PARRY: That is right.

The CHAIRMAN: Is it common knowledge amongst the staff that you use that the minimum rate is \$25 and some cents?

Mr PARRY: Correct. At NPB it is common knowledge, yes, because we maintain all our legal obligations through that and our labour hire company.

The CHAIRMAN: Can I ask if that is a related entity?

Mr PARRY: That is a non-related entity.

The CHAIRMAN: This may be historic, as the evidence goes back all the way to the infamous Rolling Stones concert in California, but is there any evidence that organised crime has become involved in the industry here in Western Australia? I know there is some evidence in the eastern states.

Mr PARRY: In WA, I believe, and hand on heart, I think it is very good. The Western Australian police force has done an excellent job in squeezing that out of the industry and certainly in NPB and all the other companies that I am aware of and associated with, there is no such evidence of any organised

crime. Again, you can pass congratulations back to the Western Australian police force and their efforts.

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: The focus has been historically on the liquor industry in that particular aspect. What are your thoughts, in the broader sense, on the security industry and particularly overseas nationals working in there?

Mr PARRY: Can you elaborate on that question? Do you mean people of different nationalities working on the doors of licensed venues?

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: I notice that historically you have quite a significant proportion of people from cultural and linguistically diverse environments specifically, and I was wondering about their influence in the industry particularly. I know that the police go through a fairly serious vetting process. As an employer, are you seeing any trends in amongst that in relation to organised crime?

Mr PARRY: No, not within our business. As you said, the police have a very thorough vetting process. There are certain types of people who do not last very long within our organisation—the ones that do not want to conform to our rules and our certain level of professionalism—and the people that I think you may be referring to would not be able to fall in with the guidelines of our expectations, so we do not see that.

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: So they self-select in other words?

Mr PARRY: Yes, that is right; they self-select as in they would not be tolerated within NPB.

The CHAIRMAN: Given that some of the venues that you work at are unique within Western Australia, how do you benchmark your performance or compare it nationally or internationally?

Mr PARRY: Nationally, we travel the country from time to time, or at least four to five times a year, and we go to other stadiums and other states, usually as guests of those stadiums. We did have the privilege of being able to walk around and look at the services provided by the providers in other states. Obviously, there is a small amount of information sharing on processes and how to do things or streamline processes, for lack of a better term. I guess the short answer is that how we benchmark it is just by flying around and looking at other companies in other states doing similar to or the same as what we do.

The CHAIRMAN: At any venue, you have quite a large workforce, especially at the big venues like Optus Stadium and the WACA. They are in uniform and they are considered to be part of the security team. What training do they have to respond to any serious incident when looking at a terrorism-type incident? What responsibilities do you and your staff have in those cases?

Mr PARRY: As I mentioned before, they come to us with a certain level of training. Our senior or leadership group undergo some limited warden training to the specific venues and then we take our guidance from the chief warden or operator and direct our staff accordingly from there. When it comes to counterterrorism training, apart from getting a university degree, there is no nationally accredited course that we could offer our leadership group or our senior guards to attend.

The CHAIRMAN: Would that be something that would be of interest to you and your supervisors if it were available?

Mr PARRY: Anything we can do to upskill our workforce and to provide a better service to our client and, therefore, the general public at large is certainly something we are interested in doing.

The CHAIRMAN: If you had a wish list of changes that could be made at a governmental level, a regulatory level, to make the public's level of safety higher, what would you suggest? If you were talking to a bunch of politicians, what would you suggest needs to be improved or changed or taken out of the way so that it does not hinder you or whatever?

[11.20 am]

Mr PARRY: Just to digress from your question a little, I think the current service or the incorporation of the user-pays system for the police that came in on something like 17 January this year has been a great advantage and asset to the industry. Certainly, when you see a certain level of police at any mass crowd gathering or event, it instils a level of confidence in the general public. It certainly instils confidence in our staff to be able to conduct their duties to the nth degree.

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: So having police working alongside your security staff is advantageous in these public events?

Mr PARRY: Very advantageous and it is a fantastic asset. Nine out of 10 times, most people are compliant, but for that small percentage that are noncompliant, the police force certainly adjusts those people's way of thinking.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions from members? Is there anything you want to say in closing that you have not had a chance to say?

Mr PARRY: I am pretty happy with everything. Just to elaborate on the user-pays system with the police, I think that is certainly, in my opinion, fantastic for the industry and fantastic for instilling confidence in people at these sorts of venues. It is great to see them out in Northbridge, in particular, and in the high-risk types of nightlife areas and at large-scale sporting events.

The CHAIRMAN: Is there a percentage in your contract or by agreement of police to security staff?

Mr PARRY: That is based on the risk management plan of the operator, and then obviously there is WAPOL's input into that plan with the operator, and that is something that we are not privy to.

The CHAIRMAN: From your perspective, just simply having that new pool of police that can be drawn upon is excellent. Obviously from WA Police, without putting words in their mouth, it takes away some of their push-pull factors in scheduling their everyday operations.

Mr PARRY: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: That is good feedback.

Thank you for your evidence before the committee today. We will send you a transcript so you can correct any minor errors. If you could do that within 10 working days and return it, that would be good. If you do not, we will deem that you think it is a correct transcript. Hansard do a good job, so it is usually pretty good. You cannot use the correction process to change the nature of your evidence, but if you want to introduce any new material to us, feel free to do so by supplementary submission. Once again, thank you for your time today.

Hearing concluded at 11.23 am
