

# **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROTECTION OF CROWDED PLACES FROM TERRORIST ACTS**



**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
WEDNESDAY, 13 JUNE 2018**

**SESSION ONE**

## **Members**

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

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**Hearing commenced at 10.17 am****Mr MARCUS CANNING****Chief Executive Officer, Artrage Inc, examined:**

**The CHAIRMAN:** On behalf of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee I would like to thank you for agreeing to appear today to provide evidence to the inquiry that we are conducting into the protection of crowded places in Western Australia from terrorism acts. My name is Peter Katsambanis and I am the Chair of the committee. I will introduce you to the rest of the members of the committee: Mr Mark Folkard, Deputy Chair and member for Burns Beach; Mr Zak Kirkup, member for Dawesville; Mr Don Punch, member for Bunbury; and Mr Tony Krsticevic, member for Carine. Our staff are Franchesca and Amy, who keep us in line. 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 we ask you contain sensitive or confidential information, you can request that the committee take that evidence in a closed session. You will need to explain briefly why and then we will consider it. If the committee accepts your explanation, we will receive your evidence in a closed session. Hansard will continue to make a transcript of the evidence, but the transcript will not be made publically available unless the committee or the Legislative Assembly resolves to authorise its release. If we have to go down that path—we have not yet—we will liaise with you anyway. We are not in the business of surprises for any of the people who give us evidence. Your evidence is protected by parliamentary privilege; however, this privilege does not apply to anything that you might say outside of today's proceedings. Would you like to introduce yourself for the record?

**Mr CANNING:** I have been the CEO of Artrage since 2002. Artrage has been in operation since 1983. Artrage is a not-for-profit cultural charity that does a range of different things. The primary thing it does is the production of the Fringe World Festival. We launched the Fringe World Festival in 2011. Since that point it has grown to become the third largest fringe in the world, in terms of tickets sold, and the largest annual event in Western Australia.

[10.20 am]

**The CHAIRMAN:** Obviously that is one of the reasons the committee wanted to meet with you. You are a large enterprise that organises significant events that then become crowded places. We have a series of questions for you around the approvals process you need to go through for your events, the cost implications on you, especially of any increasing need for security measures, and also around the engagement of security consultants and guards and the like for your events. Unless you have any particular questions about the procedures today, I am happy to move to committee questions.

**Mr CANNING:** I guess it might be worthwhile explaining, from the perspective of a large number of people gathering in public spaces, why the Fringe World Festival structure is a little different to other large festival events. It is a festival that is primarily made up of lots of ticketed shows. It is all about the arts and the cultural offering. The arts and the cultural offering happens right across an array of different venues. Those venues include existing bricks and mortar venues, as we call them. That might include existing theatres, pubs, clubs, cafes and all sorts of places on that front. It might also include places that are converted into performance venues for the duration of the festival. That might be like an empty shop. It also includes a lot of what we call pop-up venues.

**Mr M.J. FOLKARD:** Like the spiegel tent?

**Mr CANNING:** Like the spiegeltent. The spiegeltent is the most iconic style of Fringe World pop-up venue. Unlike a music festival, which is one big space where people gather, Fringe World Festival environments tend to be about a space that has a range of pop-up venues in it. Within those venues there might be three or four different shows happening over a night. What that means of course is that the numbers from the festival overall are huge, but if you look at the number of people who are gathered in a single space at any time, it is actually quite small. The other thing to note is that Fringe World is an open access festival, which means that anyone can participate. This is one of the things that gives it its great diversity and spirit of “have a go”. If the local pub wants to include an artist doing some stand-up comedy, they can pay a registration fee and they are in. Artrage produces about half of the festival. We directly manage large pop-up environments, or hubs as we call them. They include The Pleasure Garden, which is the big fringe hub at Russell Square park at one end of James Street in Northbridge. We also directly manage all of the pop-up venues and use of the Perth Cultural Centre, including the Urban Orchard outside the Art Gallery of Western Australia. In the last festival we also produced the Fringe World hub at the Ice Cream Factory, which was a temporary venue set up inside a big warehouse on Roe Street in Northbridge. We directly manage all of those sites and then there is a range of other sites that we do not directly manage. They are independent companies, often commercial companies, that produce those sites and they are not directly under our management. I can speak to all of the sites that we manage and the management of those sites. I can also speak to the general way that other event companies need to have all of their management and compliance checked with the city. I can primarily speak to our management of Fringe World hubs.

**The CHAIRMAN:** In relation to those hubs, the events that you have control over, can you explain how the event approvals process works?

**Mr CANNING:** Sure. It depends on which site we are dealing with. If we are looking at the Perth Cultural Centre, there are a number of different statutory bodies and government bodies and agencies as well as the City of Perth that are involved in the approval process. Historically, the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority has had control of the Perth Cultural Centre. They also have control of space like Elizabeth Quay. As of June, this month, control of the Perth Cultural Centre is being handed over to the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries. The Pleasure Garden in Russell Square is a City of Perth-controlled site. The City of Perth is the body that is involved across all the sites as the consistent in terms of sign-off on event management plans, risk management plans, noise management plans and disability access plans—all of the plans that relate to temporary use of spaces for this type of activity. All of the evacuation plans, emergency response plans, are included within that. It is the MRA, but primarily the city, that signs off on those plans.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are there different requirements for the state government-controlled precincts, including the MRA precincts compared to the City of Perth precincts, or are the requirements relatively the same?

**Mr CANNING:** On the emergency response on those kinds of compliance they are relatively the same. The difference has been primarily to do with the style of activity. MRA has taken quite a proactive stance in supporting a particular style of activity, because they are in the business of place making, or have been in the business of place making, over the course of their jurisdiction over those sites. But underneath it all, when it comes to the actual compliance and any of those issues, it is consistent and it all goes through the City of Perth.

**Mr M.J. FOLKARD:** Is that just because it is a quirk of the location of the events?

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**Mr CANNING:** Yes. If we were mounting an activity in Fremantle we would be dealing with the City of Fremantle.

**Mr M.J. FOLKARD:** So if there is a direct correlation?

**Mr CANNING:** Yes. Fringe World's heart and home is really clustered in the City of Perth and Northbridge. A lot of the activity that happens in Fringe World in other suburbs is often done by independent companies. There is an independent event company that does a program down in Fremantle. We are looking at launching a new program this year through another company in Joondalup. It is very much the responsibility of the local government authority.

**The CHAIRMAN:** When you provide risk management plans and traffic management plans, who do you provide them to? How many different agencies do you provide them to?

**Mr CANNING:** In our instance because we are working within the City of Perth it is to the City of Perth and to the MRA for any of the activity that might happen in an MRA-controlled site.

**The CHAIRMAN:** All your preparedness for any incidents is dealt with through those plans?

**Mr CANNING:** The plans are planning documents, but they then translate into all sorts of action plans and policies and procedures and inductions and training. They are live documents that then have results in the way the sites are managed and the way all the staff and contractors are prepared to respond if there is an emergency.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Based on your experience, do you have any suggestions about how the approvals process could be streamlined, enhanced or improved?

**Mr CANNING:** That is an interesting question in so many ways. I mean, we have built up very strong and positive and active relationships with key personnel at the City of Perth and the relevant departments within the City of Perth, which has meant of course over time the communication between us as event producers and relevant staff and departments is very strong and very efficient and very effective. Would I have any suggestions as to how to improve those? I would need to think about that a little further. But it has worked very well. I do feel that the level of rigour around the planning—you know, thankfully we have never been in a situation where we have had to put any of it to the test and we have not had to deal with any kind of major emergency event, but I do feel that the nature of the sign-off of plans and what they contain and the level of detail and how they translate into onsite activity is very rigorous. I am sure that as this committee continues to look at this there would be an array of different recommendations that might come in from different parties. We are dealing with a very particular situation, though. We are not dealing with, you know, 30 000, 40 000 people all in one spot; we are dealing with a maximum of 5 000 people on a site and they are usually broken up into lots of little venues of, at max, 700 people. That is a very different scenario to something that is a little higher risk in terms of numbers. So, for our purpose, for what we do, I think the structures and the systems around them are very effective.

[10.30 am]

**The CHAIRMAN:** In relation to what you need to put together, since you started Fringe World to now have you found that the need for higher security and risk management actions has increased, and has that increased the costs to your organisation?

**Mr CANNING:** The increase in the popularity of the festival, the increase in capacity in terms of the numbers of people that can engage in some of our sites, have led to some increase in cost. There are very set ratios as to how many licensed security personnel need to be onsite and incorporated into our planning.

**Mr M.J. FOLKARD:** That is set out through the Liquor Licensing Act, though, is it not?

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**Mr CANNING:** It is. So, there is that, which is a key part of the planning for all these things, and for us that pertains to one guard for the first 100 and then an additional guard for every 250 people above that. The largest capacity hub that we have is The Pleasure Garden, which at max is 5 000 people. Really it is quite a controllable environment, but at max there is a team of less than 20 guards onsite. For us, how to make that really count, how to make that really work, is all about the way that those guards are then also working alongside all of the other team members. In terms of our staff, you have an array of different site personnel that are all involved within this type of activity. They include the site manager, they include the site manager's team, they include all of the technical managers who are the people running all the sound and lighting in the venues, they include the front of house staff that are the key management point of contact between the people within the tent, so to speak, they include box office staff, they include all sorts of personnel. All of the key managers right across the site are all included within the planning and they all have a role to play alongside the security personnel. A lot of that has to do with the way that communications then happen onsite and the way that communications happen between site staff and City of Perth CCTV operators. In terms of active interface, on a nightly basis the City of Perth staff that sit in the CCTV control centre are one of the key points of contact for key security and site staff, yes.

**Mr M.J. FOLKARD:** You said that you develop your action plans and that sort of stuff. Are those plans set on the templates provided by the City of Perth?

**Mr CANNING:** No, we have developed those independently and improved them over time. They conform to certain Australian standards and we endeavour to ensure that they are best practice. Thankfully we are an organisation that has been in the game for a long time, since 1983, so the robustness of our capacity on our planning front as well as the way we manage our sites is very strong. If we were a new company starting out—that is an interesting question. I am not even aware that there are templates as such. You know, we have our plans that we have produced.

**Mr M.J. FOLKARD:** Can we take a question on notice then? I would be very interested in what standards those were written to.

**Mr CANNING:** Sure, yes. I could not give you the standards numbers off the top of my head; but, yes, absolutely.

**Mr M.J. FOLKARD:** Yes, all right. One of the things about emergency management is exercising your risk plans and that sort of stuff. Is that done as part of your processes throughout, or are you exercising by doing, for want of a better way? You understand the difference?

**Mr CANNING:** You mean a full scenario?

**Mr M.J. FOLKARD:** Yes, or say, for example, you may do a desktop resolution. The next question I was going to ask is how is your preparedness? There is a focus by this committee on mass casualty incidents. Have you exercised that, or at a desktop level? One thing about having plans is that another part of plans is actually exercising them. There is a methodology: you actually do it by actual activities throughout your events. So I will be interested to get your feedback on that.

**Mr CANNING:** You mean running scenarios?

**Mr M.J. FOLKARD:** Running events. Say, for example, you have an idiot running around with a glass bottle: your response to that, as different to a mass casualty incident? You have your plans; have you exercised those plans in place?

**Mr CANNING:** So, in the lead-up to the festival, all relevant personnel go through, firstly, an online engagement. A lot of our staff are consistent return staff over time, but every year they still need to familiarise themselves with any changes to the plan in an online sense. If they are at the relevant management level they then participate in small group training sessions, where some of the key

plans are run through again. We do not run a full scenario because (a) the costs associated with that type of activity are very large, but (b) given the nature of who we are and what we are and the level of risk, that is deemed as possibly not the best use of resources and there are better ways to familiarise all relevant staff and personnel.

**Mr M.J. FOLKARD:** Do you get briefings from state police about risk, particularly in that fixated threat environment?

**Mr CANNING:** We do not receive briefings from the police. We give briefings to the police as to our plan each year. That is part of the process and we have dedicated liaison personnel that are involved in that. On a nightly basis, if and when a small incident or large incident, or even if a particular person leaves one of our areas and might be behaving in a certain way, it is actually the CCTV personnel that are notified first and foremost because they have the direct line to the police and they can then also track people through the entire precinct.

[10.40 am]

**Mr M.J. FOLKARD:** That is almost done from an event management aspect rather than the preparations for your events as such. For example, when you tell the police where you are going to have your activity, they do not engage with you and say that there is a threat at that particular space?

**Mr CANNING:** In terms of the plan or during the night?

**Mr M.J. FOLKARD:** Both.

**Mr CANNING:** Okay. In the plan our risk matrix identifies all the different types of emergency that might occur and the risk associated with it and the planning around it, so the police receive a copy of that and are given the briefing around that. In terms of stuff that might happen, the CCTV personnel are notified first and foremost so that they can then watch someone who might be deemed as risky. This happens so rarely. One of the great things about Fringe World is that we are dealing with very low risk crowds. We attract a very diverse market into the entertainment precinct with wide age demographics. That leads to a very harmonious environment. Thankfully, we do not need to deal with unruly individuals all that often. The few times we have had to over the years, that CCTV interface has been very effective and it has been the fastest and most efficient way to deploy police officers where necessary as well throughout the precinct.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** I am keen to go through the scenario at, say, The Pleasure Garden, because it is something that I am probably a bit more familiar with. I will use my own experiences there as part of this conversation. I appreciate you coming in today. I am conscious that at times some of the acts or events at The Pleasure Garden or other places that are part of Fringe World might be somewhat controversial. I appreciate the usual patrons that you attract. You are right—it is a completely different environment to even another larger scale pop-up like Embargo Bar or something like that. But I am conscious that sometimes more controversial acts might attract more fixated individuals, which is what we see as a trend coming through this committee's experiences—fixated individuals who might commit a hostile act. Do you have any way of assessing the impact of particular acts or events that occur and, as part of that risk profile that you put together, do you identify that certain acts might attract certain different types of individuals or certain risks associated with that? You guys do a great job and now attract more than three-quarters of a million people through the event over the entire time. Fringe has come from humble beginnings and has grown to be an impressive fixture on our calendar culturally. I am trying to get an understanding of whether or not as part of that growth you have seen other issues come out of that and you might have to deal with those types of events now, those types of individuals who might commit those types of acts, as the

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experiences that you put on grow and become more popular. Do you find that higher risk events are assessed accordingly or do you just assess it as one larger?

**Mr CANNING:** The systems and procedures that we have in place need to be robust enough to handle the worst scenario, no matter what the show is that is happening in the tent. I can understand your question related to the type of cultural content and that, overall, the festival as it has gotten larger, the number of different potentially controversial shows may be increased. With that and with just the larger numbers that engage with the festival and see the festival in the public domain, the level of potential and the level of risk possibly increases as well. I do really feel that our plans and our systems are strong enough and robust enough. A lot of that has to do with our seven-year relationship with a very good security firm and the fact that because we are dealing with slightly smaller numbers in contrast to, say, a stadium, we not only have a consistent working relationship with a key service provider in that area, we also have a consistent relationship with key security personnel. All of the key heads of site security that are assigned by the company that we work with have been working on those sites consistently since we first launched them. That leads to a very strong working dynamic and one that makes us feel that it is robust and covered. We do not foresee the need to start to individually assess individual shows across a program that is 750 shows. That would lead to a level of complexity that might compromise the ability to have strong and robust plans and working systems in place.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** What is a larger scale issue or incident that you have had to deal with in terms of the number of people who have been affected? Can you give us an understanding of the capability that has actually happened in real time at this event and what you guys have had to deal with? It seems to me to be relatively smaller stuff, aside from a drunk patron who is getting antisocial and/or abusive. Have you had a larger scale event that you have had to deal with or have you been largely issue or incident free?

**Mr CANNING:** We have been largely incident free, thankfully. I will give two examples of small incidents in the greater scheme of things. The first was in 2014. It was an incident at the Urban Orchard where an individual, whether they were intoxicated or not, were behaving erratically and in an antisocial manner. They were removed very quickly from the site. They made some threats to the security personnel on the way out that led to staff deciding to call the CCTV personnel and say, "We would like you to keep an eye on this person and see where they end up because our belief is that they could cause some trouble later down the track." Then we received a called-in bomb threat. That led to a chain of communication with both the CCTV and the police. All of our staff were put on alert so that we could implement the evacuation procedures on notification. Across the radio channels that extend right throughout Northbridge, there are individual site radio channels but also what we call "God" channels that are there exclusively for incidents of major emergency. When the "God" channel kicks in, all sites go into a certain mode of action.<sup>1</sup> Of course, all of this is designed to be put in place so that everyone can be on high alert, but the patron is unaware of this going on until it becomes necessary. We do not want to ruin someone's night unless we need to. In that instance, the CCTV saw that that particular person had found the local payphone and had called in the threat. The police grabbed him straightaway and I believe he ended up being arrested. That is one example. We go through a range of nightly incident reports, debriefs, seasonal debriefs, continuous improvement—all of those types of methodologies. For that incident, it was the first time we had to put some stuff into practice. It was gratifying to see how effective everyone was, at least being able to and being aware that they might need to start to evacuate.

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<sup>1</sup> A letter of clarification about this part of the transcript can be accessed on the committee webpage.

The other example is when we have had to evacuate a venue. That was purely due to weather conditions. That is to do with the structural capabilities of some of the pop-up venues. This one in particular was a spiegel tent in the Urban Orchard. Some of our venues have wind mechanisms on the top of them that are constantly recording the current wind conditions. When a storm is approaching, a whole array of interface with the Bureau of Meteorology starts to kick in. Site managers assess the conditions and make hourly calls to the Bureau of Meteorology to see whether the risk matrix is increasing. Once it crosses a certain point, venues start to be evacuated. We have only had to do that once and in that one instance it happened incredibly effectively and efficiently. In an instance like that it is gratifying to see that when it counts, it works.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Are you involved in the Western Australia police crowded places forum? If you are, do you have any assessment on its merits and usefulness to your operations?

**Mr CANNING:** I am not involved in that forum; no-one from our organisation is.

**The CHAIRMAN:** In relation to security contracts, you mentioned that you were lucky to have a great relationship with your security firm that provides you with security and also with the key personnel and that continuity is an important part of that factor. Going further down to the security officers on the ground, do you rely on your contractor to vet whether they are licensed or not, or do you have any separate checks?

**Mr CANNING:** No, we rely on the contractor to check the licensing. When I said consistent personnel, that includes most of the security personnel on the ground. We do tend to be one of the events that a lot of the fulltime employees of the security company we work with really enjoy working at. We have over time identified who the best personalities are, just from a straight experience of the people attending, that we like to have on site. Across a month and across so many venues there is a bit of a rotating calendar. We do see new faces every year. It is part of the contractor's responsibility that our company has to ensure that they are all licensed.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** As part of your risk profile that you put together—I appreciate that obviously traditional things like bomb threats would be on there—does it encompass things like hostile vehicle attacks? Are you up to speed, given that you employ security consultants? Are you at that present threat level in terms of what we see as a trend globally?

**Mr CANNING:** Yes, the risk matrix is reviewed every year. New broader emergencies are incorporated into the planning and the planners adjust accordingly.

**The CHAIRMAN:** From my perspective, your information today has been quite useful as to how your festival goes and how you have grown over time, but one thing that stood out for me in what you have told us is that you really are a brand that runs some of the events and then the rest of the events are run by independent operators, be they event managers or licensed venues or the like, and those venues badge themselves under your banner. How do you protect your reputational risk from something that happens at one of those venues that is not operated by your organisation having an impact on your brand and the festival more generally?

**Mr CANNING:** That is a very pertinent question for us this year. We had one of the larger independent event companies that was producing a program at Elizabeth Quay. The board of management of Artrage made the decision to formally distance ourselves from that program about half way through the festival and removed it from the program due to the fact that we did not feel like that program reflected the values of the Fringe World Festival and the risk of reputational damage was large. More importantly, the experience of the fringe artists as well as the traditional fringe audiences that were engaging with that environment was compromised. That has triggered us currently putting some new guidelines together that have to do with standards and expected

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codes of behaviour and management conduct that we have for any independent company that might be plugging their program into the Fringe World Festival.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Do those standards incorporate requirements around risk management plans and quality of the plans or is it really more around the cultural side?

**Mr CANNING:** It is more around the cultural side and around what is the intent of the activity. At the end of the day the Fringe World Festival is a cultural festival and across the entire diversity of all of the things that are happening it needs to be about cultural content. When it comes to policing and assessing and ensuring the standards of various compliance issues, that is the jurisdiction of other bodies. It is not our job or role to take a part in that and it would be compromising if we did because that is why the relevant local government authority is there to take that role. That activity has to be assessed independently because it is a separate activity to the environments we produce.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We could probably ask a lot more questions but our time is limited today. We thank you for the evidence you have provided to the committee. A transcript of the hearing will be sent to you for the correction of any minor errors. You need to make those corrections within 10 working days and if you do not return them within that time we will deem that you are happy with the transcript and we will publish it. You cannot use the corrections process to introduce new material or change the sense of the evidence you have given but if you want to provide additional material or some information that was requested on notice, to elaborate on anything or if you think there were areas that we did not cover today that you want us to know about, please feel free to make a supplementary submission for our consideration, either when you return your transcript or at any later date.

**Mr CANNING:** Sure.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Thank you very much.

**Hearing concluded at 10.59 am**

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