

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE

Fourth Report — “Near enough is not good enough:

An initial report on the protection of crowded places in Western Australia” — Tabling

MR P.A. KATSAMBANIS (Hillarys) [9.54 am]: I present for tabling the fourth report of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee entitled “Near enough is not good enough: An initial report on the protection of crowded places in Western Australia”.

[See paper 1949.]

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: The National Terrorism Threat Advisory System, which provides advice about the likelihood of a terrorism act occurring in Australia, lists our current threat as probable. This probability does not fade as one travels from east to west across the Nullarbor, but it applies to the entire country. Western Australia, therefore, should not make the mistake of assuming that our location somehow shelters us from the threat of terrorism. We should not be complacent. We should not listen to some of the commentary and the chatter that because of our isolation or our unique characteristics we are perhaps less at risk of a terrorism act. We should be forever alert to the danger and prepare for it accordingly. In recognition of the fact that the threat level has been set at probable for quite some time—there is no indication it is going to change in the near future—the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee began its inquiry into the protection of crowded places in Western Australia from terrorist acts. The inquiry was at least partially motivated by the 2017 release of “Australia’s Strategy for Protecting Crowded Places from Terrorism”, which recognises the risk that crowded places face from terrorism and outlines the shared responsibility of stakeholders—most notably, the owners and operators of those crowded places, as well as our police forces, the security industry and the other stakeholders that are involved. As far as risk profile is concerned, the most important stakeholder is the crowd that attends these crowded places, be they at stadiums, arenas, one-off events, shopping malls or the like.

Although we have found that among owners and operators of crowded places in Western Australia there is a willingness to strengthen the resilience of their sites and fulfil the duty of care they have to people who use their sites, we have identified a number of issues that are undermining their efforts. Perhaps most prominent are the difficulties that owners and operators of crowded places face in accessing quality protective security advice. Effective risk management and emergency management require an understanding of the unique geographic built and operating environments specific to a particular crowded place. One crowded place cannot simply replicate the protective security measures of another and claim to have mitigated adequately. Importantly, during the inquiry we received evidence that, because of this difficulty in getting quality protective security advice and perhaps a lack of understanding, crowded places were often relying on cut and paste-type policies that were not unique and specific to their circumstances but generically generated. I think that is a major risk we need to avoid if we are going to protect the public properly.

The national strategy directs owners and operators to consult professional security consultants when strengthening their sites. The security industry is also recognised as a key participant in the protection of crowded places, in the installation of electronic security systems and physical defences and providing personnel to fulfil deterrence, detection, delay and response roles. As members of the community, we all know that often when we are attending these events, whether they are events at Optus Stadium or Perth Arena or at any of the thousands of events across Western Australia conducted on a weekly and annual basis, private security guards are the first point of interaction with the public, rather than police or other emergency services. The security industry plays a critical part in protecting us from any horrific acts. That is not limited only to terrorist acts, although that is what we are looking at here. We found in our inquiry that the security industry faces several intractable problems that have counterterrorism implications. These include noncompliance with workplace laws, inadequate training of security personnel and an inexperienced workforce. Further, although Western Australia has a regulatory regime overseen by the licensing division of the Western Australia Police Force, the committee has received evidence claiming that some security personnel are still not complying with the law. We know that the licensing arm has a lot on its plate—it licences not only security, but also firearms and many other matters—and it is doing its best. But some security companies and some security personnel are still not complying with the law.

During the course of the inquiry so far, we heard of one incident that was extraordinarily concerning. It was an incident in which a technician working on the security system in the armoury of a Perth police station was found to be unlicensed. I repeat: a technician who was working on a security system in the armoury of a Perth police station was found to be unlicensed. WA police appeared to have been unaware of this infringement until they were alerted by a third party. They then took very quick action and contacted the security company to ensure that that was rectified. This incident occurred several years ago, but I raise the matter because none of the evidence received by the inquiry has led me personally to believe that a similar incident could not happen again.

There is a clear expectation amongst crowded places in the public that authorities such as WA police will take the lead in protecting crowded places. We were struck, however, by the reluctance of WA police to expand its

responsibilities to the provision of protected security advice. The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation told us that providing such support was the responsibility of state police. Indeed, law enforcement agencies elsewhere in Australia are embracing this role. We heard from Queensland police about its strong involvement. It basically took over the security provision at the Commonwealth Games. We heard evidence from other state police forces, in particular Victoria and New South Wales, about how engaged their police force was with owners and operators of crowded places. I think it is an expectation of the public. If the public were asked who should be the primary repository and provider of advice relating to security, particularly around terrorism acts, I think the reflexive response—maybe not the correct response, but the reflexive response—would be police. However, WA police do not seem to be actively involved in this space, which creates a significant and concerning gap between that expectation of owners and operators of crowded places and the public, and the reality. I think it needs to be addressed. I do not criticise the Western Australia Police Force for this. It has come out through the inquiry that police are concerned at a transfer of the risk associated with approving things like security management plans and overall security of a particular venue or place to Western Australian police. I think that is an important issue that needs to be worked out, and worked out fully.

There is concern that as a public authority, police should not be seen as having a role to provide, effectively, consultancy advice to a private industry. There is a fine line between being a repository of knowledge and perhaps a bit of a clearing house of knowledge and actually providing direct consultancy advice. I sympathise with the police. There probably needs to be a fair bit more clarity around that interaction. The committee heard during the inquiry that one of the impediments is that police do not necessarily have protective security expertise and that they would need to recruit staff with those skills. That is an issue. Resourcing is always an issue with any agency, especially police, but in this critical area I think all of us, in a bipartisan manner as members of Parliament, would agree that within limits we should be able to make the resources available if we think it is critically important to the protection of public safety. I think it is something that is critically important to the protection of public safety.

In this report, the committee also recognises the importance of local governments in the protection of crowded places. Nevertheless, it is evident that many local government authorities lack the skills, knowledge and resources necessary to focus on counterterrorism or on the protection of crowded places from a terrorist act in any meaningful way. Risk management related to terrorism is a new consideration for a lot of people, including local government. It seems that only those who manage or approve large-scale events on a regular basis have identified security as a priority, and funded it accordingly. The rest struggle to keep up, leaving Western Australia's emergency management arrangements highly variable and placing the public at increased risk in the event that a terrorism-related incident happens at an event or in some other crowded place.

What the committee has not delved into in great detail in this report is the scrutiny and oversight of counterterrorism efforts in Western Australia. This is not because we think it is inconsequential and this is not because we have not focused on it during the committee inquiry. To the contrary; we recognise the importance of counterterrorism preparedness and we recognise it requires public authorities in particular to be subject to higher levels of scrutiny, and I would say also higher levels of coordination than exist at the moment. The committee intends to traverse this matter fully in its final report, which is scheduled for tabling in March 2019.

The committee does not profess to hold the answer to all matters detailed in its initial report. The purpose of the report is to set out those issues we have uncovered so far in the inquiry and initiate a more focused conversation with stakeholders about possible solutions. We want this report to become an open invitation to stakeholders and anyone else who has an interest in this area to comment on the areas raised in the report and to provide us the feedback that will inform our final report. That is why the report is structured in the way that it is. It does not actually make recommendations at this stage. We think it is better to get the whole picture, identify the issues and then seek specific feedback, particularly feedback on how we can fix some of the gaps and how we can make things better and safer for the general public.

As chairman of the committee, I want to thank all the stakeholders who have participated in this inquiry, including local government, the Western Australia Police Force, government departments and private organisations. They have been very willing and very open to share. That includes interstate organisations that we sought information from. The beauty of technology allows us to communicate with them in a better manner than perhaps we did some years ago. That is a good thing. It leads to the sharing of knowledge and the development of best practice. I look forward to that continuing as we continue our investigation and as we seek some solutions for the issues and concerns that have been identified in this report.

I want to thank the fellow members of my committee: the member for Burns Beach, who is the deputy chair, the member for Bunbury, the member for Dawesville and the member for Carine. We have worked in a very collaborative and bipartisan manner because this issue is above petty politics. That is what committees should be about. We have been a great model. I have been involved in parliamentary committees for over 20 years and we have been a great model on how members of Parliament can come together to do important parliamentary work

on behalf of the public rather than squabble about the five per cent that we sometimes disagree on in this place. I want to thank the staff: the principal research officer, Franchesca Walker, who as always does a great job, and the two research officers involved in the inquiry, Michele Chiasson and Dr Amy Lampard. They have also been invaluable to our committee, as I often say. They do a lot of the hard yards and hard work that makes us, as members of Parliament, and the committee as a whole look good. I publicly thank them again for their work.

In closing, some issues have been identified. I do not want to overstate them. I think that, overall, protection in Western Australia is good. It can be better. A lot of it relies on coordination and placing some more thought into the areas that have been uncovered in this report. We are open to feedback. We welcome feedback. We trust that the feedback, which will be focused on how we can do things better, will help to inform our final report. I look forward, on behalf of the committee, to tabling that report early next year. I commend the committee's initial report to the house.

MR M.J. FOLKARD (Burns Beach) [10.10 am]: I rise to speak to the discussion paper, "Near enough is not good enough: An initial report on the protection of crowded places in Western Australia". The report was motivated by the release in 2017 of "Australia's Strategy for Protecting Crowded Places from Terrorism". It was a very interesting inquiry to date. I recall meeting with the coroner for the Lindt Café siege in Sydney, a very learned gentleman. He commented about the operators who stormed the cafe, and their bravery, which saved the lives of many of the hostages who were there. I took the time after his testimony to walk down to the Lindt Café in Martin Place. I sat down in the coffee shop to reflect on what he had said and the findings of this inquiry. As I sat there and looked across to the mall, I took a moment to contemplate his findings and his testimony. Having been shot at myself as a police officer, I know our frontline police who operate in this space were heroes on that day and they are heroes within our current environment because they put their lives on the line when they respond to these situations. We should never forget that.

Western Australia's counterterrorism arrangements and activities are complex. The complexities at the national level overlap our state arrangements and plans. If there is a weakness, it is that it is based on collegiate relationships between national and interstate policing, and the security industry. This was evidenced during testimony given by witnesses from the Australian National University. We need to be conscious of what an agency thinks we want to hear, versus what we need to know. There is a conflict in that.

To date, I have been concerned about the east-west divides that appear in this space. On crowded places, we found that currently there are limited national standards on bollards and vehicle-mitigation structures. The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation has a group called T4 that appears to be the knowledge bank in this space. When we questioned Western Australian stakeholders in this space of their knowledge of T4 and its activities, the answers were concerning. On visits to the Australian War Memorial and other national iconic crowded spaces, and in conversations with their operators, I observed almost a mateship-like relationship between T4 and the stakeholders. That relationship is cause for concern. On my return to the west, during the Anzac Day celebrations and the recent City to Surf fun run, I noted some really imaginative and simple solutions to crowd protection. It was really pleasing that they were put in place. This is a good thing, as it is evidence that we are changing our culture in this space.

Throughout this inquiry a continued theme emerged. It was that the best way to attack terrorism head-on is to have a strong, inclusive and vibrant community that attacks marginalisation. I know that this is one of the key drivers of the McGowan government. During the inquiry, under the Premier's leadership, the McGowan government established the Security and Emergency Committee of Cabinet to have oversight of Western Australia's emergency management framework. A senior officials group was established to provide support to the cabinet committee. Promoting emergency management to this status is a positive move for the community. I find comfort for my constituents in this new development.

This report is more a of discussion paper. I would ask all those who are interested in the content to take the time to read it, and where further input is sought, take the time to reflect so we can develop and finalise the conversation. Finally, I would like to thank Franchesca Walker, Dr Amy Lampard and all the other members of the committee. I think the production of this report is truly a good conversation piece for this environment.

MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville) [10.15 am]: I, too, rise to speak to the fourth report of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, titled "Near enough is not good enough: An initial report on the protection of crowded places in Western Australia", presented by the member for Hillarys; the deputy chair, the member for Burns Beach; and fellow committee members, the member for Bunbury and the member for Carine.

At the outset, noting the time, I will keep this relatively short and sharp. I would like to thank the committee staff, in particular, Franchesca Walker and Dr Amy Lampard, for their contribution and support in the production of this report. I also thank the numerous stakeholders who came to our committee or whom we had the opportunity to visit. They imparted upon us their experiences, advice and observations. At the outset, I have to say that I have quite an interest in counterterrorism and the like. It is something that has been of great interest to me for some

time. I see it as the very important protection of our society as we stand presently. To me, it is a critical responsibility of government to make sure that we, in Western Australia and Australia more generally, are as protected as possible from these types of events that seek to terrorise our way of life. The member for Burns Beach said quite rightly that one of the best measures we can take is having an embracive society. I echo those comments entirely. It is an important point to make that we should not allow division to creep into parts of our culture in which some groups feel like they can exploit or demonise individuals and carry out violent acts against members of our society in mass-casualty or mass-terrorist situations.

When we talk about mass terror attacks or terror attacks in general, more often than not, and certainly in the past, they focus on icons or landmarks that we in Australia feel are part of our way of life. For example, it has been talked about very often that the Sydney Opera House would be a target. I cannot think of a more iconic place in New South Wales than the Sydney Opera House. We see a growing trend across the western world in which large-scale attacks are now reduced to lone wolf or individual attacks. I think it was perhaps poorly worded by former Prime Minister Tony Abbott that anyone with a camcorder, or video camera, and a knife could basically now terrorise society. That is the reality we live in. In that, how do we stop, prevent and best respond to a terrorist situation like that in a crowded place if all it is going to take is an individual with a knife and the motivation or intent, desire, or drive to make sure they terrorise and conduct a violent act? I have read a number of articles and there is a book into the Lindt Café siege by a Fairfax journalist whose name I cannot recall. I have not been to the Lindt Café but, for all intents and purposes, it was a normal cafe on a normal day and a single individual with a very storied history. He had committed very disgusting crimes in the past. He was simply an individual who had the motivation to commit a terror attack on upstanding citizens and to try to disrupt our way of life.

How do we best prevent something like that occurring? It is a mammoth task. It is a difficult task for any government to grasp. In the spirit of bipartisanship that the member for Hillarys echoed, this is not something that should ever be politicised. On a federal level, it is often approached in a very bipartisan way. The opposition and the government, regardless of the parties, often come to the point of making sure there is very little daylight between them in their positions on matters of national security. I expect the same would happen here as states becomes more responsible for protective security measures and indeed the resource and legislative frameworks that exist to make sure that our agencies are best able to respond to terrorism incidents in Western Australia. I do not envy the challenge faced by Western Australia police. The men and women of the Western Australia Police Force do an outstanding job. In particular, I would like to thank Commissioner Dawson, Deputy Commissioner Brown, Assistant Commissioner Paul Zanetti and Commander Donaldson who presented to us. They were outstanding individuals and gave me great confidence that Western Australia police has in its focus the absolute ability to respond to an attack in a crowded place due to terrorism or otherwise. It gives me great confidence in particular having Commissioner Dawson as the Commissioner of Police. I first had some involvement with him through the Premier's office when I was working for Colin Barnett, but his experience with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting was exceptional, and we can see that right through his history of working within the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission. I have seen the commitment and resolve of the commissioner and of all officers that we met from the Western Australia police to make sure that they can respond with force and appropriate rigour when a situation might arise due to terrorism or otherwise. They are absolutely aware of the environment and the nuances with which they have to approach situations like this, and they have learnt lessons from things like the Lindt Café siege in Sydney.

It is important that all agencies continue to learn from, adapt to and understand the situations that they now face. The reality is that five years ago we were not talking about individuals conducting an act of terror using knives and a mobile phone camera. Five years ago it was something completely different. In 2001, it was a plane flying into the side of a building—a very difficult circumstance for any of us to comprehend. A shift has happened in our society since that point in time. None of us could have foreseen something like that occurring. In that difficult environment, we need to look at protective security measures more thoroughly. It is a very significant blind spot that exists in the state of Western Australia. Clearly, commonwealth agencies expect state agencies, in particular state police forces, to provide the best advice to stakeholders where possible on protective security measures. That is often advice on built form design and emergency management, and even on conducting mock-up scenarios. Western Australia police should be much more empowered and better resourced by the government to make sure that when it comes to protective security measures, it can play a more active role that sees them lean into that space rather than having, unfortunately, stakeholders or the operators of venues act on information that is available to the general public—for example, the portable document formats found on different websites that stakeholders have said is their reference point. I implore the government to explore the opportunity to empower the Western Australia police to resource some of its exceptionally talented individuals as best it can. This will ensure that it can provide advice and, in some cases, compel venue operators to ensure their security mechanisms are up to scratch in the case of any terrorist or emergency situation that might arise. I cannot imagine that situation occurring in a building code now. In my experience with BGC Construction, if we created an environment that was unsafe for people to work or live in, we would be compelled to fix it. If venue operators have created an environment that is

unfortunately not responsive or built well enough and prepared enough to respond to a possible terror attack, Western Australia police should be able to compel those venue operators to bring their venue up to scratch and up to standard, but in order for that to happen, we need a legislative environment or something like that that allows Western Australia police to compel them to do so. More importantly, we need to resource WA police and empower it to be more proactive when it comes to protective security.

Built form is one part of the issue. I note that technological disruption is also playing an increasing role in the communication abilities of individuals and terrorist organisations. I note that the commonwealth recently introduced the Assistance and Access Bill that will allow for encryption and the like to be exposed so that commonwealth agencies and indeed state agencies can enforce the law when it comes to a terrorist situation, or, more broadly speaking, use any means by which it is necessary to enforce the law regardless of it being related to terrorism or otherwise. We need to pay close attention to legislation that might seek to infringe upon people's right to privacy. It is a very strong balance when we consider the technological situation that exists now in WA and Australia. We want to make sure that we do not have a situation in which terrorist groups can prepare, flourish and thrive because there is no appropriate oversight. Importantly, we also need to protect the rights and privacy of citizens. There is a lot to unpack here. Again, I thank all members of the committee, all stakeholders and particularly WA police for its exceptional effort thus far. I hope that we can continue to work with the government in a bipartisan spirit to ensure that we resource and empower agencies like WA police to protect and serve our citizens and to ensure that in the event of a possible terrorist attack in a crowded place, the state of Western Australia is prepared as best as it possibly can be.

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury) [10.25 am]: I, too, would like to make a contribution on the tabling of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee's fourth report titled, "Near enough is not good enough." I would like to begin by thanking all the agencies, especially the Western Australia police, that have made a contribution and given evidence to date; my colleagues on the committee; and the committee staff, Franchesca Walker and Dr Amy Lampard. I especially would like to acknowledge the contribution of the police who have been giving us an in-depth analysis of their views and how to respond to issues around the protection of crowded places. I wish to make four points about this inquiry, noting that it is a discussion paper or an interim report that has been tabled. It does not set out definitive conclusions at this point, nor does it make recommendations, but it is inviting further comment and discussion with the committee particularly around a number of key points. We anticipate tabling a final report early next year.

The first point I would like to make is that preventing attacks on crowded places is a complex and shared responsibility between policymakers, enforcement agencies and recovery agencies—in fact, all levels of government and the private sector. It requires leadership and a coordinated effort based on appropriately shared information. But perhaps more importantly, and the member for Burns Beach made this point, it also requires an understanding of why people commit these kinds of behaviours that threaten people and take action, and what it is that drives them. Often the reason is based around marginalisation and a lack of inclusion. Across the broader picture against which this report must be set are the issues associated with education and with the opportunity for building inclusion and reducing marginalisation. Those are the key preoccupations of this government. Earlier this year, in responding to some of these complexities, the McGowan government formed a cabinet subcommittee that involved all ministers who carry responsibility for aspects of the state's response to crowded places protection. Chaired by the Premier, for the first time this provides a point of leadership and coordination at the highest level, and it also provides an opportunity for direct oversight of the responses of various arms of government to the questions of both protection and response. That is a significant and a positive step that has been undertaken by the government.

The second point I want to make is that in other jurisdictions our inquiries found evidence that shared responsibility was based on a high degree of collaboration between all stakeholders. We saw very good examples at the national level where the sharing of information and a commitment to building collaboration led to better outcomes in preparedness. In Western Australia, the committee identified a number of areas that suggests we can learn from the experience of other jurisdictions. It was apparent to us that in WA not everybody has the same understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the framework set by Australia's Strategy for Protecting Crowded Places from Terrorism. There is variability of understanding amongst local governments about what constitutes a crowded place, variable contact with police and their role in engaging with owners and operators of crowded places, and a limited awareness of the Australia–New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee's guidelines. Over the balance of this inquiry, this is an area that requires further explanation, but what I really want to emphasise is that this does not take away from the very good work that the committee found occurring across a number of agency responses and a number of private sector operators and event organisers. That is something that was firmly in our minds as we progressed through the inquiry.

Thirdly, the committee also identified issues of capacity. Resourcing to assist prevention is spread across a number of programs, none of which appear to directly link to counterterrorism preparedness. Larger-scale venues have

greater capacity to develop strategies and test them on a regular basis, but this does not extend to smaller operators or local governments. There is also variability in access to skills and knowledge and awareness of industry standards that can inform practice, and there is not a central point of expertise or advice that stakeholders can go to. This has possibly led to inefficiencies, as multiple stakeholders research multiple sets of information independently, often with the same end. Capacity is not always about financial resources, and my observations as a committee member were that there were areas where changed business practice itself can lead to better outcomes. We do not necessarily have to pile in money to get a better result.

Perhaps the most important issue that I identified was that virtually all operators of events use contracted security guards to assist with crowd management and security. There is a regulatory regime in Western Australia that governs the employment, training and licensing of security guards, and in WA the police are responsible for issuing and renewing licences and monitoring compliance. This regime effectively extends to staff trained up to certificate IV in security risk management, but does not seem to extend to the level of professionalism and skill required to design and implement effective security responses. Security managers are outside that regime and do not seem to require police clearances, security checks and the like. The committee found evidence that the scale of compliance, auditing and enforcement may not be commensurate with the industry's role in contributing to protection in crowded process, and, being linked with other evidence concerning quality of training received, wage levels and casualisation of the workforce, the industry itself has a lot of soul-searching and review of its industry practice to do. There is a broader issue, though, than enforcement and compliance. The industry itself must take responsibility for how to improve, and to ensure the provision of well-trained and supervised security personnel, as opposed to low-cost, casualised arrangements for the employment of staff simply to meet crowd control numbers.

As mentioned earlier, this is an interim report. It sets out our lines of inquiry, and in so doing highlights those areas that the committee has identified as warranting further investigation. As a member of the committee, I am mindful that all stakeholders are operating in a new and rapidly changing environment, and I again want to emphasise the very good work that is taking place in responding to that complexity. I am particularly pleased that the government, independent of the work of this committee, has established a cabinet subcommittee to provide a strong focus for leadership. I am positive that this will set a new resolve and purpose for agencies. There is no easy pathway; there are no cheap solutions. Protecting people in crowded places from the threat of harm is serious business, and once again I thank my fellow committee members and all who have given evidence so far. I especially thank the committee staff—Ms Franchesca Walker and Dr Amy Lampard.

MR A. KRSTICEVIC (Carine) [10.33 am]: I, too, would like to make some comments on the fourth report of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, titled “Near enough is not good enough: An initial report on the protection of crowded places in Western Australia”. I start by acknowledging the hardworking committee staff, Ms Franchesca Walker and Dr Amy Lampard, who have done a fantastic job in getting this initial report together, and for their continued professionalism and commitment to this inquiry. I also thank my colleagues on the committee—the chair, the member for Hillarys; the deputy chair, the member for Burns Beach; the member for Bunbury; and the member for Dawesville—for the immense amount of work and time that has gone into this report, and the way in which we have worked well together to tease out all the information and issues to put together this initial report.

It is very important to note that this report contains a lot of information for people to consider, but it also asks a lot of questions and seeks further information to clarify some of the things that we have collected so far. I strongly encourage not only the members in this house and this Parliament, but everybody, even beyond those directly involved in the protection of crowded places, to read this report and make comments, because it affects every single one of us. It impacts on our lives in so many different ways. We see so many examples in Australia and around the world in which crowded places are coming under extreme pressure through terrorism, and also through mental health issues. In those cases, this report looks beyond just the terrorist activities and issues around that, and covers the protection of people in crowded places at a much broader level. It is important to focus on that as well. As the committee chair said, it is important to make sure that, just because we are here in Western Australia and things look like they are okay, we are not just sitting back and waiting for something to happen; we need to be proactive and make sure that this discussion takes place and is given enough time and resources so that we can implement the changes necessary, support all the agencies involved, and make people aware that there is a shared responsibility. It is not a matter of looking to our left or looking to our right to see who is responsible for this, but to look at ourselves and say, “I have a role to play in this, and I need to make sure that my voice is heard, and that the community around me is safe.”

I acknowledge the valued contribution of all the agencies, in both Western Australia and around Australia, that have contributed to this report, and provided information and advice to our committee. They have enlightened us to both the national focus and approach in this area, and also the activities that occur in other jurisdictions. That has given us something to think about as well, here in Western Australia, in terms of how well we can learn from those experiences and share knowledge across jurisdictions to come up with the best practice. Our borders do not

Extract from Hansard

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Mr Peter Katsambanis; Mr Mark Folkard; Mr Zak Kirkup; Mr Donald Punch; Mr Tony Krsticevic

offer a huge amount of protection from one state to another, and we need to be aware of the need to share information and intelligence so that we can stay on top of this area as much as possible.

There are a lot of key aspects in this report, so each sector will have its own focus, but I want to focus on the security industry, which plays a massive role in this area. Obviously, the WA Police Force has a significant role, along with other agencies, and the government, as the leader in this area, needs to continue to give this issue the right amount of attention and also the right amount of resources to make sure that all the relevant stakeholders can do their jobs. Chapter 6 of the report discusses the security industry. The first two lines read —

Australia's strategy for protecting crowded places from terrorism (the Strategy) outlines the 'central' role of the private security industry in the protection of crowded places.

That goes to show that the private security industry has a massive role to play. Further down, the report states —

In 2011, researchers found WA to be 'arguably, the most tightly regulated security industry currently in Australia'. ... Nevertheless, inquiry participants noted weaknesses in multiple aspects of the security licensing system, including licence requirements, pre-licence testing, administration, information sharing, and enforcement.

It is important to also note a passage near the back of the report, which was highlighted in some of the information we received, about having a nationally consistent licensing system. Every state and territory, and New Zealand, has different rules and regulations around the licensing of security guards. Theoretically, from what I was able to ascertain, a person might be licensed in one state under a certain regime, but those licensing requirements would not allow that person to be licensed in Western Australia. However, because of the way in which we operate, every state accepts guards as licensed, if they happen to come over. If there is a Commonwealth Games, a heads of government meeting, or other significant event, and there are not enough security guards in a particular state to meet the requirements, security guards will be brought in from other states. They will be licensed security guards in those states but, technically, under our licensing system, they would not necessarily qualify, and we would have to recognise their clearance, because they have been cleared by another state, albeit that that state may not have as high a standard as we have in this state. That is very, very important.

Since 2008, the Council of Australian Governments has been talking about a national standard; however, that has not progressed very far. I call on the state government to raise this issue at COAG again, and to try to push it so that we can head towards a nationally consistent standard. At the end of the day, if security guards are able to move fluidly between jurisdictions, we need to make sure that that is treated seriously. Albeit the words exist to support this particular initiative, we need to now bring something to the table.

I also think that the Western Australia Police Force needs more resources to carry out sufficient compliance and enforcement checks of the security industry. As at June 2018, there were 30 386 active security licences in Western Australia across a whole range of areas, whether it is crowd control agents, security agents, security officers, security bodyguards, security consultants and so forth. The report, for example, shows that in 2016–17, 245 audits were conducted. That is not a lot of audits considering there are 30 000 people in this sector. Operators have many different levels of experience and complexity. A lot of subcontractors are used in this space. Members have mentioned that inquiries have been carried out into how subcontracting occurs and that people are not necessarily paid enough money. A lot of people work in this industry part time. I think 85 per cent or so of security agents have less than three years' experience in the industry and it is a transient job for a lot of people. They often do this job in between other work and so not many people of that 30 000-odd work full time in this space or are given the necessary training and experience to undertake the activities that they do. There needs to be more focus on making sure that the security industry functions properly and that they are resourced and skilled enough and that the standards are set at a high level so the public can be confident that those who work in the industry are able to do their jobs properly to protect the public. It is also incumbent on security guards to ensure that they are always vigilant when undertaking security activities and that they are not distracted by activities around them or the public, and that they focus on their job. I commend this report to the house.