



MEDIA RELEASE

Community Development and Justice Standing Committee

Tuesday, 13 February 2018

COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO THE PROTECTION OF CROWDED PLACES FROM TERRORIST ACTS

The Community Development and Justice Standing Committee today announced an inquiry into the protection of crowded places in Western Australia from terrorist acts.

Australia's National Terrorism Threat Level is currently set at 'Probable' with indications that individuals or groups have the intent and capacity to conduct a terrorist attack in Australia. It is predicted that any Australian-based terrorist attack over the next 12 months will involve low-cost weapons and tactics. Locations where large crowds gather are attractive targets for terrorists as they provide the potential for mass casualties and generate significant fear amongst the wider population.

In announcing the inquiry, Committee Chairman Peter Katsambanis said 'Western Australia is not immune from terrorism. Attacks in other Australian jurisdictions and internationally have highlighted the need for Western Australian agencies involved in counter-terrorism to tighten their prevention, preparedness, response and recovery arrangements.'

According to Mr Katsambanis, 'the Committee will investigate the adequacy of the current framework and measures to protect Western Australians as they go about their daily lives.'

In particular, the inquiry will consider the Parliament of Western Australia's role in overseeing counter-terrorism arrangements in Western Australia to ensure that it can properly evaluate the:

1. state-based emergency management framework;
2. implementation of mitigation and protective security measures;
3. relationships between state government departments and agencies and owners and operators of crowded places;
4. capability of the Western Australia Police Force to respond to a terrorist attack on a crowded place; and
5. security licensing, registration, and assurance processes in Western Australia.

In doing so, the Committee will have regard for the flow of information between agencies and other relevant stakeholders.

Mr Katsambanis said the Committee is particularly interested in the role of the state parliament in overseeing counter-terrorism arrangements in Western Australia: 'Many WA agencies direct part of their budgets towards counter-terrorism preparedness, but Parliament struggles to assess how well this money is spent because of the classified nature of the space. We want to know how we can ensure Western Australians' money is being used effectively.'

Given that this is the first time a Western Australian parliamentary committee has considered this topic, the inquiry may give rise to additional inquiries focusing on different aspects of counter-terrorism preparedness. The Committee intends to report on the outcome of this inquiry in November 2018.

For comment about this new inquiry, please contact Mr Peter Katsambanis, Community Development and Justice Standing Committee Chairman on 0419363015.