

Standing Council on Police and Emergency Management

COMMUNIQUÉ

Melbourne, 29 June 2012.

The Standing Council on Police and Emergency Management (SCPEM) met in Melbourne on 29 June 2012, chaired by the Hon Peter Ryan MLA, Deputy Premier of Victoria and Minister for Police and Emergency Services. The Council comprises Australian and New Zealand ministers for police and emergency management together with a representative from the Australian Local Government Association.

Leading the agenda was consideration of the illicit use and trafficking of firearms, the urgency of which saw the Council convened a month earlier than scheduled. Ministers also discussed a range of national emergency management matters including the implementation of the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience. The Council appointed the Hon Jennifer Rankine MP, South Australian Minister for Police, Correctional Services and Emergency Services as the Champion Minister for disability issues on SCPEM.

Policing

Illicit use and trafficking of firearms

Ministers invited the CEO of the Australian Crime Commission (ACC), Mr John Lawler APM, to present the findings of the ACC's National Illicit Firearms Assessment. The assessment was commissioned by Commonwealth Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Justice, the Hon Jason Clare MP, in February 2012 to look into the illicit firearms market and its links to gang activity in Australia. The ACC worked with State and Territory police, the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service and the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to gather current firearms related intelligence, import and export data, registration and licensing data as well as to trace firearms manufactured in Australia and overseas.

Ministers considered the assessment and agreed to a range of activities to progress a national response to firearms crime. These initiatives include opportunities to improve information systems and sharing across jurisdictions, legislative responses to deter and deal

with illicit firearms, and enhanced coordination of operational activities through:

- In-principle agreement to the development of a national ballistics identification network;
- Development of a national firearms registry, which was agreed in principle;
- Implementation of a National Firearms Identification Database, consistent with the Interpol Firearm Reference Table;
- The ACC, working in conjunction with CrimTrac and in consultation with all jurisdictions, establishing a set of nationally agreed key data for both registered and unregistered firearms;



Back left to right: Cr Paul Bell AM (ALGA), President, Local Government Association of Queensland; The Hon Anne Tolley MP (New Zealand), Minister of Police; The Hon Robert Johnson MLA (WA), Minister for Police and Road Safety*; The Hon David O'Byrne MP (TAS), Minister for Police and Emergency Services; The Hon Nicola Roxon MP (CWLTH), Attorney-General; The Hon Jack Dempsey MP (QLD), Minister for Police and Community Safety.

Front left to right: Mr Simon Corbell MLA (ACT), Minister for Police and Emergency Services; The Hon Jennifer Rankine MP (SA), Minister for Police, Minister for Emergency Services; The Hon Jason Clare MP (CWLTH), Minister for Home Affairs, Minister for Justice; The Hon Peter Ryan MLA (VIC and Chair of SCPEM), Deputy Premier, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Bushfire Response; The Hon Michael Gallacher MLC (NSW), Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

- Establishing a working party to analyse further gaps and opportunities to strengthen legislation governing firearms possession and use;
- Developing a coordinated national operational response to serious organised crime involving firearms, including targeted enforcement measures against high risk groups;
- Working with the Commonwealth's newly established Firearm Intelligence Target Team [FITT] inside the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service to fuse together all available intelligence from law enforcement agencies and target criminal key groups at the border; and
- Developing a national community awareness campaign in relation to unlicensed firearms.

The Commonwealth Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Justice also updated the Council on further measures being undertaken by the Commonwealth to identify and target vulnerabilities in the international airstream, including the international mail environment.

Strategic directions for Australian and New Zealand policing

Ministers approved the new Directions in Australia New Zealand Policing 2012-2015. The Directions reflect Ministerial priorities for policing under a shared vision and a joint commitment to safe and secure communities in Australia and New Zealand and set out a broad strategy to improve the focus of policing services, encourage cooperation between police agencies, and so enhance the quality of overall service delivery. The Directions document will assist in shaping jurisdictional police strategic and business plans.

National efforts to counter organised crime

Ministers were updated on work Attorney's-General around Australia are undertaking to develop nationally consistent Criminal Organisation laws. These laws aim to provide a nationally consistent approach to dealing with criminal organisations and the serious threats that these groups pose. The national response to organised crime is a shared responsibility between SCPEM and the Standing Council on Law and Justice.

New South Wales Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon Michael Gallacher MLC, presented an update on recent legislative amendments in NSW targeting organised crime. Police have sought additional measures to combat the recent upsurge in violent organised criminal activity and the NSW Government has responded by introducing a suite of legislative amendments that targets gang crime at a number of levels, including consorting and criminal association offences as well as tattoo parlour regulation.

Cybercrime

Ministers discussed the evolving challenges presented by cybercrime, and efforts being undertaken to develop a coordinated national response to this type of crime.

Ministers were updated on work by the National Cybercrime Working Group (NCWG) to develop the proposed Australian Cybercrime Online Reporting Network (ACORN). The ACORN would provide a centralised online portal to allow victims to report instances of cybercrime, refer complaints to the most appropriate agency for further action, where appropriate, and collect data to inform improved responses to cybercrime by law enforcement and other government agencies. The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department and CrimTrac are working together on behalf of the NCWG to develop a business case to provide a detailed examination of technical, timing and cost considerations associated with implementing the ACORN. Ministers will give further consideration to these issues following the completion of the business case in late 2012.

Ministers noted the completion of the Cybercrime Capability Assessment by the Australian New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA). The Assessment, which contains an analysis of existing police capabilities to combat cybercrime and a series of recommendations to enhance that capability, is an important component of the national response to this issue. Implementation of these recommendations will now be progressed by ANZPAA.

Ministers also noted the upcoming release of the Cyber White Paper by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The Cyber White Paper, which will outline national policy objectives across the full spectrum of cyber issues, including cybercrime, is due to be released in mid-2012.

Social media

Ministers considered the value of social media in supporting law enforcement and community safety and received a presentation on the NSW Police Eyewatch project. Project Eyewatch relies on Facebook as an easily accessible vehicle for new, online Neighbourhood Watch forums. It places a strong emphasis on sharing information and seeking assistance from local communities. It has demonstrated itself as an effective medium as part of law enforcement's repertoire of tools to deal with crime and engage with the community and offers the potential to be the modern face of Neighbourhood Watch.

Emergency management

Ministers noted that significant progress has been made on a range of national emergency management matters and on strengthening Australia's resilience to disasters since the introduction of the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience in February 2011.

Key achievements over the last 12 months include: agreement on a nationally consistent methodology for disaster risk assessment; measures to improve hazard mapping; development of the National Disaster Resilience Communication Strategy; review of the effectiveness of disaster relief and recovery payments; agreement on a national disaster discussion exercise

program; and the introduction of an annual forum to harness new and emerging technologies in the emergency management sector.

Risk assessment and communication

Ministers endorsed the publication by states and territories of state-wide disaster risk assessment information. They also noted that the National Emergency Management Committee would undertake further work on the use and publication of risk registers as an important means to communicate risk information to the general public. The publication of appropriate risk assessment information will support community resilience by better informing people about the risks they face, enabling them to act accordingly.

Furthermore, Ministers agreed that the development of future state and territory risk assessments would be undertaken in line with the National Emergency Risk Assessment Guidelines, which will be revised to provide improved advice and information to users.

Hazard mapping

Ministers endorsed Part 1 of the National Guidelines for the National Flood Risk Information Program and noted progress on the National Flood Risk Information Portal. This important initiative will provide a single access point for flood information and improved quality and comparability of data.

Ministers endorsed key bodies of work completed as part of the National Work Program on Flood Mapping. This includes the Jurisdictional Flood Risk Mapping Stocktake, which provides an overview of flood mapping across states and territories, highlights key gaps and outlines important next steps to improve mapping data across the country.

Land use planning and building codes

Ministers considered the Enhancing Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment Roadmap to improve the consideration of natural disaster hazards in land use planning and building code regulation.

The Roadmap sets out a range of immediate and medium term activities to enhance disaster resilience in the built environment and identifies seven key areas for improvement: integrated legislation; process enhancements; comprehensive data and mapping; collaborative vendor disclosure; governance partnerships; lifelong education and training; and inter-jurisdictional collaboration.

Ministers will work with their planning and local government colleagues to obtain agreement on the Roadmap's implementation within their respective jurisdictions. Ministers also noted that successful implementation will lead to significant long term improvements to the resilience of Australian towns and cities.

Volunteers

Volunteers make significant contributions to the emergency management sector. They play a major role in emergency response services and are also active in disaster preparedness, recovery and community education activities.

Governments at all levels are committed to supporting the emergency management volunteer sector, and to this end Ministers endorsed the National Emergency Management Volunteer Action Plan 2012. The plan includes 22 recommended actions that focus on issues such as volunteer training and qualifications, recognition, legal issues and measures to strengthen volunteer attraction and retention. Ministers also endorsed the associated Summary of Achievements which outlines jurisdictional achievements in support of emergency volunteers and implementation of the previous National Action Plan for the Attraction, Support and Retention of Emergency Management Volunteers 2009. These are available on www.em.gov.au.

Research and knowledge management

Ministers acknowledged the importance of adopting a strategic national approach to natural hazards research and training as key to strengthening Australia's resilience to disasters.

Ministers endorsed the concept of a national platform to oversee natural hazards research, knowledge management and training. Such a platform will adopt a collaborative, integrated approach that capitalises on existing facilities and networks, and builds on the work of the Bushfire CRC and other research bodies to advance natural hazards research.

Ministers also agreed that the Australian Emergency Management Institute should continue to work with jurisdictions to develop national models and structures for training methodologies, skills development, and knowledge and information sharing.

National Search and Rescue

Ministers present endorsed the revised Inter-Governmental Agreement on Search and Rescue which brings national cooperative arrangements up to date with contemporary practice. The agreement makes provision for resourcing, planning and coordination throughout the national search and rescue system.

Ministers also discussed a range of other Emergency Management items including: Triple Zero surge capacity; public mobile broadband; the Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry and the Victorian Floods final reports; and the National Guidelines on Donated Goods.

***Note:** At 4pm on 29 June 2012, The Hon Liza Harvey MLA was sworn in as Minister for Police and Road Safety (WA).
Apologies: The Hon Troy Buswell MLA – Minister for Emergency Services, The Hon Paul Henderson MLA – Chief Minister – Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and The Hon Chris Tremain MP – Minister of Civil Defence.