



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Communities**

Our Ref: 2018/3315  
Your Ref: A669211

Mr Peter Katsambanis  
Chairman  
Community Development and Justice Standing Committee  
lacdjsc@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Mr Katsambanis

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROTECTION OF CROWDED PLACES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA FROM TERRORIST ACTS**

Thank you for the opportunity to present a submission to the inquiry into the protection of crowded places in Western Australia from terrorist acts.

The Department of Communities (Communities) is an integral stakeholder in the WA Emergency Management framework, and works closely with hazard management agencies, including the Western Australian Police Force in planning for, responding to and recovering from emergency events.

Communities does not have a direct role in the protection of crowded places, however, would play a significant role in the provision of support to people affected by a terrorist act, as well as the provision of support and information to the wider community.

Communities is mandated under the *Emergency Management Act 2005* to provide specified immediate welfare responses and ongoing community recovery services to people affected by disasters – including terrorist acts.

- The main welfare support services provided by Communities are:
  - **Accommodation:** Ranging from short term emergency shelter to medium term accommodation. This may include the coordination and staffing of evacuation centres, and/or assisting affected people to access alternative accommodation.
  - **Food:** Provision of meals in emergency shelters/accommodation or financial assistance to help people buy food for themselves.
  - **Clothing and personal items:** e.g. clothing, toiletries, essential items and pharmaceuticals.
  - **Personal support:** This includes information, referral, advocacy, counselling, and psychological services.

- **Financial assistance and personal hardship and distress relief payments where applicable:** This includes assistance for immediate essential items and emergency accommodation assistance for up to two weeks. Other categories of assistance that may be available are replacement of essential household goods and minor repairs to residences.
- **Registration and reunification:** Of people evacuated or affected by the disaster thereby providing a means for families to locate each other and reunite.

Communities chairs the State Welfare Emergency Committee (SWEC), which is comprised of a range of welfare support agencies that assist in our role. In the aftermath of a terrorist event, the SWEC would be convened to ensure a coordinated welfare response to affected individuals and the wider community.

Communities has examined reviews of a number of terrorist-related events such as the 2005 London bombings, the 2014 Lindt Cafe siege, and the 2017 Bourke Street mall incident and has incorporated relevant lessons in supporting individuals and communities into standard practice.

Communication with the wider community is paramount and Communities is able to provide clear and concise information to the public on dealing with the effects of a traumatic event. This was evidenced in the 2017 Australia Day air crash, with Communities providing key messaging to the Western Australian Police Force for dissemination via social media. Communities also manages a 24/7 Disaster Response Hotline that affected people can call for support. Similar information and supports would be available following a terrorist event.

Following the London bombings, an ongoing welfare assistance facility (the 7<sup>th</sup> July Assistance Centre) was established to provide support specifically to the families and significant others of those who had been killed or injured in the event.

Communities, with input from Western Australian Police Force, has reviewed and adapted the model used for this centre, and developed an operational plan for a multi-agency Disaster Information Support and Care Centre (DISCC).

The purpose of a DISCC is to enable the timely exchange of accurate information and provision of services between families, relatives, friends and essential emergency service agencies. Support and information can be provided with scope for focus on critical mass casualty and disaster victim identification processes. The model can be used following any disaster with mass casualties or injuries, including terrorist events.

A DISCC will:

- provide a secure and confidential environment, with assurance of physical safety and free from external intrusion
- enable families and friends to gain as much information as is currently available about those affected by the emergency
- offer access to a range of resources and information that will allow families and friends to make informed choices and direction about the services and supports for their needs

- ensure an integrated multi-agency approach to provide support without duplication of effort
- assist responders in ensuring that bereaved families and friends receive professional advice and assistance which is co-ordinated, consistent and clear; meets individuals' needs; and is offered in a sensitive, compassionate and private manner.

Should you require further information, please contact Mr Brad Jolly, Assistant Director General, Regulations and Concessions, at the Department of Communities on

Yours sincerely

Grahame Searle  
**Director General**

29 March 2018