

# FOREWORD

## Counter-terrorism in Australia

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I welcome this opportunity to highlight key initiatives being undertaken by the Australian Government in addressing the threat of terrorism.

Terrorism presents us with a range of new and complex challenges. The threat is unpredictable and, for the most part, invisible, and clearly is not one which could be countered solely by traditional means. It requires a response that involves all levels of government, industry and the community. We continue to look for innovative ways to meet this new threat.

Since the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, the Australian Government has systematically reviewed the critical components of Australia's protection against terrorism and has established a national strategic framework to counter-terrorism based on the principles of:

- **maximum preparedness** – strong ability to detect and disrupt terrorist activity;
- **comprehensive prevention** – strong protection of people, assets and infrastructure from terrorist activity; and
- **effective response** – rapid and effective capabilities to reduce the impact of a terrorist incident, should one occur.

The Australian Government has committed \$5.6 billion in additional funds to Australia's national security efforts since the terrorist attacks of 2001. Funding has been provided for enhanced intelligence, aviation and maritime transport security, strengthened law enforcement and border control and science and technology research in areas relevant to combating terrorism. New measures have been introduced to manage chemical, biological and radiological incidents





and law enforcement, emergency management and defence capabilities have been strengthened.

The primary co-ordinating body for dealing with counter-terrorism in Australia is the National Counter-Terrorism Committee (NCTC). In 2002, its mandate was expanded to include managing the consequences of terrorist activity. I co-chair the Committee together with a State or Territory senior official. The NCTC comprises senior representatives from key agencies, including EMA, all premiers' and chief ministers' departments and the deputy police commissioners from each State and Territory. Senior New Zealand government officials attend as observers.

Key functions of the NCTC include providing strategic and policy advice to heads of government and relevant ministers, co-ordinating an effective nation-wide counter-terrorism capability, and maintaining effective cross-jurisdictional arrangements for sharing relevant intelligence information between all relevant agencies in all jurisdictions. In addition the NCTC maintains an overarching national strategy to co-ordinate the protection of critical infrastructure and maintains the National Counter-Terrorism Plan.

The National Counter-Terrorism Plan provides a whole of government framework for responding to terrorist incidents. The Plan outlines the responsibilities, authorities and mechanisms to prevent, or if they occur, manage acts of terrorism and their consequences in Australia. The Plan relies on strong co-operative, co-ordinated and consultative relationships among

Commonwealth and State and Territory government departments and agencies.

Over recent years the relationship between counter-terrorism and emergency management has become closely aligned. There are a range of issues where the NCTC and the Australian Emergency Management Committee (AEMC) both have a direct interest—most notably in the areas of urban search and rescue and chemical, biological and radiological incidents. Discussions are currently underway on arrangements for strengthening the link between the NCTC and the AEMC.

Australia's national counter-terrorism exercise programme has been expanded and strengthened. The exercises are designed to test the operational responses to major terrorist incidents as well as the critical decision-making processes that deal with these events. Planning for the next multi-jurisdictional exercise, *Mercury 05* is already underway. It will draw on recently conducted exercises and will rigorously test Australia's consequence management capabilities.

There is no room for complacency as the terrorist threat continues to evolve. We need to continually review our arrangements, minimise unnecessary duplication of effort and be able to respond quickly and flexibly to emerging threats and challenges.

The ability of agencies involved in counter-terrorism and emergency management to work effectively together will ultimately determine the success in providing a more secure Australia.