

NEWS

sort of treatment for mental illness,” Mr Freeman said.

But ADF professor of military medicine and surgery Lieutenant Colonel Michael Reade said there were problems with sending personnel to external specialists.

“I have heard of a particular soldier going to a private psychiatrist, saying he was having flashbacks to when the IED (improvised explosive device) went off and having the chap say to him, ‘What’s an IED,’ which of course destroyed their therapeutic relationship,” Lieutenant Reade said.

However he admitted a different level of confidentiality does apply when an ADF member is being treated internally.

“We are often required to make it explicitly clear to the patients we treat that we are treating them not only as a patient but also as an agent of the organisation in which we both serve – in the same way that an occupational physician for a mining company might treat someone but have a dual loyalty,” he said.

“I do not think it is as problematic as it might seem to be. It is certainly not the case that the chain of command – that is, the soldier’s boss – has full access to the medical chart; it is all medical-in-confidence.

“But you are correct in saying that the commander has the ability to ask the psychiatrist, or whoever the doctor is treating the patient, ‘What’s going on?’ And he or she may feel entitled to a more detailed answer than they would get from a private health professional.

“Therefore I think the answer is probably to have a mix of both systems.” •

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AGAINST THEIR WILL: *Slavery a shocking reality in Australia*

Slavery begins at home

Public awareness campaign proposed on trafficking.

Representatives of the Australian Federal Police have told a parliamentary inquiry that slavery and human trafficking are serious problems in Australia, despite only a handful of people being convicted of slavery related offences over the past decade.

AFP manager of crime operations Commander Jennifer Hurst told the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee the AFP has 25 specialist staff working on human trafficking.

“From an AFP perspective, we do see it as quite a serious problem,” Commander Hurst said.

Human Rights Sub-Committee deputy chair Philip Ruddock (Berowra, NSW) questioned whether too many resources were being dedicated to the area, citing figures showing only 33 matters were referred for investigation in 2011–12.

However AFP legislation program coordinator Elsa Sengstock said regardless of the number, the AFP considers every referral of slavery a high priority because it is a crime against humanity.

“It is not getting a high priority because of the perceived number ... it is

because of the nature of the offending,” Ms Sengstock said.

Meanwhile, the Law Council of Australia has urged the federal government to fund a comprehensive public awareness campaign in the area.

Council president Joseph Catanzariti said the average Australian does not realise people in Australia can find themselves coerced into a situation where they are being denied their rights or proper wages and conditions.

Mr Catanzariti said a Crime Stoppers style campaign is needed to educate people to be on the lookout for unusual situations.

“It would be great to see the government initiate a campaign that said, ‘right next to you your neighbour could be in fact subjected to these sorts of things’,” Mr Catanzariti said.

“There are support groups for these people where they’re able to identify themselves but we need a lot more education, a public awareness campaign, and we’d be very keen to see a lot of media done in relation to human trafficking.”

The Australian Institute of Criminology has just finished a four-year research program into slavery and human trafficking.

Research program manager Laura Beacroft said a study conducted by the AIC found that 60 per cent of those surveyed confused human trafficking with the smuggling of asylum seekers.

“If people in the community don’t recognise something then that limits the detection,” Ms Beacroft said.

“What we’ve been doing is exploring with service providers and community people what their understanding of slavery is, making sure that they understand what it is and then asking them whether they’ve seen anything like that.”

Getting an accurate picture of the prevalence of the problem has proven difficult, with evidence and data hard to gather.

Mr Ruddock said the committee will consider the evidence it has been presented.

“What I’ve tried to do is to look behind that data to see whether or not there is evidence that we can obtain that there are people that are not coming forward that have not been identified,” Mr Ruddock said.

The federal government recently passed legislation which broadened the definition of slavery offences, increased penalties, and boosted support and care for victims.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard has also announced safeguards for government procurement policies to ensure slavery has not been used in the supply chain.

Anti-slavery group Walk Free’s Fiona David believes business must also step up to help reduce slavery worldwide.

“Business is clearly not doing enough on this issue, it’s as simple as that,” Ms David said.

“Business has remarkable power in its purchasing decisions and has the capacity to say to their business partners ‘we won’t buy from you unless you can verify for us that these are produced in a slavery-free way’.

“Walk Free believes companies should be more transparent about where they get their products so they can provide a slave free guarantee to consumers.” •

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Federal police shut down cyber scammers

Australia’s law enforcement agencies are closing the net on cyber criminals but internet users need to remain vigilant, the Australian Federal Police has told a parliamentary inquiry into cybersafety for seniors.

The AFP’s cyber crime operations manager Glen McEwen said the recent success of an international investigation codenamed Operation Lino shows progress is being made.

Commander McEwen said Operation Lino uncovered and shut down a sophisticated criminal network based in Romania that was targeting the computer networks of Australian businesses and hacking into their point of sale systems.

“That resulted over a period of time in dismantling an organised crime syndicate that was allegedly responsible for the compromise of more than 500,000 credit cards and exposing the Australian financial sector in the vicinity of \$750 million,” he said.

In its most recent report, federal parliament’s Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety said a one stop cybercrime awareness and reporting portal is needed to help seniors get online and stay safe once they do.

The committee found while many seniors are embracing communications technology, others are being held back by lack of skills and fear of cyber-scams.

Committee chair Senator Catryna Bilyk (Tas) said governments need to help more seniors get online to avoid leaving a large part of the population on the wrong side of the ‘digital divide’.

“The internet has become an essential tool for participation in many aspects of modern life and today Australians, including many seniors, are online for business and pleasure, for social networking, accessing government information or education, for shopping and other financial transactions,” Senator Bilyk said.

“Unfortunately, however, there are also many seniors who are not taking part in the digital revolution. The reasons for non-participation are various, but fear of becoming a victim of cybercrime is a real deterrent to many seniors.”

To help overcome these fears, the committee called for governments to give support to libraries and other organisations to provide cybersafety training, and create a centralised point for cybersafety information and assistance.

Overall the committee made 13 recommendations based on 12 public hearings, a number of submissions and an online survey for seniors that received 536 responses. •

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