

Doorstop with the NSW Minister for Police and Minister for Emergency Services, AFP Commissioner and NSW Police Commissioner

PRIME MINISTER: Well good afternoon. I'm joined today by Troy Grant the New South Wales Minister for Police, David Elliott, the New South Wales Minister for Counter-Terrorism, Andrew Colvin the Federal Police Commissioner, Mick Fuller the New South Wales Police Commissioner and Tony Sheehan the Commonwealth Counter-Terrorism Coordinator.

After the Nice truck attack last year, I asked the Counter-Terrorism Coordinator for the Commonwealth who was then Greg Moriarty, to get together with all of the State and Territory Police agencies, with business and local Government and make sure that we had a comprehensive strategy for protecting crowded places. Particularly with respect to vehicle attacks, but not exclusively obviously. Offenders with guns or knives or bombs or chemical devices are also a threat, it's a full range of threats. But what Nice demonstrated was the lethality of somebody using a truck in a crowded place.

Since then we've seen a number of attacks with vehicles. Of course tragically here in Australia in the Bourke Street Mall, in the UK on several occasions, most recently in the London Bridge attack where tragically young Australian's were killed. Now, the last few days we've seen the shocking attack in Barcelona where once again Australians have been injured. As you know we are concerned about a young Australian boy who is unaccounted for. Again as I said yesterday, our prayers go out to all the victims but we pray for that little boy, that he will be found and restored alive to his parents. But it is a very tragic circumstance and one of great risk.

Now what we've done with this crowded places strategy, is we have set out a series of tools which owners and operators of venues, whether it is a council, a sporting arena, whether it is a state government site or a federal government site, we're able to assess the vulnerability of the site, see how they can make it safer, know where to seek advice from police.

We've just walked through the Pitt Street Mall. As Commissioner Fuller was pointing out, you can see there the bollards at each end of that mall that make it safe from vehicle attack. So all of the people in that mall, that large open space are perfectly safe from vehicle attack. But that's been done in a way that does not diminish the amenity for those pedestrians. We also of course recognise that the best mitigations are done at the design stage. Clearly you can't proof every site 100 per cent, there are certainly there things that can be done to existing sites, but the most important thing is as you get new developments, new plans that security measures are put in place at that time.

So this is a comprehensive strategy. It's one that has been done with cooperation between all the state and territory agencies and the commonwealth. It is available online at nationalsecurity.gov.au and it's one that I believe is going to be very important as we work tirelessly to keep Australians safe. There is no place for 'set and forget'.

Just before I hand over to the New South Wales Minister for Police, I just want to acknowledge again the outstanding work that is done by our police and intelligence agencies. As you know just a few weeks ago, the Federal Police and New South Wales Police and ASIO successfully disrupted, contained a terrorist plot to bring down an aeroplane. That was here in Sydney. Today you will have seen arrests of three persons in Melbourne, again the consequence of the Joint Counter-Terrorism Team cooperation, who will be charged with terrorist acts against a Shiite mosque in Melbourne last year. So you can see that we are relentlessly, tirelessly working to keep Australians safe. There is no place for set and forget.

Every day we are improving the tools, whether they are legislative or technical that our agencies have to keep us safe. So I'll ask Troy to say a few words and we're happy to take questions.

NEW SOUTH WALES MINISTER FOR POLICE: Thank you Prime Minister and good afternoon everybody. The New South Wales Government thanks the Prime Minister for leading this body of work. An important part of our ability to continue to keep the community safe. Public safety is paramount and every city and every community in New South Wales and right cross Australia. The New South Wales Government, supported by our police, have had significant involvement in the construct of this information for crowded places. For this plan and what has been developed has been is a very important toolkit.

It is well thought through, it will be an evolutionary document, something that will continue to evolve, be well-informed by not only our law enforcement partners, but our intelligence community and the broader community as well. So for businesses, local Government, state and federal government, this is the greatest opportunity we have to work collectively, to utilise this tool kit, to make our communities as safe as possible against the ever emerging and evolving threats.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister you mentioned [inaudible] since then, did the authorities make it clear [inaudible] barriers and bollards? Especially since all sorts of governments are already doing that, including Sydney and Melbourne?

PRIME MINISTER: Well this strategy has been a process that in the course of putting it together, has been informing local authorities. Of course, everyone has been aware for these threats. But it's important to bring all that together. This is where the Federal Government can provide leadership and coordination. That's why Tony Sheehan, there's Tony, who is the Commonwealth Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, we can bring all of that expertise, all of that experience together to make sure that everybody is as well-informed and has the tools they need to keep us safe.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister you said there was design put into this, where it's morbid to see deliberate structures and you know what they are, to what extent will they blend into the environment, become part of the infrastructure?

PRIME MINISTER: Well you can see very good examples of that and they're set out in the Strategy document, where you can have, look you can obviously have bollards. We're familiar with those. You can have seating. You might have noticed some of the seating in the Pitt Street Mall is positioned in a way that it would provide a barrier to a vehicle attempting to enter the mall. You can have works of art. You can have steps, you can have planter boxes. There's a range of measures that can be built in at the design stage, it can be done very unobtrusively. Would you like to add to that Tony?

COUNTER-TERRORISM COORDINATOR: Thank you Prime Minister. There are many options available to owners and operators, in some cases we would see, as we do see around Sydney and in other cities around Australia, very visible bollards and other barriers. But one important thing that the Prime Minister has referenced is opportunities in the design phase as well. Where there are steps taken around security in the design phase in our crowded places, we can see very effective measures taken which can also be very attractive in the build of what we have in our crowded places.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister it would be fair to say, wouldn't it, that this is about being proactive rather than reactive? Just being –

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, this work has been underway for a year. It's been finalised recently, it's been discussed at COAG. All of the jurisdictions, all of the states and territories are very familiar with it. So this is a part of our continuous program of optimising, improving the way we can keep Australians safe.

Our agencies are the best in the world. I'm so proud of our police, our security services, our intelligence services, our Defence Force. They're the best in the world, but we recognise that the threat is constantly evolving. So what we have to do is make sure that we too are constantly improving and updating the measures we have to keep Australians safe.

JOURNALIST: I assume this will be a costly exercise, will government help businesses at all?

PRIME MINISTER: The responsibility goes to the owners of the particular venues and locations but of course most of the crowded places locations, or many of them, many of the biggest ones belong to governments, whether it's state governments or local governments and in some cases federal government. But the important thing is that you've got tools in the documents there that people will be able to download now I'm sure, which enable an assessment of the risk of a particular site. That will then give the opportunity to then seek specific advice from police. Perhaps Mick do you want to say a little bit about how you would operate if somebody goes through that checklist and says: "Well I've got a venue that I think could be vulnerable," how would you react to that? What's the help you can give?

NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE COMMISSIONER: Thanks Prime Minister. I think that one of the important parts of the document is that it's to stop 'one size fits all' in this, it's not just a football stadium, it's not just Pitt Street Mall. It's there to highlight. Crowded places could be just one day of the year, it could be just Anzac Day in your local town. At the same time it's about not just asking for the community to be part of this, looking for suspicious bags, it's about what can security and your people that work in these private assets do, to hopefully identify a threat at the earliest opportunity? So there's a risk assessment process in there. There are potentially people out there now who have an asset that is a crowded place that don't assess it in that way. So this document will give you a great deal of consistency in relation to private, local government, government departments, all risk-assessing these individual spaces in the same way.

Now the wonderful thing about the document is it gives different people different solutions to minimise opportunity. So I think in the past, law enforcement or government has asked the community and the media to be an important part of prevention in terrorism. But what we're doing now is tying in local businesses, local government, to all be on the same page.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister for a long time now you've been advising people not to change their behavior. [inaudible] their first response is fear. So, what are you telling them?

PRIME MINISTER: We will never be cowed, nor will we bow to terrorism. We will defeat the terrorists. But what we must do of course is take every step we can to protect Australians from the threat of terrorism and terrorist attacks. The changes that we're talking about here and the strategy, making crowded places, public places more resilient to for example vehicle attacks, are ones that will enhance the amenity of those public spaces.

You know, I never heard anybody for example, say that they don't like the Pitt Street Mall because of the bollards. You don't notice them. They're there, they're very effective. It's important always to recognise that we want to improve the amenity of our public spaces, it is part of our way of life. Getting together, going out, going out shopping. Look at the people we saw just a little while ago in the Pitt Street Mall, there was a family that had come down on the train from the Blue Mountains for a day in the city, a bit of shopping. That's part of our great Australian way of life. That will always continue and what we're doing is ensuring it's secure and can be done safely.

Now there's no guarantees obviously, but we're doing everything we can, every day, to keep Australians safe.

JOURNALIST: Mr Colvin I'm wondering what the police input into it was, into what the criteria should be, what considerations, what specific requests you had for this?

AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE COMMISSIONER: Thank you for that. A lot of this framework has been drawn upon from what we've learned overseas as well. So obviously this isn't just reacting to what we're seeing, this is about trying

to get ahead of the game and be preventive in our focus. But we're not in isolation around the world in thinking about these measures. So a large part of our input has been to make sure that the threat environment is well understood, to make sure that where there's lessons that we can learn from our partners over seas, both our traditional partners and some of our non-traditional partners frankly, then we're learning them. That's been integrated into this strategy. So, while a lot of this is very local in nature, this is a layered approach. Of course local state and national level governments need to play a role.

JOURNALIST: How likely is it Commissioner and Prime Minister, that we'll see a Barcelona-style attack here? Is there any indication that in our own community, jihadis are looking at these tactics that have been used overseas and talking about them or considering them?

AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE COMMISSIONER: The national security level at the moment in Australia is 'probable'. It's 'probable' for a reason. I think we know that these attacks around the world resonate with those who want to seek to do us harm. They're low sophistication attacks so we have to work on the basis that it is probable, that's why the threat level is what it is.

PRIME MINISTER: Can I give you an example? Andrew can add to this if you wish, or Tony. There was a very serious terrorist plot disrupted just before Christmas in Melbourne and the plot involved an improvised explosive device to be detonated in the vicinity of Federation Square in Melbourne, just outside the cathedral there on Christmas Eve. The plan of these conspirators also involved driving vehicles, trying to get vehicles into Federation Square. So we have to work on the assumption that every vector of attack, every type of attack, is potentially under contemplation by those who seek to do us harm. That's why intelligence is so important. You know you have to operate on so many levels, you've got to do everything you can to make crowded places safe, safer and more resilient to these type of attack. But equally intelligence is critical and so when armed with that intelligence, as our Joint Counter-Terrorism Team were here in Sydney a few weeks ago, they were able then to quickly identify the people that were suspected of being involved in this plot and contain them and disrupt the plot and then of course, as you know, there have been charges laid following.

JOURNALIST: You've got footy finals coming up, is there any, in light of this report, any changes going to be made to security at those events?

PRIME MINISTER: All of the venues are keenly aware of the security implications, but again, I just might ask the New South Wales Commissioner to add to that, or Troy if you want to speak about it?

NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE COMMISSIONER: In terms of New South Wales and most other states and territories of Australia, we know that big sporting events is certainly a crowded place, it's probably something more consistent we've been used to in the past. We work with asset owners very closely. It's more than just about bollards and spaces it's about preparing your staff, it's about having plans it's about communicating to ensure that – heaven forbid – if there is an incident, then we are well-trained and well tested to work

together with law enforcement, local security and those asset owners. But this document has been worked up with a number of private partners including some of the biggest stadiums, to ensure that it's not just about a shopping centre, it's not just about a mall. This document fit every type of crowded place that you can think of, which I think is key.

But we really have changed the way we do business in terms of sporting events now, for some years. We'll continue to strengthen that through this document.

JOURNALIST: [inaudible]

NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE COMMISSIONER: Absolutely, the document is publically available. Again, in the past we probably trained our security staff to look for a bag left on it's own; it's more complex than that. It's about looking for a person that may be suspicious, maybe sweating profusely for the time of year, dressed inappropriately, carrying a bag that doesn't fit within the environment. These are the type of things we need to train staff, not just security staff but all staff in assets to be aware of going forward.

JOURNALIST: [Inaudible]

NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE COMMISSIONER: Its about partnerships, isn't it. We've often asked for the community to be a part of the solution. We'll we're asking business now, big business and small business also to be part of the solution.

JOURNALIST: You're also looking at, I think, the trucking industry? I mean there are concerns about the security surrounding trucking.

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, there are and we are working with the trucking industry. Again, I don't know if Tony or Andrew or Mick would like to talk about that further, but it's to ensure that people who are not entitled to, not authorised, cannot get access to heavy vehicles because they can clearly be a very potent, lethal mode of attack. Although, you know, you have to recognise that a light van can be very lethal too, as we've seen in Barcelona. Indeed in the London Bridge attack, the terrorists had a light van which they loaded sandbags into the back of, to make it heavier so it would have greater and more lethal impact. But big trucks like the one used in Nice for example, they need to ensure that the wrong people are not getting behind the wheels of it. Do you want to add to that?

NEW SOUTH WALES MINISTER FOR POLICE: The New South Wales Government is acutely aware of that risk. A significant body of work is being undertaken with New South Wales Police, Organised Crime Squad as well as CT Command, with the Roads and Maritime Traffic Services and also the WestConnex Project for example. So we're across that and our agencies are working very harmoniously together.

JOURNALIST: On another matter, yesterday we had an incident up at Chatswood, not terror related. Will that be an area you'd be considering putting bollards in?

NEW SOUTH WALES MINISTER FOR POLICE: This is a matter for every location to

go through the risk assessment, go through the audit and then the key to this work is that the police and the experts are then available to you to help advise you. They're now an additional resources. So one of the key things for me out of this plan is that the agencies, the law enforcement, the intelligence agencies, they understand the risk. Now businesses and operators of venues and local government can be more aware of the risk and the role they can play in mitigating that risk. But they have available to them, the expertise, across every state and territory, of their expert police to advise them as to what measures they will undertake.

JOURNALIST: Are there compliance issues with this? Is it mandatory, do you face fines for not conforming to building standards as you would see for any other building standard?

NEW SOUTH WALES MINISTER FOR POLICE: Those measures are governed by local environmental plans for each of the local government areas. They all have to be compliant with those planning requirements etc. for each jurisdiction.

PRIME MINISTER: Okay thank you all very much.