

IMAP Implementation Committee
Briefing Paper
Protecting People in Crowded Places

BACKGROUND

1. At the IMAP Implementation Committee meeting of 25 August 2017, the Committee resolved:
 - 17.1 *That, in relation to the Federal Government's recently released document "Australia's Strategy for Protecting Crowded Places for Terrorism" it is recommended that relevant officers from the IMAP Councils meet with a view to forming a working group to review the document, share insights and identify opportunities for collaboration and report back to the next meeting.*
2. A working group was subsequently formed. The working group met on 25 October 2017 to discuss the strategy, its impacts on Council operations, and share current practices with a view to identify best practice options and opportunities for collaboration.

DISCUSSION

3. The Strategy has local government implications, particularly in the areas of event management, emergency management and urban planning.

Event Management:

4. The working group agreed that the Strategy's templates and checklists for site security are a useful tool, however, there is a broader gap that exists among the Councils around the application of a consistent, robust risk management assessment framework – particularly for the planning and conduct of public events.
5. Most Councils hire risk management consultants. The working group agreed that a shared panel containing specialists – some with expertise in the area of counter-terrorism - would be useful for this purpose, as it was generally recognised that Council event managers are not necessarily qualified in risk management.
6. Compounding this issue is the fact that many community members applying for event permits are also lacking skills, experience or qualifications in this area. The working group identified that there is room to improve Council event management processes, by creating a comprehensive, standardised risk evaluation tool that can be provided to community members wishing to apply for an event permit.
7. Any Council risk management assessment or activity (be it the construction of hard infrastructure in preparation for an event, education campaigns or open space design specifications) needs to strike a balance between reasonably protecting a space from potential terrorist activity and ensuring the functionality and culture of the space remains. The working group identified that each Council will need to determine its own risk appetite – especially with regards to major or one-off events, where the procurement or placement of hard infrastructure, such as bollards, may be financially prohibitive.
8. The working group members commented that, since the publication of the Strategy, some Councils have received requests from private organisations to supply bollards; other Councils have received requests to install bollards. The City of Port Phillip has decided to procure portable barriers for major events such as the St Kilda Festival and Pride March. At this stage, it is the only Council procuring additional and specific barriers for Council-led events.

Emergency Management:

9. To apply the Strategy to the area of municipal emergency management, the working group recognised the importance of aligning Council business continuity and emergency management plans and procedures. If they have not done so already, Councils need to ensure that activation of one does not jeopardise the other (e.g. Council staff need separate business continuity and emergency management teams; business continuity plans for services should consider how the service can continue in the event of a major municipal emergency such as a storm and whether some services will be in higher demand while they are also suffering loss of facilities, staff or utilities).
10. The working group identified the value in incorporating testing of terrorism-type events when exercising emergency management and/or business continuity plans. The Cities of Melbourne, Stonnington and Port Phillip have done this already.
11. Council emergency management planning inherently gives consideration to protecting people from harm and generally does not distinguish between hazards, as per the State Government doctrine of the 'All Hazards, Broad Hazards' approach. There are a number of preventative measures already in place (refer to working group minutes – Attachment 1) from:
 - the use of CCTV, to
 - pre-screening staff checks,
 - the promotion of national security hotline information, and
 - local evacuation maps that show areas where mass gatherings occur or facilities where vulnerable people are likely to congregate.
12. The working group recognised that Councils are best placed to implement the Strategy through education and reassurance campaigns and projects or programs that consolidate community connectivity and pride. This can take the form of:
 - promoting the safety and security planning for the city and events;
 - the provision of information to community on how to report suspicious behaviour;
 - training of Council staff on how to identify and respond to unusual or suspicious behaviour etc.
13. The City of Melbourne is relatively engaged in the counter-terrorism space already, having developed a specific Capital City Safety Plan, adopting a colour code system for internal messaging (similar to hospital codes) in the event of danger within a municipal facility. Staff from the City of Melbourne attend the Crowded Places Forum and will be sharing information back to the IMAP Councils in future, following their attendance at the forums.

Urban Planning and Design:

14. From a municipal design perspective, the Strategy is limited in that it focuses exclusively on crowd protection. Councils also need to consider the protection of critical infrastructure if they seek to protect community members from the consequences of a terrorist attack. Similarly to emergency management, safety considerations are embedded systemically into urban design - such as access points, exits, crime prevention through environmental design. Counter-terrorism guidelines are already provided to municipalities regarding the design of community infrastructure. The working group agreed that any formal planning scheme amendments should be led by the State Government.
15. Another limitation of the Strategy with regards to its implementation in the urban planning and design area is the definition of 'crowded place'. Almost any open space, public road or event can become a crowded place. Another complication with the definition is that a place that is normally not a crowded place can be deemed a soft target or 'crowded place' at a single point in time, or on an ad hoc basis: for example, a public festival held on a site that is normally fairly empty. The working group determined that there were two types of crowded places: fixed/hard infrastructure versus event-specific. The key types of spaces in the IMAP Councils that are considered 'crowded places' are:

Fixed infrastructure

- Tourist attractions
- Shopping Centres
- Shopping Strips

Momentary crowded places

- Sporting Grounds
- Major Parks
- Major Roads (Anzac Day parades, White Night, Street Festivals, marathons, markets etc.)
- Town Halls

16. Following a number of isolated security incidents during Council meetings, some Councils have reviewed their site and procedural security for Town Halls and specifically for the conduct of Council meetings. The City of Yarra has applied the Crowded Places security audit and assessment tool to determine the suitability of one Town Hall for meetings. Other Councils such as City of Melbourne conduct bag checks and have security staff on site. Once again, each Council will need to determine its own risk appetite – especially with regards to investing in surveillance, hiring external security staff and venues.

RECOMMENDATION

17. That the IMAP Implementation Committee resolves to:

- (a) Create a panel of risk specialists for event management planning purposes that can be used by the IMAP Councils and made available to community members wishing to apply for an event permit. The panel should contain a number of risk specialists with qualifications and experience in counter-terrorism and criminal activity. Qualifications for the panel of consultants to be developed in consultation with the Police.
- (b) Develop a standardised event risk evaluation tool for Councils considering a permit for a major event. The tool will provide guidance on risk assessment and the development of management plans that respond to the identified level of risk. The tool would identify where to access relevant resources such as checklists and templates. The tool should be developed with Federal and State police assistance and in consultation with council and event insurers.
- (c) Noting the increasing security costs associated with the delivery of events, IMAP Councils explore measures to increase State funding and reduce costs. This could include IMAP Councils sharing systems, knowledge and resources and engaging with the State Government on funding options.
- (d) Nominate one Council to investigate options for training Council staff on how to identify and respond to unusual or suspicious behaviour.
- (e) Ensure that City of Melbourne provide relevant information to the IMAP Councils following their attendance at the Crowded Places Forums.
- (f) Receive a report from the City of Port Phillip in April 2018 on the use of their newly-procured barriers, including the costs, benefits and drawbacks as demonstrated following their use in events.
- (g) Councils nominate a CEO(s) to liaise with Federal and State police to implement recommendations a, b and c above.