

FEDERAL MOVES TO IMPROVE SECURITY

By **Rod Cowan***

The Federal Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, has called on businesses to get smarter about buying security and has leant strong support for a national licensing regime to improve standards.

Speaking at an Australasian Council of Security Professionals function, McClelland said threats to national security now go beyond terrorism and territorial borders, to include serious and organised crime, electronic attack and natural disasters.

“To ensure the private security industry continues to make its important contribution to national security, we must do all we can to make sure we have the highest industry standards,” said McClelland.

“Business leaders have an obligation to take all steps reasonably available to protect their company from foreseeable risks.”

For its part, the Government provides information to help understand the range and likelihood of threats and hazards.

“Business then has the obligation to take the necessary steps to manage this risk,” said McClelland.

Government, he added, can't give detailed directions on specific security solutions.

“Such advice must take into account the intricacies of the business operations, applicable regulations and controls and not least, the investment decisions that the business has to make. Business seeks this type of detailed and specific advice from either in-house professionals, or from professionals in the marketplace,” said McClelland.



“When a business goes to the market it wants to be sure it's getting the best advice from competent and honest professionals.”

Changes to licensing regimes on a Federal level will help improve the industry, McClelland said.

Such moves have been in the pipeline for some time. In 2008, the Council of Australian Government's (COAG) 2008 decided to reform security licensing. Last year, the Ministerial Council on Police and Emergency Management (MCPPEM) agreed to more reforms as part of the COAG initiative on harmonising private security regulations.

“This means states and territories will be introducing common training standards for guards, and common background checking for all types of security licenses,” said McClelland.

“This will not only increase the competencies and skills of security staff, it will also increase confidence and trust in security personnel by removing criminal elements.”

One way to boost the industry is to implement the security performance standards demanded by customers and delivered by security businesses.

“I actively encourage clients and purchasers of security services to have high expectations because this will lead to security business owners constantly improving the professionalism of their business,” said McClelland.

“Likewise, you should also encourage clients to ask for the level of security they realistically need to safeguard their business operations. This isn't just about them saving money, or you making money. It's about cost effective security that contributes to the economic and social wellbeing of Australia.”

As part of improving security buying, McClelland recommended viewing the Security is Your Business DVD, sponsored by the Australian Government.

“This DVD is effectively a security conference-in-a-box and it's designed to help clients become smart shoppers,” said McClelland.

“Security is Your Business provides professional, constructive security advice from some of Australia's top experts in the field. It addresses security, risk management and resilience. And it aims to help clients better understand the different security issues they should consider in specifying security requirements.”

Through the Trusted Information Sharing Network (TISN), he said, the Attorney-General's Department promotes awareness of security risks, and ensures that information and techniques needed to assess and mitigate risks is readily available and freely exchanged.

The Federal Government has, of late, shifted the focus of the existing Critical Infrastructure Protection program to



Critical Infrastructure Resilience, with new branding to accompany the change.

As part of that shift, the Attorney-General's Department has restructured to create a National Security Resilience Policy Division, with a key focus on looking after critical infrastructure.

The MCPPEM has also agreed that the future direction of emergency management should be based on achieving community and organisational resilience, including the development of national partnerships with the private sector and non-government organisations.

The Attorney-General's Department is inviting all stakeholders to contribute to the consultation process to develop the details of the Critical Infrastructure Resilience Program, which will include at least two components:

- organisational resilience; and
- support for disaster resilience.

Organisational resilience will focus on enhancing the ability of critical infrastructure businesses to continue to deliver essential services in the face of significant and unexpected challenges.

Disaster resilience will focus on the contribution businesses could make to the ability of communities to prepare for and recover from disasters. This will necessarily require organisations to take greater account of the impacts on the community of their operational decisions, before and immediately after a disaster.

The new program is expected to be launched in May.

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