



ATTORNEY-GENERAL  
THE HON ROBERT McCLELLAND MP

**Security in Government Conference 2008**  
**The Royal Theatre, National Convention Centre**  
**31 Constitution Avenue, Canberra**  
**Tuesday, 16 September 2008, 9:05am**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**[Acknowledgements]**

- **First, may I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land we meet on – and pay my respects to their elders, both past and present.**

**[Other Acknowledgements]**

- **Chair, Mr Martin Studdert AM, Executive Director, Protective Security Coordination Centre**
- **Major General Maurie McNarn AO, Director, Defence Intelligence Organisation (also speaking)**

- **Mr Paul O’Sullivan, Director-General of Security, ASIO (also speaking)**
- **Conference delegates**
- **Ladies and gentlemen**

## **[Introduction]**

- 1. Thank you for your welcome this morning.  
It's a great pleasure to be here to contribute to your discussions, to talk about some of the Government's security initiatives, and to encourage you all in your work.**
- 2. As I'm sure you will all be aware, last week marked the seventh anniversary of the destruction of the World Trade Centre in New York.**
- 3. Something you may not know however, is that today also marks the anniversary of what was, until 11 September 2001, the worst terrorist attack in the history of New York.**
- 4. At noon, on 16 September 1920, as workers poured onto Wall Street, a horse-drawn carriage stopped outside the headquarters of the J.P. Morgan Bank.**
- 5. Shortly thereafter, 45 kilograms of dynamite exploded into the lunchtime crowd.**

- 6. The blast killed more than 30 people, injured a further 200 and caused over \$2 million in property damage.**
- 7. Apart from the human and financial toll, the bombing was seen as a symbolic attack against the financial centre of America. It caused widespread fear and panic. The Washington Post labelled it '*an act of war*' - a phrase which is familiar to every one of us.**
- 8. This story reminds us that some things don't change, although the scale and frequency may.**
- 9. When facing a threat, it is easy to imagine that what we confront is unique and unprecedented. But the truth, of course, is that states have always faced threats to their national security.**
- 10. What we in Government must do is to re-examine the assumptions we make about the nature of the threat and what this means for Australia's response.**

**11. For that reason, this conference is focused on the evolution of security.**

**[The Evolving National Security Threat]**

**12. Australia's national security challenges have clearly evolved from those we faced at the start of federation to those we face today.**

**13. As the Prime Minister has said, during this session of Parliament, the Government will deliver Australia's first ever National Security Statement.**

**14. The statement will outline the way we approach the full range of national security challenges.**

**15. We are all familiar with what I would characterise as the 'traditional' environment: where the focus of Australian national security was the threat of aggression by other nation states.**

**16. Traditional national security threats took the form of attacks by conventional forces against**

**Australia or its allies. These threats drove the creation of the Navy, Army and Air Force, and their deployments in both world wars.**

**17. The emergence of the Cold War environment in the 50s, though different in some respects, was still dominated by the threat of major state conflict.**

**18. The September 11 attacks, and the Bali and London bombings made terrorism front and centre of the national security agenda.**

**19. Terrorist attacks are not new, but these events powerfully focused the attention of the western world on a new approach to an old problem.**

**20. Two main characteristics of the terrorism-related national security environment stand out.**

**21. The first has been the emergence of non-state actors as the source of threat. Terrorist organisations are amorphous - independent of borders and nationalities. Their members wear no uniform.**

- 22. The second – and worst – aspect is the deliberate targeting of civilians to inflict major disruption. In traditional warfare, most military forces at least try to minimise civilian casualties.**
- 23. These developments have radically changed the way Australia perceives and responds to threats. Our mindset has changed from ‘defending’ against attacks to taking steps to prevent such attacks.**
- 24. The deliberate targeting of civilians has necessitated that we extend our preventive strategies to more than military targets. We are of the belief that transport infrastructure, institutions of national significance or places of mass gathering could also be targets.**
- 25. The possible nature of the attacks themselves has also become wider and more unpredictable – from conventional explosives, to chemical, radiological or biological weapons.**

- 26. The chance that such weapons could be constructed under our noses from readily available materials has created enormous challenges for security and intelligence agencies.**
- 27. Notwithstanding the ongoing need to deal with terrorism, I think we are seeing a further evolution and broadening of the national security agenda. This is sometimes referred to as the ‘all-hazards approach’, and is driven by the realisation that threats can come from directions that have not tended to be the focus of traditional national security.**
- 28. I think there are two main factors driving this change.**
- 29. The first can be summarized in one word: ‘technology’.**
- 30. It’s true to say that developments in technology have been changing national security environments since the Stone Age.**

- 31. What is particularly challenging today is the speed of technological change – across the board.**
- 32. In all sorts of ways, technology will be used to advance the prosperity of nations.**  
**But there is a dark side – and with that, formidable new challenges for national security.**
- 33. The growth of technology has enabled the development of cities, high rise buildings, with concentrations of population in small areas, and the rapid and extensive movement of people, goods and food.**
- 34. It has also given us telecommunications, the internet and an abundance of easy to access public information.**
- 35. Increasingly, every aspect of our private and professional lives is being conducted online, from banking to romance. There is an explosion of new products and services that can be accessed wirelessly from any device.**

- 36. This increasing dependence on electronic communications creates new opportunities for criminals and terrorists. Electronic attacks are becoming more sophisticated, more carefully targeted, and appear to be constantly evolving to stay ahead of counter measures.**
- 37. All of this highlights the need for our responses to be adaptable and agile. Adhering to old methods of response is not going to be enough.**

**[Expanding the Concept of National Security]**

- 38. The second factor is that our nation's security can as easily be threatened by events in the natural world as they could by deliberate man-made aggression.**
- 39. Perhaps at the top of the list are the implications of climate change – issues of enormous complexity including fragile states, pandemics,**

**uncontrolled mass migration, energy and food security issues, and extreme climate events.**

**[Australia's Evolving Response]**

**40. Having touched on aspects of the evolving security environment, I'd like to turn to the way we as a country, and as a Government, seek to ensure that our responses are also evolving, flexible and relevant.**

**41. I believe there are three elements to this.**

**42. The first of these is national leadership.**

**43. As time passes, the urgency of national security issues can fade.**

**We can become complacent and fail to adapt – if a crisis were to hit we could find ourselves on the back foot.**

**44. Important to this approach is to also recognise that not everything can or should be done by government.**

**45. Our communities have enormous skills and experience in looking after themselves.**

**In government, we need to find ways to strengthen this self reliance.**

**The Rudd Government is doing this in several ways by:**

- boosting skills through training and information sharing;**
- providing technical and communication resources; and**
- ensuring inter-operability of organisations and systems.**

**46. Another element of our evolving response is to work closely with our state and territory colleagues, through the National Counter-Terrorism Committee and other key bodies, to ensure the national arrangements and capabilities are maintained and developed to counter the evolving threat.**

**47. Most of you will be familiar with the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery framework.**

**[Prevention of Extremist Behaviours]**

**48. Perhaps the most fundamental of our responses should be prevention.**

**We have learnt lessons from the London and Madrid bombings.**

**In particular, we understand that a terrorist attack in Australia has as much prospect of coming from a radicalised Australian as it does from an overseas terrorist organisation.**

**49. The danger of radicalisation leading to potentially violent extremism is present in our communities.**

**This has been highlighted by some recent arrests and prosecutions.**

**50. I believe arrests such as these are important in combating extremism in Australian society.**

**Successful prosecutions can make those thinking about going down such a road to think again.**

**51. But there are other steps we need to take to prevent home-grown extremism.**

**52. We must also understand the different stages of radicalisation and the activities likely to be associated with each of these.**

**53. In addition, we should look at initiatives being tried in other countries, adapting those, when relevant, to the Australian situation.**

**54. I travelled to the United Kingdom earlier this year. They are tackling this issue by building partnerships between government agencies, police and Islamic communities.**

**55. I've tasked my Department to work with other relevant agencies, as well as the states and territories, to develop strategies for helping Australian communities to counter extremism, taking note of the UK example.**

**56. Some work is already being done.**

**The Australian Federal Police has launched a National Community Engagement Strategy, with community engagement teams set up in Sydney and Melbourne.**

**57. It is essential that we bolster the prevention aspects of our counter-terrorism arrangements and work more closely with communities at risk.**

**[Preparedness]**

**58. The next layer is preparedness: the process of identifying and closing gaps and vulnerabilities.**

**59. Our approach to critical infrastructure protection is an example of how our capabilities in this area have evolved.**

**60. Critical infrastructure protection was once about ‘guns, gates and guards’ protecting power stations and bridges.**

**61. We now take a more sophisticated view - communications, banking, the food chain and**

**places of mass gathering are now all part of the critical infrastructure landscape.**

- 62. I'm pleased to say that industry, along with the Government, has embraced the all-hazards approach to critical infrastructure protection.**
- 63. Lack of food, heating or medical services causes the same hardship whether it's the result of flood, power outage, or criminal act.**
- 64. The Government has several initiatives which reach out into the business and private sectors to help build their resilience and ability to recover from disruptions.**
- 65. The Trusted Information Sharing Network, or the TISN, enables a two-way dialogue between government and industry on matters of national security and provides a forum for sharing information across sectors.**
- 66. The Government has also provided funding of \$23.4 million over four years in the recent Budget to make the Critical Infrastructure Protection**

**Modelling and Analysis program an operational part of our national security architecture.**

- 67. Its computer modelling capability can generate a virtual picture of the effects of a disaster.**
- 68. Another initiative the Government has taken is to instigate a whole-of-government review of e-security arrangements.**

**One task of the review is to deliver a national framework, which will aim to secure Australia's electronic networks so that governments, business and the community alike can use these services with total confidence.**

### **[Response and Recovery]**

- 69. As the tragic experiences of the Boxing Day Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina show, some disasters cannot be prevented. The big question is how we respond.**
- 70. Citizens don't readily forgive Governments that let them down in such circumstances.**

- 71. One key to effectively protecting Australia lies in ensuring that our agencies are working as effectively and as cooperatively possible.**
- 72. Next month, my Department will coordinate a multi-jurisdictional exercise, ‘Mercury 08’, designed to test Australia’s response and recovery arrangements.**
- 73. The scenario involves a series of terrorist threats and attacks against critical infrastructure, urban centres and mass transport systems.**
- 74. It will provide a valuable opportunity for Commonwealth and State government agencies – and the private sector – to test their skills.**
- 75. Response, of course, is linked to resilience.**

**[Resilience]**

- 76. A community that recovers quickly is resilient.**
- 77. When a community is resilient, it can respond to crises in ways that strengthen community bonds, resources and the community’s capacity to cope.**

- 78. Australians experience of dealing with fires, floods and drought have given our communities this quality in great measure.**
- 79. At a basic level, resilience comes down to preparedness.**
- 80. We provided \$19.2 million for the Natural Disaster Mitigation Program through the 2008-09 Budget to help the States, Territories and local councils prepare for the threat of natural disasters.**
- 81. We are working hard to find fresh ways of encouraging people to become better prepared.**
- 82. And we're seeking to strengthen both national partnerships for emergency management and a more hands on approach for communities to develop self-reliance.**

**[Conclusion]**

- 83. I have talked about the evolving nature of national security and how Australia needs to respond.**
- 84. I think if we can distil a single message from this, it is that the things that threaten us never stay the same.**
- We must learn from the past – and be on the front foot in anticipating the future.**
- 85. When it happened, 9/11 forced governments across the world to seriously examine their approach to national security. We need to ensure that we do not become complacent in the face of emerging challenges.**
- 86. I began this address by taking you back to an event that occurred on this day, some eighty years ago.**
- 87. Let me conclude by noting that the day after the 1920 bombing, Wall Street reopened for business.**
- 88. The Rudd Government will continue our efforts to ensure Australia is well protected and that it**

**continues to function effectively.**

**The extent to which we are successful depends in part on the quality of the partnerships we form, our intelligence gathering services, our engagement with the community, and in turn, the community's confidence in what we're doing and appreciation of why.**

**89. As Attorney-General I thank you all for attending this conference – I look forward to feedback from events such as this one to help ensure that our strategies remain relevant and meet the needs of Australia.**

**ENDS**