



## **DAVID MORRIS MP**

**Member for Mornington  
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### **Victoria's Preparedness for Terrorism Response**

#### **Legislative Assembly 7 December 2011**

**Mr MORRIS** (Mornington) — I am pleased to rise this afternoon to make some comments on the report resulting from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's review of the Auditor-General's report on the preparedness to respond to terrorism incidents in relation to essential services and critical infrastructure, which was tabled by my colleague the member for Forest Hill in the house this morning.

This is a follow-up report — and I think it is the first one in the current Parliament — to a report by the Auditor-General that was brought into the Parliament in January 2009 on exactly that point: the preparedness to respond to terrorism incidents and so on.

That report made some 11 recommendations which revolved around things like establishing clear oversight and coordination of arrangements for provisions under the act, leading the development of a performance management framework, clarification of roles and responsibilities and identification of risks.

That report followed the attacks in the United States in September 2001 and the subsequent attacks in Bali, Madrid, Jakarta, London and so on. The report noted on page 1 of its summary that while Australia had not and has still not been directly attacked by terrorists in recent times, its citizens and our interests have been attacked offshore, so it is certainly, I think, a very important subject. Simply because things have not happened in the past or have not happened recently does not mean there is any room for complacency.

Today is the 70th anniversary of the attack on the US naval base in Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941 by the Japanese empire. It was not an isolated attack, and it was not a terrorist attack in the traditional sense of the words.

I have had the privilege of visiting Japan as a representative of this place and meeting with current senior government and legislative leaders, and without wishing to rake over old coals it is worth acknowledging what occurred on that day. It was an unprovoked attack, and while the methods, as I said, were very different from those employed by today's terrorists, the results from today's attacks are perhaps as devastating as those of that tragic event some 70 years ago.

As on September 11, the attack came from a clear blue sky. It was totally unexpected by many in the general populace. There may have been some misgivings about the diplomatic manoeuvres, but the attack itself was not expected.

We now know that had preparations been more vigilant and intelligence tea leaves been read more accurately, it might have been a very different outcome. While the intelligence side of the issue and combating the attack are national responsibilities, our capacity to respond to these sorts of incidents is very much an important role of a state government.

The committee has made a series of recommendations for consideration by government, including the provision of clear and strong central policy leadership and coordination by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, even within a devolved system of responsibility. That has been a point of contention between the department and the Auditor-General, but the committee is firmly of the view that clear leadership by the department is required.

Other key recommendations are that there should be clear and commonly understood terminology and definitions, and roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders; a formalised and commonly understood process for the identification and classification of critical infrastructure; risk management which takes into account all risks and hazards; a more formalised and standardised form of compliance certification and reporting; and an incorporation of the Council of Australian Governments agreements to have a uniform approach to disaster management.

There are many recommendations in the report. It is a subject of immense importance. Hopefully the outcomes we are seeking will never be required to be put into practice, but nevertheless history shows us, as I think I have demonstrated, that these things come out of a clear blue sky. I commend the report to members. I note it has bipartisan support.

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