

The Hon Brendan O'Connor  
Minister for Home Affairs

Pacific 2010 International Maritime Exposition  
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[Acknowledgement]

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

I would like to welcome representatives from industry and government here today, and to give a warm welcome also to the many visitors from overseas who are here today.

[Introduction]

The first priority of government is the nation's security. Today, I set out the Government's plan for border security and its links to our approach to national security. I will outline our strategy for fulfilling that vision and update you on the progress we have already made.

[The vision- integration not just coordination and Australia as a good global citizen]

The Government's vision for border security is one of strength through the integration of capabilities. Integration of border protection challenges into the National Security agenda. And the integration of individual border protection and security agencies into an agile border management community.

This concept was introduced in December 2008 when the Prime Minister made the first National Security Statement to Parliament. The move beyond mere coordination to collaboration and then to integration is a significant evolution in our nation's thinking about national security.

With the list of non-traditional security threats growing and the national security environment changing, strong border protection is more important than ever before. Complementing that strong border protection with an humanitarian approach, is achievable and consistent with Australia's traditional role as a good global citizen.

[Telling the story part 1 – setting the scene]

Australia presents unique challenges for border management. It is vast in size and diverse in environment. The scale of the challenge of protecting that diversity should not be underestimated.

It is not news to anyone here that the Australian border is massive, largely unpopulated, spans three oceans and takes in extreme natural environments from the sweltering northern tropics to the freezing polar south.

Australia is the sixth largest country in the world after Russia, Canada, China, the United States and Brazil and is the only one of the top six completely surrounded by water. Rather a lot of water. The Australian maritime zone, and here I am only talking about the area around the mainland, is four million square nautical miles of water that needs surveillance. Add to that 37,000 kilometres of coastline. Add again the coastline around the islands and you have almost 60,000 kilometres of coastline.

Australia's marine exclusive economic zone is bigger than our country's land mass, and is the third largest in the world behind the United States and France. The area in which we have search and rescue obligations is even larger. From the east of Norfolk Island it extends as far west as south of India, and down all the way to Antarctica. This distance equates to nearly 13 per cent of the world's oceans.

Australia experiences almost every climatic condition encountered elsewhere in the world, along with some that are unique.

And it is not just our oceans and natural environment that are vast and diverse. Our population is too.

With a name like O'Connor announcing my Irish background I cannot be anything but aware that Australia is a nation built on immigration. Since 1945, more than seven million people from over 200 countries have come to Australia as new settlers. Some were fleeing the consequences of conflict, famine and persecution; others, simply looking for a better life for themselves and their children. Known as a country of tolerance, security and opportunity, Australia has provided a new home for many. In return, they have made an inestimable contribution to Australian society, enriching us with diversity and making us the socially cohesive nation that we are today.

While Australia presents unique challenges for border management, the pressures on our border arising from global issues are shared with much of the rest of the world. The pressures include conflict, poverty, rapidly changing technology and environmental constraints.

Conflicts continue to drive people to move across the globe. Bitter and protracted conflicts in Afghanistan, Africa and the Middle East and the situation in Sri Lanka mean that large numbers of displaced people are looking for homes in nations such as Australia. Europe will remain the primary destination for those seeking asylum. Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand are also countries where asylum seekers regularly pursue haven. Australia, like other countries, must be, and has been, prepared to do its fair share.

Conflict is not the only reason our border is under increasing pressure. The volume of trade and numbers of people crossing the border are increasing significantly as a result of globalisation, and that makes ports and airports busier than ever before.

Technology too places pressure on borders. Technology that is increasingly powerful, portable and affordable gives our border management agencies better tools to combat crime, but it can also be taken advantage of and used by criminal groups which are evolving, diversifying and adapting to new technology to evade border security.

Environmental changes and the resulting resource constraints also place pressure on the border by driving movements of people and changing trade patterns.

To all this we can add the pressures created by unforeseeable events - environmental catastrophes - such as the Boxing Day Tsunami in 2004.

These pressures make the role of the border agencies multi-dimensional. Our effort at the border is not just about stopping the vile people smuggling trade, and the threats from terrorism, illicit drugs, dangerous goods and dangerous people. It is also about facilitating international trade, protecting our environment, our natural resources such as our fish stocks, from exploitation and pollution and saving lives in search and rescue missions.

This expanded role for border management agencies is a far cry from the early days of border protection.

[Telling the story part 2 - how did we get here- up to Dec 08]

A Customs Service in one form or another has existed for more than a century. In the early days its primary job was to collect revenue, to screen goods and stamp passports for those leaving or entering the country.

Over the years border protection has become a critical part of the Customs role- processing passengers and detecting drugs and other prohibited goods.

Then came the events of September 11 2001. The Customs Service moved to focus much more on counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation while still raising revenue, processing passengers and detecting drugs, and moving further into the national security sphere.

With the Prime Minister's National Security Statement in December 2008 the Customs Service became even more important to Australia's national security sphere.

The traditional guardians of our national security, our Defence Department, have also come a long way. The last century saw our defence forces move from a small core of experts to a standing defence force, to taking on peace keeping roles, humanitarian and disaster relief and now emergency response and domestic security, particularly as it relates to counter terrorism.

In last year's Defence White Paper, the Government acknowledged the vital role Defence plays in providing support to civil border security. Just as the traditional border management agencies have moved into the National Security sphere, our Defence force is aligning to support border integrity.

Australia's agencies have always defended our border well. The National Security Statement recognised this, however, it also recognised that the security environment was changing. It could see that there would be dire consequences if government agencies were to lack unified control, direction or a single point of accountability.

[Telling the story part 3 - where are we now - Dec 08 to January 2010]

In this context the Prime Minister's National Security Statement was historic. It marked the beginning of the border management community as a coherent whole.

- Customs and Border Protection Command;
- Department of Defence;
- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet;
- Attorney-General's Department;
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade;
- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government;
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship;
- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Biosecurity Services Group;
- Australian Security Intelligence Organisation;
- Australian Crime Commission;
- Australian Federal Police;
- CrimTrac; and
- Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre.

Building that border management community—ensuring that it thrives—is not an easy task. But imagine the continuing benefits to Australia that will flow when these agencies bring their combined talents, capabilities and experience to the task.

It made it clear that national security was no longer just about traditional statecraft and military capability. The list of non traditional threats was growing. Border integrity issues, risks from terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and climate change were now central national security concerns.

It is vital we have a border management community that responds flexibly so that policies can be quickly switched to accommodate the changes that man-made and natural catastrophes create.

The border management community has acknowledged it must prepare for the unpredictable. Few could have predicted the Boxing Day Tsunami in 2004 or the terrorist attack of September 11, but those events have shaped the future of our border management needs.

To achieve the agile, adaptable and outward looking border management community that needed to deal with the complex national security challenges of the modern world, integration was essential.

A first step was to create a National Security Adviser to improve the strategic direction and cohesion of the national security community.

The second was to place the heads of the major border protection agencies on the Secretaries' Committee on National Security. Placing border integrity issues firmly and squarely inside the national security agenda.

The third was to establish a National Intelligence Coordination Committee to improve the focus on intelligence and information sharing.

One year on in January 2010, it is appropriate to assess the progress we have made. In other words – in the words of Winston Churchill – ‘however beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results’.

I would like to share some of the results with you today, using three examples: the operational efforts in our waters by Border Protection Command, our civilian maritime capability planning efforts, and our longer term strategic planning efforts in the Strategic Border Management Plan.

Border Protection Command is a multi-agency authority. It delivers an integrated approach to Australia’s maritime security. It is headed by a Navy Rear Admiral, and combines the resources and expertise of both Customs and Border Protection and the Department of Defence.

Here I want to speak about the steps towards integration that have been made by Defence and Customs and Border Protection in operational efforts and in capability planning. Mr Mike Pezzullo, the Chief Operating Officer of Customs and Border Protection and Admiral Allan du Toit of Border Protection Command will speak with you next in more detail about the operational challenges and successes of Border Protection Command.

Under the authority of Border Protection Command, up to 350 Australian Defence Force personnel are protecting our borders - as well as over 100 personnel from Customs and Border Protection, Australian Fisheries Management Authority, the Biosecurity Services Group incorporating the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, and other Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies.

They operate 24 hours a day. Up to 18 vessels and 14 aircraft patrol Australian waters and the coastline up to 365 days a year.

Border Protection Command has a strong track-record in achieving its mission in Australia’s maritime domain. Border Protection Command has intercepted 65 irregular maritime boat arrivals since January 2009, successfully preventing these ventures from reaching Australia’s mainland. This equates to an interception rate of 95 per cent. If we compare these figures to the time period between 1996-2007 there were 31 mainland Australian arrivals, the interception rate of 89 per cent over that period.

Again, we do not undertake these border activities in a vacuum, we are conscious of our place in the world, we cooperate and assist our neighbours, we respond to events in our region and events around the world. For example, as I mentioned earlier, Australia is a nation of immigrants and many of us can relate to the plight of the refugee.

As a good global citizen, Australia is a signatory to the Refugee Convention. Australia cannot return genuine refugees to their country of origin if they are to face persecution. We are obliged to treat asylum seekers fairly and reasonably while examining their claims. All asylum claims are assessed against the criteria set down by the Refugee Convention. Those intercepted at sea are mandatorily detained whilst this process, as well as health, security and identity checks are undertaken. Those found to warrant our protection are recognised as refugees and resettled here or in other resettlement countries, providing they meet health and character requirements. Those who are not found to warrant our protection are removed from Australia. They are sent home.

It takes more than having a humanitarian approach towards genuine refugees to be a good global citizen; we also need to cooperate with our neighbours.

The Government works to improve the circumstances of the displaced in a number of countries around the world so that viable options are there for those who might otherwise be targeted by people smugglers.

Border Protection Command has succeeded, in part, because of the progress made by a number of Australian Government agencies in working with our neighbours to build their capacity. They work with Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Sri Lanka to name a few, to strengthen maritime security in the region and unite in the fight against people smuggling syndicates.

In Indonesia, Border Protection Command and the Australian Federal Police have developed strong relationships; exchanging information with Indonesian agencies, sharing in coordinated patrols,

providing training support, and hosting port visits to increase Indonesia's capacity to secure their maritime zones. The cooperation between the Australian Federal Police and the Indonesian National Police, for example, is excellent. The success of this relationship can be seen in Indonesia where there have been 94 disruptions involving 2449 people, resulting in 88 arrests and 25 convictions since September 2008.

Comment [c1]:

I now want to move on to my second example of the steps being taken to move our border agencies towards true integration through capability planning in the maritime zone. The Defence White Paper made it clear that Defence capability has an important role in civil maritime security.

The Government has also undertaken civil maritime capability planning across the border protection agencies, including Defence. This capability planning was evidence based and a large range of agencies contributed, including the Defence Science and Technology Organisation, which used informed modelling to ensure balanced capabilities.

This capability planning will ensure that we are well prepared for the maritime security challenges that we will encounter over the next ten years. The Government will prepare for these challenges by improving coordination, engagement and intelligence arrangements.

Capability planning in this way has been a success. AMIS, the Australian Maritime Identification System, ensures the best deployment of available assets by allowing us to threat assess vessels before they reach our shores. The system has been recognised by industry and by awards such as the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence for its excellence in delivering an innovative engineering solution to the global challenge of understanding the national maritime domain.

As our maritime security patrol and response assets come to the end of their life the Government must consider replacements for these assets from a capability perspective, with the overall aim of protecting Australia. The capabilities we need include: the ability to operate throughout the maritime zone, to have sufficient speed to intercept targets, and to have sufficient force and robustness to board, apprehend and control vessels operating illegally. Importantly, we must continue to operate in conjunction with other civil and defence assets.

We are progressing options for Customs and Border Protection to maintain an offshore patrol capability beyond the life of the Bay Class vessels. Major Defence programs including AIR 7000 which replaces the P-3 long-range maritime surveillance aircraft and SEA 1180 to replace the Armidale Class patrol boats at the end of the decade are part of this consideration. New technology such as unmanned high altitude long endurance aircraft promise to dramatically increase the level of cooperation between Defence and civilian agencies.

It will not be enough for agencies to work together, partnership with industry to build and support assets will be critical. The success of this relationship will be based on the capacity for industry and government to work together to provide solutions for the ongoing security of Australia and its maritime domain.

Now to my third example - how in our whole-of-government longer term planning efforts, agencies are moving towards integration.

The move towards integration is evident in the Strategic Border Management Plan – the result of coordination and collaboration by thirteen agencies led by Customs and Border Protection.

Our Strategic Border Management Plan sets out the future principles for border management that will deliver us the agile border management community we need. Agencies will work ahead of the border, focus on intelligence, increase their focus on risk management and be flexible, scalable and integrated in their intervention approach.

Our Strategic Border Management Plan sets out the Government's highest priorities for the development of the border management community. This Plan includes dispelling the out-of-date idea that the intelligence communities for national security, law enforcement and border management are separate, and is moving to bring them together.

The priority effort will also include new ways to identify travellers and to assess their intent in travelling, making our agencies better able to separate out those who are not a risk from those who are.

Further out, a priority effort will be directed towards money laundering. Being able to follow the money trail presents significant opportunities for criminal intelligence agencies, such as the AUSTRAC and the Australian Crime Commission, and thereon to law enforcement in combating crime at the border. This is quite a challenge as the global financial sector has diversified and grown, and technology has advanced, so too has the complexity of movements of money financing criminal activity. Targeting this complex criminal economy with an intelligence-led approach is one of the key capabilities identified in the Commonwealth's *Organised Crime Strategic Framework*. Integrating the work of agencies from within the Attorney-General's Department, Treasury and other portfolios provides a potent mechanism for making the business of transnational organised crime and associated money movement unviable.

The plan does not neglect Australia's role as a good global citizen. Capacity building and maintaining global partnerships are key themes. A particular example is our participation in global efforts to curb the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism related goods, through efforts to secure the supply chain. Supply chain security is, in part, about our border agencies being able to assure our trading partners that exports from Australia are safe. In turn we would want to be assured by our trading partners that their exports are safe.

[Telling the story part 4- where are we going ]

Even with the strides we have made towards integration with Border Protection Command, maritime capability planning and the *Strategic Border Management Plan* there is more to be done.

True integration and collaboration requires changes to agency culture in Australia. This will not mean displacing the expertise of individual agencies but rather making sure that the protection of Australia is placed above all else. The ability to work together, to move beyond mere cooperation and coordination to integrated capabilities and responses is critical.

In moving beyond coordination to collaboration to true integration there are challenges ahead.

The US Department of Homeland Security faced this challenge after Hurricane Katrina. What was needed was not simply a strong planning process, but the ability to draw on components and strengths of other agencies, or capabilities that were not part of the ordinary workforce.

Risk management when dealing with natural disasters is not that different from preventing harmful things from crossing the border, or ensuring there is an appropriate law enforcement response to a serious incident. The ability to have tools at hand that may not be called on every day, but which are available when needed is crucial to success in preventing incidents, reducing vulnerabilities and mitigating any damage that occurs.

One lesson from Katrina, however, was that the tendency with emergencies, as well as with other events that impact on border management or homeland security, is to focus on the last things that happened, or things which often happen: the probable. Yet what is most difficult to address—and at the same time the most urgent to consider—are those events which may not be that likely, but which will cause the most disruption if they do occur: the possible.

With Hurricane Katrina, it was not the predictable hurricane that caused the most impact—it was, in fact, the considerably less likely, but possible, failure of the levee system, that was so catastrophic.

That is just one example of why we need to examine the very worst possible threats that could happen, months and even years into the future, and understand the interdependencies between Australian agencies across the whole spectrum of prevention, protection and response.

The next iteration of our capability and strategic planning will see even stronger collaboration and integration, as we move to fulfil the Prime Minister's vision for our national security.

That is not a wish it's an expectation. We expect agencies to address the national security application of all new capability requests.

[Conclusion]

The Government is committed to ensuring that the border management community is ready to meet the challenges of today and the future. Some of the challenges we face at the border are already evident, others may manifest as sudden and potentially dramatic events.

One year on from the Prime Minister's National Security Statement the Border management agencies are well on the way to becoming the agile, integrated community we need. This will prepare us to face these challenges in an intelligent, sensible and humanitarian way.

We have come a long way. We have further to go.

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