THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

ACT Government David Balfour Churchill Fellowship for 2012

Innovative Decontamination of Public Facilities and Spaces Exposed to Hazardous Materials

By Paul Thorpe

The report is not available for Public Release
(For Official Use Only)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

1. INDEMNITY

I indemnify the Churchill Trust against any loss, costs or damages it may suffer arising out of any claim or proceedings made against the Trust in respect of or arising out of the publication of any Report submitted to the Trust and which the Trust places on a website for access over the internet. The information contained in this Report represents the views of Paul Thorpe. All questions or enquires should be directed to paul.thorpe@act.gov.au.

I also warrant that my Final Report is original and does not infringe the copyright of any person, or contain anything which is, or the incorporation of which into the Final Report is, actionable for defamation, a breach of any privacy law or obligation, breach of confidence, contempt of court, passing-off or contravention of any other private right or of any law.

Origan Signed

P.A. Thorpe
David Balfour Churchill Fellowship Recipient for 2012
GPO Box 158 Canberra ACT, Australia 2601
Station Officer Hazmat Response, ACT Fire & Rescue
Telephone: (02) 62078510

February 2013

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

On both a professional and a personal level, I wish to express my thanks to the ACT Government for the continued support and professional development afforded to me, on being awarded the ACT Government David Balfour Churchill Fellowship for 2012. I sincerely appreciate the enthusiastic participation and support that the ACT Government has shown the Balfour Family in sponsoring this Fellowship.

I would also like to thank the following persons and organisations for their support:

Chief Officer Paul Swain of the Australian Capital Territory Fire and Rescue for supporting my application.

Mr Eric Stevenson of Army Headquarters, Australian Defence Organisation.
3. **ABSTRACT**

From 16 Oct to 5 Dec 2012, I visited first responders, government departments and military organisations to understand interactions between the civilian and military sectors, within the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) and Hazard Materials (HAZMAT) environment. Countries visited included Singapore, United Kingdom, United States and Canada. The purpose of the visits was to examine innovative decontamination of public facilities and spaces exposed to hazardous materials. I focused on the area of recovery from a large-scale, wide-area, domestic attack involving the release of an environmentally persistent warfare agent or Toxic Industrial Materials. Each of the countries visited faced the same operational response challenges, utilised similar equipment types, and were staffed by dedicated and capable professionals. The trip proved to be worthwhile as it provided important contacts in each of the organisations visited, improved my understanding of response skills and provided a baseline for future improvements to Australian local, state and federal first responder organisations.

This report highlights critical observations drawn from the people and organisations visited. The United Kingdom (London) has a very similar response base to Australia and both countries face similar threats; in particular to its key infrastructure such as government buildings. Australia could do well in adopting the United Kingdom’s National Resilience Program. This involves maintaining and improving the readiness and resilience of the fire and rescue services nationally.

The United States provided me with the opportunity to view different federal and local organisations, to facilitate discussion in response, recovery and remediation issues. This occurred at a number of levels, and involved civilian and military agencies. Based on the American Constitution, the military tends to work offshore, with the National Guard supporting domestic activities. Key learning outcomes centred on the process of passing information across jurisdictions. The number of levels in the United States and quantity and variety of organisations, made this problematic.

The Military CBRN Conference held in Canada, with its open and frank exchange of information between members of the science and technology, first responders and law enforcement community, proved to be one of the most valuable and satisfying highlights of the trip. The Toronto Special Operations Fire Services Model was particularly impressive.

The consequences of CBRN emergencies are likely to stretch national capabilities in each of the countries visited, while the responsibility for first response and remediation remains with individual states. It is essential that states build on their resources to respond and mitigate the consequences of an emergency on lives, property and the environment.

A number of recommendations to address the issues raised in the report will be offered.