Presentation - PACA 2026 Brisbane Australia

Crowded Places Protection Strategy Comparison Australia & New Zealand

Introduction

The protection of crowded places and our cultural heritage assets is something everyone has a vested interest in. If we lose our heritage and culture we cease to exist as a community, a culture or a race. Our Mana becomes extinct until archaeologists dig up and uncover our past in a few thousand years (if we are lucky). The common motive in war is to conquer and assimilate a population, erase the culture by obliterating and assimilating the population and everything that is, their identity, history or culture so their essence of being, ceases to exist.

We have to protect our cultural heritage, history and the mana of who we are. But war is not the only threat to our heritage and cultural assets. Loss or significant damage can happen deliberately or incidentally as a result of adversarial attacks. These attacks can be directly or indirectly attributed to terrorism, vandalism, theft, natural or human made disasters.

Adversarial threats, largely terrorism and extreme violence, particularly in Europe, have been occurring regularly for centuries but they are also occurring more commonly in the southern hemisphere including closer to home, the Asia Pacific region. These attacks have generally been in crowded places that include open public spaces, supermarkets and shopping malls, or cultural precincts where it's natural and normal for crowds to gather on a regular basis as part of daily life. This provides an easy target for anyone, particularly a "Lone Armed Attacker", because it requires minimal planning and resources to successfully commit.

Museums, galleries and large open cultural precincts are a prime target. They are open almost every day, offer (in most cases) unrestricted public access, are generally a destination in their own right and so attract planned as well as unplanned visits by large numbers of people. For a museum of gallery, the risks are not just limited to a potential fatality or life changing injury as a result of extreme violence. It has a very high risk of causing damage to cultural assets and property directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally.

As the owner or operator of a "Crowded Place" as defined within the definitions of both the Australia and New Zealand Crowded Places Strategies, we have a primary responsibility and duty of care to ensure we take every step practicable and reasonable to protect people, property and assets associated with the crowded place both known and potential threats.

As a result of various adversarial incidents in Australia and New Zealand over several decades, each jurisdiction has developed and deployed Counter Terrorism and Extreme Violence Strategies. Much of the New Zealand strategy is aligned with Australia however there are some significant differences in approach in how the strategies are applied in practice. This paper looks at each and identifies the differences and how that impacts an owner/operator to meet their responsibilities to protect a crowded place.

In July 2026 Singapore has started to align themselves with what Australia and New Zealand by starting to develop a Crowded Places Counter Terrorism and Extreme Violence strategy. Singapore Police is commencing a strategy to work with Crowded Places, including Shopping Malls, owners and operators to implement protection strategies and exercise a variety of response plans.

Summary in Short

There are common threads that align the two jurisdictions as summarised in this section.

Australia

A highly structured, operator-focused strategy emphasising risk assessments, layered security, physical protection, and compliance. Responsibility sits primarily with owners/operators, supported by national guidelines and law enforcement.

New Zealand

A holistic, partnership-driven strategy emphasising community resilience, cultural inclusion, shared responsibility, and advisory group governance. A strong focus on public education, inclusivity, and collaborative intelligence sharing.

Overall Difference

Australia = Operational, compliance-driven, owner-centric

New Zealand = Community-centric, partnership-driven, culturally informed

Comparative Summary: Australia vs New Zealand Crowded Places Strategies

1. High-Level Purpose and Intent (Shared Focus)

Both strategies aim to **protect crowded places from terrorism and extreme violence attacks** while maintaining public accessibility and enjoyment. Each strategy emphasises:

- Owners/operators hold **primary responsibility** for protecting their sites.
- Security must be **proportionate**, **practical**, and integrated into everyday operations.
- Risk management should follow a **layered security approach**: deter, detect, delay, respond.
- Collaboration between government, police, private sector, and communities is essential.

Overlapping example:

Australia: "Owners and operators… have the primary responsibility for protecting their sites."

New Zealand: "Owners and operators… are responsible for assessing the risks and vulnerabilities of their crowded places."

Singapore: Police are taking the lead with Owner Operators to develop strategic protection plans for crowded places including shopping malls.

2. Key Similarities

Shared Strategic Principles

Both countries emphasise:

- Risk assessment and vulnerability analysis
- Layered protective security
- Staff training and public awareness
- Suspicious behaviour reporting
- Partnerships with law enforcement
- Use of national guidelines and tools
- Proportionate, cost-effective mitigations

Common Threat Understanding

Both strategies recognise:

- Low-resource, high-impact attacks (e.g., vehicle ramming, IEDs)
- The importance of public vigilance
- The role of staff and patrons in detecting suspicious behaviour
- The need for continuous monitoring and review of mitigations

Shared Outcomes

- Increased resilience
- Improved preparedness
- Stronger public confidence
- Reduced likelihood and impact of attacks
- Better coordination between agencies and operators

3. Key Differences

A. Strategic Context

Australia

- Strategy is **terrorism-focused** and highly operational.
- Strong emphasis on **national consistency** across states and territories.
- Provides **detailed operational tools** (e.g., Security Audit, Self-Assessment Tool).
- Heavy focus on **physical security measures** (CCTV, bollards, fencing).
- Law enforcement agencies (ASIO, Police) play a strong advisory role.

New Zealand

- Strategy developed **post-Christchurch attacks**, with a broader social and cultural lens.
- Integrates **Te Tiriti o Waitangi** and **inclusive public messaging** (Māori, ethnic communities, disability access).
- Strong emphasis on **community engagement**, **resilience**, and **security culture**.
- Establishes **multiple advisory groups** (CPAG, CPBAG, CPCAG & CPSAG).
- Includes **holistic well-being frameworks** (e.g., Te Whare Tapa Whā or the House has four walls to guard).

B. Governance and Advisory Structures

Australia

- Centralised national guidance.
- Workshops and forums support operators.
- No equivalent multi-group advisory structure.

New Zealand

- Four advisory groups:
  - **CPAG** – Government agencies (Crowded Places Advisory Group)
  - **CPBAG** – Business sector (Crowded Places Business Advisory Group)
  - **CPCAG** – Community sector (Crowded Places Community Advisory Group)
  - **CPSAG** – Security industry specialists (Crowded Places Security Advisory Group) a register volunteer based entity.
- Strong emphasis on **local engagement**, information sharing, and sector-specific feedback loops.

C. Cultural and Community Focus

Australia

- Primarily operational and security-driven.
- Less emphasis on cultural inclusivity.

New Zealand

- Explicitly incorporates:
  - Māori rights
  - Disability accessibility
  - Community resilience
  - Inclusive communication
- Strong focus on **security culture**, staff engagement, and organisational behaviour.

D. Tools and Resources

Australia

- Crowded Places Security Audit
- Self-Assessment Tool
- Safe & Healthy Crowded Places Handbook
- National workshops and forums

New Zealand

- Police guidelines and tools (risk self-assessment tools)
- “Escape, Hide, Tell” training resources
- Posters, conversation guides, scenario exercises
- Protective Security Requirements (PSR) framework
- CPSAG & Police as specialist advisory agencies

4. Focus Points Unique to Each Strategy

Australia – Focus Points

- National consistency across states
- Strong physical security emphasis
- Detailed consultant selection criteria
- Heavy reliance on law enforcement intelligence
- Clear operational guidance for owners/operators

New Zealand – Focus Points

- Partnership-driven model
- Cultural safety and inclusivity
- Community-based resilience
- Holistic well-being considerations
- Multi-layered advisory ecosystem
- Strong emphasis on organisational security culture

5. Outcomes Comparison

Australia – Expected Outcomes

- Improved protective security across diverse venues
- Better operator awareness of terrorism threats
- Stronger physical security posture
- Enhanced coordination with law enforcement
- Increased public safety through vigilance and reporting

New Zealand – Expected Outcomes

- Stronger national and community resilience
- Improved cross-sector collaboration
- Inclusive, culturally aligned security practices
- Better organisational security culture
- Enhanced preparedness and recovery capability
- Increased public confidence and trust

6. Overall Comparative Conclusion

Both strategies share a **common foundation**—risk-based, layered security supported by government guidance and operator responsibility. However, their **emphasis differs**:

- **Australia** is more **operational, security-technical, and nationally standardised**, with strong law enforcement integration and detailed physical security guidance.
- **New Zealand** is more **community-focused, culturally inclusive, partnership-driven**, and emphasises resilience, organisational culture, and holistic safety.

Together, they reflect two complementary approaches:

- Australia prioritises **hard security and operational readiness**.
- New Zealand prioritises **community resilience, cultural alignment, and collaborative governance**.

7. Insights for Cultural Precincts

Cultural precincts in both jurisdictions retain the responsibility of protecting their venues in consultation with security and intelligence services to assess and apply proportionate layered protections. There is also a distinct responsibility to ensure workers and community maintain a functional awareness in assisting towards the protection of a crowded place they engage with or occupy.

The primary protection should always be the layered approach, Deter – Detect – Delay – Respond for any adversarial threats. In the case of a terrorist or extreme violence attack, the focus must immediately shift to Run – Hide – Tell.

In New Zealand, Police and Private Security operate on totally different playing fields. Private Security can only Observe, Record & Report and cannot use any physical intervention unless it is in self-defence or falls under the strict criteria of "Citizen's Arrest" powers under the NZ Crimes (Amendment) Act. It is noted however, that good security practice as defined in points 1-2 of the force continuum apply to any situation in either jurisdiction when it comes to a uniformed presence such as security officers or visitor services staff in the case of museums and galleries.

The powers of security personnel differ significantly between Australia and New Zealand. Australian private security and Police follow the same "Force Continuum" which sets out the protocols in each Australian jurisdiction to apply enforcement from;

1. **Officer Presence: No force is used. Considered the best way to resolve a situation.**
   - The mere presence of a law enforcement officer works to deter crime or diffuse a situation.
   - Officers' attitudes are professional and non-threatening.

2. **Verbalisation: Force is not physical.**
   - Officers issue calm, non-threatening spoken commands, such as "let me see some identification".
   - Officers may increase their volume and shorten commands in an attempt to gain compliance. Short commands might include; "Security Stop," or "Don't move."
   - If a person does not comply, commands may become louder, firmer, or more direct (such as shouting "Stop!").

3. **Empty-Hand Control:** Officers use physical touch, grabs, holds, or joint locks (soft techniques) or strikes, punches, and kicks (hard techniques) to restrain an individual.

4. **Less-Lethal Methods: Officers use bodily force to gain control of a situation.**
   - ***Soft technique***. Officers grab, hold and joint locks to restrain an individual.
   - ***Hard technique***. Officers use punches and kicks to restrain an individual.

5. **Less-Lethal Methods — Officers use less-lethal technologies to gain control of a situation.**
   - ***Blunt impact.*** Officers may use a baton or projectile to immobilize a combative person.
   - ***Chemical***. Officers may use chemical sprays or projectiles embedded with chemicals to restrain an individual (e.g., pepper spray).
   - ***Conducted Energy Devices (CEDs)***. Officers may use CEDs (Tasers) to immobilize an individual. CEDs discharge a high-voltage, low-amperage jolt of electricity at a distance.

6. **Lethal Force: Officers use lethal weapons to gain control of a situation. Should only be used if a suspect poses a serious threat to the officer or another individual.**
   - Officers use deadly weapons such as firearms to stop an individual's actions.

To protect your Crowded Place, in particular Museums and Galleries, what are the primary steps that need to be taken:

1. Identify, assess and analyse your vulnerabilities for the protection of people and cultural assets, and

2. Undertake a self-assessment of vulnerability, consider all elements of the self-assessment tools provided in your jurisdiction, and

3. Adopt a whole of organisation approach, it's everyone's responsibility to help in protecting your crowded place and the people and assets housed therein, and

4. Provide awareness training for all workers and include the CEO, SLT, employees and volunteers in how they can play a critical part through situational awareness and vigilance to protect your venue.

5. There is specific training available for your inhouse security that focuses on the use of technical security and surveillance equipment, enhanced de-escalation technics, and more non-physical force (applied assertiveness).

6. Security Officers and Visitor Services (*front of house*) workers should specifically receive training in de-escalation technics This is critical in applying the first two steps of the Force Continuum. In the majority of cases, particularly in a museum or gallery the issue is often related to customer dis-satisfaction and can often be easily dispelled through de-escalation.

7. Include all the strategies for the protection of the venue in your emergency response planning and test your plans regularly followed with post exercise debriefs and analysis of what went well and what didn't go so well, (be honest with yourself, particularly what didn't go so well).

8. Review your response plans at least annually and following each exercise or incident.

9. Take a layered and practical approach to the use of security and surveillance technology. Blend your protection strategies proportionately with the identified risks and which should include at least;

    - Hi profile visual presence of staff who engage with visitors comfortably and confidently, this is critical. The simple customer service act is to just acknowledge the customer. This also has an effect of putting the customer on notice their presence is known and are being watched.

10. Be mindful and prepared for the unexpected and refrain from over thinking the consequences against the likelihood when assessing your vulnerabilities and associated risk potential.

Case History

Australia and New Zealand have been subject of a multitude of attacks on cultural and crowded places precincts for decades, but the only ones we often remember are the most serious or most recent. In any case there is still a deep misbelief across New Zealand and to a similar extend Australia that when something serious occurs overseas there is this misguided perception that, “awe, that’s over there, it will never happen here” well here are a few examples of what has happened here.

In **Australia**, everyone remembers the **Port Arthur** Massacre on the **28 & 29 April 1996**, a little over 30 years ago. 35 people dead 23 wounded, committed by Martin Bryant but the true motive is still a subject of debate 30 years on. It had all the hallmarks of a terrorist attack, but the trigger or motive remains unknown. The internet and social media were non-existent, so online radicalisation wasn’t a catalyst.

In **New Zealand**, everyone remembers the **Christchurch** massacre on **15 March 2021**when Brendon Tarrant (a 28yr old Australian born citizen) living in Dunedin at the time, shot dead 51 people and injured a further 89 at the Al Noor Mosque in Riccarton and Linwood Mosque in Christchurch. This attack was racially motivated and even live streamed until authorities shut the live stream down. Tarrant was a self-radicalised terrorist with the means to deliver a Lone Wolf attack that rocked the foundations of New Zealand’s identity.

More recent terrorist attacks across Australia & New Zealand that many will not recall.

Waiouru Army Museum burglary (2007) – Organised Crime
2 December 2007, 96 medals, including two George crosses, an Albert medal and nine Victoria crosses, were taken from smashed locked display cabinets. The medals were returned in February 2008 in exchange for a ransom. Two men were later charged with burglary and in 2009 and 2010 received six-year jail terms for the crime.

Sydney siege terrorist attack (2014) – Radicalised Terror Attack
In December 2014, an armed man claiming extremist motivations took hostages inside the Lindt Café at Martin Place in central Sydney, turning the heart of the city into the scene of a prolonged siege. The standoff lasted more than 16 hours before police stormed the café, resulting in the deaths of two hostages and the gunman.

Margaret River shooting (2018) – Murder Suicide Mass Shooting
In May 2018, police discovered the bodies of seven people, including four children, at a rural property near Margaret River in Western Australia. Investigators concluded the incident was a familicide followed by suicide, the country's worst mass shooting since Port Arthur at the time.
The tragedy drew attention to domestic violence, firearm access in rural areas and warning signs that can precede family-related mass killings, even in a country with strict gun laws.

Darwin mass shooting (2019) – Politically Motivated Retaliation
13 January 2021 A man has been arrested after turning up to Parliament wielding an axe, smashing glass doors.

Wellington (NZ) (Jan 2021) – Mental Health Motivated
A man has been arrested after turning up to Parliament wielding an axe, smashing glass doors.
"It's the entrance door to Parliament - to the Beehive, from the yard."
The man accused of launching an axe attack on Parliament has been bailed to a secure mental health unit.

Wieambilla ambush (2022) – Retaliation Against Authority
In December 2022, two police officers and a civilian were killed in a deadly ambush on a remote property at Wieambilla in Queensland. Officers had attended the property to investigate a missing persons case when they were shot by residents armed with high-powered weapons.
The attackers were later killed in a police operation. Investigations found the perpetrators held extremist and conspiratorial beliefs, sparking renewed focus on radicalisation, misinformation, and the risks faced by frontline police in rural settings.

WELLINGTON: Te Papa (Dec 2023) – Politically & Culturally Motivated
A dozen protesters from a Māori activist group were arrested at New Zealand's national museum on Monday after defacing an exhibit about the Treaty of Waitangi, the country's founding document.
Police said a man abseiled from above the exhibit at the Te Papa museum in the capital Wellington, before using an angle grinder and spray paint to damage a panel, which is several meters high.

Gunfire at Bondi Beach (2025) – Cultural Radicalised Motivation
Emergency services first responded to reports of shots fired at 6:47 pm (0747 GMT) at Bondi Beach, one of the biggest tourism draws in Australia's largest city. The shooting took place during a "Hanukkah by the Sea" event, which police said was attended by around 1,000 people.
As gunfire erupted, crowds fled in fear from the beach in eastern Sydney and police descended on the area.
One of the alleged shooters was killed, and the second was in a critical condition, police said. In addition to the 11 killed, emergency responders rushed at least 29 people to local hospitals. Police declared the shooting a terrorist incident, adding they had found suspected improvised explosive devices near the beach in a vehicle linked to the suspects.

Conclusions

The protection of a "Crowded Place" and the protection of "Cultural Assets" are aligned in that, both scenarios require very similar actions from the venue owner/operator. There is a clear accountability and responsibility of venue owner/operators to identify, control (in so far as low as reasonably practicable) the identified risks. This has been clearly articulated in both the Australian and New Zealand Crowded Places Counter Terrorism and Extreme Violence Strategies. To date there is no clearly defined strategy documented and released in Singapore, but it's expected the Singapore Government and Police in collaboration with business owners develop a strategy in the near future. Early indications show that Singapore will follow a combination of Australia's hard approach inline with existing security measure with added collaboration and community support, the focus in New Zealand.

Museums and Galleries, particularly the larger ones are particularly vulnerable to adversarial threats because they are open to the public daily, often have little or no physical control over gaining access. Can often be culturally or politically sensitive in nature, exhibitions can draw criticism under certain circumstances like the Ukraine and Russian, Israil and Palestine or America & Iran conflicts. Museums, particularly war memorials can be a centre peace for a protest to gain airtime in the media.

Specific exhibits that are culturally high profile, and if they are subject to ownership protest can be a target in themselves. This paper is not focusing on criminal threats where objects are stolen for profit, that is a whole realm by itself, except for when an attempted heist goes array while in progress and siege or hostage situations can occur, resulting is serious harm or damage.

The primary focus for any owner/operator is to identify and manage risk specific for each venue, because they are all different in every way. The three critical headlines for every owner operator to focus on are;

1. Identify their threat vulnerabilities and associated risks and apply layered defences to control or mitigate the identified threat risks.

2. Everyone has a responsibility to protect the venue and cultural assets. Everyone should receive appropriate training to be vigilant, situationally aware, prepared to respond if needed, with confidence and capability.

3. Provide effective training, have robust emergency response plans, exercise them at least once per year, empower workers to be the front line visual presence, with the skills to assess and prioritise a proportional response without putting themselves in immediate danger.

It is also critical the venue owner operators are very aware and familiar with the Crowded Places Strategy for their jurisdiction, develop close ties and relationships with Police and Emergency Services, engage competent skilled resources directly (consultants' & training providers), to help you to work through the process of identifying, assessing, planning, preparing and responding to any and all identified real and potential vulnerabilities and threats.

The final word is **complacency**. Never loose sight of the fact that its "**Not a Case of If, I a Case of When**" an attack will occur in any of the contexts explored in this paper. So not just compliant, be capable and ready to respond.