Our invaluable role when tragedy struck - Transcript

[Desley Hargreaves]

Well, I was actually in Darwin at the time attending a meeting of the social workers in the Northern Territory. So we were obviously hearing what was on the news and we were all pretty shocked that terrorism had come to our country essentially.

Then I got a phone call from the CEO, Sue Vardon, at the time who said, Desley, I’ve been speaking with Senator Vanstone, who was the Minister for Social Security at the time, and I’ve told her that all 500 social workers that work for you will be put at her service essentially, and Desley make it happen!

It was a very scary time at many levels, I’ve talked about the challenge of establishing a service offshore that had never been done before and the huge weight of responsibility I felt for the agency, for government, but more for our staff who were delivering our services in a very risky environment.

I believe we did make a difference and feedback from families would indicate that was the case. Being with them, being able to debrief, facilitating meetings between families where that was requested, and some families wanted to meet families of the Indonesians who’d lost loved ones. But I guess over top of all of that is what most sticks in my mind and most importantly is the incredible courage and, I say resilience, but I use that carefully and the determination of the families and the survivors who wanted to come back and face what had happened.

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