

Australia's heartfelt sympathy and resolute solidarity is with the people of the United Kingdom. We stand with them today, as we always have and always will - steadfast allies in freedom's cause.

So far we know that at least nineteen people have been killed and about 60 injured as the result of an explosion at the Manchester Arena shortly after the conclusion of an Ariana Grande concert last night.

As I speak the cause of the blast is unknown but British authorities are treating it as a terrorist incident.

This would be the deadliest attack in the UK since the London bombings in July 2005.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of this attack and with their families.

As parents we keenly feel the anxiety of those waiting to learn of their children's safety on this terrible night.

Mr Speaker, this incident is especially horrific because it appears to have been deliberately directed at teenagers. This is an attack on innocence.

Senate F&PA Committee

Tabled Document

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Date / Time: 23/5/17

Witness Name: Attorney-General

Organisation: .....

Surely there is no crime more reprehensible than the murder of innocent children.

This is a direct and brutal attack on young people everywhere; on freedom everywhere.

Already, Mr Speaker, we are seeing stories of bravery, solidarity and compassion emerging from this tragedy as people rally without a second thought to help each other. Emergency workers rushed to the Arena, towards the danger, as concert-goers flooded out of it. On the streets and online - beds, phone chargers and cups of tea - are being offered to those caught up in the attack.

This morning I have spoken with our counter terrorism coordinator Tony Sheehan and to our High Commissioner in London, Alexander Downer who is liaising closely with British authorities. I have also spoken to her Excellency, the British High Commissioner, Menna Rawlings, and I acknowledge the presence of her deputy, Ingrid Southworth, in the House today. You have our full sympathy and support.

The Australian High Commission in London is making urgent enquiries to determine if any Australians have been affected by the incident. I urge any Australians in the UK to heed the advice of the British authorities and to contact

the UK Anti-Terrorist Hotline if you have any information that you think relevant to the incident in Manchester. Australians in the UK or at home concerned about their friends or relatives should call the DFAT consular line [Within Australia: 1300 555 135 - Outside Australia: +61 2 6261 3305].

Australian and UK agencies work closely together - none closer - across the full spectrum of our counter terrorism work. These partnerships are enduring and essential to keeping our nations safe.

This attack comes just two months after a terrorist targeted Westminster, striking at the very heart of democracy, killing six innocent people.

Safely enjoying public places - from sports arenas to local neighbourhood markets is part of the way of life in the UK, just as it is here in Australia.

We already have robust arrangements in Australia to protect public places, including close cooperation between governments, law enforcement agencies and operators of public venues.

The Government is working intensively with other jurisdictions, and with international counterparts, to further

develop our national strategy for protecting places of mass gathering.

Mr Speaker, too often we stand in this chamber offering our sympathy and support to those confronting horrific attacks like the one we have seen today.

Once again Australia stands with Britain in resolute solidarity - partners in freedom' cause. Tireless in our defence of people's safety and their liberty.

We will never give in to terror.