

We are absolutely opposed to any form of terrorist activity anywhere in the world, be the activity the work of an individual, a community group, a private or public organisation, a political faction, a religious association or indeed a recognised world country.

While terrorist acts can be considered criminal acts and therefore the perpetrators subject to the criminal laws of the country within which the terrorism has occurred and while the punishment for proven terrorist acts should be punishable according to the country's law (except with respect to the death penalty) such extreme behaviour can have its foundations in political oppression, discrimination and persecution or indeed "simply" in extreme poverty. Too little has been done in Australia and other countries to determine the origins of terrorism. This must be the overarching main objective of any government and especially of one that purports to be democratic.

The Anti-Terrorist Bill (No2) 2005, as it stands is the antithesis of democratic principles and should be rejected or at least heavily amended. While extreme behaviours especially on a national scale demand extreme measures to protect the nation's people the proposed laws reflect an Orwellian attitude to protection - more control, segregation and punishment.

The proposed laws have passed to parliament with little opportunity for public scrutiny, debate and understanding - basis principles of democracy.

At the core of deficiency is the fact that Australia does not have a Bill of Rights. The ATB proposals attack human rights and undermine fundamental legal protections that ensure freedom from arbitrary detention, freedom of association, expression and movement.

Control orders and preventative detention, under the proposed Bill, are draconian measures. Where is the accountability? How does the "authority" draw the line between a normal citizen going about his or her normal business in a free and democratic way and the marginally different behaviours of others? The proposals undermine the principle of "innocent before proven guilty". Even when taken into custody the laws prevent or circumvent established democratic process of legal representation, legal appeal and free and open communication with family. The checks placed on talking to one's lawyer and the punishment if one infringes are extreme.

We totally oppose the "shoot to kill" option given to the police. There must be other ways to anaesthetize a suspected terrorist.

Inciting violence against a democratically elected government and its formal authorities is not acceptable but again we often enter a grey area where a person is engaging in debate that could be considered part of the democratic process. The laws must not deny freedom of speech on any subject whatsoever, otherwise we turn the clock back many many decades if not centuries. The Roman forum was a long time ago.

The proposed laws relating to sedition are dangerous. As ex-teachers we wonder how the teacher of today/tomorrow will be able to present both sides of a societal issue; we wonder at a future without political cartoons that do so much to generate (non-violent) discussion for the sake of education - producing a better educated electorate; we wonder at the future of all of that great investigative journalism that is released in our daily press and especially through the ABC radio and TV; we reflect on the way people behaved towards each other in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, mistakenly serving the communist leaders of the day.

We personally consider it important to maintain the nation's security and

safety. It is also vital to retain that central principle of all the modern democracies that have emerged especially from the 18th century - liberty.

The proposed laws are leading our country into a police state. We have lived through the Nazi attempt at world domination; we have lived through the Soviet period of extreme oppression and punishment; we even have some understanding of this country's own European origins as a convict settlement and its early treatment of the original people of Australia, the aborigines.

The Anti-Terrorist Bill (No 2) 2005 as it has been presented must be defeated. It is not in the interests of the Australian people; it is not in the interests of national unity; it is not supporting our pride in being a successful multicultural country; it dilutes substantially our claim to be a democratic and free country; it destroys rational judgement at all levels because it is essentially based on fear.

Perhaps under the proposed laws the sending of this email will be enough to have us placed under house arrest! In the interests of democracy and the future of our great country we'll take the risk.

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