

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
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Dear Secretary,

I urge the Government and Opposition to reconsider the anti-terror legislation and reject the clauses of the legislation relating to sedition. **I am very concerned that the proposed laws relating to sedition will be counter productive.**

It seems to me that the best defence against terrorism is a strong and cohesive society where open communication is the norm. In these conditions people know their neighbours, accommodate difference and provide the mutual support so needed for resilience in this 21 century knowledge society.

In contrast, laws which limit association and robust debate of controversial matters send that debate underground. This fosters feelings of resentment and alienation, exactly the conditions which breed violent acts and terrorism. Where normal avenues of protest are curtailed through limits on the right to free speech and the potential for prosecution, extreme forms of protest become an inevitable consequence. As the old English saying goes, *one may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb.*

Judging from the level of protest and public concern which has been evident over the last few weeks, it seems that many voters sense their human rights are being unacceptably limited by this legislation. Whilst I can accept that this may be an unintended outcome, that the laws are supposed to be applied to a small group of potential terrorists, I think the price to be paid by society in general is far too high. And as I indicated in my opening paragraph, I fear that they will be counter productive.

Concerned citizen of rural Western Australia

11 November 2005