

Dear Committee Secretary,

I wish to make a submission to your enquiry into the provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Bill (No. 2) 2005.

I was amused to read that the stated aim is to "improve existing offences". I can't quite get my head around the concept of improving an offence. Does it mean to make the offences more enjoyable? to make them more offensive? Surely this could have been expressed more clearly. I was further amused that, in a newspaper advertisement calling for submissions, the American spelling "offenses" was (repeatedly) used. Does this give us a clue to the actual origin of these ideas?

On a more serious note, I have grave concerns that this bill is essentially aimed at reducing people's civil liberties, including the right to free speech and the right to be regarded as innocent until proven guilty.

Strengthening sedition laws is surely both unnecessary and counterproductive. I believe that everyone has not only a right to disagree with the stated government policy or course of action on assorted matters, but also a responsibility as a decent citizen to express this opposition in a lawful way. This is particularly the case if a government (or its leaders) pursue clearly immoral and possibly illegal courses of action such as joining the invasion of a foreign country without direct provocation or legitimate reason.

The proposal to strengthen sedition laws is open to the interpretation that the leaders of this current government wish to silence its opponents by whatever means.

The concept of preventative detention without charge is an appalling one which has had no place in Australian society until recently. Surely, if there is evidence that someone has conspired to commit an offence, that person should be charged. If there is no evidence, then there should be no arrest and no charge. Apart from the immorality of this concept, it seems to be a vote of no confidence in our law enforcement authorities, suggesting that they are not competent to properly gather sufficient evidence to charge criminals or those conspiring to commit criminal acts. Such courses of action are also open to gross abuse. When we have seen the abuse of detention by our immigration authorities, one shudders to think what may happen under the proposed laws. When we see the Australian government allow an Australian citizen to be held by the American army for years without proper trial, charging or due process, we know that the same government would allow abuse of its own proposed laws.

These laws have the hallmark of those who wish to reduce civil liberties, silence opposition and make Australia into a fascist regime.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Moran