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Submission to the Senate on the Anti-Terrorism Bill (2) 2005

We regret that the Howard Government is rushing this Bill through Parliament with insufficient debate and that the terms of the Bill were kept from the population. The changes proposed are profound and the methods used to force it through in such an underhanded manner are despicable.

We call on the Senate to oppose the legislation for these reasons:

1. The police and ASIO have demonstrated convincingly that they already have sufficient powers to detain and charge terrorist suspects.
2. Events over the past ten years show that the operation of the armed forces, the police and ASIO have been politicised for the electoral advantage of the Coalition, e.g. the abuse of the armed forces in the SIEV-X affair, the Tampa incident and the "children overboard" scandal. More power to these bodies will risk further abuse.
3. There have been insufficient checks and balances on the existing intelligence services, e.g. the failures in East Timor which displayed the Australian Government's willingness to compromise its military to serve its relationship with Indonesia even when that nation displayed bungling and viciousness.
4. The haste in presenting this Bill matches another element of timing, that of the Bill's introduction at the same time as the Industrial Relations legislation. To subject the people to these two huge Bills at the same time is an unconscionable ploy to push both Bills through.
5. Most of Australia's media are owned by few organisations, most of whom project the Government's views. The obvious co-operation between police media and general media e.g. in the recent arrests re terrorism contribute in effect to a "trial-by-media". Due process is not observed when the decision on guilt or innocence is affected by such sensationalism.
6. A fair trial in the case of a suspected terrorist has already been threatened as a result of the 2002 ASIO legislation so the nation needs no more such laws. These attacks on hard won freedoms may well serve to ignite the sense of grievance which expresses itself in extreme behaviour. Human rights are for everyone, even the wicked and stupid among us.
7. The Prime Minister calls for "trust" as the basis for our accepting these new laws. He has told far too many lies during his terms for there to be any evidence that trust would be well-placed. Trustworthiness requires far more than skilful manipulation of fear, and the good luck embodied in a benign economic climate and the combined gift of an ineffective Opposition and a timid, cloned front and back bench.

Signed 10 November 2005

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