

To the members of the Senate Legal & Constitutional Committee,

I want to convey to you my deep concern regarding the proposed anti-terrorist legislations.

I understand that it is the intention of the Prime Minister to pass these laws quickly. However, I urge you to think long and hard about the ramifications this legislation will have on public debate, freedom of expression and ultimately Australian democracy.

Broadly defined sedition provisions will unreasonably erode freedom of speech and artistic expression. Any person or organisation could be charged with sedition without, as existing law requires, having urged force or violence. There are already laws in place that prohibit inciting crimes, membership and funding of terrorist organisations, and racial vilification. Such extreme sedition laws are not necessary and should be excluded from the legislation.

Authorities will be able to act without accountability. Harsh penalties for anyone who reports on people detained under preventative detention or control orders attempts to dissuade journalists and the families, lawyers and detained citizens from questioning possible miscarriages of justice.

Notice to produce powers for the Australian Federal Police will prevent journalists from doing their job. The AFP can force a journalist to hand over all documents, including the identity of a confidential source. With this threat, no one will speak to journalists and we can look forward to only one viewpoint being heard in our media - that of the government.

These are serious threats to our democracy and are not in the interests of the Australian people. I urge you to think carefully about these issues and oppose the Bill as it stands.

Many thanks,
Steven Hopley