

WHAT'S WORSE - TERRORISTS OR A TYRANNICAL STATE?

The recent Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) Special Meeting on Counter Terrorism gave the rubber stamp to Howard's raft of new laws. The Premiers went along with the new proposals because ASIO, the Office of National Assessments (ONA) and the Federal Police briefed them.

We already know how suspect ASIO and the ONA's intelligence has been. Both of them got it terribly wrong over Iraq and Howard was quick to scapegoat them when it was convenient. Now he is using these organizations to bolster his case for the introduction of laws that have all the hallmarks of tyranny.

Howard claims that these laws are necessary to counter the modern threat of terrorism. But at no stage has he gone before the Australian public to say why. Why would such laws be effective when even more draconian laws in London weren't? In what way does the risk justify taking away long cherished checks and balances? Why aren't the existing laws sufficient to counter terrorist acts?

None of these questions have been answered. All we have been told is that the AFP and ASIO have requested these additional extreme measures. That's like relying on Count Dracula for advice about the blood bank. The AFP and ASIO have a vested interest in seeking additional powers, no matter how extreme they are.

The Commonwealth also needs to consider whether their extreme proposals will generate the very violence they are trying to prevent. These laws will deprive citizens of their liberty; their right to free speech; their right to associate with people and organizations; and long held legal checks and balances. They will allow the State to impose arbitrary control orders on citizens, backed up by electronic surveillance.

Such laws may get passed through a Parliament under the control of one party, but their tyrannical nature undermines their legitimacy because even a democratically elected government doesn't have the right to impose draconian laws. Brave and thoughtful citizens may have to disobey these laws in order to preserve our democracy.

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