

REGARDING THE PROPOSED COUNTER-TERRORISM MEASURES

The recent police operation in which people in Melbourne and Sydney were arrested in relation to terrorist activities, was conducted successfully using existing laws (already amended since 2001 to include strong anti-terrorism components) and legal processes in an open and accountable manner.

There is no justification for the proposed new counter-terrorism measures involving control orders, preventive detention, associated secrecy provisions, and new sedition laws.

Those (however well-intentioned) formulating or supporting these measures, do not realise the deeply corrosive effects they can have in time on the whole ethos in which we live, and on the vital air of relative freedom that we are fortunate to still breathe in this country - until now.

Such powers may also attract those persons with a particular leaning towards the use of such secret power. They open the door in the future to serious abuse of human and civil rights, by authorities or powers influencing them for their own ends.

Without open and accountable legal processes at work, more alienation and fracturing can occur in the community, leading to further extreme activity on the part of some who might feel that they or their associates are being wrongly or unjustly victimised.

In South Africa, I grew up watching the erosion, narrowing and crippling of the humanity of a society, as legislation was enacted year by year, permitting the increase of secret police power, to protect 'national security' against 'subversive'/'communistic' elements etc.

Criticism and questioning of the imposed social order, as well as many human developmental activities became seen as 'subversive'. Security Police and their informers became a direct part of my life.

In such a society, the very air one breathes becomes filled with suppression, fear, anxiety and constriction. This seeps subliminally into the people of the society, as well as overtly for those more directly impacted. Quality of life as a conscious and expressive human being is greatly curtailed.

When, then, life brought me to Australia twenty-seven years ago, I began to feel I could breathe deeply and freely, stand upright and speak my mind without fear of unjust retribution.

If these new counter terrorism measures are enacted, that Australian human reality will have been essentially destroyed.

Such measures are not justifiable and are in themselves a force of terror.

It is precisely in a time of such challenge that we need to reaffirm the essential principles of justice and the rule of law in an open, democratic society.

Certainly, the police force need the resources to investigate and accumulate evidence, as displayed in the aforementioned case, but then charges should be made before a court.

Please do not forsake our present open and accountable policing and legal system, in bringing perpetrators of wrong-doing to justice, whatever the nature of their deeds,

Control orders, preventive detention, secrecy provisions and new sedition proposals are destructive of the vital heart of our society.

Margaret Waspe

11 November 2005

Yarra Junction
VIC