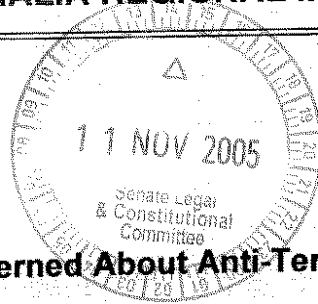


**THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS
- QUAKERS -
WEST AUSTRALIA REGIONAL MEETING (INC)**

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6 November 2005

W.A. Quakers Concerned About Anti-Terrorism Legislation

The way to security is through trust and trustful relationships. We believe that the Anti-Terrorism Legislation breeds mistrust and insecurity.

While we appreciate that there is a tension between public safety and individual civil liberties, we question whether the likelihood of terrorism justifies the loss of democratic rights. We appreciate that in the event of a terrorist act, governments need to be seen to have done all they could have to prevent it. However, many of the 'terrorist acts' we have witnessed have been small, local and using low scale technology. It is unlikely that this, or any other, legislation will protect us from these kinds of acts.

When the focus is on fear and terror the balance between security and civil rights is tipped. We wish to redress this imbalance.

We ask governments (Commonwealth and State/Territory) to:

- Clearly define 'terrorism' and 'a terrorist act'. The lack of definition is divisive.
- Clarify lines of accountability and safeguards that will protect civil liberties.
- Establish a Bill of Rights under which all legislation can be reviewed.
- Protect human rights as it becomes accepted in social and political mindsets that some people are subject to greater scrutiny and oppression than others.
- Shorten the review periods and sunset clauses which have been appended to the legislation
- Ensure that the democratic principles of public debate and political review are upheld.
- Ensure security solutions meet accurately assessed Australian conditions and Australian needs, rather than adopting the precautions set up in other countries.

We ask individuals, organisations and agencies to:

- Promote connectedness in the community
- Extend the hand of friendship wherever possible, diffusing polarisation, reducing 'us' and 'them' thinking and being practically helpful in ways that connect people in our community
- Continue work that reduces resentment and alienation between people and groups of people in the community
- Be and remain informed so that misinformation can be corrected
- Work with local and state politicians to enable them to advocate for their constituents

We must all work to ensure that this legislation will not be enacted at the cost of the breakdown of trust in our community.

We feel that the public statement of the Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1987, a contemporary version of the Quaker Peace Testimony, continues to speak to our condition today. We end this statement with a few excerpts here:

We. ..actively oppose all that leads to violence among people and nations. Refusal to fight with weapons is not surrender. We are not passive when threatened by the greedy, the cruel, the tyrant, the unjust. ..

We must start with our own hearts and minds. .. The places to begin acquiring the skills and maturity and generosity to avoid or to resolve conflicts are in our own homes, our personal relationships, our schools, our workplaces, and wherever decisions are made.

We must own up to our own negative side and not look for scapegoats to blame, punish or exclude...

What we advocate is not uniquely Quaker but human and, we believe, the will of God. Our stand does not belong to Friends alone - it is yours by birthright.

Together, let us reject the clamour of fear and listen to the whisperings of hope.

Signed -----

Jennifer Hole and Jo Vallentine

Co-Clerks, W.A. Regional Meeting

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