

Dear Committee Secretary,

I am writing you on behalf of the Muslim Student's Association of Victoria (MSA). The MSA is a student representative body, which represents Muslim university students and Islamic Societies across Victorian universities, including, but not limited to: Melbourne, Monash, RMIT, La Trobe and Victoria Universities.

Over the years, many Muslim students have expressed their feeling that Australia's anti-terror measures are draconian in nature, and discriminatory in practice. This has led to widespread fear and anxiety regarding these measures within the Muslim student community, as Muslims feel they are being targeted unfairly due to their beliefs. Cases such as those of Dr. Mohammed Haneef and Izhar Ul-Haque have only furthered such fears and anxieties.

The Muslim students are therefore somewhat relieved that the Greens have put forward the Anti-Terrorism Reform Bill 2009. We, the Muslim Students, support the amendments proposed in the Anti-Terrorism Reform Bill in general, and strongly support the motion that this Bill be passed through Parliament before any consideration is given to the Attorney-General's proposed amendments.

Most importantly, we support the proposal to repeal the sedition offences, as they can be discriminatory and may be used against legitimate dissent. We also support the repeal of the offence of 'possessing things connected to a terrorist act' and the offence of 'association with a terrorist organisation or its members', as these offences are incredibly vague and far reaching, as was illustrated in the Dr. Haneef case. We support the proposed amendments to the definition of 'terrorist act', as the current definition is also quite vague, and allows for people to be targeted on the basis of their religious or political beliefs. We also support the repeal of the 'dead time' provision, as well as the repeal of the presumption against bail for terrorism offences.

However, we do feel that there are two other areas not mentioned in the Bill, which also ought to be repealed;

1. ASIO's compulsory questioning powers ought to be repealed, as they undermine personal freedoms, create widespread confusion, and instill unwarranted anxiety and fear.
2. The system for banning 'terrorist organisations' ought to be repealed entirely, as it is an arbitrary and draconian measure, not in line with Australian Democratic values.

For too long, Australia's anti-terror laws have had an adverse impact on the civil rights of Muslims living in Australia. The proposals put forward in the Green's Anti Terrorism Reform Bill 2009 will ensure that Muslim and other minority groups are no longer unfairly targeted and discriminated against under these laws. We therefore strongly urge the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee to take seriously our concerns, and act in sincerity and good faith.

Regards,

Mohamad Tabbaa - MSA VIC,