



Submission No 68

Inquiry into potential reforms of National Security Legislation

Organisation: Mr Laurie Virr

Sent: Friday, 17 August 2012 3:10 PM
To: Committee, PJCIS (REPS)
Subject: Proposed National Security Legislation

Mr Secretary:

Taking cognizance of the proposed changes to the National Security Legislation, their intricacy, and the potential ramifications should they be enacted, a far longer and wider period of consultation with the electorate is justified.

One of the tenets of democracy is the concept that all those suspected of crime are considered innocent until proven guilty. These proposals could serve to turn that principle on its head,

It is not an unreasonable assumption to consider that most people thru'out the world, and particularly in Australia, do not take extreme positions on any topic: they are law abiding, and just wish to live their lives to the best of their ability. The remainder, a small minority, do pose a problem for society, but the myriad intelligence agencies within the country should, with competence, be able to combat them. This, without it being necessary to introduce draconian legislation that tars the majority with the brush of the few.

There has been a tendency in recent times for an increasing number of the members of police forces thru'out the world to consider that they are the sole upholders of what is worthwhile in life, and the remainder of the population are potential criminals. I would suggest that those in the intelligence agencies who have urged the Government to enact this proposed legislation fall into the same category. Moreover, their paranoia is such that they wish for it to be completed in great haste. If there are concerns with regard to extremism, perhaps it is amongst their ranks that it is to be found.

Nothing is to be gained, and much lost, if insufficient time is allowed for adequate community consultation.

You would be aware that little more than one month ago, Australia supported an addenda to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to the effect that the rights enjoyed by people online must reflect those in place before the introduction of the internet.

Thru'out history, honest, law abiding folk have found ways to circumvent legislation they considered abhorrent and unjustified. Consider the problems the Chinese Government is experiencing at this time in attempting to control access to the Internet.

Most people, of course, wish to live their lives without the constant fear of acts of terrorism, but those in the democracies also value their rights to privacy, freedom of expression, and association. I exhort you to maintain these rights for all Australians.

Laurie Virr