

Submission to the Senate considering the new anti-terror laws.

I wish to express my deep concern about the passing of this new terror legislation.

Firstly I am not convinced that it is necessary. I believe that we have already sufficient laws to investigate, and prosecute people who commit crimes or plan to commit them. Of course this is because I am not privy to the secret information that our Prime Minister, ASIO, and the AFP hold. So as a citizen I am expected to just trust them to act in the best interests of the Australian community.

Let me consider this government's record on being trustworthy and acting in the best interests of the community.

- They took our country into an unjustified war, a pre-emptive invasion of another country that has resulted in that country sliding into chaos, the loss of 2000 young US soldiers and an enormous, and un-estimated death toll of the Iraqi people. The reason for invasion was that Saddam Hussein was stock piling weapons of mass destruction. This was a lie. Thousands of Australians marched against this war, and many now believe our involvement has made Australians targets, as the Bali bombs so clearly indicated.
- SIEV X sank drowning 300 refugees. Our Government mysteriously was unaware of it's presence and could therefore not save these people, despite having exceptional intelligence operations that allowed them to intercept all other vessels leaving Indonesia.
- The "Children Overboard" affair is yet another example of the way this Prime Minister deals with the truth.
- The only white westerner left in Guantanamo Bay is an Australian citizen, every other Western Nation has negotiated the release of it's citizens, but our Government has continuously lied about their knowledge of torture of inmates, of the legitimacy of the trial procedures and is complicit in the atrocities and illegality of the facility.
- The arrest and deportation of a peace activist, Scott Parkin, who just happened to be speaking about Halliburton in Iraq. No charges have been laid and the case is surrounded by secrecy.

In fact I believe that this legislation is being introduced to divide people's attention from the other major legislative changes being put forward, the Industrial Relations Legislation. John Howard is trying to push multiple agendas with great urgency hoping that no-one will have time to read the small print, or write the letters of concern. This is not democratic process.

We are extremely lucky to live in a democratic country that is governed by a rule of law. Every time I travel overseas I come back with great joy to this country, and I will not allow civil liberties, freedom of speech and the presumption of innocence to be taken away without a fight.

These new laws remind me of reading Kafka, living in a police state where citizens disappear, where dissent, speaking out against the Government, can lead to arrest without trial, where houses can be raided without a warrant, where citizens will have to prove they are innocent, and where ASIO's powers to tap phones, put people under surveillance and make them wear tracking devices are increased.

Royal commissions in every state in this country have shown that despite the honesty of most members of the police force there are people in the forces who will misuse these powers, with a separation of powers between the courts and the police there are checks and balances to keep systems transparent. These new laws erode this.

Senator Allison in her address to parliament details the expert opinion that is aligned against this new act

"Over the past week the Uniting Church has come out and sent a letter to all senators... The conclusion of the Uniting Church's message to us was that the government is acting in haste and that this is unnecessary and could have serious consequences. Mr Stanhope, the Chief Minister of the ACT, earlier this week in a forum which was conducted in the ACT Assembly put out

a statement which was headed The bill fails the human rights acid test. The Centre for Public Law at the University of New South Wales issued a damning criticism of the sedition laws that are being proposed...The International Commission of Jurists denounced the terror laws, as they described them.. The Centre for Public Law at the University of New South Wales issued a damning criticism of the sedition laws that are being proposed, ...The International Commission of Jurists denounced the terror laws, as they described them."

I do not trust John Howard, I believe that all thinking politicians, across political party lines should consider this legislation carefully. The terrorists have won if they make democracies throw away their freedoms and civil rights, and opt for police states, where citizens live in fear and watch their neighbours suspiciously.

Just writing a letter like this, in the new order, could make me a suspect, who if removed, tortured, and talks about it could be jailed for 5 years, even my family could be jailed for 5 years for talking about it! Is this the Australia we wish to pass on to our children?

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