



Steve Fielding **Family First** Senator for Victoria

Speech by Senator Steve Fielding Family First Senator for Victoria

Second Reading Speech Anti-Terrorism Bill (No.2) 2005 Monday, 5 December 2005

One of the things that we believe distinguishes Australia from most other countries and makes Australia the best place in the world to live and raise a family is our lifestyle.

Australia is not like other parts of the world.

Yes, it is true that if you live in cities and even many regional centres you do have to lock your doors these days, even when you're at home.

And even today many people do not feel safe to answer the door at night or go out alone.

Even so, we still like to think that Australia is safer than most places and we want to keep it that way.

The problem is that doing that is a challenge.

Terrorism is not like it used to be.

No longer is terrorism limited to a particular country or region.

Today we confront ideological terror which does not recognise national boundaries or differences between civilians and the military.

Family First understands Australian families want to feel safe and secure.

To do so in these extraordinary times requires extraordinary measures.

As Queensland premier Peter Beattie said:

"These are draconian measures...but when you're faced with a terrorist threat like this you have to have a response...and you just can't ignore these international threats."

Australia is a democracy and one cornerstone of a democracy is balancing the greater good and individual liberty.

We have to strike a balance between doing whatever it takes and the notion that individual liberty overrules everything.

Enforcement agencies do make mistakes and we do need a system of checks and balances to ensure that innocent people do not suffer.

However, if we are seriously trying to prevent the horrendous crimes we have witnessed in other parts of the world, rather than sitting back and waiting for it to happen, we do have to give our security agencies the powers they need to do the job.

This does involve an invasion of civil liberties which we would not countenance in other times.

But this is the price we have to pay if we are going to take the task of deterrence seriously.

Family First is concerned about the part of the Bill that deals with sedition and I am pleased to read reports that the Government will be amending the laws to specify advocating actual force or violence, and that next year there will be a review of the sedition laws by the Australian Law Reform Commission.

Nevertheless, Family First would prefer that the Government adopted the recommendations of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee to amend Schedule 7 on the sedition laws.

Family First is also worried by the expanded powers to detain people.

I note the comments of former director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Hugh White, who says the powers "... appear to allow the Government to detain people who are not and have never been - so far as anyone knows - involved in terrorist planning or training, on the grounds that police or ASIO believe that they might become terrorists in the future."

Nevertheless, Family First supports the Government's view that Australians expect security agencies to have the powers they need to protect us and that this imperative outweighs these concerns.

Consequently, I will be supporting the Bill.

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