



Speech by

## Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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Hansard 4 December 2002

### TERRORISM [COMMONWEALTH POWERS] BILL

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (10.01 p.m.): I rise to support this legislation and to thank the state government for working with the Commonwealth and the other states in a truly cooperative way to look at how we can strengthen our national security at this particular time when we are facing issues as a nation that we have never faced before. We are giving bipartisan support to this bill, which is about referring state powers to the Commonwealth where necessary under the Constitution so that there are no legal loopholes that give the advantage to terrorists or potential terrorists in this nation. The very freedoms that we hold so dear and perhaps in many ways have taken for granted in this nation and assumed were always ours to be unchallenged are the very things that can prove antagonistic to other cultures that want to take advantage of that freedom in order to bring about a reign of terror.

This country is made up of such a diversity of people from so many backgrounds. We have always had complete freedom to have very different political viewpoints in this country while knowing that at the end of the day we do not resolve political differences with a gun. We do not resolve political differences with military uprisings. We have a system of democracy where, with that diversity of backgrounds and political viewpoints, we can have relatively peaceful forums. Some people would say that the parliament is not always that peaceful, but it is far better to have such forums where ideas and views can be brought forward without people having to resort to violence.

**Mr Springborg:** It's best to throw words rather than use guns.

**Miss SIMPSON:** Absolutely. It is hard for this generation to understand that people from particular ideologies find that concept to be antagonistic and want to actively deconstruct it, to bring that concept down. Ultimately, people may have a desire to influence other's ideas and beliefs in life, but those who seek to do it by terror or military force have never been terribly successful. While obviously one can try to subvert people physically, they can never win their hearts with military or terrorist force. The very freedom we have as a nation to discuss different ideas is so precious.

Our diggers have long told us that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance, and this generation has never really known what it is like to have to fight to uphold that freedom. We need to be vigilant and that heightened vigilance is something that is not comfortable to us because the Australian attitude of 'she'll be right' and 'it'll go away' comes to the fore. We hope that these terrible times will slip away, but the reality is that the world today has changed. Other members have talked about the horror of September 11. Those of us in this place during that time found it a numbing, horrible thing. Even though it was thousands of miles away, our grief was for the human race, for seeing people in such agony and for the destruction at the hands of evil.

The Bali incident in October brought such issues closer to home. If Australians felt we are an island nation where we could get by because 'she'll be right' and 'we're nice people' and 'nobody's going to want to hurt us', that feeling was very rudely stripped away with the Bali bombings. In a closer sense, Australia has East Timor on its doorstep and we just assumed that the freedoms that we believed were right for that nation as it sought independence should lead to us holding out our hand to our neighbour to provide assistance. As I said, there are those who do not uphold the values of the democratic freedoms that we do. Instead, those freedoms antagonise and offend them, yet we must always promote the values of freedom and strengthen our democratic institutions.

A friend of mine worked in the emergency room in a senior surgical position and had the horror of having to amputate the limbs of young Australians and other young Bali victims and work on burns victims. I just cannot imagine that horror, yet these health professionals who are trained to deal with such circumstances also found it horrific. I want to come to the issue of how we respond in other ways, and some of my colleagues have touched on issues to do with the police and emergency services. I feel that it is important that we also raise the issue in terms of our readiness across Australia but particularly here in Queensland with our public hospitals and emergency services in responding to possible disasters such as the ones we have just seen.

After Bali we saw an amazing response from outstanding health professionals and emergency services professionals who swung into action. They really did us proud. With their high level of skills and training, they tried to save or salvage as best they could people who had been in the war zone of what was Bali. Coming out of there are lessons that we must learn. It is scary when the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons warns that Australia's hospitals will be pushed beyond their limits if a tragedy on the scale of the Bali bombings occurs here on home soil. Professor Danny Cass, the trauma committee vice-chairman with the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons said that about a third of trauma patients with the potential to survive could die unless existing systems were upgraded. That is a clarion call that says to our Australian hospital system and health ministers and the Queensland Health Minister, 'What we had before is not enough for where we're going in the future.'

We already have an acute emergency services system under great strain. We already have emergency rooms that are under incredible strain when it comes to dealing with the so-called routine traumas that they face, although obviously anyone who has suffered from a trauma would hardly call it routine. We are already stretched to the limit with our intensive care and emergency room specialty services and those who are trained to fill those gaps. When the Bali incident occurred, the Health Minister, Wendy Edmond, said that Queensland hospitals could handle a large-scale disaster.

Maybe this was bravado to shore up people's emotions at this difficult time, but with the warning of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons clearly stating that Australian hospitals could not cope I call on the government not to take a 'she'll be right' attitude in this particular area. The services that may have been enough today, yesterday or five years ago are certainly not enough for tomorrow and what we are facing today. A very hard-nosed look has to be taken at how to put additional resources into these areas. We cannot afford not to have that level of specialist care in the quantities needed in the network in Queensland let alone across Australia. The warning is there.

I make it clear that we do appreciate those who train in these particular areas. We as parliamentarians need to support them, to make sure they are not put in an unfair situation when they are trying to deal with the future of emergency work. We hope we will never see a terrorism attack such as that in Bali on Australian soil or in Queensland, but we would be negligent if we did not as a parliament insist that our government not take a 'she'll be right' attitude in such a critical area of care. It has been shown clearly that we were very lucky with the emergency services post Bali. The warning signs are there. Hospitals desperately need their trauma services upgraded.

I believe that our strength as a diverse nation is the ability to be unified, not only with legislation such as this but also for the times ahead. Those who will be seeking to undermine the great freedoms of this country will be hoping that Australians will fight each other. They will be hoping that Australians will turn on each other and so be ineffective in addressing the very serious concerns we are facing. I believe it is part of the Australian spirit and tradition that in tough times we work together, that we do value the fact that we are Australians together. These are things that are more important than individual political ideologies.