



Speech by

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TRANSPORT SECURITY (COUNTER-TERRORISM) BILL

Mr HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (9.20 pm): I rise to support the Transport Security (Counter-Terrorism) Bill. Terrorism is most commonly defined to include acts which are intended to create fear or terror, are perpetrated for an ideological goal as opposed to a lone attack, and deliberately target or disregard the safety of noncombatants. This tactic of extremists is certainly not new. This parliament draws on the traditions of Westminster and, in the lee of 5 November, I know the House will recall the details of Guy Fawkes's gunpowder plot. While that instance of terrorist threat by religious extremists targeted the parliament, in more recent times transport systems have been targeted internationally.

In the 21st century transport systems are themselves symbols of liberty and freedom and, as I say, have been the subject of terrorist attack. As referred to by other speakers in this debate, the bombings in London in July 2005, in Madrid in March 2004 and in Mumbai in July 2006 all witnessed devastating terrorism attacks on surface transport systems. These important world cities were brought to a standstill by the attacks, which caused not only outrage at the loss of innocent lives but also economic and social mayhem. Queensland cannot sit back and presume that our community is immune, and this bill is part of a coherent and responsible reaction. In his second reading speech the minister referred to the fact that this legislation is part of a wider and larger strategy by the Queensland government to enhance the safety and security of the public.

In fact, the bill underpins the Queensland plan for the protection of surface transport operations from terrorism. The aim of both this plan and the bill is to reduce the risk of harm caused by terrorist threat or act on the surface transport system. While the bill will apply to declared security identified surface transport operations, all other surface transport operations will be provided with guidance material so they can put in place counter-terrorism preventative measures as a part of their normal business. For most, this will really mean just a few basic common-sense steps. For the transport industry generally, it cannot be said that the bill proposes anything revolutionary. As we know, the transport industry—including commercial, government owned, ferry, bus, train, and terminal and station operators—unions and relevant local, state and Commonwealth agencies have all been engaged and consulted in the development of the plan and indeed the bill. They draw also on the benchmarks for industry security regulation established elsewhere in Australia and indeed worldwide.

It is fair to say that we can never claim to have completely eliminated the risk of a terrorist attack in Queensland, or anywhere else for that matter. But that does not mean that we should not do our best to minimise that risk, and this bill assures the public that our important transport operators recognise their responsibility to contribute to a safer environment for users of public transport and that they take that responsibility seriously.

The bill begins by first requiring a comprehensive risk assessment to establish which parts of the Queensland transport industry face a risk that is elevated above the general community-wide risk of a terrorist attack. Risk management is an essential element of the legislation, and that is why risk management is critical to deciding how transport operators respond to the threat of terrorism.

The bill is not prescriptive. It does not require bollards to be constructed or CCTV cameras to be installed in certain numbers or in certain places, nor that airport-like security screening is required everywhere. Rather, it requires operators to identify areas of risk and take appropriate measures to mitigate the effects of a possible terrorist threat or attack. This bill demonstrates that the Queensland government is determined to use both international best practice and common sense when working with transport operators to make a terrorist attack an even more unlikely proposition. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (9.24 pm): I rise also to speak in favour of the Transport Security (Counter-Terrorism) Bill. It is in a sense very sad that the minister for transport, the Hon. John Mickel, has to introduce this bill and we as legislators have to ensure the safe passage of this bill in this House as a countermeasure to combat terrorism. It is certainly in my view a very sad reflection of our times.

Terrorism is an evil which we are forced to confront more and more today and it is a word that brings to mind destruction, loss of lives and total chaos. People who carry out acts of terrorism at times say that they are following a particular belief or faith—one where their acts of murder and carnage are celebrated. In the history of mankind, we can see evidence of a lot of terrorism taking place by people using religion and in fact the name of whatever god they worship to exercise carnage to people, and most of the time innocent people. If we look at the history of the Crusaders, in my view clearly that was an issue of territorial supremacy. The recent conflict in Ireland between the so-called Irish and Catholics is no more than a political problem rather than a religious one, as is the latest issue in Afghanistan, Iran and so on and so forth. Political problems demand political solutions, not religious ones.

This week we reached another milestone in the Bali bombing tragedy in which hundreds of people lost their lives, including 88 Australians. Three Bali bombers were executed this week. For those people in our community who continue to believe that all Muslims are terrorists, I refer them to an article in the *Courier-Mail* today in which Dr Halim Rane, a lecture at the National Centre of Excellence in Islamic Studies at Griffith University, states very clearly—

The Bali bombers showed none of the noble qualities possessed by revered Islamic martyrs of the past.

In fact, he said—

Given this historical perspective, if Muslims are to salvage the good name of their cherished heroes, the Bali bombers and their cohorts will have to be written into the history books not as martyrs but just plain murderers.

Unfortunately, in this day and age we do have crazy people around willing to sacrifice innocent lives for their own political agenda. Therefore, the Bligh government is taking its commitment to enhancing and maintaining the safety of all Queenslanders seriously, and this bill is simply another step further. With a commitment already in place that supports the national counter-terrorism plan and the additional counter-terrorism response measures such as the major transport precinct project, the Bligh government has made its stance against terrorist attacks and threats very clear.

This bill is the government's plan for all identified surface transport operations to be part of the state's response against terrorist attacks on important transport systems such as buses, ferries, trains and heavy vehicles more than 20 tonnes. This bill puts the business owner—large or small, government or private—in the driving seat of compliance with the provisions of this bill. If the company or business has been identified as having a level of risk which could transport a bomb to kill or injure hundreds of people, then the company or business will need to put a risk management plan together that includes educating and training all of their staff so that they can identify suspicious situations and to use the eyes and ears of their staff on the ground—one of the best sources of information for early detection of any perceived risk.

A good response plan means that people know what they are meant to do and what their role is in the event of an emergency. It is vital to keeping the company or business operations' downtime to a minimum and also to provide some reassurance to commuters that our transport system is safe.

Last week I was speaking to a resident of London who was visiting my electorate. This lady was there when the 2005 simultaneous bombing occurred in London. She said—

You have to remember there were bombs going off almost simultaneously all over the place. Being prepared made a huge difference. People were panicking. If the police, the Tube staff and ambulance personnel hadn't taken charge—there would have been many more casualties. I hate to think what would have happened if there had been no plan. It was frightening.

A certain amount of responsibility has been placed upon the business operators or managers whose companies have been identified as being at risk. People being proactive and reactive is the theme of this bill. In the interests of time, with those few words I commend this bill to the House.