




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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JUSTICE LEGISLATION (LINKS TO TERRORIST ACTIVITY) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (12.57 pm): I rise to strongly support this bill. As other speakers before me have done, I put on the record my sympathies, prayers and condolences for the people of New Zealand, which is such a strong community and a wonderful country. Christchurch has had its fair share of horrific events over the past few years. The earthquake had a devastating impact on Christchurch. After the terrorist attack of only a week or so ago, my heart goes out to what is a wonderful country. We enjoy our Bledisloe Cup matches. We are fierce in that, but—

Mr Nicholls: I don't enjoy them!

Mr MILLAR: Of course. They have not gone our way for a long time, but—

Mr Harper: And they won't be, either!

Mr MILLAR: Probably not.


Mr Harper interjected.

Mr MILLAR: I take that interjection as well. I want to put on the record how devastated we all were when the news came through on that day. It certainly shocked everybody in this nation. We pay our respects and offer to help the citizens of that country to get back on their feet. They have a long way to go. I am sure they will get through this, but we are here for them. I say to anybody from New Zealand who lives in this country: we are with you and will continue to be with you.

I strongly support this bill. We should always take a strong stance against the threat of terrorism and make sure we do everything in our power—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Member for Gregory, would you please adjourn the debate.

Debate, on motion of Mr Millar, adjourned.

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (4.00 pm), continuing: I rise to strongly support this bill. This parliament will always take a strong stance against the threat of terrorism. That is why we went to the last election with a policy that was very similar to this legislation. We argued that there must be a presumption against bail for people charged with terrorist offences and, further, there should be the presumption against parole for those convicted of terrorist offences. It should give Queenslanders pause when they consider that it has taken the Labor Party two years to act on this issue. Still, this bill is before parliament now and, as a member of this parliament, I believe that the parliament needs to take a very strong stance against terrorism and parliament needs to be seen to be unflinching in this regard.

The mass murders in the New Zealand mosques were shocking in themselves, but I think they were doubly shocking to Australians because they were carried out by one of us. This was shocking not because we think we are somehow pure and incorruptible; it was shocking because Aussies have

such a deep affection and regard for our Kiwi cousins. It was shocking because the terrorist was, for all intents and purposes, an Australian boy next door in a small town of Australia. It was shocking that he could lose his way into extremism with no-one to guide him back to the light and no-one to notice. It was shocking that he cold-bloodedly chose an attack on our friends in New Zealand as a way to demonstrate our vulnerability to attacks.

After such an attack, there is always debate about motivations and mental states, but the truth is that we may never know. What we do know is that we must stand up strongly against such attacks. This bill does that within the COAG national framework, which will ensure that all Australian jurisdictions have a consistent approach to preventing terrorist threats and prosecuting terrorist offenders. The bill implements an agreement made by the Council of Australian Governments that there will be a presumption that neither bail nor parole will be granted to those persons who have demonstrated support for, or have links to, terrorist activity.

These presumptions are unusual in our justice system, but the phenomenon of terrorist attacks on civilians is unusual, both historically in the West and culturally in Australia. So alien is it that most Australians will react not just with grief and rage but also with anger and bafflement. We must look at the reality on the ground where we take our stand and we must start to work at once with the tools that come to hand. Better tools may evolve, but they will evolve only because we are making a stand.

The duty to defend our citizens and our way of life is sacrosanct. That means it must take precedence over the rights of an individual offender because, to do otherwise, is a risk for all of us. The need for a presumption against bail has created some concern among some in the legal profession, but I believe that most reasonable Queenslanders see the need to ensure public safety while the courts of justice grind their way through their process. The terrorist is not just an ordinary offender and it would be extremely foolish to free someone charged with such an offence when to do so creates the risk that they may escalate the offending or become a fugitive.

The other aspect of this bill that is unique is that it treats adults and children identically. This would appear to fly in the face of reforms to youth justice. In our courts there is usually a presumption in favour of bail when the person who is charged is a minor. This bill will reverse that and will also remove a judge's discretion in the matter of both bail and early release.

We must ask ourselves why the Council of Australian Governments has agreed to this measure. I believe that the answer lies in the very nature of terrorism itself. It does not rely on armies. It does not need expensive equipment. It does not need supply lines. It needs very little more than extremist belief and a little bit of know-how. It is digitally connected. It wears 100 different faces and uses 100 different modes of attack. This makes it very appealing to young people. Being Australian does not make our young people immune.

Some members who are parents may have come across the Australian author John Marsden's excellent series of young adult novels called *Tomorrow, When the War Began*. It tells the story of a group of Australian youth who form an underground resistance when Australia is invaded by an unnamed country. When you read it you find yourself thinking about the practical skills that the average 16- or 17-year-old Aussie kid brings to the table, especially those who grow up in the country. In an age of terrorism, those accurate observations by the author become chilling. The truth is that age is no real guide to the capabilities of the terrorist offender to create havoc. Against our natural sympathies, we must stand firm, letting terrorism be the exception in youth justice reform. The LNP makes no apologies for this stance against terrorist offenders. I commend this bill to the House.