




Speech By
Rob Molhoek

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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JUSTICE LEGISLATION (LINKS TO TERRORIST ACTIVITY) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (5.18 pm): I rise also today to speak in support of the Justice Legislation (Links to Terrorist Activity) Amendment Bill. At the outset I, too, want to add to the condolences that have been passed on by many of us in the House over the last day or so to the people of Christchurch. There are many Kiwis who live in the electorate of Southport. In fact, at last count there were about 8,000 who live in Southport. Southport and Bonney share the Arundel mosque, so we also have a large Muslim community within our combined electorates.

It is incredibly sad to try to comprehend the absolute horror that occurred in Christchurch some 10 days ago. I know that it has obviously had a huge impact not only on the people of Christchurch but many people around Australia and New Zealand. The news of this has travelled to most parts of the world, and many people are very sad that this is the world we have come to know.

This bill supports a national framework to ensure a consistent national effort to prevent and respond to threats of terrorism. It also implements COAG's recommendation that there be a presumption that neither bail nor parole will be granted to those persons who have demonstrated support for, or who have links to, terrorist activity. What I find interesting is how long it has taken the government—the Labor Party—to do anything about COAG's recommendation. The Council of Australian Governments agreed to the presumption against bail and the presumption against parole back in 2017, but it has taken nearly two years to act on it. On this side of the House, the LNP knows that terrorism is one of Australia's major security challenges. That is why the LNP took a policy to the last state election that included a presumption against bail and a presumption against parole, which has taken up until now to act upon. The LNP supports toughening Queensland's stance on terrorism, which is why we support the bill.

The policy objectives of this bill are achieved through a number of legislative mechanisms. The first is reversing the statutory presumption in favour of bail for any adult or child offender who has previously been convicted of a terrorism offence or who is, or has been, subject to a control order under the Commonwealth Criminal Code. This will require a court to refuse to grant bail unless the court is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist to justify granting bail. A person charged with an offence possibly unrelated to terrorism, but who has a previous conviction for a terrorism offence, would be subject to the presumption against bail. Promotion of terrorism or association with terrorist organisations is also added to the list of factors that comprise an unacceptable risk justifying the refusal of bail.

The bill also creates a presumption against parole for prisoners who have been convicted of a terrorism offence or who are the subject of a control order as well as those who have promoted terrorism. This means that offenders with demonstrable links to terrorist activity will be captured by the reforms. The presumption for parole will also be reversed in circumstances where the Commissioner of Police provides a report to the Parole Board identifying a reasonable likelihood that a prisoner may carry out a terrorist act. The Parole Board must refuse to grant the application unless the board is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist to justify granting the application.

The bill also amends the Penalties and Sentences Act to give the court the discretion to fix a parole eligibility date rather than a parole release date for offenders with previous terrorism convictions and those who are the subject of a control order or who have promoted terrorism. The bill will also remove the discretion of a sentencing court to order a release date for a child any earlier than after serving 70 per cent of a period of detention and to require conditions to be imposed on the supervised release of a child.

I note that the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, which examined this bill, recommended that the bill be passed. I would like to thank my LNP colleagues the member for Southern Downs and the member for Lockyer as well as the other members of the committee for their hard work in assisting the House with its deliberations on this bill. I also note that the majority of stakeholders who made a submission to the committee supported the bill and recognised the government's responsibility to minimise the risk to the community posed by terrorism.

We on this side of the House will always support tough measures which guard our fellow Queenslanders against the risk of a terrorist incident. The Labor Party needs to come into this chamber and justify to Queenslanders why it has taken so long to strengthen legislation to protect them against dangerous terrorists. We know that the Labor Party is weak on crime. You only have to look at their track record in this place to see just how weak they are when it comes to protecting Queenslanders from crime. My Gold Coast colleagues will remember how the Labor Party watered down the LNP's tough organised crime laws, welcoming back the bikies to the 'glitter strip' with open arms. My electorate of Southport does not want to return to the bad old days of bikies running cartels across the Gold Coast.

We have also seen the Labor Party's slashing of Gold Coast police numbers, and I alluded to this a little bit last night in the five o'clock debate. This is the same police force that we rely on to keep our communities safe. Under the Labor Party we have seen more than 40 police officers disappear from the Gold Coast despite our rapidly increasing population. It seems to the Labor Party that more people equals fewer police, so if you increase the population you decrease the size of the police force.

Ms McMILLAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order under standing order 118 on relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): I draw the member back to the long title of the bill.

Mr MOLHOEK: I can assure you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that my community knows that the LNP can be trusted to keep them and their families safe. This legislation is well overdue. The LNP supports the presumption against bail and the presumption against parole and makes no apologies for trying to keep terrorist offenders behind bars. Terrorism is a scourge on our society. Those who perpetrate its crimes commit terrible atrocities while striking fear into the hearts of our communities.

A few years ago on September 11, when we saw that terrible act of terror in New York, we saw what an incredible impact acts of terror can have on the stability of our society and our way of life. Nearly 3,000 people were killed and over 6,000 people were injured. There was billions of dollars' worth of damage to infrastructure and property, and subsequently many more people died from cancer related and respiratory diseases. I had the privilege of standing at ground zero only a few short months after that horrific act. It is a struggle to put into words the overwhelming sense of emotion that I experienced in that place and the conversations that we had with families and survivors of those attacks even a year or two on from the event. Subsequently, on my many return visits to the United States the events of that day still have a huge impact on morale and the sense of security that families feel.

In closing, I do not think we can understate what the people of Christchurch must be feeling at this time. It is one thing to endure an earthquake—and I have had the pleasure of visiting Christchurch on many occasions as I have friends there—but when something happens that is not an act of nature or an act of God, when something comes completely out of the blue, undeserved and unprovoked, we as members of parliament must stand against this. We must speak out in the strongest possible terms. We must pass laws and give our officers and police the powers they need to intervene and do all things reasonable to protect our society and our way of life. As legislators and leaders, we have to do everything in our power to battle terrorism and keep offenders in prison where they belong. This parliament must be seen as taking a tough stance on terrorism, and the passage of this bill is one way to achieve that.