




Speech By
Steve Minnikin

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

Record of Proceedings, 28 March 2019

JUSTICE LEGISLATION (LINKS TO TERRORIST ACTIVITY) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (12.48 pm): Like many honourable members in this chamber, I too rise to make a brief contribution on the Justice Legislation (Links to Terrorist Activity) Amendment Bill. In doing so I also pay tribute to victims and their families in Christchurch. What happened there recently is too terrible for words. In fact, I guess it proves conclusively that there are indeed three great monotheistic religions in the world: Christianity, Judaism and Islam. I do not care about colour, creed, who your God is or what you believe in, but one thing I do believe in is the sanctity of life. I do not care which country you come from or what your views are, but at the end of the day life is precious.

I note from the outset that the LNP will not oppose this bill. When speaking about the issue of terrorist activity, my mind immediately goes back to a couple of things that have been instilled in me. I can distinctly recall my parents knowing exactly where they were in 1963 when John F Kennedy was assassinated. I recall very clearly where I was during 9-11.

I think I said in a contribution many years ago that I can distinctly recall watching Jim Whaley on *Nightline*. While I was watching *The West Wing*, one of my favourite TV shows of all time, there was a news break which reported that a light plane had inadvertently clipped one of the Twin Towers. We now know that, sadly, that was not the case. The events of that time in history are too horrific for words. The shadow Attorney-General also spoke about being in London in 2005. It is incredibly important for the chamber to come together in a bipartisan manner, as much as we can, to support this bill. I have been emboldened by the contributions from members on both sides of the chamber.

The policy objectives of the bill are straightforward and very clear. They include supporting a national framework to ensure a consistent national effort—‘consistent’ is the key word—across all state jurisdictions to prevent and respond to terrorist threats of any type. This stems from the Council of Australian Governments agreement that there will be a presumption that neither bail nor parole will be granted to persons who have demonstrated support for or have links to terrorist activity. That is a very strong COAG commitment.

Terrorism remains a major security challenge for Australia. Everyone inside and outside this chamber knows that. It seems to me that the times we are living in right now are extraordinary. The member for Toowoomba North spoke about growing up in the United Kingdom in the 1970s and early 1980s and the ever-threatening presence of the IRA. I can fill in a blank for him in relation to Expo 88. Being at that time 23 and single and with a six-month pass, I was there pretty much at breakfast, lunch and tea. It was a completely different era compared to, say, the 2018 Commonwealth Games. As I have said in the past, apart from perhaps the opening, the way the Commonwealth Games were run logistically, from a security perspective, was absolutely first class. Of course, freedoms had to be potentially touched upon for the greater good. I guess that will be a theme for most speakers to this debate. I am very strong in relation to upholding one’s civil liberties, but as lawmakers in this august chamber we have to be sensible and pragmatic. At times there will be trade-offs between competing

rights—in this case the right of people to be presumed innocent before the courts. As other speakers have articulated very well, here we are talking about people who have been convicted of terrorist activity. Apart from paedophilia, I can think of nothing worse than terrorist activity.

We note that the presumption against bail applies to people who have a previous terrorism conviction. We also note that a person with a previous terrorism conviction who at a later date is charged with a minor criminal offence, for example break and enter, will have that presumption for bail reversed. That is eminently sensible. We on this side of the chamber support the presumption against parole. As other speakers have said, we make no apologies for terrorism offenders remaining behind bars. Why would we?

We will always support tough measures to guard against the risk of a terrorism incident in Queensland. I pay tribute to those hardworking men and women of the Queensland Police Service who 24/7 do a remarkable job to ensure the protection of everyday Queenslanders. We took a policy to the last election that included a presumption against bail and a presumption against parole, which it has taken Labor a good while to enact. A speaker before me said that we could get into the reeds and be a little churlish by making some cheap political points. We are not doing that. We highlight that it has taken a while, but the things that unite us are more important than the things that divide us. It is an often used line, but it is pertinent to the debate of this bill. I know that, at the end of the day, all of us in this chamber would walk over cut glass to protect each other's families. This bill, which we will not oppose, will go a long way towards ensuring Queenslanders can go to bed safe at night.

We also want to make sure that the safety of the community takes priority over the rights of any minor child who is engaged in terrorist activity. I know that for some people this represents a bit of a slippery slope in relation to law and lawmaking but, sadly, we have seen examples of the radicalisation or brainwashing of some youth, particularly through the use of social media as an outlet and as a streaming service. As sad as it is, given the right tools and equipment a child can cause terror that should not be contemplated in too much detail. This provision needs to be enacted. The parliament needs to be seen to be taking a tough stance on terrorism, and reversing the presumption for bail and parole achieves this.

In this chamber we often engage in robust debate. Most people get their take on parliament from clips of question time on the nightly news. What they do not often see are the times that both sides of the chamber come together to pass legislation for the betterment of all Queenslanders. Whilst a couple of stakeholders have raised concerns—they have been articulated by previous speakers so I will not go through them in detail—those concerns and competing rights represent something that every parliamentarian occasionally has to weigh up. On balance, it comes back to the principle of the greater good—Pareto theory 101 in action. While it is sad in many ways that we even have to bring this bill into this chamber, it will go a long way to protecting all Queenslanders, regardless of where they live—from Cooktown to Coolangatta and everywhere in between. I support this bill.