



**Australian Security in the 21st Century
Seminar Series**

**NATION BUILDING, SECURING OUR BORDERS AND
PREVENTING TERRORISM**

Transcript of an address by

**Hon Philip Ruddock MP
Commonwealth Attorney-General**

Parliament House, Canberra
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Well thank you very much, and can I first, as I am want to do, acknowledge the Ngunnawal people and pay my respects to their elders, past and present. Can I thank the chair, can I acknowledge Bob Weight from Saab and our sponsors, Thales and IBM, and Raytheon as well as Saab, and colleagues, ladies and gentleman.

Andrew Robb is, as usual, very generous in his introductory remarks. My only response can be that, in talking to Andrew about these issues, he didn't need to come back. He's a very fast learner.

But I did want to spend a few moments as we start, to reflect as Andrew did, on the recent tragic loss of lives of people who were very much involved in the task of protecting Australia. The resolution of the Prime Minister's and the House of Representatives gave me an opportunity to speak about our two Australian Federal Police as well as our diplomatic representatives and our friends in the media.

And more recent events, I think, have demonstrated the importance of the work that was being undertaken in Indonesia, and I'll have something further to say about that. But also, why this was a particularly unique and tragic event for us. And we all felt it. And I sometimes ask myself the question, when we feel so strongly about an act which occurred for whatever reason, be it equipment failure, personnel failure, or just an act of God, how do you see that when it occurs as a deliberate act to take people's lives, is a wanton act of terrorism.

And when you look back at the events in September 2001, that's what it was. Thousands of people died in aircraft, in buildings, on the streets. And again, for us, it was much closer to home in 2002, when many Australians lost their lives in Indonesia.

For many Australians, these are merely events that happened to someone else and usually overseas. And their response will often be conditioned by newspaper reports and even movies, where the attacks are in far off lands, where the terrorists are people who speak a foreign language, they dress differently, and they use religion to justify the atrocities with which they're associated.

However, it is closer to home than many of us realise, because Australia has been targeted. And in each of the first five years of this century, a terrorist attack involving Australia or Australian interests has been disrupted, aborted or carried out. In Singapore, in Indonesia, and of course there are those who have planned acts of terrorism here in Australia, which have not been successful.

Our threat level remains at medium. People wonder what that means. Well what it means is a terrorist act could occur at any time. The only thing we can't tell you is where and when.

It is clear that there is justification for that belief, when you look at the recent conviction of Willy Brigitte in France, and of course other convictions here, and the number of prosecutions now underway in relation to terrorist acts. And I am sure you will understand that, as those matters are before the courts, it would be inappropriate for me to say anything further.

Our partners have had successes. The disruption of JI and the arrests in Yogyakarta last week by Indonesian Police, and the weakening of al-Qaeda are encouraging. As were the arrests in Britain, in connection with those who were believed to be involved in the train and bus bombings of 2005.

The disruption that we have seen might have reduced the ability of people to attack us, but some suggest this might only mean in a smaller way... smaller bombs. Or that they might put greater focus on other means of hurting our community. In a recent paper to Chatham House in London, the issue was raised of what was called a CBRN attack, or as we know it to be, chemical biological radiological or nuclear. And Dr Paul Cornish the author, observed that a small scale attack might conceivably trigger an immediate and disproportionately terrified response. And he stressed that, to counter this argument, and to ensure that people do respond appropriately, governments need to involve the community.

And of course this provides a fine line for governments to walk. If we are to say too much we risk jeopardising investigations or creating an unhealthy level of cynicism. To say nothing can mean complacency. And in a speech last week to the Australian Chamber of Commerce, the Director of our Security Agency, Paul O'Sullivan, warned against that complacency, and stressed the importance of collaborative effort.

And of course that brings us to the origin of the threats, and what we are to do about what is known as home grown terrorism. As I mentioned at the start, the general comfortable view that we have of a terrorist, has been of a foreigner, an outsider, dressing, talking and thinking differently. This was the popular stereotype or profile that most people share.

Very few people outside the intelligence community were paying much attention to the possibility that a significant threat could come from a terrorist living among us, or from one of us, a man or a woman, born in the west to middle class parents and carrying a Western passport.

The London bombings of July 2005, I think, shattered that illusion comprehensively. Three of the four young men who blew themselves up in the London transport system were British-born. The fourth had lived in Britain since he was a baby. There is evidence that recruiters have been specifically targeting Australians who do not fit the stereotype.

Four Corners on the ABC, some time ago, suggested Osama bin Laden wanted an Australian white person to work for him in Australia. Jack Roche, convicted in

Western Australia in relation to terrorist activities, is a British-born Australian national. Like most Australians, I am horrified when I hear reports of religious leaders encouraging young people to take up arms in the name of some extreme doctrine. Or to sacrifice their lives for a misguided cause that distorts peace and tolerance, that religions like Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, have at their core.

Of course, none of this is new. Many of the atrocities we have seen in the world, have been carried out in the name of religion, and not just in recent years.

Some may remember a recording by the actor Richard Harris in the early 70s. It was called "*There are too many saviours on my cross.*" And, in it, he decries the use of Christianity to justify violence. He was referring then, of course, to the troubles in Northern Ireland. But sadly we see the same thing happening today with Islam, where the Koran is being used to justify terrorism.

Now I am told by Muslim scholars that this is often done by self-proclaimed Imams, who have read a few texts and then claim the right to teach their thinking, their brand of hatred.

I recently met with the Grand Mufti of Bosnia. He was here in my office in Parliament House, Canberra. And he and his party referred to these people as fast food Imams, preaching a distorted view of Islam and criticising anybody who engages with non-Muslims. And he pointed out that if you try hard enough you can find a justification for violence in almost any writings. He was a well read man, and he referred me to Shakespeare, and the Bard did write of treason and tragedy. I don't believe he advocated terrorism, especially that which is home grown, but I am concerned of course that some Australians hearing distorted messages, especially the young, are being manipulated and marginalised.

We can't let that happen. It is not in their interests to isolate themselves. It's not in the community's interests to allow them to become isolated. If those who corrupt religion, including Islam, succeed, there will be consequences for us all. And I think it is the responsibility of us all, religious leaders included, community leaders and representatives and spokespeople, to encourage communities to follow the law, to respect our cultural diversity, to share our Australian values. However, religious and community leaders, whether they're inspired or misguided, cannot alone be a cure or a cause for radicalisation.

To eliminate terrorism root and branch, governments and religious leaders have to work together to address the social issues in vulnerable communities that lead young astray... to be marginalised, to fall prey to extremist doctrines. We must, as a nation, work together, to build a society where these doctrines will not flourish. We want them to miss their footing and fall to stony ground.

We must build a society that accepts people have rights, while recognising that there are responsibilities that go with those rights, like accepting the rule of law, and recognising the importance of parliamentary democracy. We must build communities where those who fall out at the margins of our society, can be pulled back and embraced. And this represents a huge multifaceted challenge, but one which your government has firmly grasped.

We have engaged and will continue to engage in this core aspect of nation building. A key facet of our counter terrorism strategy is to reach out to parts of our community that are most vulnerable to radicalisation, to terrorist recruiting. And this recognises that the targeting of the early stages of radicalisation is an effective means to reduce the threat of home grown terrorism, as it is called.

And the Australian government, together with states and territories, have developed a national action plan to build on social cohesion, harmony and security. And I might commend Andrew Robb for the part that he played, in relation to the development of that national action plan.

It supports the national security imperative in Australia, by addressing extremism and the promotion of violence and intolerance. Using targeted social policy responses, the plan seeks to eliminate or minimise social and other issues within the wider community that can contribute to isolation.

Now this is very similar to the approach in the United Kingdom and a range of other European countries, and to what the Department of Homeland Security is doing in the United States. And the impetus for this plan came from the Prime Minister's engagement with the Australian Muslim communities after the London bombings in July 2005.

The Prime Minister met with community leaders that August, and attendees committed to work with all Australians to produce outcomes to protect the nation. Research undertaken by the government under the plan, has also provided a valuable insight to the root causes of radicalisation and terrorism. And it has shown that we need to promote social experiences that counter the view of radical Islamic groups, so that they can be regarded as illegitimate.

We need to counter the incentives, the social networks, the ideology offered by these radical groups. We need to promote the moderate forces within communities that develop an authentic moderate theological framework.

In addition to the resources invested in its development, the government has committed a further \$35 million, over four years, for initiatives to support that national plan. And in January it was announced that we would be establishing a National Centre of Excellence in Islamic Studies.

Now that \$8 million centre is to be based at three universities in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, and will adopt a curriculum based upon moderate teachings. It will be an important tool in fighting the emergence of home grown terrorism. Moderate Imams can speak from a position of authority and community leadership, where they can negate intolerant and violent doctrines espoused by extremists.

Other initiatives under the plan include, within my own portfolio, the developing of specialist training and educational materials and forums. They're being managed by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. They're aimed at bringing law and police and Muslim communities together, to promote the lawful means and

appropriate ways to deal with difference, conflict and grievance, without resorting to extremism and violence.

Inclusive workshops have already been held in Sydney and Darwin, to discuss the national security arrangements and crisis management strategies with people of influence within the Muslim communities. There are also plans to stage a biennial national forum in Canberra, to host a website for community representatives and government agencies to conduct discourse. And these initiatives are to help share information, to build trust and engagement.

I do have a real concern that if there were to be a terrorist attack in Australia... God forbid... that there will be two distinct groups of victims. Those caught in the initial senseless act of violence, and then those in the Muslim community who might well be caught in a senseless act of revenge, probably directed at people who had nothing whatsoever to do with the act of violence.

I have spoken to people in the Islamic community about how they feel - people who do engage, people who want to function fully as participating members of our society... who say to me, their greatest fear is that a terrorist act will occur, for which they will be blamed, and they will be innocent.

This view, of course, is shared by others. For example in a recent speech, the Director of Canada's Security and Intelligence Service, Jim Judd, emphasised the need for engagement. And I quote him when I say *'we cannot afford to see these communities withdraw or close in on themselves, for fear of being unfairly associated with the actions of what amounts to a relatively few individuals.'*

Now, open dialogue between our law enforcement authorities and the community is also vital, for preventing misinformation and misunderstanding about our strategy. As we have maintained from the outset, counter terrorism laws do not target any race, any religion or people of any ethnicity.

Australian Federal Police play an important role in making this message clear. They engage with the Australian communities about their rights and obligations under our law, and ensure that legislation is implemented fairly. Cultural sensitivity training is very useful in this respect, and the Australian Federal Police deliver a culturally diverse program to all new recruits, and provide a booklet on cultural and religious diversity as a ready reference to all of their officers.

In addition, I am informed that a programme focusing on Islamic culture will be delivered across the organisation, with the first courses commencing this financial year.

Now, these measures strengthen the considerable progress that the Police have already made, in fostering relationships within our Muslim communities. This is a core priority, because there is a different challenge in countering home grown terrorists with no known criminal backgrounds.

Although it is fair to say that radicalisation is not yet a significant issue for Australia, we have seen an increase in extremist activity in some of our prisons. Now this is an

issue we're also addressing. Last July I spoke at a seminar organised by the AFP on radicalisation in prisons. And other speakers, including international experts from the United Kingdom and the United States, who have experience in dealing with radicalisation in their home jurisdictions, participated with us. There is much we can learn from them.

I know their respective governments are concerned about this issue. Last year I took part in the trilateral discussions between Australia and the United States and the United Kingdom. It was in London, and it was with the then Home Secretary Charles Clark, Peter Goldsmith the UK Attorney-General, as well as the United States Attorney-General Alberto Gonzales.

All were very concerned about the radicalisation of young people. It was clear that all were keen to work with other nations to try and resolve this matter, and to promote a voice of moderate Islam. However, home grown terrorism is but one facet of the threat that we face.

An internationally cooperative approach is clearly needed. Terrorism does not respect borders. Many of our border protection measures are well known, and, while these focus on largely protecting our economic interests and preventing illegal immigration, they do play a role in ensuring a wider protection for our community.

It is for this reason that Australia must continue to extend our borders beyond our shores. We need to know who is entering or leaving Australia, because that enables us to better undertake the enquiries that we might need to undertake.

Last November, the head of Britain's MI5, Eliza Manningham-Buller, noted that her agency is tracking around about 200 groupings or networks involving more than 1,600 individuals. I was very surprised when she made that statement, and I think the numbers have been expanded since.

And the reason I was surprised is that I had been taught from a very early political age, that on security issues it is highly undesirable to talk about how much you know, because it might reveal to others who know far more, that you haven't found out about all, of which they are involved. In other words, you give away something of your knowledge.

So I asked Dame Eliza why they did it, why they put these numbers into the public arena. I'm sure it's a question any of you would have asked. And I was surprised at the answer, but it emphasises what we're dealing with. What she said was, those figures will not mean anything to anybody in understanding the nature of the threat, except that it is so large. Except that it is so large.

And of course that's something of the enormity of the problem that they are dealing with in the United Kingdom... that potentially, there are so many groupings which are of concern, and the numbers of people involved with them... that a threat could emerge from any one of them. And those targets are said to be actively involved in plotting or facilitating terrorist acts in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Now, intelligence agencies such as ASIO play a very important role in meeting the challenging of dealing with home grown terrorist threats, but we need them to remain vigilant about people wishing to come here, who may intend us some harm. And to assist ASIO over the coming years, we've committed additional resources that will see their staffing levels increase from around about 1,200 where they are now, to 1,860 by the year 2010. And that's on top of a very substantial increase that has already occurred.

And the organisation is focusing on building cooperative relationships with other agencies, foreign partners in the private sector as well as the wider community. We are giving them tools to do that job of protecting our community and our borders.

One of more recent measures, AusCheck - it passed another milestone overnight with the passage of the enabling Bill through the Senate. I suspect I might be dealing with it later this afternoon.

AusCheck will commence operations formally in July this year and will be responsible for coordinating the conduct of background criminal and security checks on applicants for aviation and maritime security identification cards and for notifying relevant issuing authorities of the outcome of those background checks.

Technology is also giving us an edge with tools such as the movement alert system, the MAL, which means that Australia can better handle the movement of people across our borders than almost any other country in the world. Where we have information we have the ability to stop people of security concern even before they board a plane.

The interconnectivity between agencies means that ASIO has access to information and therefore is better able to protect us. The issue of cooperation and interconnectivity brings me to a major policy difference that I have with the Labor Party. Labor's main policy in this area is to establish a department of homeland security. Why is that? Well, it's because that's what the United States did after 9/11.

The United States had a unique problem in that many agencies and departments had sprung up and were working in silos, in isolation, not talking to others, not sharing information. That is not a problem that we have.

The United States' experience is instructive. Less than two weeks ago the head of the United States Department of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff observed that the integration of agencies was entering its fifth year and he indicated that the job was a long way from finished. He also pointed out that the organisation doesn't and I quote *'get to call a time out while we finish the process of binding everything together'*. I would not want to see our agencies distracted from protecting the community, let alone calling a time out to fix something that is not broken.

Now, interestingly, they looked at these matters in the United Kingdom and came to the same view that we did. Labor has often stressed the need for a minister whose sole focus - I emphasise the word sole focus is homeland security. I find this is at odds with the fact that the Shadow Minister is also the Shadow Minister for Territories. Now, the ACT is very important but I'm sure it's not a major feature in relation to

homeland security issues. And, of course, for good measure they gave him Justice and Customs after the recent reshuffle and so much for a person whose sole focus is homeland security.

Add to that reports yesterday that Labor was proposing a high level national security office, not within the department of homeland security I might say but within the Prime Minister's department. Well, it seems to me that even Labor is having trouble supporting its homeland security policy. However it's worth observing - and for those who do observe these matters that under this government and within the Prime Minister's department there is already a very senior officer who chairs the National Counter-Terrorism Committee, in other words plays that important coordinating role which the Prime Minister undertakes as the chairman of the National Security Committee of Cabinet, in which all of the key ministers are involved.

I believe we have the right structure in place and that we've given our agencies the strong tools to protect the Australian community. But to complement the efforts of law enforcement and security agencies, our counter-terrorism legislation operates to prevent, to deter, to investigate and to prosecute terrorism. I often have to speak about these matters particularly in human right terms and I think it's important to recognise that in the present environment the community would not regard it as appropriate to sit back and wait until an offence has occurred and then to investigate and prosecute those who are responsible. I think we would be very, very severely condemned by the Australian community were we to take that approach and yet that is the way in which the criminal justice system of this country traditionally operates.

So, laws that operate to prevent, to identify and to prosecute people for planning or inciting in terrorist activity become of crucial importance. There are measures that countries like ourselves who do have a respect for the rule of law and do have a respect for human rights, have implemented, such as the control order provisions, where a court can authorise and order that an individual's movements be monitored or that they require people to participate in specified counselling or education if they consent, can play a role. Sedition offences can also play a preventive role... prohibiting groups from making statements that urge violence against another group simply because of their nationality, their ethnicity, their race, their religion, or against our institutions.

Now I do have a concern that sometimes there are people out there, vulnerable people, especially those with diminished capacity who could be pushed towards radicalism and acts of terrorism where those who urged the conduct seem to have no responsibility and no accountability.

Now I am aware that there are some who question the hard work and the commitment of the Australian government in relation to its efforts in protecting the nation. But I want to assure that the Australian government does recognise that it has a clear responsibility to protect this nation. One of the fundamental human rights which are frequently not mentioned where governments do have an obligation is to protect the right to life and the right to safety and security of the community for whom we are responsible. I think that responsibility is a very necessary matter that we have to address. The only scary aspect for me would be if governments did not take that approach.

The costs in human terms can be enormous if we fail but it can be much wider than that. It's not just the injuries, the loss of life, it's also economic security. There was a study carried out to analyse the possible economic impact of a national terrorist incident in Australia. Drafted by the Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics the scenario involved the Boeing 767 with a mere 184 passengers and crew on board being blown up over the ocean off Sydney.

In this scenario there were no survivors. The initial effect of the notional attack drawn from overseas experience forced a shutdown of all Australian airports for 24 hours. The estimated cost in the first year of that would be of the order of \$22.5 billion. It would slice, in the study, something of the order of 2 per cent of gross domestic product.

The World Trade Centre attack in the United States took 0.75 per cent off the GDP of the United States of America. Over two years, it is said that the cost would rise to more than \$30 billion. And in the study, this was attributed to a downturn in tourism, delays from increased security inspections of vehicles and passengers, export losses and the loss of around 146,000 jobs in the first year. This analysis has been based on the actual impacts of 9/11 as well as the bombings in Bali, Madrid and London.

I'll just say to you that the threat of terrorism to Australia is real and remains real. Aviation, in particular, is still a big target. If we don't invest in protecting our nation we could well suffer not only the devastating loss of human life but a very extreme economic loss to the whole Australian community. The cold, hard fact is that terrorists target us because of who we are and what we stand for.

Now, I've often said that I don't want to be seen to be an Attorney-General of Australia of whom it could be said after some tragedy he could have done more but governments alone can only so much. I will do everything I can to ensure that we actively protect this nation and its people but we do need the help of the community if we are to detect and to prevent home-grown terrorism. Community leaders whether they are in our parliament or in the suburbs of Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne, must play a role in unifying this nation as well as preventing radicalisation. Thank you very much.