

# CIVIL RIGHTS & ANTI-TERRORISM

## Coalition

Over the past five years, the Coalition Government has developed comprehensive legislation to counter the threat of terrorism. This includes enactment of specific terrorism offences criminalising the commission of terrorist acts, acts done in preparation or facilitation of terrorist acts, and financing of terrorists or terrorism. This strong legislative framework is enabling our law enforcement and intelligence agencies to deter, apprehend and punish the perpetrators of terrorism. The Government's counter-terrorism laws are designed to promote security and protect all members of the community from the threat of terrorism. In implementing these laws the Government is also promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

## Labor

*The Labor Party did not provide a response for this forum. Policy information has been collated from the ALP website [www.alp.org.au](http://www.alp.org.au)*

A Rudd Labor Government will produce a Counter Terrorism White Paper, which will provide an assessment of the threat we face as a nation, lay out a co-ordinated approach for a whole-of-government response, and form the basis of future strategic planning. Six years after the 9/11 terrorism attacks in New York, Australia lacks a clear, comprehensive statement of the threat presented by various terrorist organisations and their sponsors together with a clearly enunciated blue print in response.

A Department of Homeland Security will be established to have all non-military agencies involved in border security and counter terrorism work in the one department.

A Labor government will introduce an increase in x-raying and inspecting containers arriving at our ports from overseas. At present about 93-95% of containers entering Australia are not x-rayed or physically inspected. The risk that presents to Australia is unacceptable.

Labor will also ensure that only security-cleared crew are authorised to carry explosives and dangerous goods on Australian coastal routes.

Federal Labor has also committed to increasing the overall size of the AFP by 500 sworn officers over five years as part of a five-point AFP Enhancement Plan worth \$200 million. Labor is opposed to the new sedition laws introduced by the Howard Government in the Anti-Terrorism Act (No. 2) 2005. Under these laws a person can be convicted of sedition merely by expressing a strong dissenting opinion. Labor believes that sedition should be confined to circumstances where a person urges force or violence and intends that force or violence to occur.

## Christian Democrats

Civil rights must be upheld provided they do not interfere with the overall peace and security of all Australians. Although the individual person must be given adequate opportunity to defend himself and not be detained without sufficient evidence, it is important that we keep the "balancing act" right and that we do not dilute our security and anti-terrorism policies to the point where we endanger the lives of our own people. The tension between civil rights and overall protection of our society cannot be resolved with simplistic solutions.

## Australian Democrats

The Australian Democrats have consistently opposed the Howard Government's antiterrorism legislation as bad law which undermines some fundamental human rights and civil liberties.

During debate in the Senate on the 2005 legislation we said that it would erode many rights including the right to liberty; to a fair trial; freedom from, and protection by the law from, unlawful interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence; and, not least of all, the right to be treated with humanity and dignity. The legislation is unprecedented in its powers and in its potentially damaging impact on the lives of Australians. Another fundamental concern was about the treatment of minors; and the sedition offences.

In August this year, we moved in the Senate to set-up a committee inquiry to urgently examine Australia's anti-terrorism laws and examine its controversial powers. The ALP joined with the Coalition to vote down our initiative

For more detail on our policy and actions see

[http://www.democrats.org.au/docs/ActionPlans/Attorney\\_DomesticHumanRights\\_2007.pdf](http://www.democrats.org.au/docs/ActionPlans/Attorney_DomesticHumanRights_2007.pdf)

## Greens

Substantial legislative changes are needed to reaffirm Australia's commitment to universal human rights and the rule of law. The 'war on terror' has undermined the civil rights of all Australians. The Greens oppose laws that allow people to be detained indefinitely. The Greens will replace Australia's 'counter-terrorism' laws, with laws that respect universal human rights and repeal sedition laws.

## Socialist Equality

The SEP demands the repeal of all federal and state "anti-terror" laws.

The SEP insists that the real target of the anti-terror measures is not terrorists but ordinary people – as revealed in the extraordinary police-military mobilization against protestors during the recent APEC summit in Sydney.

Behind the attacks on democratic rights lies the growing disparity between the social conditions of the mass of ordinary people and a privileged and powerful layer at the top.

The social tensions arising from deepening social inequality and unpopular military operations cannot be maintained by democratic means. This is the impetus behind the anti-terror legislation and the establishment of authoritarian forms of rule. What they are carrying out is the erection of the scaffolding for a police state.

## Socialist Alliance

These new laws strip away our civil rights and scapegoat Islamic and Arabic-speaking communities, which have suffered dramatically increased police harassment since September 11, 2001. They can also be used in industrial disputes against union activities. In light of this we would scrap the anti-terror laws and enshrine our democratic freedoms and civil liberties in a Bill of Rights.