



Speech by

**Rachel Nolan**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

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## **TERRORISM (COMMUNITY SAFETY) AMENDMENT BILL**

**Ms NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (4.16 p.m.): I rise to strongly indicate my support for the Terrorism (Community Safety) Amendment Bill brought into the House by the Premier. The bill, as other members have outlined, is the result of a national agreement on combating terrorism in Australia. It undertakes a number of measures to improve Australia's security preparedness. In speaking to the bill, however, I do not wish to dwell on the specifics as other members have done but rather touch on the broader issues of international terrorism.

Governments can and should improve security with measures such as those included in this bill. It cannot protect a community from terrorism. The Howard government, like the Bush government for which it is an apologist, is lying to Australians by suggesting that they absolutely can. Terrorism is by its very nature insidious. It involves attacks usually on innocent civilians and can happen any time, anywhere. Its success lies not in harming that many people as a proportion of the population but by causing such fear in a community that people are unable to go about their daily lives.

Terrorism is, by definition, the kind of warfare we get when one party is angry and is, in a military sense, inherently weak. It is by its nature faceless and gutless because it attacks civilians. The insidious nature of terrorism means that it simply cannot ever be beaten by conventional means. As such, the very concept of a war on terrorism is patently absurd.

The grammatical embarrassment of 'war on terror' is even wackier given that terror is an emotion and there is not generally a war on emotions. Historically, terrorist campaigns have only ever ceased when one side has run out of puff or when there have been genuine attempts to engage in dialogue about the issues at hand. The negotiations around the Northern Ireland question are, in the later regard, a case in point.

While we take a conventional military approach to dealing with this threat, we cannot by definition succeed. By Australia involving itself in the misguided American wars in Afganistan and Iraq there can be no doubt that our risk of becoming terrorist targets is exponentially increased. That is the view of our most qualified policemen. Federal Police Commission, Mick Kelty, and opinion polls clearly show that it is the view of the majority of Australians.

The war in Afghanistan was bad enough. Australia's involvement in the war in Iraq is an abomination. We now clearly know that the fundamental and unequivocal reason given for the war, the search for weapons of mass destruction, was wrong. With the shocking revelations that American soldiers have been involved in the sadistic torture, rape and murder of Iraqi prisoners, in blatant defiance of the Geneva conventions, the secondary argument that we went to free the Iraqi people from an oppressive regime is also lost. With these revelations, the whole exercise of the war in Iraq has lost its credibility, both in the eyes of those in the Middle East and most people in the west. As Mark Latham has consistently said, the longer Australia stays in Iraq the worse it is going to get.

The bill before the House includes a number of moves to improve Australia's security preparedness. It is a great tragedy that the actions of our national government are making it more, not less, likely that that preparedness will be put to the test. I commend the bill to the House.

