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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONDOLENCES

Bali Bombing: 10th Anniversary

SPEECH

Monday, 29 October 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Hawke, Alex, MP

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Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (17:53): I rise to associate myself and the people of Mitchell with the fine remarks of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the House commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Bali bombings.

We all remember the horror on that Monday when this hideous act of terror occurred in Indonesia. On the Monday following the bombing in 2002, then Prime Minister John Howard stood in the House of Representatives and stated that the word 'terrorism' was too antiseptic or too technical a term to describe what had occurred the previous Saturday evening, and he was right. That was an evil act—an act motivated by those willing to encourage people and to seek people to blow themselves up and commit acts of terror in the cause of an evil religious motivation.

It is incomprehensible to us that an individual can become so motivated by such an evil ideology and so driven to cause mass mayhem and destruction that to further that ideology they will murder 202 innocent people, including 88 Australian citizens. Following 9/11, this hideous event woke Australia to the prospect of terror right on our doorstep and, indeed, brought us to some other very important conclusions. These acts are reprehensible, not just for the sheer loss of life but for the lasting impact they have had on the families left behind—the cruelty, the immoral acts of the people involved and the legacy left behind on people in Australia with nothing but broken families and memories of sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives.

These incomprehensible acts forced consequences on Australia which are not all bad. We have seen the best in humanity brought out by such hideous acts—the volunteers, the people who selflessly put themselves in harms way to look after fellow human beings, many of them Australians and many local Indonesians and Balinese who were present on the day. We think of all the doctors and nurses who were present, who put themselves at great risk, and ordinary business owners who rescued people and applied first aid and triage. There are so many stories that are impossible to tell here today, but all of them are worthy of praise. The only one I will mention briefly is the story I recall of the very humble Australian nurse, the guy who immediately after the bombing made a triage area and applied first aid all through the night. When DFAT were trying to track him down to award him with an Australian medal eventually they found him a year or two later in Africa continuing to help other people and they had to forcibly pin the Australian metal onto his chest. That is the kind of person we are talking about and that is the kind of strength and endurance which arose out of this hideous tragedy.

Ironically, the Bali bombing had the impact of strengthening our ties with Indonesia, forcing our two nations, which historically do not have a great depth of relationship, into dealing with the problems created by such a hideous affair—strong people-to-people relationships, government-to-government and service-to-service relationships, the Australian Federal Police, the military and security agencies, all working together to oppose such extremism and terror. It is a sad indictment on the world today that events such as this occur, but then we see the great things which come out of them—the forging of human links, the memories of courage and bravery inspired by such events and the grief which we all remember 10 years on.

Today we do not seek to re-open old wounds of pain and suffering; we celebrate the lives that have been lost and reaffirm our fight to preserve and continue the Australian way of life. Our nation is not one that lies down and rolls over at the first hint of terror and tyranny. We stand up and fight and have a lot to be proud of. We continue to seek justice for those wronged by the actions and we commemorate their memory. That is why I am pleased to have spoken for the final consequence—that is, to improve the legislative framework, to consider the fact that we were able to introduce and put in place, with the government moving the same way, a social security amendment to cover victims of overseas terrorists, which was a gap in the Australian system. We have a superior situation from what we had previously. We all remember the great loss of life and tragedy but also the things which have been produced after what was a terrible tragedy, and we must always remember.