



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

**Melbourne: Attacks**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 8 February 2017**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Speaker** Ryan, Joanne, MP

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**Ms RYAN** (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (17:55): It is a little sad to think that it is only moments of great tragedy or great celebration that bring us together in this place. But I am pleased to join my colleagues from around Australia, particularly my colleagues from Victoria, to say a few words about the Bourke Street tragedy and to honour the victims of that tragedy.

A few weeks ago, the nation stood still as we heard reports of a man driving down a busy city street. That city street was Bourke Street. For Victorians, it was our Bourke Street. The incident resonated with many of us because of how surreal it was. It was shocking that people going about their business could be killed and injured by a man in an act of pure evil in what we consider to be our safe streets. Six people were murdered, and a bright summer's day was shattered by the actions of an uncaring individual. I have struggled with that adjective because it is only through the courts that we will find the adjectives for this person. To say that the act was selfish is, I think, fair in the circumstances. The footage will be remembered by all who watched in their lounge rooms and will be imprinted in the mind's eye of all who watched it unfold in real time at the scene because it was Bourke Street. It was our street—a street that all Victorians have roamed around aimlessly or busily. It is a street that I have spent my life walking along, first as a young person, a child, on my first trip to the city in my school uniform—we would get off at Spencer Street and walk up to Bourke Street—and then as a teenager on my first trip to the city with friends. I think I was 13 when I was first allowed to go to Bourke Street. On that day a few weeks ago, I thought of all the parents making the decision about their child going to the movies in the city for the first time or going shopping with friends.

I would like to offer my condolences to the families of the victims. I also wish to sincerely thank, as have many here, the first responders for their skill and bravery. Those responders were, of course, both paid and unpaid. They were members of the public reacting instinctively and members of services who are trained in these areas. They all went towards danger to help others, unthinkingly, reacting in their humanity. I spare a thought for the police officers who attended that day. Those who worked across the day will always feel connected to that event. In particular, I think of the police officers who made the decision to draw their weapons and all that that means for those officers—not just on that day but permanently. I say that because I have good friends and relatives who are in the Victoria Police and who have shared what that moment means for any police officer.

On that day, ordinary Victorians and Australians rushed to the aid of others, even in a moment of unimaginable darkness. They reminded us all of what is good in our society. Their actions were an affirmation of all of our humanity in response to what was such an inhumane and incredibly evil act. It is difficult to understand why people decide to perpetrate such evil. However, perhaps this incident offers an insight into the character traits that suggest an ability to carry out acts of evil like this. We all know hindsight is a great thing, but we need to look for patterns in behaviour so that we can predict behaviours. If you can predict it, you may have a chance to prevent it. It seems to me that a clear pattern is emerging, which we can see in this and in other circumstances, that domestic violence might be a precursor or a predictor of repeated and escalating violence, as it was tragically in this and other cases.

I hope that we can take the hindsight of this and other events. I hope that we can systematically act from the perspective of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence. I hope that we can come together to grow new knowledge and new learning about what it is in our humanity that can suddenly become so inhumane repeatedly in these cases. I hope that, in Victoria and across Australia, our parliaments can come together—our members of parliament in this place and our senators in the other place, and those in our state parliaments—and work together. In our courts we look at case law. I hope that from this event we might pull together police, magistrates, academics, lawyers, psychologists, politicians, welfare workers and experts in this field to look at case studies to see if we can use that hindsight to create a new system. I hope that in our parliaments we can work together to study what that presents and that we can grow that knowledge to make evidence based decisions to find the appropriate balance between the presumption of innocence and the protection of the innocents.

On 20 January a violent person took the lives of Matthew Si; Jess Mudie; Bhavita Patel; a 25-year-old Japanese national; Thalia Hakin, aged 10; and Zachary Bryant, who was only three months old. I am pleased to hear that in response to this tragedy Daniel Andrews, Premier of Victoria, has announced bail law reform, so that perhaps we can prevent another tragedy, and has established a fund to assist affected families. I would urge anyone who wants to make a donation to do so through the Victorian government's website or by calling 1800 226 226.

The impact of this day will live with many Victorians for a long time. The impact on the families who lost loved ones on that day will be extraordinary. The impact on anyone who was in the city on that day, which will be forever linked to that event, will be extraordinary. It is awful to think that what played out so quickly on our television screens will have a permanent impact on so many people. It is in the interests of those that we lost that day, and the interests of those who will live with the vision, live with their reaction, live with the memory and live with the 'what if' and the 'if only'. It is for them that we need to continue to work in this space and come up with some real answers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER ( Mr Hastie ): I thank the honourable member for her remarks. As a mark of respect, I invite honourable members to rise in their places.

*Honourable members having stood in their places—*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the chamber.