



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE

National Security

SPEECH

Wednesday, 1 October 2014

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Questioner
Speaker Van Manen, Bert, MP

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Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (10:37): I appreciate this opportunity to rise and speak on the Prime Minister's statement on national security. Whilst I agree with many of the sentiments of the member for Throsby's comments, I would also like to associate myself with some of the comments from the member for Rankin, who spoke earlier and is my electoral neighbour. Both of us represent a community that has some 215 different cultures.

I would like to reflect a little more broadly on this debate and in my opening remarks address some comments made by the Canadian academic, Salim Mansur, who recently wrote about the issues that we are talking about today and, more broadly, about what is going on in the world. In an article on the Gatestone Institute website, dated 29 September, Mr Mansur states:

Broadly speaking, the struggle within Islam is between Muslims who embrace the values of the modern world in terms of freedom, individual rights, gender equality and democracy on the one side, and Muslims opposing these values and insisting on a Sharia-based legal system on the other. Any Muslim who even questions this version of Islam they refer to as a heretic or, worse, an apostate to be killed.

For Muslims who embrace modernity, Islam is a matter of personal belief, not a political system.

A reformed Islam -- greatly desired and sought after by swelling numbers of Muslims -- cannot succeed without the support of non-Muslims.

In speaking on the Prime Minister's statement, I would like to thank the constituents who have contacted my office to raise their concerns about this particular issue. I have certainly had many discussions with constituents to rightly say to them that we need to be calm and measured in our approach to this. But they also rightly share their concerns about what is happening with the Islamic State in Iraq. As previous speakers have mentioned, we know that there are at least 60 Australians fighting within terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq and at least 100 Australians who are supporting them. Furthermore, some 20 fighters have already returned to Australia.

I would like to thank our police and security agencies for the wonderful job that they have done over the past several weeks, in difficult and trying circumstances, with a focus on ensuring that we keep our communities safe for everyone in those communities. We have seen the raids in Sydney and Brisbane a couple of weeks ago and in Melbourne yesterday. Also, in my electorate of Forde, Boronia Heights was the location of one of the men arrested in the raids in Brisbane. I pay due credit to my community for the way that they have handled this news and equally for the way that the Australian Federal Police and the Queensland Police Service have handled this. As was reported in *The Courier-Mail* on 24 September, there was an active plan by this gentleman, or an alleged plan by this gentleman, to seek to behead a government official. The man has, ultimately, been charged with preparations for incursions into foreign states with the intention of engaging in hostile activities and with recruiting persons to join organisations engaged in hostile activities.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 10:42 to 10:51

Mr VAN MANEN: As I mentioned earlier, our police and security agencies are striving to stay at least one step ahead of those threatening us with harm. In the case of their recent activities over the past several weeks, the police and security agencies have been very successful. It is important that we stay calm and let the security agencies and police do their job. September 11 is a very salient reminder of what can happen if we are not vigilant and diligent, and that is why we have our security agencies and police actively prosecuting these people for breaking Australian laws.

As a preventative measure, the government will invest an additional \$630 million in a counter-terrorism package. This includes \$13.4 million to strengthen community engagement programs in Australia with an emphasis on preventing young Australians from becoming involved with extremist groups; some \$6.2 million to establish a new Australian Federal Police community diversion and monitoring team for returning foreign fighters and those who support them; \$32.7 million for a multiagency national disruption group to investigate, prosecute and disrupt foreign fighters and their supporters; and some \$11.8 million for the Australian Federal Police to bolster its ability to respond to the threat of foreign fighters at home and abroad, including local and regional liaison officers and two new investigative teams to help reduce the threat of extremists leaving Australia.

In consultation with the community, packages will be developed to address the particular requirements of young Australians at risk and may include youth diversion activities, health care, mentoring, employment, educational pathways support and counselling. There will also be referral and support processes for individuals at risk to help them disengage from their activities. That will combat online radicalisation with education programs and by working with communities, industry and overseas partners.

As a result of the rise in the warning system from medium to high, there has been a rollout of high-security protocols, which will most likely be around for some time. As I said before, we need to remain calm in the face of what is happening overseas and ensure, as I said at the outset, that we assist those in the Muslim community who want to achieve something quite different in respect of the opportunities they now have here in Australia.

Roger Scruton, in his opening comments in the book *The Closing of the Muslim Mind: How Intellectual Suicide Created the Modern Islamist*, makes an important point. It reflects what I started with at the outset, and that is that the outcome of the struggle within Islam today will have consequences for all of us. We need to understand this struggle and we need to work with those in our Muslim communities and help support them in achieving a better outcome, not only for themselves but also for the broader Australian community.

I would like to use these final few minutes to thank our armed services personnel who have gone to the Middle East and who are part of the multinational force that is seeking to degrade and, ultimately, entirely disrupt the activities of ISIS. I would also like to thank our local police and security agencies for the work that they are doing and recognise their families for supporting these people who often risk their own safety for the safety of fellow Australians, as we have seen with the recent events in Victoria.

In conclusion, I would like to quote three key passages from the Prime Minister's statement:

... first, the government will do whatever is possible to keep people safe; second, our security measures at home and abroad are directed against terrorism, not religion; and third, Australians should always live normally because the terrorists' goal is to scare us out of being ourselves.

We live in a wonderful country that has succeeded where many others have failed in integrating many different cultures into our diverse community. We should, rightly, be very proud of that and continue to work hard with all of those from various cultures to ensure that that continues to be the way we move this great country forward.