



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

November 25, 2005

A statement on terrorism by the Catholic Bishops of Australia

We, the Catholic Bishops of Australia, meeting in Conference, condemn all acts of terrorism and pledge to intensify our efforts to promote a culture of respect, dialogue and peace in our community.

In recent times we have had stark reminders of the reality of terrorism. The random killing of innocent people to impose an ideology or to seek to undermine a way of life is never acceptable. It is an evil which must be resisted at every turn.

As a community, we must always be seeking to understand the reasons behind acts of terrorism. Pointing the finger at religious minorities is not the answer and will only lead to more fear and mistrust. If there are young people in our community who feel so alienated that they would seek to harm innocent people, then we must try to understand the causes of this alienation and to address them.

Adequate anti-terrorism laws are vital at this time. Our police and intelligence agencies deserve the full support of the law and the community in their efforts to stop terrorist acts before they occur. But we must be vigilant that such laws do not undermine those very freedoms that terrorists seek to take from us. A balance is needed. We acknowledge the bipartisan approach to anti-terrorism legislation in Australia and call on all parties to ensure that proper parliamentary scrutiny is applied to such bills and that the rule of law is not compromised.

Effective laws and their enforcement are important, but they are not enough. If fear and mistrust are to be overcome, then there is a need for genuine dialogue. This will mean that cultures and traditions in our society come together to establish shared values and create new bonds of understanding. As religious leaders, we pledge ourselves to do all in our power to promote and participate in such dialogue. We call on Catholic people and all of goodwill to join us in that task.

For more information contact Bishop Christopher Saunders on 0418 260 155.