



ACSJC

AUSTRALIAN ♦ CATHOLIC ♦ SOCIAL ♦ JUSTICE ♦ COUNCIL

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MEDIA RELEASE

More time needed on Anti-Terror laws

The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council is calling on the Federal Government to allow more time for the scrutiny of its Anti-Terrorism legislation.

Bishop Christopher Saunders, ACSJC Chairman, said, "No-one would deny the Government's responsibility to ensure that Australia's security arrangements are capable of detecting and addressing potential terrorist attacks. It is essential that such arrangements adequately respect and protect the rights of all Australians.

"This legislation will be complex and it could have far-reaching consequences for the civil and political rights that all Australians presently enjoy. To push for the approval of the Bill before Christmas will undermine proper Parliamentary review and rule out the possibility of adequate public input.

"Federal authorities already have extensive powers to counter possible terrorist threats. The powers now being sought include: preventative detention without charge; the application of control orders including home detention and tracking devices; extended "stop, question and search" powers; the so-called "shoot-to-kill" power (while it appears this power may not be pursued); and, a new criminal offence of leaving baggage unattended at the airport.

"It is a concern that these powers are likely to be considered without the level of scrutiny and improvement that earlier anti-terror Bills were exposed to during 2002 and 2003.

"The ACSJC calls for more time for Parliamentary review of the proposed legislation with the opportunity for extensive public debate," Bishop Saunders concluded.

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