



ATTORNEY-GENERAL
THE HON ROBERT McCLELLAND MP

Security in Government Conference
National Convention Centre, Canberra
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Acknowledgements

Firstly, may I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land we meet on – the Ngunnawal people – and pay my respects to their elders, both past and present.

- Chair – Mr Martin Studdert AM, Executive Director Protective Security Coordination Centre
- Mr Robert Cornall, AO, Secretary, Attorney-General's Department
- Associate Professor Damien Kingsbury, School of International and Political Studies, Deakin University
- Mr Andrew Metcalfe, Secretary, Department of Immigration and Citizenship
- Inspector-General (ret.) Ansyaad Mbai, Head Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, Republic of Indonesia
- Ladies and gentlemen

Introduction

It is a pleasure to join you this morning. And it is my great honour to be doing so as Attorney-General.

This is a role I welcome with open arms – the responsibilities, the challenges, and the opportunities.

As some of you may be aware, I represent the electorate of Barton.

It, of course, was named after Sir Edmund Barton, our first Prime Minister, who was a High Court Judge.

My seat was also held by the late Dr HV Evatt, who resigned from the High Court to enter federal politics.

It is fitting that I acknowledge both men and their public service.

Throughout my career I've had a strong interest and involvement in issues of law and justice – and national security.

I believe the time is right for the nation to move forward on all these issues. And I must say the time was certainly right for this conference to be held so soon after the election – it is a fine way for us to meet.

We have serious and important issues to assess and address.

The Future of Security

Clearly, since the attacks on New York and Washington in September 2001, there have been improvements to our national security capabilities and structures.

However, there have also been failings. For example, there still appears to be some way to go in implementing the recommendations of the Wheeler Review.

It is important to ensure that we are adopting world's best practice in all areas of national security.

A change of Government presents an opportune time to evaluate – consolidate – enhance – and broaden – our approach to national security.

And this does not only involve preventing a terrorist attack – we must also be prepared to face a range of other significant challenges.

Natural disaster, pandemic or the failure of critical infrastructure also pose a dire threat to the security of our people and our nation.

With such a broad range of security concerns, one of the greatest challenges we now face in Government is how to manage the risks – both real and perceived – well into the future.

Unfortunately, there is no crystal ball to show us the way.

This is why we must work together – to talk tactics, to strategise and to reach out to help all Australians.

There has been a large emphasis on national security laws.

But as I was quoted as saying recently in the *Australian Financial*

Review, I don't think there has been enough emphasis on community building.¹

I intend to do what I can to start building bridges with communities at risk of alienation.

I think national security has to be dealt with by a mix of hard intelligence and law enforcement, as well as steps to promote greater inclusiveness and opportunity in Australia. It is a responsibility that must be shared by the leaders of all communities.

This has also been highlighted in a speech by the Secretary of my Department, Robert Cornall AO, who spoke of the need for a judicious mix of hard law enforcement and intelligence, along with effective public diplomacy.

I understand the theme of building bridges and public diplomacy was also discussed in a panel session on Wednesday.

I encourage you to continue fostering dialogues of this nature.

The cultural diversity we enjoy in Australia is not only an asset for social enrichment – it is also a potential asset for our national security.

Public Diplomacy

This is one area where I believe a more sophisticated approach to our national security could be adopted.

¹ Australian Financial Review, Friday 11 November 2007, 'Mending fences with Muslim Australia'

As overseas experience indicates, a terrorist threat in Australia has as much prospect of emanating from a disgruntled and alienated Australian youth as it does from the awakening of a sleeper cell planted by an overseas terrorist organisation.

There is considerable academic literature about effective public diplomacy, and such measures are being increasingly undertaken by other countries.

Equally, here in Australia every day of the week, there are encouraging and uplifting instances of community building – whether through multi-faith services, interactive school concerts or weekend sporting events.

These sorts of activities, as commonplace or trivial as they may seem, have the potential to build lifelong associations and friendships among young Australians, and break down the barriers that can cause alienation.

In many ways, the fact that the Cronulla riots of December 2005 were so quickly subdued is a testament to community leaders from all sides. Shortly after the riots, I participated in a touch football match organised by the then Mayor of Rockdale, who is a Muslim.

He invited Anthony Mundine and a number of prominent rugby league players, including Hazem El Masri, to play in the match on Brighton Beach.

My good friends Craig Emerson and Joe Hockey joined me in representing the Australian Parliament.

It was a fine example of how simple gestures can bring communities together.

The event was cheered on by local shopkeepers some who still had barricades on their windows from the riots of the week before. It was literally that same night the barricades were removed – without further incident since.

Vigilance

For us to move forward as a nation, we must find new and innovative ways to safeguard Australians and Australia's national interests.

And we must be prepared for a range of incidents and events – including the rapidly evolving ones such as cyber-crime and bioterrorism.

I understand Dr Richard Hames addressed these issues in his keynote speech at the Gala Dinner last night.

While significant technological advances are being made in the area of national security, we need to evaluate whether adequate and timely consideration is being given to adopting these technologies. In particular, adopting them in a manner that is in accordance with nationally consistent protocols and practices.

For us to move forward as a nation, we must also manage the risks and embrace the uncertainties – of which there are many.

One thing, however, is certain. The future of security requires every action to be underpinned with vigilance. This is where all of us – whether in Government, industry, or the wider community – have a central role to play.

Of course, I should emphasise at this point that the role of security in our democracy is *not* vigilantism.

This would be contrary to our Australian values.

It is vitally important that the public does not perceive the Government as being prepared to exploit insecurities for political gain.

So for example, while we must fight terror with determination, we must also do so by promoting justice, the rule of law, genuine peace and inclusive development.

To do otherwise risks losing public trust.

Franco Frattini, European Commissioner responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security, has recently described public trust as being two-fold:²

Our citizens entrust us with the task of protecting them against crime and terrorist attacks; however, at the same time, they entrust us with safeguarding their fundamental rights.

We cannot risk losing this trust.

This means that any necessary steps we take to enforce security must always be accompanied by adequate safeguards to ensure scrutiny, accountability and transparency.

It is essential that we remain ever vigilant to the two pronged challenges.

² Address to EU Conference on Public Security, Privacy and Technology (20 November 2007)
<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/07/728>

As Thomas Jefferson said:

*The price of freedom is eternal vigilance.*³

This statement is as relevant today as it was in the 1800s.

Conclusion

As we look to the future of security, we can now do so with renewed vigour.

We are stepping into a new era of success for Australia. And I am looking forward to working constructively with all agencies and key players to achieve this.

Today, I've only touched on a few ways for us to move forward. But I hope the message about public diplomacy is something you consider further.

I thank you and congratulate you for your contribution to this conference. I look forward to the outcomes and assure you that I will pay careful attention to the constructive suggestions that come out of your discussions.

ENDS

³ Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) Third President of the United States of America (1801-1809)