



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**ASSISTING THE VICTIMS OF  
OVERSEAS TERRORISM BILL 2010**

**Second Reading**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 28 February 2011**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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# SPEECH

**Date** Monday, 28 February 2011  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Abbott, Tony, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (8.41 pm)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am very pleased and proud to rise in this House to support this piece of legislation which was introduced into the previous parliament but unfortunately lapsed when the parliament was prorogued. I have reintroduced it into the parliament because I believe this is an important gap in our provision for people who suffer simply because they are Australian. As I have already indicated to the House in the first reading speech, this bill is designed to support Australian victims of overseas terrorist acts. These are people who suffer because they have been deliberately targeted by terrorist groups by virtue of being Australians or of being Westerners. What I am attempting with this piece of legislation is to ensure that support exists for them which is analogous to the support which has long been available to the victims of ordinary crime under the state and territory victims of crime schemes. What I am proposing is not radical, it is not particularly expensive, it is not novel, it is not, in the Sir Humphrey Appleby sense, courageous; it is simply extending to the victims of international terrorism the same kind of support that would be extended to the victims of domestic crime by the states and territories. It is a very modest but important measure to fill a significant gap in the support that our country gives to people who have suffered through no fault of their own.

In no way do I wish to score political points here. In no way do I wish to gain political kudos. I simply wish our parliament, our government and our country to accord to Australians who have suffered through terrorist acts this additional measure of recognition. Nothing would give me greater satisfaction than to see this measure, or a measure like it, or an improved measure taken up by the government and adopted as a government measure. I would be thrilled if the Attorney-General or the Prime Minister were to so act.

I want to pay tribute to the Attorney-General and also to the former Prime Minister, Mr Rudd, for the sympathetic consideration that they have given to my bill. My office was briefed by officers of the Attorney-General's Department on the government's general issues. One of the questions that were raised was about the potential problem, as they saw it, of Australian citizens overseas—in, for instance, Middle Eastern

countries—who are caught up in terrorist incidents being eligible for this kind of assistance and blowing out the budget. I think there is a very straightforward way around this. The scheme that I am proposing is to be set up by regulation made by the minister and, if there is genuine concern on the government's part about this, there is a very easy way around it—the scheme would only apply to people who are Australian domiciled as well as Australian citizens. That way, Australian citizens who are not living here in Australia and are caught up in terrorist incidents would not be covered. So there is an easy way under the bill as submitted to the parliament, being debated tonight, to address the issue that was raised by officers of the Attorney-General's Department.

I do not wish to detain the House long, given that I had my 10 minutes in introducing the bill and given that I have spoken to it before in this chamber and in the Main Committee. I do believe that it is important to give others the opportunity to speak, should they wish to speak, in the time allocated to this debate. I simply wish to reiterate that there are ways within the bill as drafted to address all of the various problems that have been put to me by people who I have been promoting this bill to. There are ways of handling them. As I said, nothing would give me greater satisfaction than to see this bill adopted by the government. In that way, the whole of the parliament, and the government in particular, could take the credit for addressing the serious problem in our current levels of assistance for people who are hurt simply because they are Australian by people who have a hatred for our way of life.