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**THE HON. TONY ABBOTT MP, PRIME MINISTER
SENATOR THE HON. GEORGE BRANDIS QC, ATTORNEY-GENERAL**

NEW COUNTER-TERRORISM MEASURES FOR A SAFER AUSTRALIA

The Government will introduce a range of counter-terrorism measures to give security agencies the resources and legislative powers needed to combat home-grown terrorism and Australians who participate in terrorist activities overseas.

The threat to Australia and Australians from extremists is real and growing.

Australian citizens and dual nationals are currently fighting overseas in Iraq, Syria and other conflicts, committing unspeakable atrocities and honing terrorist skills.

Many violent jihadists will attempt to return home.

To combat terrorism at home, and to prevent Australians committing terrorist acts abroad, our counter-terrorism agencies must be properly resourced and have legislative powers to respond to technological change and evolving threats.

An effective counter-terrorism response includes the ability to identify and prevent known extremists from leaving Australia to participate in foreign conflicts.

We must be able to obtain and use evidence from overseas to prosecute extremists when they return to Australia and monitor and disrupt their activities at home.

And we must be able to keep pace with the sophisticated technology at their disposal.

These counter-terrorism measures will ensure that we can:

- Increase intelligence collection and assessment to better understand the onshore and offshore threat;
- Enhance border protection measures to prevent terrorists leaving Australia and identify those wanting to return;
- Improve the technical capabilities of our agencies; and
- Provide adequate resources to engage those at risk of radicalisation.

The Government's counter-terrorism response will include:

- More than \$600 million in additional funding over the next four years for agencies involved in counter-terrorism activity (including ASIO, the AFP, ASIS, ONA, and Customs and Border Protection). This funding responds to reduced agency expenditure on counter-terrorism since 2009 and supports new programmes to bolster monitoring and disruption activities in Australia and overseas;
- Further legislative measures (in addition to those currently before Parliament) to toughen our national security laws. Together, these changes will strengthen our ability to arrest, monitor, investigate and prosecute returning foreign fighters, prevent extremists departing and broaden the criteria for terrorist organisations to include those that encourage terrorist acts; and
- A review of Australia's counter-terrorism coordinating machinery (to report by the end of the year). Australia is well served by the agencies involved in counter-terrorism, but the review will ensure that they are as well organised, targeted and effective as possible to meet current and emerging threats, drawing where appropriate on international best practice.

The legislative measures include:

- Broadening the listing criteria for terrorist organisations to ensure advocacy of terrorist acts is not limited to specific acts and that advocacy captures promotion and encouragement of terrorism;
- Making it easier to arrest terrorists by lowering the threshold for arrest without warrant for terrorism offences;
- Ensuring ASIO can access its questioning and detention powers beyond July 2016 (when they are scheduled to expire under current legislation) and that the AFP can continue to access control orders and preventative detention orders (powers which are scheduled to expire in December 2015);
- Extending AFP stop, search and seizure powers in relation to terrorist acts and offences beyond December 2015;
- Improving the ability of the AFP to seek control orders on returning foreign fighters;
- Making it easier to prosecute foreign fighters, including by making it an offence to travel to a designated area where terrorist organisations are conducting hostile activities unless there is a legitimate purpose;
- Clarifying that it is an offence to participate in any way in terrorist training; and
- Enabling ASIO to request suspension of an Australian passport (or foreign passport for a dual national) in appropriate circumstances.

The Government also intends to introduce further legislation to improve the collection and admissibility of evidence abroad, lower standards of proof for elements of offences committed overseas and update Australia's telecommunication interception law which predates the internet era and is increasingly ineffective.

The Government will be working closely with the states and territories on these legislative measures – ensuring we have a consistent national approach to countering the terrorist threat.

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These powers will also be balanced with proper oversight to protect the individual rights of Australians, including their right to privacy. To ensure this, the Government will increase the resources of the independent Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security.

We can only effectively combat the threat posed by terrorists and extremists if we first know who they are and what they are planning.

Terrorists and violent extremists represent a fringe minority and an affront to the values of all Australians. The Government will continue to work closely with communities, including the Muslim community, to address radicalisation and the threat that it poses.

These measures underline our commitment to a safe and secure Australia.

The Government will release further details of the new measures in due course.

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