

Friday, 9 June 2017

## COAG must prioritise risk assessment tools used for parole and bail

The Law Council of Australia today called on COAG to give high priority to developing superior risk assessment tools, not only in relation to those convicted of terrorist offences but for violent offenders who may have a propensity for extremist views or terrorism activity.

This week's terror attack in Melbourne, and the Lindt café siege in Sydney, have underscored the inadequacy of various risk assessment tools in judging the likelihood of a violent offender engaging in terrorist activity if released on parole or bail.

While work is underway at a federal level on new risk assessment tools for convicted terror offenders to predict the likelihood of further terrorism activity, there appears to be a gap in risk assessment tools focusing on violent offenders who may have a propensity for extremist views or terrorism activity.

Law Council President, Fiona McLeod SC, said the need for improvement was compelling.

"Courts and parole boards making decisions about bail and parole can make good decisions if they have sound information and effective tools permitting an accurate assessment of risk. We need to improve the tools used to assess violent offenders," Ms McLeod said.

"As we have unfortunately seen from recent experience, there is no neat line to be drawn between violent offenders and terrorists.

"We have to recognise that the capacity of current risk assessment tools to predict future terrorist activity is at best, limited."

Ms McLeod said that improving information sharing should also be an area of focus at COAG.

"We need to critically examine why there appears to be an absence of effective information sharing between intelligence agencies, law enforcement, and parole boards," Ms McLeod said.

"ASIO and the AFP already have the power to share information with State and Territory bodies including police. There needs to be clarity about when and how that information should be shared.

"We also need to ensure that individuals with extremist views and a propensity for violence are able to participate in de-radicalisation programs, regardless of whether or not they have been convicted of terrorist offences."

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