



SEPTEMBER 2011

REMEMBERING SEPTEMBER 11

Marking the tenth anniversary of the attacks wrought on American civilians by Islamic terrorists is a dark occasion indeed. Yet it also provides an important opportunity to reflect on an event as momentous as it was tragic, whose impact shaped the key global issues of the last decade.

Australians can be proud that we recognised the attacks of September 11 not only as an attack on America, but as an attack on the Western liberal values that our own country holds dear. Then Prime Minister John Howard knew immediately that those who seek to murder American civilians would just as soon wreak the destruction they caused on September 11 on our own soil if given the chance. The renewed strength and depth of the Australian-American relationship in the wake of September 11 reflected the fact that our shared values and beliefs were under attack.

The vicious method employed by those who inflicted the attacks of September 11 were so barbaric, and their results so horrific, that the event itself often obscures from attention the motivation behind the attack. The objective of those who perpetrated these attacks was not to fly civilian aircraft into American landmarks; these were mere tactics to achieve the ultimate aim of the destruction of Western culture and the values upon which it is built.

Christopher Hitchens summed it up well when he stated that Al Qaeda employs terrorism in order to bring about its ultimate objective; the transformation of the global community into "a stone age society without music, culture, philosophy or dialectic of any kind – the model being Taliban Afghanistan."

It's a shame that it has become politically incorrect to say that our way of life is more enlightened and more tolerant than that which these

extremists would impose upon us. We should celebrate that the foundation stones of our society promote individual liberty and tolerance, rather than kowtow to cultural relativism.

Australians must never forget what happened in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania on the 11th of September 10 years ago. It's not about maintaining hatred and anger towards those who inflicted these atrocities. It's about remembering how important it is that tolerance, freedom and decency remain strong in our own country and across the world.

We mustn't allow an attack on our values to result in us abandoning those values. America and the West are certainly not flawless. Our societies are not without problems or difficulties or challenges. But it is vital that we remember that September 11 was not an attack on us because of the negative elements of our societies. September 11 was an attack on us because of the good things in our society.

The terrorists who flew those planes into the World Trade Centre did so because they were fundamentally and violently opposed to the truly wonderful things about Western civilisation. They hate democracy. They despise pluralism. They detest secularism. And they loathe tolerance. These attacks were a direct assault on the key tenets on which our nation and others have been built.

As we all pause to remember the thousands of innocent lives lost on September 11 and in attacks since, let us steel our commitment to the values we hold dear. We must not waiver in our resolve that our nation is built on beliefs that are good and right.

Senator Mitch Fifield
Senator for Victoria
42 Florence St Mentone VIC 3194
Ph: 03 9584 2455 Email: senator.ffield@aph.gov.au