

EXTRACT From Interview with Neil Mitchell, 3AW

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Prime Minister
E&OE

NEIL MITCHELL:

Fair enough. What I wanted to ask before we went off on that tangent – but it is an important one – George Christensen, one of your MPs who was involved in the superannuation thing, threatened to cross the floor. Last night in Parliament he sounded a bit like Pauline Hanson. He raised the issue of Islamic terrorism – he said this:

GEORGE CHRISTENSEN – VOICEOVER:

I am concerned about the rise of Islamism in this country and those who are willing to commit violence in the name of that ideology. I think we should consider some tighter controls on borders such as restricting immigration from countries where there is a high prevalence of violent extremism and radicalism.

NEIL MITCHELL:

Well he is one of yours – is he right?

PRIME MINISTER:

I'm not going to run a commentary on George but let me address the point.

NEIL MITCHELL:

Well it is not just him, it's Pauline Hanson as well.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes. Our immigration policy is absolutely non-discriminatory. Having said that, we pay great attention to security considerations and obviously with Islamist terrorism - and that is a fact, there is no point being merely mouthed about it - not all of the terrorism in the world is motivated by Islamist ideology but a great deal of it is. In fact, most of the immediate challenge for us in our region particularly, is motivated by that. So we do pay very close attention to security and the protections, the security that Julie Bishop and Peter Dutton manage in their respective portfolios, on our borders is absolutely the best in the world.

NEIL MITCHELL:

But he is asking for tighter controls specifically on Islamic refugees and migration. What do you say to that?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well what Mr Christensen was saying was that people should not be allowed to be admitted to Australia if they come from particular countries. Well, let me give you an example – there

is no country in the world that is more racked by terrorism than Syria, OK? We are taking a number, a substantial number, some thousands, 12,000 in due course in one program alone from the Syrian conflict zone. These are people from oppressed minorities; these are people that have been victims of terrorism. So we are protecting them.

NEIL MITCHELL:

I understand that, but do you see that he and to an extent Pauline Hanson are perhaps touching a nerve that exists in the public arena and there is a concern about this?

PRIME MINISTER:

There is and there should be a concern about terrorism. There are people within Australia, we've seen examples very recently, who seek to do us harm, who do not like our free way of life and seek to undermine it.

NEIL MITCHELL:

But Prime Minister this goes further than that, this goes to a fear of Islam, a fear of Islamic people living in this country even if they are born in this country. You've heard what Pauline Hanson said, Mr Christensen is reflecting much of that.

PRIME MINISTER:

Again I think if you listen to what - he was talking about, as I heard it, Islamist terrorist ideology and that is absolutely the focus of so much of our counter-terrorism work.

But can I just say to you that tagging all Muslims with the crimes of a few, is fundamentally wrong and it's also counter-productive. This is a very important point. The most valuable tool our security services have to keep us safe is intelligence. They need to know what is going on. The way they find out what is going on is through talking to the community and in particular the Muslim community.

Seeking to demonise or denigrate all Muslims, or seek to alienate all Muslims and suggest they're somehow not part of Australia or shouldn't be in Australia - that is exactly what the extremists and the terrorists are saying to the Muslim community.

So what we need to do and I need to do and frankly you need to do - all of us - in the nation's interest, is to say we are the most successful multicultural society in the world. Australian Muslims are part of that successful multicultural society. You're born here, you're part of the country, you're included and what we need is their support, we need support from all Australians to work together to defend ourselves against terrorism and above all, to provide our agencies with the intelligence they need.

NEIL MITCHELL:

Pauline Hanson also made a comment about "welfare should stop after a person on welfare has one child". Now I criticise that and there is today, people telling me I was wrong. Does she have a point? Do we need to have a stricter cut off point on welfare particularly with people with multiple children?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well Neil the answer to that is no. These - sweeping observations like that, I mean...

She has been elected, over half a million people voted for One Nation and she is a Senator and she is entitled to express –

NEIL MITCHELL:

But is she divisive, is she dividing the country with this sort of stuff?

PRIME MINISTER:

Neil, I'm not going to run a commentary on her. I mean I was asked about her views on migration and obviously everybody knows I don't agree with them. My commitment is to an inclusive multicultural society which is based on mutual respect. The more we respect each other the more secure we become.