

Statement on the attack in Manchester

23rd May 2017 | [Comments](#) | [Transcripts](#)

E&OE...

PRIME MINISTER:

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Australia's heartfelt sympathy and resolute solidarity is with the people of the United Kingdom. We stand with them today as we always have and always will, steadfast allies in freedom's cause.

So far, we know that at least 19 people have been killed and about 60 injured, as the result of an explosion at the Manchester Arena shortly after the conclusion of an Ariana Grande concert last night.

As I speak to the House now, the cause of the blast is unknown, but the authorities in the United Kingdom are treating it as a terrorist attack.

This would be the deadliest attack in the United Kingdom since the London bombings of July 2005. Our thoughts and our prayers are with the victims of this attack and with their families. As parents, we keenly feel the anxiety of those waiting to learn of their children's safety on this terrible night. Mr Speaker, this incident, this attack, is especially vile, especially criminal, especially horrific - because it appears to have been deliberately directed at teenagers.

This is an attack on innocence.

Surely there is no crime more reprehensible than the murder of children.

This is a direct and brutal attack on young people everywhere, on freedom everywhere.

Already, Mr Speaker, we are seeing the stories of bravery, solidarity and compassion emerging from this tragedy, as people rallied without a second thought to help each other. Emergency workers rushed to the arena, towards the danger, as concert goers fled from it. On the streets and online, beds, phone chargers, cups of tea were being offered to those caught up in the attack. Now this morning, I've spoken with our counterterrorism coordinator Tony Sheehan, to Alexander Downer, our High Commissioner in London who is liaising closely with British authorities. I've also spoken to her excellency the British High Commissioner, Menna Rawlings and Mr Speaker, as you acknowledged, we welcome the presence of her deputy Ingrid Southworth in the house today.

In this House, built upon the values and the freedoms of British people, of the British Parliament itself, surrounded, here we are, reminded of the freedoms that British people established at Westminster.

We stand with you and we thank you for being here with us today.

The Australian High Commission in London is making urgent inquiries to determine if any Australians have been affected by this attack. I urge any Australians in the UK to heed the advice of the British authorities and to contact the United Kingdom's anti-terrorist hotline if you have any information

that you think may be relevant to the incident in Manchester. Australians in the UK or at home, who are concerned about friends or relatives who could be affected by this attack, should call the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade consular line.

Within Australia, it is 1300 555 135 and from overseas, +61 26261 3305.

Now Mr Speaker, Australian and British agencies work closely together, none closer, right across the full spectrum of our counterterrorism work.

These partnerships are enduring and they are essential to keeping our nation safe. This attack comes just two months after a terrorist targeted Westminster, striking at the very heart of the democracy, killing six innocent people.

Now Mr Speaker, safely enjoying public places - from sports arenas to local markets - is parts of the way of life in the United Kingdom just as it is here. It is a basic human right to be able to go out into public places and into public spaces, to shop, to go to a concert, to do our business, to take our exercise.

Keeping Australians safe is our first priority, as it is keeping Britain safe, the first priority of Prime Minister May. Now, we already have strong arrangements here to protect public places, including close cooperation between governments, law enforcement agencies and the operators of public venues. My Government is working intensively with the other jurisdictions in Australia and cooperating with our international counterparts, to further develop our national strategy for protecting places of mass gathering.

We have seen too many crimes perpetrated by acts of violence and terrorism in places of mass gathering, not to realise that we need to do more to keep our public places safe. It is a very, very high priority.

Now, Mr Speaker, too often, we stand in this chamber offering our sympathy and support to those confronting horrific attacks like what we've seen today. Once again, Australia stands with Britain in resolute solidarity, partners in freedom's cause. Tireless in our defence of our people's safety and their liberty.

Our nations will never give in to terror.

[ENDS]