

Shorten must back us on terror laws: Dutton



Australian Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton says thought new anti-terror laws must be passed by parliament in the next sitting fortnight. Picture: Dan Peled/AAP

Richard Ferguson, Reporter, 2:27PM November 20, 2018

Bill Shorten needs to back tough new anti-terror laws which would allow police to access encrypted messages following the arrest of three alleged terrorists in Melbourne, Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton says.

Victoria Police claimed today that three men they allege wanted to obtain a gun and shoot Melbourne crowds used encrypted messaging systems to hide their plot.

The Home Affairs Minister said stalled laws which allow police and ASIO to access encrypted messaging must be passed in the next sitting fortnight to foil future terrorist plots.

“I want to call on the Intelligence Committee today within the parliament to return their advice back to parliament very quickly because this is legislation the government needs to deal with very quickly,” he told reporters. “We have a bill before the parliament that provides the appropriate safety mechanisms, the privacy protections in place, but it allows police and ASIO to do their jobs in relation to these terrorist investigations.”

“Mr Shorten has been opposed to this legislation but he needs to review his position as well. We are in a position of vulnerability.”

Security officials have said in the past that new encryption laws must be passed to allow authorities to keep up with technology, but privacy advocates are concerned Mr Dutton's anti-terror bill is too broad.

Mr Dutton also attacked Victorian Attorney-General Martin Pakula for his handling of the aftermath of the Bourke Street terrorist incident in his press conference. Mr Pakula said earlier this week that Victoria Police was never told that terrorist Hassan Kalif Shire Ali's passport had been cancelled.

ASIO, the Federal Department of Home Affairs, and Victoria Police chief commissioner Graham Ashton later contradicted his claims. "The Attorney-General in Victoria hasn't yet as I understand it corrected the record in relation to a false statement he made about whether or not information was shared in relation to Shire Ali and the issues around bail," Mr Dutton told reporters in Sydney.

"The fact that the Victorian Attorney-General wouldn't know that really is quite incredulous. So he needs to correct the record because he's made a statement which is incorrect. "He needs to apologise for that and Premier Andrews, frankly, needs to chastise him for what is a very significant error."