

Secrets of Howard's terror plan

By [Ian McPhedran](#)

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THE Federal Government's tough new anti-terrorism laws go much further than previously stated, according to a draft copy of the Bill published yesterday on the ACT Government's website.

Sweeping shoot-to-kill powers and strict secrecy provisions will further spook civil libertarians, who regard the new laws as draconian.

According to the draft, the Australian Federal Police will be given extraordinary "preventive detention" powers to lock up anyone they believe might be involved in or have knowledge of a terrorist act.

If a suspect refuses to surrender, the police will be authorised to cause their "death or grievous bodily harm" provided the person "cannot be apprehended in any other manner".

The Attorney-General's Department last night said ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope's decision to publish the draft was "disappointing" and claimed it was being amended.

However, the move by Mr Stanhope – sparked by his belief the community should know about the laws – has enabled the airing of more details, which include:

POWERS to prevent detainees from telling relatives they are being detained;

LIFE in jail for financing terrorism;

SUSPECTS to wear tracking devices;

SUSPECTS or those with knowledge prevented from working, using phones or the internet;

ACCESS only to lawyers who are security cleared and all contact monitored by police;

SUSPECTS or associates banned from leaving the country;

RESTRICTED movement between specified times each day; and

POLICE will be able to order transport operators to provide details of cargoes and then swear them to secrecy under threat of two years in jail.

The Bill also overhauls sedition laws – seven years jail for inciting hatred or encouraging an enemy.

Mr Stanhope and other state leaders signed off on the tough package last month, but the

ACT chief now believes the community must be consulted before the laws are passed.

Just one day has been set aside for the Senate to review the legislation.

The Howard Government tried to force Mr Stanhope to remove the draft 107-page Bill from his website yesterday, but he flatly refused.

He said he was not prepared to keep the people of the ACT in the dark.

"I believe all Australians should have the opportunity to see, think about and have input into this legislation," he said.

"These laws are of such significance that every individual and every organisation has the right to have a proper look at the drafts before they (become) law.

"It is appalling that the Howard Government apparently believes that the people of Australia have no right to see this draft legislation, or to have any input whatsoever into its formulation," Mr Stanhope said.

A spokeswoman for Attorney-General Philip Ruddock said Mr Stanhope's move was "disappointing".

Despite the fact that it was the document signed off by state leaders the spokeswoman said it was an "incomplete and inaccurate document".

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