



When Prime Minister Anthony Albanese described the Bondi Beach massacre as an act of “pure evil,” he spoke to a nation in shock. Fifteen lives ended in minutes. A ten-year-old girl among them. Australia was jolted out of its illusion that extreme violence is something that happens elsewhere, to other people, in different countries.

But what do we really mean when we call something “pure evil”? And more importantly, does that moral language shape our response? Or is it a platitude we reach for when naming and addressing the truth is not convenient and safe?

We Cannot Respond Meaningfully Without Naming Evil Clearly

If we are to respond meaningfully and effectively to the Bondi massacre, we must confront the reality of evil for what it is, both in the extremist ideology that motivated the attack and in the temptation for our own political response to be shaped by fear, self-interest, or avoidance.

A response grounded in truth requires moral clarity, not euphemism. It requires leadership that contends with reality, not language crafted to soften it.

The NSW Police Commissioner determined on the night of the shooting that this was a terrorist attack. That clarity matters. But we must go further: this was an attack motivated by radical Islamist extremism.

To call it only “hate” is to obscure the driver of violence.

To call it only “antisemitism” is to underestimate the ideology behind it.

To call it “senseless violence” is to deny the deliberate, calculated nature of what occurred.

There is nothing “senseless” about travelling overseas to be radicalised and trained.

There is nothing “senseless” about targeting Jewish Australians celebrating Hanukkah at one of our most iconic beaches.

This was purposeful. It was ideological. It was evil.

Until we acknowledge that extremist Islamist ideology has been allowed to take root in Australia, especially since October 7 2023, our response as a nation will be the only thing that remains senseless.

This is where leadership either rises to the moment or collapses into politics.

Leadership Must Be Motivated by Truth, Not Politics

Former Treasurer Josh Frydenberg's exchange on ABC's 7.30 captured the tension at the heart of this moment. When asked whether his impassioned response was politically motivated, he replied:

"I'm deeply offended by what you've just said... I am an Australian who has to have personal security because my life is endangered in this country... My children go to a school where there are armed guards outside... When I send my kids to Jewish sporting clubs, there are police cars out there and police tape."

I credit Frydenberg's response. Something bigger than his political persuasion is going on here. Something that should not divide us.

Here is a father speaking from lived experience as an Australian whose safety has been compromised. A tragic reflection on how far our country has descended, that many across the Jewish Australian community live in fear.

This should concern us all.

Frydenberg's rebuke of Sarah Ferguson highlighted a deeper issue: too often, contemporary political leadership, legacy media, and social media commentators retreat into political calculation, tribalism, and blame shifting.

At the very moment when leadership and moral clarity are most needed, fingers are pointing in every direction except to ourselves. Our country needs bipartisan strength to confront the radicalism behind this attack, not a focus on optics and political allegiances.

As has been said, "An attack on the Jewish community is an attack on all of us". This is not to diminish that the Jewish community was the target of this violence, but to give us pause to reflect upon our shared responsibility in confronting it.

This is not the time for political and personal lambasting.

This is the time for decisive leadership that names and addresses Islamic radicalism and unifies the nation against it.

Policy Must Address Root Causes, Not Scapegoats

NSW Premier Chris Minns has recalled Parliament to pass what he calls "the toughest gun laws in Australia." Gun laws are a legitimate area of debate, but they are not the core issue here. Focusing on the weapon avoids confronting the ideology that motivated the person who pulled the trigger.

At the federal level, Minister Tony Burke supported the Prime Minister's push for tougher hatecrime laws, saying, "we have no time for organisations whose mission is to hate Australia." But "hate" is an imprecise category. It risks sweeping in groups that simply hold unpopular views, while failing to distinguish between legitimate, strong civic disagreement and genuine extremist incitement and violence.

If we are serious about preventing future attacks, policy must address the actual drivers of extremist violence, including:

Stronger immigration screening that identifies and prevents entry for individuals with extremist affiliations.

Clearer deportation powers for non-citizens who incite violence or glorify terrorism.

Targeted protest laws that crack down on gatherings that cross into incitement, glorification of violence, or propping up terrorist organisations, without undermining the civil liberties of Australians who protest in good faith.

Enhanced counterterrorism capabilities and resources to detect, disrupt, and prosecute extremist networks.

These measures would constitute a proactive approach to targeting the real issue: extremist Islamic ideology and the pathways that enable it to grow.

Yet policy alone cannot carry the weight of what we are confronting.

The Deeper Moral Reality: Good and Evil

In moments like this, we are forced to confront the reality of "pure evil": not as a sentimental phrase, but as something objectively real that destroys lives, families, and communities.

But we must also confront the reality of the human heart, including our own. Scripture reminds us that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick" (Jer 17:9). That warning is not abstract. It presses us to ask: What shapes our national response to evil?

Is it fear?

Self-interest?

Political calculation?

Or a genuine desire to protect the vulnerable, uphold truth, and do what is right?

For Christians, this moment sits within a deeper story. At Christmas, we remember that "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5). Evil is real, but it is not ultimate. The hope of redemption, forgiveness, and renewal in Jesus Christ is not naïve, it is the foundation that enables us to face evil without being consumed by it. It reminds us that justice, truth, and human life matter because every person is made in the image of God.

Policy alone cannot heal a nation.

But a nation without moral grounding cannot craft wise policy.

Australia needs clarity, courage, and conviction, and those virtues do not arise from political instinct but from moral truth. We need our leaders and ourselves to see clearly again, especially when confronting what is “pure evil”.

Conclusion

If we want a safer nation, we must confront evil honestly, in the world and in ourselves.

That means naming extremist ideology clearly. It means rejecting political optics and personal power plays. It means crafting policy that addresses real causes, not convenient distractions.

More importantly, for the reader, as we come to Christmas, it means facing the darkness in our own hearts by looking upon Christ. At this time, we celebrate His birth. Born for a purpose. The one who entered the world to expose darkness, to set us free in truth, and offer a hope that overcomes our deepest fears.

In the truth of the Christmas message, we have the most decisive response to “pure evil” of all, that it is overcome, defeated once and for all. In this, we hope, and in this, we move forward.

Blessings,



Joshua Rowe

NSW/ACT Director

Australian Christian Lobby