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**STATEMENT ON TARGETED STRIKES IN SYRIA**

Labor supports the appropriate and targeted response to the chemical weapons attack in Eastern Ghouta which injured 500 people, and killed 70.

We note the military strikes in Syria are a joint action by the US, UK and France, designed to prevent more atrocities against civilians by targeting the facilities and infrastructure that enables the chemical weapons attack, and to send a clear signal such attacks cannot be tolerated. Labor has been briefed by the Government, and will be receiving a fuller briefing from our security agencies on this mission.

Chemical weapons are forbidden by the UN and those responsible for this barbaric and criminal act have to be held to account for their flagrant breach of longstanding international law.

Labor condemns Russia's veto of the UN Security Council Resolution authorising action to investigate the chemical weapons attacks. It is tantamount to Russian support for such attacks. That is completely unacceptable, and has left few other options available for the international community to take action against Syria, and demonstrate its abhorrence of this latest attack.

We know the Assad regime has been guilty of similar attacks in recent years and the ongoing brutality towards its own people confirms the regime should have no place in a future, stable, post-war Syria.

Last month marked the 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the Syrian civil war, a tragic conflict which has now claimed the lives of half a million people.

The international community must redouble its efforts towards a political solution to the conflict in Syria. In the meantime, Australia must do more to help alleviate the terrible humanitarian suffering. Over half of Syria's pre-conflict population have had to flee their homes, and left at least 13.5 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance.

Labor urges all parties involved in the continuing conflict in Syria, including Russia and Iran, to apply maximum pressure on the Syrian regime to bring an immediate end to the production and use of chemical weapons, and to bring an end to this conflict which has caused so much suffering for the Syrian people.

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***Authorised by Noah Carroll ALP Canberra***