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SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

SPEECH AT GEELONG MOSQUE OPEN DAY

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**GEELONG MOSQUE
MANIFOLD HEIGHTS, VIC**

*****CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*****

Can I start off by acknowledging the Wathaurong people, the traditional owners of the land on which we meet; can I pay my respects to my fellow parliamentarians who are with me at the front. Can I thank all of you for taking the time to be here today. It is a genuinely, genuinely remarkable moment.

I'm very lucky in the job that I do. It gives me an opportunity to walk around my community and see a whole range of different components to it; different peoples, different activities which give rise to the richness of who we are. Along the way I get to meet remarkable people, and there's a really remarkable person who leads the Geelong Islamic community here, Sheikh Mohammed Ramzan. It has been my enormous privilege over the last few years to get to know Mohammed such that now I very much call him my friend.

I've watched him in times of trial and tribulation for this building, this community,

but beyond that, for all of us here in Geelong. I have watched Mohammed lead. He is the personification of the tremendous power that comes with human dignity. He is a beacon of peace and only speaks in those terms about what this community represents and about what his message to this community and to all of us above and beyond that is.

What occurred on Friday was horrific and it was so deeply confronting. It was confronting in its brutality. It was confronting in its violence. It was confronting in its arbitrariness. It was confronting in the extremely public way in which it occurred.

For all of that, I think the most confronting part of it was the name in which it was done. This is abhorrent and has no place within our community.

It is confronting that this occurred at the hand of an Australian. It does ask really difficult questions that we must not shirk from about our society. The exploitation of fear has no place in it.

There is another Australia, a wonderful Australia, that I believe in, which is so beautifully on display here - an Australia which is not defined by whether we are white or whether we are black. It's not defined by whether we are Christian, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, although we are all of those things. It's defined by a common set of values: values of compassion; of fairness; of justice; of egalitarianism; values of generosity; and values of openheartedness towards all of us within this community. These values are so incredibly on display here today. It is that Australia on display here through all of you, which I want to say to you, Mohammed, and through you to the entire Geelong Islamic community; it is that Australia which stands in solidarity with the Geelong Islamic community today.

Harm and violence done to the Geelong Islamic community is harm and violence done to all of us. Anger and hatred directed at you is anger and hatred directed at all of us, and we stand with you to confront that.

The Quran tells us that there is good and evil in the world and certainly we saw evil on display on Friday. Equally, the Quran is very specific in what it asks of people in the face of evil and suffering. The Quran says “*command what is right*”, that in the face of good and evil each of us in our own lives, in the way we respond, must do the right thing. We must be on the side of good.

The Quran says to “*hold to forgiveness*”, and it asks you, as you heard in the beautiful Quranic verse that was read earlier, to be patient. Forgiveness and patience is so important in the face of the kind of evil we saw on Friday, because only through that does the cycle of violence and suffering and hatred stop.

Most of all, what the Quran asks of us in this moment is faith. Certainly, in the face of the inexplicable events that we saw on Friday, a faith in a higher being, the submission to that, the prayers that go with it, seem the right response. So today I want to say to you all that our prayers are with the Geelong Islamic community. They are with those who lost their lives in Christchurch on Friday and with all who are grieving for them. And after the horror of Friday, finally we pray deeply for a better world.

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