

**Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security**

**Interim Report**

**Inquiry into Extremist Movements and Radicalism in Australia**

**March 2022**

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS) commenced its inquiry into extremist movements and radicalisation in December 2020 following receipt of a referral from the then Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon Peter Dutton MP.

The PJCIS received a great deal of interest in this inquiry and, due to the sensitivities of the subject, carefully considered various matters prior to publishing evidence. The PJCIS published 19 submissions and 10 supplementary submissions and held two days of public hearings in April 2021. The PJCIS also received numerous private briefings on security matters in relation to this inquiry and received further evidence which remains confidential to the Committee.

The PJCIS thanks all participants for their contributions to the inquiry. All participants may be assured that the information provided has been carefully considered by the PJCIS as part of the overall evidence received.

The threats of extremist movements and radicalisation in Australia are evolving, and the Committee notes the last two Annual Threat Assessments by the Director-General of Security. On 17 March 2021 the Director-General stated:

In addition to the enduring threat from religiously motivated violent extremists is a growing assortment of individuals with ideological grievances.

So-called right-wing extremism has been in ASIO's sights for many years, and last year I called out what we have been seeing.

Since then, ideological extremism investigations have grown from around one-third of our priority counter-terrorism caseload, to around 40 per cent. This reflects a growing international trend, as well as our decision to dedicate more resources to the emerging domestic threat.<sup>1</sup>

And on 9 February 2022, the Director-General stated:

The most likely terrorist attack scenario in Australia over the next 12 months continues to be a lone-actor attack—and that fact weighs heavily on my mind and the minds of our staff. ...

Most of the radicalisation occurs online, reflecting the dynamic I raised earlier, but some of it also happens in person, face to face. Children as young as 13 are now embracing extremism, and this is happening with religiously motivated violent extremism and ideologically motivated violent extremism.

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<sup>1</sup> ASIO, 'Director-General's Annual Threat Assessment' <<https://www.asio.gov.au/publications/speeches-and-statements/director-generals-annual-threat-assessment-2021.html>> viewed 30 March 2022.

A few years ago, minors represented around two to three per cent of our new counter-terrorism investigations. In the last year, though, the figure's been closer to *fifteen* per cent. And perhaps more disturbingly, these young people are more intense in their extremism.<sup>2</sup>

The PJCIS has maintained a strong interest in national security matters in relation to extremist movements and radicalisation in Australia, including through this inquiry and other reviews and inquiries it has undertaken during the last three years. While its work on this inquiry has been very worthwhile and has informed the Committee's broader work, the PJCIS has been unable to complete the inquiry during the 46<sup>th</sup> Parliament due to other pressing demands. The PJCIS has concluded 37 reports in this parliament including 22 in the last 12 months as part of the highest workload the committee has ever experienced. The Committee believes that the PJCIS of the 47<sup>th</sup> Parliament should conclude this important work, and therefore recommends that the Government consult with the next PJCIS on terms of reference to finalise this inquiry into extremist movements and radicalisation in Australia. All evidence received by the Committee during this inquiry would be available and will inform the work of a future PJCIS.

## **Recommendation 1**

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**The Committee recommends that the Australian Government consult with the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security of the 47<sup>th</sup> Parliament on terms of reference with a view to referring to the Committee an inquiry into extremist movements and radicalisation in Australia.**

**Senator James Paterson**  
**Chair**

**31 March 2022**

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<sup>2</sup> ASIO, 'Director-General's Annual Threat Assessment'  
<<https://www.asio.gov.au/publications/speeches-and-statements/director-generals-annual-threat-assessment-2022.html>> viewed 30 March 2022.