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PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence And Trade

Inquiry into certain aspects of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Annual Report 2019-20 – Human rights of Australian citizens and some Diaspora communities

13 September 2021

QoN Number: 01

Subject: National Security Hotline - Public Data Reporting

Asked by: Janet Rice

Question:

Senator RICE: What do you say to those community members who are saying that this level of harassment and intimidation is occurring at the moment and that, when they report it, nobody really seems to want to listen? From what you're telling me, there does not seem to be a mechanism by which they can report it and by which we could be getting, across the Australian community, a sense of the level of the intimidation and harassment that is occurring.

Mr Hallinan: Senator, you might not find it satisfactory, but I think our response would have to remain that if there is concern for their personal safety then it's a matter they should raise with police in the first instance. I'm aware of some evidence the committee has received today about people's dissatisfaction with the response that they've garnered, but the National Security Hotline is also a mechanism for people in the community to express their concerns and report those incidents. That data is collected and provided to operational agencies to consider, but I can't speak to any particular case, and I'm probably not best placed to speak more generally about what operational agencies subsequently do in respect of those instances.

Senator RICE: Is there any public reporting of that data?

Mr Hallinan: I don't believe so, Senator. I'm happy to take that on notice, if that's okay, and come back to you on that. Certainly in respect of things like National Security Hotline calls and so on and so forth, it may well be that there is data that is captured and it may well be that that is released publicly, but I wouldn't want to commit to that being the case. I'm happy to take it on notice.

Answer:

The National Security Hotline (NSH) operates 24/7 and provides an avenue for members of the community to report concerns about possible signs of terrorism or foreign interference in our community. Relevant matters are referred directly, but confidentially, to Commonwealth and State/Territory law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Cumulative monthly and annual contact data from the NSH is reported on the National Security Website

(<https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/WhatAustraliaisdoing/Pages/NationalSecurityHotlineStatistics.aspx>). This information is also reported in the Department of Home Affairs' Annual Report.