

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

Group: 3

Program: 1.7

Question No. BE15/027

Senator Collins asked the following question at the hearing on 27 and 28 May 2015:

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Firstly, I very quickly want to touch on the Countering Violent Extremism Program. And then, for the department's benefit, I will be moving on to the new antiterrorism portfolio. Can you confirm for me concerns that have been raised—and we have had sessions in estimates a couple of times touching on these issues—that the funds available for organisations dealing with countering violent extremism were not available for the period July 2014 until 2 May 2015?

Ms Lowe: During the financial year 2014-15, a number of projects that had already been funded continued during that period. The difference was that in August of last year a decision was made, and announcements were made, about the fact that the focus of the Countering Violent Extremism Program would be shifting from a community approach, so funds under the previous Building Community Resilience grants program had been targeted towards building community capacity—

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Some of those issues we have covered in the past, but what I am seeking to understand, and you seem to have contradicted the concerns that have been raised with us, is the previous program that was funded for four years concluded in July 2014. The new funds were not made available until 2 May 2015. But you said a moment ago that some funding continued. Can you give me some information about what that funding was, where it came from—because obviously the program had not been re-funded—and what the quantum of those funds was? I do not want you to name individual organisations, for the same reason that we currently do not, but I would like to know what quantum of funds was made available during that period.

Ms Lowe: As to quantum of funds, I would actually have to take that on notice, but the funds during that period of time came from departmental funding, so we had other funds available to us. While that particular program had come to an end, we were able to continue to fund organisations. You are quite correct: there are certain organisations that do not want to be publicly named, but there are others that have come out and spoken about the work that they have continued to do with the Attorney-General's Department during that period of time. The one that I would particularly name, because they have taken the initiative and have quite a public profile, is the Australian Multicultural Foundation.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: If you can provide me on notice with the quantum—

Ms Lowe: Certainly.

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

The Department contributed \$990,000 to community based CVE initiatives between 1 July 2014 and 2 May 2015, comprising:

- \$135,000 to People against Violent Extremism to run a series of youth-led events to develop innovative and practical solutions to tackle radicalisation in Australia together with young people from communities here in Perth, Sydney and Melbourne for these events.
- \$155,000 for the Australian Multicultural Foundation in its efforts to raise community awareness of the indicators of radicalisation and a new project to help parents manage the risks of online radicalisation.
- \$500,000 to partner with the Islamic Museum of Australia for a new education program to promote understanding amongst children and the general public of Islamic art and culture. This work builds resilience by promoting social cohesion, which helps tackle causes of extremism at their roots.
- \$200,000 to the AFL's Bachar Houli Academy, a high performance leadership program for junior footballers of Islamic backgrounds.