

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

Program: 1.2

Question No. SBE15/048

Senator Collins asked the following question at the hearing on 20 October 2015:

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Okay. So this material was not going to duplicate the work that state education departments were developing?

Ms K Jones: No.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: And this was designed for a broader audience, not necessarily just schools?

Ms C Jones: The fact sheets have been available for some time. They have been available on our website and in broader circulation since mid last year actually—a number of them. The booklet was published in April and has been in use since June. There was a broad consultation process involved, as I mentioned, including a number of roundtable consultations involving academics and community stakeholders in April to June 2013 initially. May 2014 was the final round. The feedback from that process finalised mid-2014.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Can you tell me who the community stakeholders were from the Australian Islamic community?

Ms C Jones: The names of them? I will take it on notice.

....

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: I asked you this earlier and you have taken it on notice about which stakeholders from the Australian Islamic community have been consulted in this process. Has the community made any recommendations to government on the prevention of violent extremism and terrorism on the home front? Firstly, I suppose, I should ask: can you describe a particular approach as being represented by the Australian Islamic community? And, if so, what is it?

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

Which stakeholders from the Australian Islamic community have been consulted [in the development of the Radicalisation Awareness Information Kit]?

The development of the Radicalisation Awareness Information Kit was informed by consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, including 13 organisations representing groups from across the Islamic community in NSW and Victoria. These included state peak bodies, religious organisations, youth groups, migrant support organisations and community advocacy bodies.

The consultation process consisted of a series of one-on-one interviews with stakeholders to discuss the preliminary information within the Radicalisation Awareness Information Kit, and to seek feedback and gauge the suitability of the material. These interviews were conducted by Monash University's Global Terrorism Research Centre, with support from the Attorney-General's Department, between April and June 2013. Following incorporation of feedback from the interviews, roundtable consultations were held with community stakeholders in both Sydney and Melbourne in May 2014.

Has the community made any recommendations to government on the prevention of violent extremism and terrorism on the home front?

Australia's Muslim population comprise a little over 2% of the population. While they share a common religion, Muslim Australians represent a number of groups and are culturally and linguistically diverse, with origins in over 183 different countries (*Australian Muslims: A demographic, social and economic profile of Muslims in Australia 2015*, International Centre for Muslim and non-Muslim Understanding, University of South Australia). While many stakeholders share common harm prevention objectives around violent extremism, there are many differing perspectives and opinions as to the best way of achieving this.

The Australian Government is committed to building sustained and meaningful engagement with international and domestic partners, the private sector and communities across Australia to reduce the number of people who support violence as a means to achieve political or social change and to inform approaches as this area of important work evolves.

All levels of government extensively engage with community leaders and representatives to inform policy approaches and proposed legislative reforms to counter violent extremism. Many different views have been raised by Muslim Australians, as well as other stakeholder groups, including the need to support community-led initiatives to support those vulnerable to extremist influences, promote work to aid social cohesion in Australia to address marginalisation and other potential drivers of radicalisation, and ensure that vulnerable communities and institutions are supplied with resources to adequately equip individuals and families in countering messages of violence and hate.

Can you describe a particular approach as being represented by the Australian Islamic community? And, if so, what is it?

The development of intervention programs around the country, to provide access to case management services for individuals who may be radicalising to violence and their families, directly responded to concerns expressed by members of the community, particularly parents, around the need for programs that could help reach out to an individual to prevent them from travelling or doing harm to themselves or others at an earlier stage, prior to a law enforcement response.