# Responses to Senator Karen Grogan regarding the Safer Communities Fund

1. **Do you have a breakdown of the types of schools who received these grants? Public private / religious?**

   Of the 53 projects approved under Safer Communities Fund Round Six: Infrastructure, 16 were awarded to registered schools and preschools. Of these:

   o **14** self-identified as having a religious or cultural affiliation

   o **One** identified as a State School, and

   o **One** identified as an independent school.


a. **What is the average grant to schools for security guards?**

   Neither the Department nor the Grants Hub breaks reports on grants programs by the type of eligible activity funded.

   Based on a manual search of a summary of the grants awarded, the Department can advise the following:

   o **Twelve** schools were awarded funding **solely** to enable the employment of licensed security guards (some projects included funding for training for security guards).

   o The total expenditure of these projects was **$3,530,790**, for an average of $**294,232** per project.

   o **No** schools were awarded funding for security guards along with other eligible activities.

2. **Of the total funding provided in the Infrastructure Round, what proportion went to hiring guards?**

   Grant agreements under Safer Communities Fund Round Six are however still being negotiated and **consequently the figures provided are subject to change**.

   The total amount of funding awarded under Safer Communities Fund Round Six: Infrastructure was **$9.8** million.

   The total amount of funding awarded for security guard funding was **$3,530,790**. This represents approximately **35 per cent** of the total value of the Safer Communities Fund Round Six: Infrastructure grant opportunity.

   All grants approved under the Safer Communities Fund Round Six (Infrastructure stream) will be published on the whole of Government 'GrantConnect' website (grants.gov.au) no later than 21 calendar days after the grant agreement is executed.

3. **Was Round Six the first time Safer Communities funding has been available for schools to apply to employ security guards? If no, when was did this occur?**

No. Engagement of security guards was an eligible activity under Safer Communities Fund Round Four (2018-19 to 2020-21), Round Five (2019-20 to 2022-23) and Round Six (Infrastructure stream) (2021-22 to 2023-24).

4. **How many schools missed out on security guard funding in the latest round?**

23 schools that applied for security guard costs were not approved for funding under Safer Communities Fund Round Six: Infrastructure.

a. **What was the most common reason schools missed out? Was it about errors in their applications? Or a funding envelop question?**

The most common reason for schools were not funded was that they were assessed as not suitable for funding.  This means the applicant school did not score at least 50 per cent against each of the three assessment criteria as set out in the Safer Communities Fund Round Six: Infrastructure grant opportunity guidelines (the Guidelines).

- In accordance with the Guidelines applicants were required to demonstrate and score at least 50 per cent against each of the following assessment criteria:
    - The extent that your project will protect schools and pre-schools, places of religious worship, community organisations and local communities that may be facing security risks associated with racial and/or religious intolerance (50 points).
    - The impact of grant funding on your project (30 points).
    - Their capacity, capability and resources to deliver the project (20 points)

Another reason schools were not funded was that they were assessed as eligible and suitable for funding, but due to the funding available under the infrastructure stream were not able to be approved.

*Examples of statements on religious or racially motivated attacks in their communities*

Common examples of reported attacks include that the organisation is the target of crimes, including vandalism, verbal abuse, abusive letters, online cyber-attacks, threats towards staff and theft. Many organisations referred to examples of racial and religious motivation for these attacks, such as anti-Semitic behaviour regularly on social media, via emails and telephone, which is of major concern for staff and community.

One organisation reported experiencing abusive phone calls and an incident of threatening anti-social behaviour where passers-by imitated a drive-by shooting. Another reported multiple incidents of racial violence occurring at the project site, including a gang related fight, resulting in the fatal stabbing of a 19 year old man, and injury to 10 other people.

Some schools which were approved for funding for security guards specifically cater to immigrants or non-English speakers, and reported they had been experienced an increasing frequency of racially-motived incidents within their community, causing anxiety for the school community. In those cases, funding was sought for security

guards to monitor access, deter criminal and anti-social behaviour and respond to security incidents.

5. **Normally, if you have received Safer Communities funding in an earlier round, you can't reapply for a grant.**

   Under the Guidelines, applicants could not apply for a grant if they had received a Safer Communities Fund Infrastructure or a Safer Communities Fund Northern Territory Infrastructure grant in earlier rounds, **unless**:

   • the applicant was a school or pre-school applying for funding for security guards only, or

   • the applicant is applying for infrastructure at a different location/campus to the applicants previous grant.

   For example:

   • If a school had been funded for a security fence, they remained eligible to apply for **guards** at the school's campus, but **were not** able to apply for the further installation of security-related infrastructure works at that campus.

   • Likewise if a religious institution had applied for security infrastructure in earlier rounds to protect a place of worship, the same institution was not automatically excluded for applying for funding for the installation of infrastructure at a further place of worship in an alternative location.

   Under earlier infrastructure streams of the Safer Communities Fund, applicants could apply for a further Safer Communities Fund grant even if successful under earlier rounds provided project deliverables were not duplicative. The changes made in the most recent round (round six) aimed to ensure a wider pool of applicants would be able to access the funding.

   > **But in the case of security guards, you are able to apply for security guard funding after receiving infrastructure funding, reapply. Is this an open-ended proposition? Can schools apply year after year for security guards funding?**

   Security infrastructure (i.e. security lighting and fencing), once installed, will have an ongoing protective impact that aims to address the security risk identified by an applicant.

   In contrast, guards are only a protective measure when actually present. The policy rationale for allowing schools to apply to re-hire or re- employ a security guard reflects this.

   All schools applying for funding for security guards need to submit new applications to each round in which they seek funding to support the employment of security guards. For Round Six, this included the need for schools to demonstrate that they continue to face security risks and demonstrate how the project activity (in this case guards) would address and reduce these risks at the specific location to be protected. In line with the Guidelines, applicants were merit-assessed on the basis of the application and evidence that was submitted.

   A funded project in a previous round is no guarantee that funding will also be provided in a subsequent round, if there are more meritorious projects in that latter round.

6. **If schools can repeatedly apply for funding - will the Safer Communities Fund essentially become an ongoing school security guard program for schools?**

See response to question 5. In addition, the conduct and objectives of any future rounds of the Safer Communities Fund program is a matter for Government.

**7a. How many schools do you expect to apply for security guard funding in upcoming rounds?**

The Department does not speculate on the objectives or outcomes of any future rounds of the Safer Communities Fund.

**I would like to understand the policy rationale for schools being able to apply to use Safer Community grants for security guards - but other organisations such as places of religious worship and community organisations cannot. Could we please discuss this?**

The Safer Communities Fund aims to improve security, reduce street crime and violence and improve perceptions of community safety, leading to greater community resilience and wellbeing.

Schools have only been eligible to apply for funding under the general infrastructure streams of rounds four, five and six.

Prior to round four, the Government had provided funding for security guards and infrastructure to government and non-government schools assessed as being at risk of attack, harassment or violence stemming from racial or religious intolerance through the Schools Security Program.

The School Security Program was discontinued following the 2017-18 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) Budget process and funding for this program used as an offset for round four of the Safer Communities Fund, and schools became eligible to apply for funding under the Safer Communities Fund. Consistent with the Schools Security Program design, guards remained an eligible project activity for schools under the Safer Communities Program.

To date, just over half of all Safer Communities Fund program funding ($171 million out of $315.5 million) has been allocated to general security infrastructure for organisations including councils, community groups, schools and places of worship and religious assembly. The remaining funding ($144.5 million) has been allocated to early intervention programs for youth at high risk.

**8. Has the Department considered if it would be possible to expand the eligibility of Safer Communities to provide access to security guards for places of worship and community organisations? Can you share information about this?**

The conduct and objectives of any future rounds of the Safer Communities Fund program is a matter for Government. The Department would provide advice on this option if requested to do so by Government.

**9. Has the Department considered the cost implications of expanding the eligibility of guards to places of worship and community organisations? Can you share information about this?**

No.  The Department of Home Affairs has not been asked to provide advice on this issue. The Department would provide advice on this if requested to do so by Government.

**10. Finally, could you assist me with the following information?**

**a. How many places of worship received a Safer Communities grant in Round Six infrastructure stream?**

**20** places of religious worship received funding under Safer Communities Fund Round Six: Infrastructure, for a total funding of **$2,647,165**.

*Note*: Places of worship includes churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, or any other place described by the applicant as a place of worship.

**b. How many community organisations received a Safer Communities grant in Round Six infrastructure stream?**

**29** community organisations received funding under Safer Communities Fund Round Six: Infrastructure for a total funding of **$5,946,622**.

*Note:* 'Community organisation' includes schools, religious organisations other than places of worship, charities and community recreation projects – see further breakdown in the table below.

| Funding recipient type | Number of recipients | Funding (million) |
|---|---|---|
| **Places of worship** | **20** | **2.647** |
| **Community organisations** | **29** | **5.946** |
| • Schools | 16 | 3.798 |
| • Non-schools | 13 | 2.148 |
| ○ Religious community organisation | 6 | 1.211 |
| ○ Charity | 4 | 0.551 |
| ○ Community recreation project | 3 | 0.386 |

*Please note*: 4 projects that were funded under Round Six of the Safer Communities Fund are neither places of worship or community organisations. These include councils and shires, for a total funding of $1,742,017.