



Australian Federation
of Islamic Councils

Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security
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Dear Committee Secretary

Submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security

AFIC was established in 1964 as the peak body for Australian Muslims with member societies (including societies that operate mosques and Islamic centres) throughout the Australian States and Territories.

In this submission, we aim to present the broad ideas based on our interactions with members and our overview of existing situations.

AFIC has consistently raised concerns with respect to the following points:

- 1 – Association of counterterrorism law and policy with religion instead of political ideology
- 2 – The uneven treatment of Muslim youths under these laws.
- 3 – The unwillingness of the authorities to actively stem right wing extremism

AFIC accepts that ISIS is a terrorist organisation. AFIC has not seen evidence that Al Qaeda continues to exist.

However, we see these organisations as political aspirants and are driven by motives of political dominance and not religious zeal. The methods of ISIS are to appeal to anything that will entice new recruits, these include:

- A sense of pride
- A sense of belonging
- A sense of purpose
- A sense of adventure

Our review of a number of youths who had been charged under the terrorism powers as intending to join a terrorist group reveals that the youths suffer from the following common traits:



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Grave concern for gross injustices on an international level and the concern for the plight of those who are not able to defend themselves.

A low self-esteem

No sense of belonging

No discernible prospects of a meaningful future in Australia

It is clear that these “recruits” did not intend to travel in order to learn to better practice Islam, they are attracted under the aforementioned and similar motivating factors.

All references to religion as a motive or cause of terrorism need to be taken out of terrorism rhetoric. Such references only serve to polarise society and create suspicion and apprehension towards neighbours, friends and colleagues. This is counterproductive and undermines social cohesion.

It is for these reason that AFIC is firmly committed to dissociating these groups from notions of religious zeal. In this sense, all references to religion as a motive or cause of terrorism must be removed from the terrorism rhetoric.

Youths of a Muslim background who were caught under the ambit of these lawys are Australians who have not been able to find guidance to a meaningful role in mainstream society, they have been failed by a variety of systems, especially education and the employment market. They need help and not to be treated with suspicion nor enticed, in some cases, by undercover agents, to travel and join a terrorist group.

To help us deter these youths:

All references to religion must be taken out of the terrorism rhetoric.

Intelligence services must treat all those with a similar ideology the same, both through policing and the judiciary. The law must be applied evenly whether the suspect is of a Muslim background who has been deceived into considering the move towards a terror group or a non-Muslim who adopts an extremist right wing ideology. They must be treated equally.

Yours faithfully

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President, AFIC

Australian Federation of Islamic Councils

*The peak body for Australian Muslims representing
State and Territory Islamic Councils and Societies*



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