

**HOME AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS**

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY SPOKEN QUESTION ON NOTICE

Senate Select Committee on Foreign Interference through Social Media

QoN Number: 7

Subject: Community outreach program to counter foreign interference

Asked by: James Paterson

Question:

PATERSON on 14 February this year, the Minister of Home Affairs announced a new community outreach program to counter foreign interference which was to be coordinated by Home Affairs and ASIO. Can you describe what work has been undertaken to date as part of this program

Ms Pfeiffer: The community engagement program was looking to uplift existing activities that are undertaken through the Department and with our partner agencies including ASIO AND AFP who have engagement as well in the states and territories who work quite closely with communities, as do we. We have worked with those agencies to look at targeting or engaging with particular communities in addition the Australian Federal Police have received a specific fact sheet relating to community interference which has been translated to a number of languages to enable people to understand what the risks are and we have undertaken a number of collaborative engagements so we working quite closely with our AFP colleagues as well as our Community liaison network to look at engaging with community groups to discuss foreign engagement activities

PATERSON: what additional resources have been provided to undertake this work?

Ms Pfeiffer: We have used existing resources that are available, including as I mentioned earlier we have an engagement network across Australia of specific counter foreign interference officers, engagement officers as well as the CLO? Network. We have utilised the existing resources

PATERSON: What is new about the new program?

Ms Pfeiffer The new program is actually looking to target particular communities, or target communities, sorry this is probably the incorrect term, to identify communities that we think are at risk and to then proactively engage with them and seek opportunities to provide them information and make sure we are engaging in understanding their concerns

PATERSON: The department weren't doing that previously?

Ms Pfeiffer: The department was doing that previously. I think it is about the specific scale. We have increased the number of engagements, we have also particularly identified those communities that we think are of concern. Communities quite often will seek out engagement, but we have probably more proactively sought engagements in those particular communities

PATERSON: Can you share with the Committee which communities have been identified as part of this process?

Ms Pfeiffer: It does go to operation activities. I would like to consider whether we can provide that information

PATERSON: Sure, take that on notice. I would like that on notice

Answer:

The CFICC, through a network of state-based CFI engagement officers, work closely with the Department's Community Liaison Officer (CLO) Network to undertake engagement on foreign interference where the community identifies a concern.

CFI engagement officers also work with ASIO, AFP and DFAT outreach officers in each region.

The CFICC has worked with the AFP to support their Foreign Interference in the Community campaign with the development and distribution of their Fact Sheets which have been translated into 35 languages (refer <https://www.afp.gov.au/what-we-do/crime-types/espionage-and-foreign-interference/foreign-interference-community>).

Since February 2023, engagements relating to foreign interference have been conducted with the following communities:

- Arab
- Cambodian
- Chinese
- Eritrean
- Indian
- Iranian
- Vietnamese
- Kurdish
- Russian
- Rwandan
- Ukrainian