



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department

**National Security Law
& Policy Division**

14/15512

27 February 2015

Ms Julia Searle
Inquiry Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Searle

Questions taken on notice – Review of the declaration of Al-Raqqa Province, Syria as a declared area

Thank you for your letter of 18 February 2015 which enclosed a transcript of evidence the Attorney-General's Department provided to the Committee at the private hearing held on 12 February 2015. I am writing to provide answers to the questions the Department took on notice.

Which community groups have been provided with information about the declared area in Mr Anthony Byrne MP's electorate of Holt?

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection's Ethnic Liaison Officer (ELO) network has engaged with 40 community leaders in Victoria on the declared area of Al-Raqqa through provision of an information pamphlet about the declaration. This includes the following three organisations within the electorate of Mr Anthony Byrne MP:

- Shamama Association – Hampton Park
- Afghan Australian Philanthropic Association – Endeavour Hills, and
- Rasul Akram Association – Endeavour Hills.

More generally, through the Living Safe Together (Countering Violent Extremism) programme, the Attorney-General's Department engages with over 50 community leaders and organisations in Victoria. This includes providing information on legislative changes through emails, roundtable discussions and via the Living Safe Together Website [www.livingsafetogether.gov.au]. The Department works closely with peak bodies such as the Australian National Imams Council and the Islamic Council of Victoria in order to reach more leaders and organisations. Representatives from the Dalgety Street (Dandenong) Mosque and the Emir Sultan Mosque, both in the adjoining electorate of Bruce, attended recent roundtable discussions as part of the consultation in the lead up to the introduction of the legislation.

Have likeminded countries, including France and Belgium, shown an interest in the declared area provisions and / or are considering enacting similar legislation?

Australia has engaged bilaterally with a number of countries to discuss international best practice approaches to countering the foreign fighters threat, including counter-terrorism legislative reforms. Officials from the Department have recently met officials from the embassies of New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom and France to discuss legislative reforms in Australia and partner countries. The Attorney-General's Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade have engaged on foreign fighters issues via multilateral fora, including during Australia's recent term on the United Nations Security Council, through the Global Counter Terrorism Forum and various five-country fora.

Please contact Julia Galluccio, Principal Legal Officer, on [redacted] if the Department can be of any further assistance to the Committee in completing its inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Karen Horsfall
Acting Assistant Secretary