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24 March 2005

Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

via [\[mailto:pjcaad@aph.gov.au\]](mailto:pjcaad@aph.gov.au)

Dear Secretary

Review of ASIO's special powers relating to terrorism offences as contained in Division 3 Part III of the *Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act 1979*

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the above review.

The Northern Migrant Resource Centre, incorporated in 1984, services the wellbeing and settlement needs of migrants and refugees living in the Local Government Areas of Darebin, Banyule, Whittlesea, Yarra, Nillumbik and Moreland in metropolitan Melbourne. Our services include, the provision of Settlement orientation and information for newly arrived migrants and refugees; Employment assistance programs to migrants and refugees, Aged and disability services for members of ethnic communities preferring to access ethno-specific or multicultural services, and research and consultancy on a range of cultural and community issues.

We work with a diverse range of individuals and groups of ethnic background, including those from the Chaldo-Assyrian, Chinese, Ethiopian, Greek, Italian, Iraqi Macedonian, Lebanese, Liberian, Sudanese, Somali and Turkish communities.

We wish to express the following concerns regarding Division 3 Part III of the *Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act 1979* ('the Act'):

Lack of publicly available and multi-lingual information about the ASIO laws

We are concerned that whilst the legislation has been in effect since July 2003, communities that we work with are not aware of the legislation and its implications.

As an agency, we service quite a few Muslim communities. Given that the Criminal Code list of 17 terrorist organizations features predominantly Muslim organizations we are concerned that our clients are unaware that this list exists as

- a) this information is not available in languages other than English, to our knowledge
- b) that this information is only available via the internet and this presumes access to the internet
- c) furthermore, they may not be aware that simply being a member of these organizations, which they may have associated with in their homeland, carries an imprisonment offence

Given that intent to join, membership of, directing, recruiting for, participation in the activities of, or supporting financially or in any other way an organisation on the government's list is an offence and that the onus of proof is on the individual that he or she did not know it to be a terrorist organization, it is incumbent on the

Government to ensure that this list is available in a variety of languages and distributed via means other than the internet.

Furthermore, because these laws appear to have been directed at Muslims, they may also contribute to prejudice and discrimination against Islamic members of the community.

Lack of broad public notice and multi-lingual information about this review

There was a lack of board public notice to the communities that may be affected by these laws. In addition, this information should have been provided in a variety of languages. It also impedes the Committee's ability to conduct an effective review.

We submit that in future additional material about the operation of these and similar powers, these should be made available widely and in a variety of languages so as to assist in the process of review and the legislation's implementation.

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to contribute to the above Review. We welcome any opportunity to further elaborate on our submission should the Committee decide to hold public hearings in Melbourne. If you have any questions regarding our submission, please contact me on 0413 786 577.

Yours faithfully

GAETANO GRECO

Chairperson

Northern Migrant Resource Centre