

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

Program: 1.7 National Security and Criminal Justice

Question No. BE16/026

Senator Collins asked the following question at the hearing on 5 May 2016:

Mr Moraitis: I just think it is a good question. The amount of money we have provided for both deradicalisation efforts and for CVE, and the money for challenging online propaganda, was received and it is being implemented. The \$5 million you refer to, which is about this counselling hotline plus some money for the e-safety commissioner, is I think, for the purposes of now, adequate for us to try to get to where we can on CVE. We continue to monitor its success and its effectiveness, and it is—

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: That is what I was hoping to find out.

Mr Moraitis: reassuring to hear from Duncan, from the director-general, that he feels that it is having an effect, which is good. But, as we discussed earlier, is a complex area, and we are experimenting with various things in the online space, in the deradicalisation spectrum and in the counselling area. The information hotline has moved beyond being purely informing to being a sort of counselling hotline. So there are a whole spectrum of things we explore, and I have set up a CVE centre which looks at all these things. So, in the future, will we need more? That is to be seen, but at the moment we have the resources that we need to pursue these various areas of activity.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: What would be the best way to capture an understanding of the outcome of the evaluations that we are conducting in this space—have a briefing from the centre, go to the centre?

Mr Moraitis: We could provide a briefing, if you like.

Ms K Jones: We could provide briefings in terms of evaluation, recognising that these programs are in a sense in their infancy and are being rolled out. But we have built evaluation in right from the start so we can get good evidence to adapt the programs if necessary. I would also note that there are state programs. Various state governments have invested quite significantly in CVE, as well. So we are trying to get a picture of—

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: But the centre is consolidating all of that material, is it?

Ms K Jones: In terms of evaluation and best practice, yes, we are looking to do that, but we are doing that collaboratively with the states and territories through the COAG task force that we established after the COAG agreements last year to focus on this. So we do have a working group under that task force that is focused specifically on research and evaluation. We could provide a briefing on the work that it is being done by that working group, as well as on the work that we are doing within our centre.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Anyway, I do not want to take up more time on this than necessary. I think it might be more appropriate to pursue more detailed information in that way, because, as you say, it is an evolving field. And the international experience—I picked this up not that long ago from the centre in Europe—is that it is multifaceted, and the best advice is to remain multifaceted but also to stay on top of what does seem to be working and what is not, and to link in with international experience as well. Chair, I think I have finished the questions I need to ask.

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

Countering violent extremism (CVE) is a relatively new discipline and all nations are trialling innovative policies and programs to identify those techniques that are most effective and suitable for the particular domestic environment. We constantly monitor research, share international best practice and evaluate the effectiveness of complex, multi-government CVE measures, to build an evidence base and to inform the Australian approach.

Measuring and evaluating the impact of CVE policies and programs has been an important ongoing element of the Australian Government's approach to CVE and has informed the development of evolving policy responses. In appropriate circumstances external experts are contracted to assist in developing evaluation plans and conducting evaluations.

The Australian Institute of Criminology was contracted to evaluate capability development projects to counter violent extremism, funded through the Australian New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee (ANZCTC). While the report itself was not published, approval was given for the key researchers to publish their findings in an academic journal to assist building the knowledge base on countering violent extremism. The article by Shandon Harris-Hogan, Kate Barrelle and Andrew Zammit, titled 'What is countering violent extremism? Exploring CVE policy and practice in Australia' was published in *Behavioural Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 2016, Vol. 8, No. 1, 6–24, (available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2015.1104710>).

This internal evaluation along with the changing threat environment as a result of the conflict in Iraq and Syria, the emergence of ISIL and increasing numbers of foreign fighters informed the shift in government policy approach and establishment of new programs.

In December 2015 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a range of new initiatives to better prevent and counter violent extremism and, in particular, address youth at risk of radicalisation. The National CVE Taskforce, formed to develop and implement the proposals for COAG, in conjunction with the CVE Sub-committee of ANZCTC, has established a Research and Evaluation Working Group to develop a national CVE evaluation framework and good practice guides to facilitate comparison of approaches and sharing of lessons learnt between jurisdictions.

The aim is to bring together experience from the broad range of CVE programs being delivered at all levels of Government to build an evidence base of the effectiveness of these programs to inform agile policy responses in this evolving field. Similarly, we are collaborating with like-minded countries that are also facing this challenge to help build an international evidence-base.

The international evidence base is best encapsulated in "Does CVE Work? Lessons Learned From the Global Effort to Counter Violent Extremism," written by Peter Romaniuk and published by Global Center on Cooperative Security, September 2015 (available at http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Does-CVE-Work_2015.pdf).