

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2017

Attorney General's Department

Program: 1.2 AGD Operating Expenses - National Security and Criminal Justice

Question No. BE17-152

Senator Pratt asked the following question on 05 June 2017:

- 1) How important are programs to counter violent extremism in the fight against terrorism here in Australia?
- 2) How successful would you say these programs have been in achieving their objectives?
- 3) The Government has previously – and rightly – made very significant funding commitments for CVE work, hasn't it? On 29 August 2014 you issued a press release with the prime minister your party disposed of last year, announcing “the Government will invest more than \$64 million in measures to counter violent extremism and radicalisation.”
- 4) Is it fair to say that CVE continues to be a priority of the Government?
- 5) This year's Budget commits just over \$9 million for CVE programs this year, dropping to just over \$6 million per year for the following three years. Does that massive downgrading of commitment to CVE, compared with the 2014 announcement, reflect the Government's lack of concern in this space? Why does the Government no longer consider CVE such a high priority?
- 6) What is the breakdown of the CVE funding in this year's budget? Specifically how will it be spent?
- 7) What services or programs are now available as a direct result of this funding?
- 8) What funding is there for ongoing service delivery in CVE?
- 9) What framework is the government using to assess effectiveness of the overall CVE approach and programs?
- 10) What was the funding program for the Australian Intervention Support Hub?
- 11) What was the criteria for funding the Hub and what were the objectives and performance indicators?
- 12) What were the outcomes/ outputs of the Australian Intervention Support Hub? Did they meet the criteria for funding and performance indicators originally set out?
- 13) Has the government set up a support program for CVE providers?

- 14) What services are currently listed on the Directory of CVE services?
- 15) How many of organisations funded under the Living Safe Together program are currently delivering CVE services? How many are listed on the CVE Directory?
- 16) What was the total level of funding for the Living Safe Together program?
- 17) What are the future budget projections for this grants program?
- 18) How much of the total CVE funding allocation does this represent?

The response to the honourable Senator's question is as follows:

1) How important are programs to counter violent extremism in the fight against terrorism here in Australia?

Programs to counter violent extremism are important in the fight against terrorism in Australia. Australia's Counter Terrorism Strategy, which was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments in 2015, includes prevention as a critical part of the strategy. This is consistent with the dedicated funding announced by the Australian Government in 2014-15 to fund countering violent extremism programs.

2) How successful would you say these programs have been in achieving their objectives?

Feedback from a range of stakeholders indicates that these programs are contributing to our prevention efforts. CVE is a relatively new and evolving discipline, and the department is constantly monitoring research and sharing best practice with our state and territory counterparts, as well as international partners, to build an evidence base to inform the Australian approach.

3) The Government has previously – and rightly – made very significant funding commitments for CVE work, hasn't it? On 29 August 2014 you issued a press release with the prime minister your party disposed of last year, announcing "the Government will invest more than \$64 million in measures to counter violent extremism and radicalisation."

On 26 August 2014 the Australian Government announced \$64 million in funding for measures to counter violent extremism and combat home grown terrorism, this included:

- \$13.4 million for the Attorney-General's Department to support the national roll-out of intervention programs and related education and awareness initiatives under the Living Safe Together program:
- \$6.2 million to establish a new Australian Federal Police (AFP) Community Diversion and Monitoring Team for returning foreign fighters,
- \$32.7 million for a multi-agency National Disruption Group within the AFP, and

- \$11.8 million for the AFP to bolster its ability to respond to the threat of foreign fighters at home and abroad including local and regional Liaison Officers and two new investigative teams to help reduce the threat of extremists leaving Australia.

4) Is it fair to say that CVE continues to be a priority of the Government?

Yes.

5) This year's Budget commits just over \$9 million for CVE programs this year, dropping to just over \$6 million per year for the following three years. Does that massive downgrading of commitment to CVE, compared with the 2014 announcement, reflect the Government's lack of concern in this space? Why does the Government no longer consider CVE such a high priority?

There is no decrease in CVE funding in the forward years. Funding in 2017-18 includes additional one-off funding to support implementation of a dedicated CVE community advice and support helpline in NSW and the development of a national approach to these services.

6) What is the breakdown of the CVE funding in this year's budget? Specifically how will it be spent?

In 2017-18, CVE funding is allocated as follows:

- \$3.07 million for intervention programs and related education and awareness initiatives under the Living Safe Together program
- \$3.02 million to combat terrorist propaganda (particularly online), and
- \$3.2 million to support the implementation a dedicated CVE community advice and support helpline and the development of a national approach to these services.

7) What services or programs are now available as a direct result of this funding?

The funding has enabled the roll-out of the national intervention program, alongside supporting programs such as the Living Safe Together (LST) grants program, development of CVE intervention tools, and related education and awareness initiatives.

The national intervention program, which is delivered by States and Territories, aims to tackle the conditions that make Australians susceptible to the lure of violent extremist ideologies and recruitment by terrorist groups, as well as helping to divert "at risk" individuals who are starting to subscribe to violent extremist views, through individual case management plans. The plans are designed to identify the particular vulnerabilities for that individual and connect them with relevant services (e.g. mentoring, counselling, education, employment support) to divert them from a path of violence.

The national intervention program provides an additional tool to complement existing law enforcement and intelligence efforts to prevent and divert vulnerable Australians through early intervention and diversion programs.

8) What funding is there for ongoing service delivery in CVE?

See the response to question 6.

9) What framework is the government using to assess effectiveness of the overall CVE approach and programs?

The CVE Sub-Committee of the Australia-New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee developed a *National CVE Evaluation Framework and Guide* to support evaluation of programs to counter violent extremism in Australia. It offers guidance on incorporating evaluation into program design and implementation, planning evaluations, and communicating evaluation findings to support learning.

10) What was the funding program for the Australian Intervention Support Hub?

The Attorney-General's Department provided one-off funding of \$700,000 to the Australian National University to work with Deakin University to establish and operate the Australian Intervention Support Hub. The AFP contributed an additional \$225,000 in one-off funding.

11) What was the criteria for funding the Hub and what were the objectives and performance indicators?

The one-off funding provided by the Attorney-General's Department was to support the establishment of the Australian Intervention Support Hub (AISH).

The objectives of AISH were to provide advice and support to government agencies, law enforcement and community groups in developing and implementing nationally consistent, but locally delivered, evidence-based CVE programs. This included support to identify and engage with community organisations involved in delivering CVE-related services; contributing to the promotion and sharing of best practice about countering violent extremism programs; CVE-related research; and the development of a dedicated CVE website.

12) What were the outcomes/ outputs of the Australian Intervention Support Hub? Did they meet the criteria for funding and performance indicators originally set out?

The Australian Intervention Support Hub developed a dedicated CVE website on international and domestic research, undertook mapping exercises to identify community organisations involved in delivering CVE services, research into issues relating to radicalisation of Australian youth, research into the impact of media training for communities, and convened a number of forums for CVE experts including the 'Addressing the New Landscape of Terrorism' Conference held in February 2016. AISH also supported Australia's efforts to establish a Regional Civil Society Network and development of a regional compendium of counter narratives. These were key outcomes from Australia's Regional CVE Summit in Sydney 2015. These outcomes have informed the Government's approach to countering violent extremism as well as contributing more generally to increasing information to the CVE discipline.

13) Has the government set up a support program for CVE providers?

As part of the national intervention program, a range of tools and training is available for those involved in the assessment and delivery of CVE services. This includes information and training for service providers to build their knowledge and capacity to recognise behavioural indicators that someone might be radicalising to violent extremism to assist with early intervention, as well as how they can assist with case management of individuals at risk to help them reconnect with families and communities and disengage from violence.

14) What services are currently listed on the Directory of CVE services?

The Directory of Intervention Support Services includes a range of community-based services to provide support relevant to the individual needs of those who may be at risk of radicalising to violent extremism. Services include counselling (inclusive of psychological, family and relationship, drug and alcohol support), mentoring, volunteering, education and training, employment services, financial management services, youth programs, religious mentoring and support, and sports and recreation programs.

15) How many of organisations funded under the Living Safe Together program are currently delivering CVE services? How many are listed on the CVE Directory?

Twenty-eight organisations who received a Living Safe Together grant are currently included on the Directory of Intervention Support Services. Organisations delivering services to counter violent extremism are not made public, as this is sensitive work and community trust is critical. The department continues to work with states and territories and community groups to identify additional support services that may assist at-risk individuals to disengage from violent extremism and reintegrate back into their community.

16) What was the total level of funding for the Living Safe Together program?

A total of \$1.9m was provided under the Living Safe Together grants program.

17) What are the future budget projections for this grants program?

The Living Safe Together grants program was a one-off program.

18) How much of the total CVE funding allocation does this represent?

\$1.1 million of the \$13.4 million Living Safe Together program budget was allocated to the LST grants program.