

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

Program 1.2, 1.6

Question No. 64

Senator Trood asked the following question at the hearing on 18 October 2010:

Home Grown Terrorism Measures

In response to the questions on notice the Attorney-General's Department indicated that it "will undertake significant research and consultation to inform the appropriate allocation of the \$9.7m in funding":

- a. What has occurred?
- b. How much has been spent?
- c. Where has it been spent?
- d. What are the specific programs?

The Department also refers to "arrange consultations directly with communities through a series of community engagement forums. The Attorney General has already met with community leaders in Sydney as part of this consultation and further consultations are proposed across the country."

- e. When did the consultations occur?
- f. Who did the Attorney General meet with?
- g. What was the outcome of the meetings?
- h. Where are the further consultations proposed?

The answers also state "The intention is to fund new activities aimed at countering violent extremism, and drawing together of existing programs..."

- i. Is it still an intention to create these programs? What are they? When will they begin?

I note that 2 additional staff will be employed under the funding to counter violent extremism in Australia?

- j. Why are only two additional staff being employed to counteract the increase in terrorist threat from people born or raised in Australia?
- k. Is this indicative of the "real" level of threat?

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

A **National CVE Framework** has been developed and Year 1 activities are being delivered (see below for specific activities). AGD has identified activities for future years through an evidence-based analysis drawing together intelligence assessments, research and comparative evaluation of relevant programs both domestically and internationally, as well as results of consultations with key stakeholders including affected communities.

Activities in 2010-11

- Development of a comprehensive **Program Evaluation Framework** to ensure the program remains appropriate, efficient and effective. The cost of this consultancy will be up to \$80,000 and the evaluation framework will be finalised by March 2011.
- **Literature review and CVE research database.** This was completed in October 2011 and \$60,000 was spent on the research and database development.
- The Department has developed a number of options for future program to counter the **role of the internet in the radicalisation process** and improve the response to violent extremism

messages. Announcements about specific initiatives, including cost implications will be made as appropriate. Possible actions identified to date include; establishment of counter narrative websites by community and private organisations which will be managed and assessed through CVE Grants programs; technical options aimed at removing or blocking harmful content, including working with hosting companies to take down extremist websites or deregister domain names under a relevant legislative framework and working with search engine companies such as Google concerning the display of page warnings which have been used overseas and are designed to advise the person viewing a web page to the existence of relevant laws, including offences that apply to terrorist activities; education packages for vulnerable communities within Australia; and the development of a dedicated government website on CVE which would provide the opportunity to announce government policy and initiatives about violent extremism and provide information to communities on actions they can take. Some of these proposed initiatives will be implemented by community organisations and funded through grants programs.

- The Government launched a pilot **Youth Mentoring Grants Program** to support community organisation to help young Australians develop the skills to actively participate in Australian society and our democratic processes and to equip youth with the skills and resources to actively build resilience to violent extremist influences. Youth mentoring plays an important role in addressing and countering violent extremist ideologies as it promotes initiatives to deal directly with vulnerable youth. The Youth Mentoring Grants Program was well received by the public, with 98 applications submitted. The successful recipients of the 2010-12 Youth Mentoring Grants Program were announced on 20 February 2011. \$1,170,000 was awarded to successful applicants.
- A broader **Building Community Resilience Grants Program** will be launched in March 2011. The grants program will assist community groups and NGOs to deliver projects that promote an understanding of violent extremism and its negative impacts on society and individuals, and build the capacity of organisations and communities, particularly vulnerable groups, to identify the signs of extremism and actively resist extremist messages. The nature of activities to be funded under this program will be informed by analysis of requirements and key capabilities identified. Up to \$1,000,000 will be available for this program in financial year 2011-12.
- Approximately \$72,000 has been spent in administrative costs, including advertising, independent assessors and legal advice, for the set-up of both programs to ensure they meet probity regulations and achieve value for money.
- The Department co-chairs the **CVE Sub-Committee** of the National Counter Terrorism Committee (NCTC), comprising representatives from all jurisdictions (State and Territory Premier's and Chief Minister's Departments, Police and multicultural agencies) as well as the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Australian Federal Police and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. The committee coordinates activities nationally and shares expertise across jurisdictions. The Australian Government agreed to quarantine \$2 million per year of NCTC funds for CVE purposes. This is in addition to the \$9.7 million over four years announced as part of the 2010 Budget. In 2010 – 2011 the NCTC committed \$1.7m towards CVE activities. Funded projects include:
 - Pilot terrorist rehabilitation/disengagement programme – a program aimed specifically at the rehabilitation of imprisoned terrorists, which will offer a holistic approach to rehabilitation, including both post and pre-release;

- Countering extremism through community strengthening, social cohesion and combating disengagement in the Muslim community;
 - Two-way media project - a project comprising of training on engaging with media outlets, and a workshop for training participants and media representatives to discuss issues of concern, including language used in the media and perceived misunderstandings;
 - Research on home grown terrorism - a research-based project that would include indicators of radicalisation and identification of best practice for the development of rehabilitative programs;
 - Counter-radicalisation program: anti-violence forum which aims to undertake research to establish the veracity of attitudes towards radicalisation;
 - Democracy workshops - targeted workshops to provide information on Australia's electoral history and how to become involved in the democratic process;
 - Reducing Marginalisation of Youth at risk –social inclusion initiatives that target youth at risk to develop local resilience using local solutions;
 - Community and radicalisation – project to seek community feedback and perceptions throughout Australia on an examination of perceptions, ideas, beliefs, and solutions through consultation with the Muslim communities and non-Muslim communities;
 - Countering violent extremism through partnership with key leaders within secondary and tertiary education institutions –develop and conduct one day workshops with key corrective service personnel to provide awareness of radicalisation and violent extremism;
 - Delivery of large scale sporting tournaments involving Muslim people from many countries and police, to build trust between the police and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- **A Prisons Working Group** has been established by the CVE Sub-Committee to pilot projects with a view to developing national capability supporting disengagement and deradicalisation of those convicted of terrorism offences and preventing the radicalisation of other inmates while in prison. This work involves supporting prisons prior to their release as well as ensuring that once released, prisoners with radical views, or those who may be vulnerable to them are able to access appropriate support and make positive relationships with people that will not lead them down a path to extremism. Funding for this work is managed by the NCTC.

Community Engagement Forums

The Government hosted community engagement forums in Sydney and Melbourne in July and December of 2010, in order to speak directly with key representatives about issues of concern in their communities, the Government's countering violent extremism strategy, and to hear community perspectives on these issues. Further forums will be held in both of these cities in the coming months, as well as in other jurisdictions around Australia. As with the first forums, multicultural and interfaith organisations, as well as a diverse range of cultural and religious-based organisations, will be invited to participate in the forums to ensure that all individuals vulnerable to extremist ideologies, regardless of ethnicity and cultural backgrounds, are supported. This series of engagement activities will build on and deepen the Government's engagement with at risk

communities, as well as influencing those who may already be affected by radical ideology. The Department has spent approximately \$25,000 on community engagement forums to date.

Staffing

While funding for two additional staff was included in the 2010 CVE Budget package, a number of other staff have been recruited to the CVE Taskforce from existing departmental funding while others have been seconded to the Taskforce from other agencies.

Furthermore, the funding for CVE in the 2010 Budget is in addition to a number of existing initiatives that form part of the Government's broader social inclusion and national security agendas, which contribute directly and indirectly to countering violent extremism.

The Department's CVE Taskforce aims to complement the range of CVE and social policy activities conducted across jurisdictional and federal government agencies as well as activities funded through the National Counter Terrorism Committee.