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Gen Y jihadists
Preventing radicalisation in Australia

Anthony Bergin, Michael Clifford, David Connery, Tobias Feakin, Ken Gleiman, Stephanie Huang, Grace Hutchison, Peter Jennings, David Lang, Amelia Long, Clare Murphy, Simone Roworth, Rosalyn Turner, Samina Yasmeen

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A supplied image obtained 8 March 2015 shows CCTV vision of two teenage brothers suspected of trying to fly to the Middle East to fight. Sydney Airport officials seen with the two brothers. © AAP Image/ Sydney Airport.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In May 2015, the Australian Government estimated that more than 100 Australians were fighting for terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq. At least 24 had died fighting (Lewis 2015 p.79), more than 30 had returned to Australia and there were 160 people 'supporting terrorist organisations from Australia' (Australian Government 2015a). Since the terrorism threat level was raised to 'high' in September 2014, 23 people have been charged as a result of eight counterterrorism operations (Brandis 2015c). In each case the police argued that urgent pre-emptive action was needed to disrupt plans for staging terror attacks in Australia. The Lindt Cafe siege in Sydney in December 2014 and the stabbing attack on two police officers in Melbourne in September 2014 tragically showed that terrorist acts could take place on Australian soil. The government estimates that 'The number of high-risk terrorist threats being monitored by security agencies has doubled in the last year and is now around 400' (Australian Government 2015a).

This paper examines the scope and nature of terrorism in Australia and assesses the policy response. We explore the threat of terrorism motivated by violent Islamist extremism and offer policy recommendations to counter that threat. Using a dataset of extremist jihadists constructed by ASPI, Section 2 examines specific themes and issues that affect Australia and profiles some of the individuals who have advocated or become violent Islamists. Section 3 provides an overview of terrorist attacks in the West since 2010 and of Western 'foreign fighters' in the Middle East. Section 4 assesses the Australian policy response to date, and Section 5 offers policy recommendations.

We don't propose that the government create large new structures or make increases to the budget beyond what has already been provided—many of the recent government policy responses, although reactive, provide the right authorities and levels of funding. Our recommendations focus on taking new approaches with existing organisations or reinforcing old approaches that have proved effective. Governments should avoid over-reaction, which terror groups hope to provoke. We focus instead on the importance of better communication and cooperation across government and society as a whole.

Australian law defines a terrorist act as 'an act or threat, intended to advance a political, ideological or religious cause by coercing or intimidating an Australian or foreign government or the public. This action must cause serious harm to people or property, create a serious risk to the health and safety of the public, or seriously disrupt trade, critical infrastructure or electronic systems' (NCTC 2011).

For this study, we define violent Islamist extremists as people who have adopted views associated with Islamist extremism and are willing to support or commit terrorist acts. Groups or individuals described as 'Islamist' often have very different aims and views about how those aims might be realised. Some militant Islamists endorse violence to achieve their aims, but many Islamists do not. Islamist extremism is characterised as an ideology that's based on a distorted interpretation of Islam. Islamist extremists deem Western intervention in Muslim countries as a 'war on Islam', creating a narrative of 'them' and 'us'. They aspire to impose a caliphate: a global Islamic state governed by their interpretation of sharia as state law, rejecting liberal values such as democracy and the rule of law. We use the term 'jihadist' because it has become a common way to describe supporters of extremist Islamist violence, but we recognise that jihad also connotes a sense of legitimate inner spiritual struggle for many Muslims.

Why and how do people who live in Australia become violent Islamist extremists? What processes do they go through to radicalise and what can be done about it? A commonly used description of the radicalisation process highlights four stages: pre-radicalisation, self-identification or conversion and identification, indoctrination and finally jihadisation (or commitment to action).

Although there mightn't be a single terrorist profile, we note three shared characteristics often found in people who radicalise:

- A sense of injustice or humiliation—Terrorists often explicitly justify their attacks as an appropriate response to a perceived injustice against a group of people, who aren't necessarily related to the terrorists.
- A need for identity—Individuals who don't feel a sense of identity may be searching for a defining purpose or goal in life (Neumann 2007).
- A need to belong—Prospective terrorists find a sense of belonging in their association with terrorist groups or causes (Crenshaw 1988).

Spiritual mentorship and social network bonds are also important factors. Terrorists don't go through a radicalisation process in isolation. A study of UK and US homegrown terrorism cases found that around 20% had a spiritual mentor who provided guidance during radicalisation and justification and approval for violent action. Social networks and interpersonal relationships are vital for recruitment into terrorist organisations (Sageman 2004).

The increased number of English language websites advocating jihad assists radicalisation and the production of homegrown terrorists. When no physical mentor or social network is available individuals can find support online, along with a sense of purpose, identity and belonging.

The role of religious ideology is more controversial among researchers. Marc Sageman assesses that religious ideology is incidental and not causal to radicalisation, instead providing only a weak pretext or justification. However Mitchell Silber and Arvin Bhatt in a study for the New York City Police Department, found that the adoption of a salafi ideology was at the core of radicalisation (Silber & Bhatt 2007, Precht 2007). It seems clear that Islamist ideology is used by spiritual mentors, recruiters and terrorist social networks as a vehicle for radicalisation. Whether countering ideology can be part of a policy solution is still up for debate. For example, there's a body of research on deradicalisation and disengagement programs that seek to take surrendered or captured violent Islamist extremists and prevent recidivism or the radicalisation of others (Horgan & Altier 2012). Such approaches have not been well received in Australian public debate. Our secular society struggles to understand how to deal with religious motivations behind extremist ideological behaviour.

Social scientists tend to rule out three factors that some believe are causal to acts of terrorism. First, researchers conclude that there's no single terrorist profile (Sageman 2004, Bakker 2006). Ethnicity, education, marital status and socioeconomic levels don't point to a predominant terrorist profile. As we show in this study there are many individual paths to radicalisation. A second misconception is that radicalisation can be blamed on mental illness. Reports of the Sydney siege in December 2014 perpetuated this view because, in the case of Man Haron Monis, there was a history of mental illness. Our study does not find mental illness to be a widespread factor, but detailed research is needed to establish potential connections between mental illness and radicalisation. Finally, radicalisation to the point of being prepared to commit violent acts isn't a predetermined outcome. People who begin a path to radicalise mightn't necessarily complete the journey to become terrorists. This is a significant finding given the current policy emphasis on developing strategies to counter violent extremism.

Defeating terrorism and removing the sources of inspiration for radical extremism calls upon a massive array of policy responses covering everything from military operations in the Middle East to school curricula and involves a bewildering collection of state and federal government agencies and community groups. There is surely no more complex policy problem currently facing the country. It is also clear that governments cannot successfully develop counter-terrorism policy without the closest engagement of all sections of the community. Nothing less is at stake than the nature of Australian society.

CHAPTER 2

The Australian experience

Gen Y jihadists—contemporary radicalisation in Australia

Australian citizens who have become extremist jihadists since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011 are, on average, younger and better educated than a previous generation of Australians who radicalised in the late 1990s and after al-Qaeda's attacks in the US in 2001. Gen Y jihadists are mostly born in Australia and have diverse ethnic backgrounds. In some cases, friends and community networks have nurtured their radical views; in others, online media have enabled their radicalisation quite separately from family and community.

A distinguishing feature of Australian Gen Y jihadists has been their willingness to travel to Syria and Iraq to fight in a sectarian conflict between the Sunni and Shia branches of Islam. Opposition to the Assad regime in Damascus has been a prime motivator, although this has broadened following the military campaign in Iraq by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, or ISIS) to oppose the predominantly Shia Iraqi Government and its Western and Iranian supporters. Australian jihadists have died in surprisingly large numbers fighting in such conflicts, the origins and drivers of which aren't well understood in this country.

A second feature of Australian Gen Y jihadists has been their willingness to participate in making propaganda material, earlier versions of which helped to recruit them. ISIL's slick propaganda machine enables it to dominate a wider field of terror groups in recruiting foot soldiers and others useful to its putative 'caliphate'.

Australia's experience of radicalisation is similar to that of the US, the UK, Canada and other developed Western countries. There are differences based on the historical experience of countries as past colonial powers, previous patterns of immigration and the nature of relations between communities. But social media grafts a global overlay onto these national experiences. An Australian Gen Y jihadist is just as able to communicate with a like-minded friend in the UK or the Middle East as they are to engage with friends living in the same suburb.

Australian jihadists before the Syrian war

Australian researchers Andrew Zammit and Sam Mullins made detailed studies of the characteristics of around 30 local jihadists in the 1990s and the first decade of this century. This work shows a broad similarity between Australian and other Western experiences of radicalisation. Among 36 individuals investigated, Mullins (2011) found as follows:

- The average age of those promoting violent jihad was 28, and 29 at the time of their arrests.
- 94% were Australian citizens; 86% had 'non-Australian heritage (more than half being Lebanese)'; 57% were born in Australia.
- 12% of 38 individuals were converts to Islam.
- Most had not progressed much beyond high school.

• Only 5 of 24 individuals could be classified as having a skilled education.

• 17 of 23 individuals for whom data was available were married (74%).

• A relatively small percentage had a criminal background.

• Among the 12 individuals for whom information on criminal background was available, there were no confirmed cases of mental illness.

Zammit's work points to similar conclusions. Reviewing the same period, he found that the Australian jihadists were 'disproportionately poorly educated' compared with jihadists from other Western countries and with the Australian Muslim community. The jihadists didn't have 'devoutly Muslim upbringings'. Australian jihadists were more likely to have been born in Australia than jihadists from other Western nations were to have been born in their countries. Like Mullins, Zammit found a high proportion of jihadists who had family origins in Lebanon (Zammit 2011, Zammit et al. 2014).

Syria and Australia's Gen Y jihadists

The Syrian conflict, the spread of ISIL into Iraq, the international response involving air strikes, and a constant stream of online propaganda videos primarily from ISIL are combining to spur an increase in the number of Australians willing to fight in Syria or Iraq and potentially to commit terrorist acts in Australia. In this study, we present brief biographies (based on open sources) of 16 Australians who have fought in the Middle East and planned or supported violent Islamism there or in Australia since 2011. These individuals have been prominently reported in the Australian and international media and we set out details at the end of this section. Appendix 1 provides data for a total of 54 people, whose activities have been widely reported in the media.

Although we have exhaustively searched the public report we stress that our information is incomplete—Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) figures show that a significantly higher number of individuals are of concern to officials. The number of Australians being radicalised is also growing quickly. For example, the government stated in early May 2015 that, in the eight months from August 2014 to April 2015, new counterterrorism units operating at eight major Australian international airports 'assisted in offloading 267 passengers of security concern' from air flights (Australian Government 2015a). In evidence presented to a Senate Committee on 25 May the number of passengers offloaded had grown to 284 persons, pointing to a steady increase in the numbers of people motivated to travel that present security concerns (Quaedvlieg 2015 p.47).

Within the limits of available reporting, what informed generalisations, if any, can be made about this group? An obvious point is that there's significant diversity of age, ethnic background, education and career experience, mental health issues and other factors. Policy thinking must take this diversity into account.

Age

Of the 54 people examined for this study, an approximate age is known for 47 at the time of their death or the time of publication. Their average age is just over 25.

Thirty-nine travelled to the Middle East. Of the 32 whose age we know, the average age was 24. Twenty were killed in fighting or in suicide bomb attacks, including four in Iraq. We know the age of 18 of the 20 people killed—they averaged just under 25 years of age.

Of the 15 individuals whose actions brought them to the attention of authorities in Australia, the average age is 27.5. However, that figure includes Man Haron Monis (50), who acted alone and is *sui generis* to the broader terrorism phenomenon, and Abdul Nacer Benbrika (54), who was arrested in 2005 as part of Operation Pendennis and is said to be a recruiter for ISIL from his jail cell in Victoria. If those two men are excluded, the average age of the remaining individuals is just under 24.

Of great concern is the apparent attraction of ISIL propaganda for some people in their late teens. Abdul Numan Haider was shot and killed at the age of 18 in Melbourne in a stabbing attack on police officers in September 2014. Jake Bilardi was killed detonating a suicide bomb in Ramadi, Iraq, at age 18 in March 2015. Adam Dahman killed himself and five people in a suicide bomb attack in an Iraq market in July 2014 at age 17. Abdullah Elmir left Melbourne in June 2014 and has since appeared in ISIL propaganda material at age 18. Wider media reporting suggests that some individuals are denied flights out of Australia when their parents ring authorities to ask that their children be denied passports.

An older group of people act as facilitators and mentors for younger recruits. For example, Mohammed Ali Baryalei, until his death in October 2014 at age 33, was known to be a successful jihadist recruiter in Sydney, using a network of people to identify young potential fighters. He travelled to Syria to fight for Jabhat al-Nusra in April 2013, switched support to ISIL in June 2013 and worked at the Turkish–Syrian border facilitating passage for Australians entering to fight for ISIL. Sydney man Hamdi Al Qudsi, 40, was committed to stand trial in November 2014, accused of recruiting Australians to fight with terrorists in Syria. Police allege he assisted with the travel arrangements of six young men who left Australia to fight with Islamic State in 2013 (Hoerr 2015).

While older people may play mentoring roles, age is no barrier to online recruitment efforts. ISIL propaganda emphasises the recruitment value of putting younger supporters in front of the camera, including Neil Prakash, a 23-year-old Australian of Fijian-Indian and Cambodian background, who allegedly encouraged teenagers to carry out a plot to kill police and members of the public on Anzac Day 2015.

Country of birth and ethnic background

Tables 1 and 2 show the 54 individuals' countries of birth and ethnic or family backgrounds, respectively, based on open-source information.

Table 1: Country of birth ($n = 54$)

Country of birth	Number	%
Afghanistan	4	7.41
Algeria	1	1.85
Australia	23	42.59
Egypt	1	1.85
Iraq	1	1.85
Iran	1	1.85
Kuwait	1	1.85
Lebanon	1	1.85
Libya	1	1.85
Somalia	1	1.85
Sudan	1	1.85
Syria	1	1.85
US	1	1.85
Unknown	16	29.63
Total	**54**	**100**

Table 2: Ethnic/family background (*n* = 54)

Ethnic/family background	Number	%
Afghani	4	7.41
African American / Anglo-Australian	1	1.85
Albanian	1	1.85
Algerian	1	1.85
Anglo-Australian	5	9.26
Bangladeshi	1	1.85
Bosnian	1	1.85
Egyptian	1	1.85
Fijian–Indian / Cambodian	1	1.85
German / Palestinian	1	1.85
Iranian	1	1.85
Iraqi	1	1.85
Iraqi / Italian	1	1.85
Kuwaiti	1	1.85
Lebanese	10	18.52
Lebanese / Anglo-Australian	1	1.85
Lebanese / Anglo-New Zealander	1	1.85
Libyan	1	1.85
Somali	4	7.41
Sudanese	1	1.85
Syrian	1	1.85
Turkish	3	5.56
Unknown	11	20.37
Total	**54**	**100**

Of the 38 individuals whose country of birth is known, 23 (42.59% of the 54), were born in Australia. Afghanistan was the birthplace of the next largest group (four people, 7.41%). What's most striking is the diversity of birthplaces, which include the US, but with a strong representation of Middle Eastern states. It's also striking that no North or Southeast Asian countries are represented. Almost all in the sample are or were Australian citizens and lived in Australia for long periods. Most attended school in Australia.

Ethnic or family background is also strikingly diverse. Lebanese (10 people, 18.52%), Anglo-Australian (5 people, 9.26%) Afghani (4 people, 7.41%) and Somali (4 people, 7.41%) are the four largest ethnicities. The data suggests that the preponderance of people with Lebanese backgrounds identified by Zammit in his analysis of the first decade of Australian jihadists has reduced significantly. There's a weighting towards countries with Muslim cultures, but it's clear that radicalisation can affect people from any ethnic or family background.

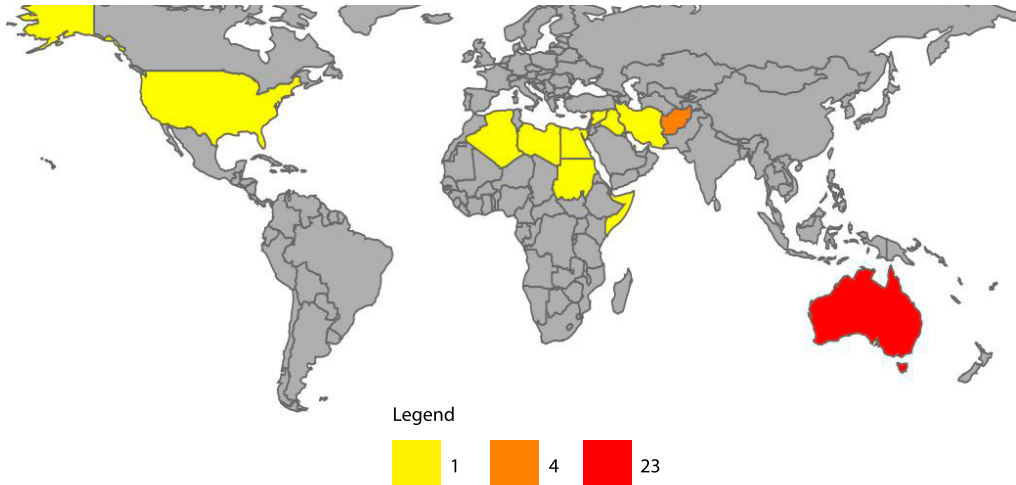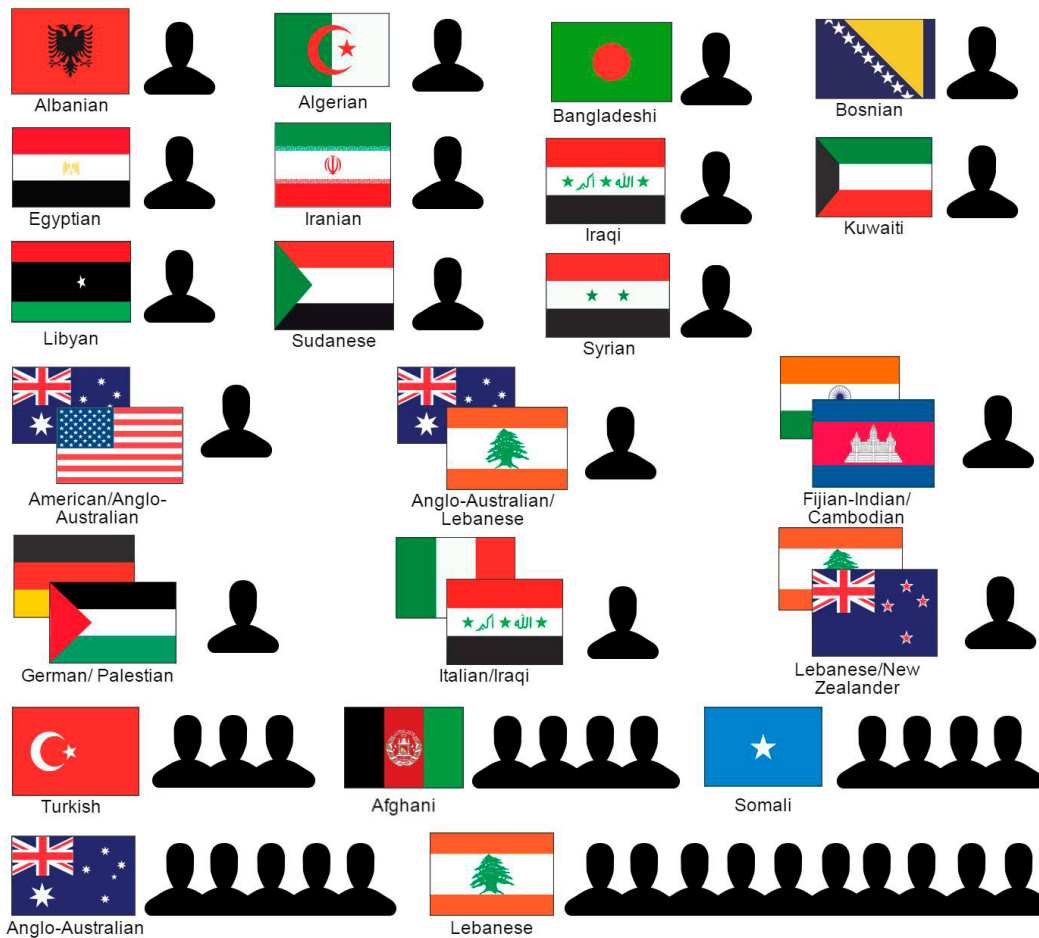**Figure 1: Country of birth of individuals identified in our database**

Legend

■ 1   ■ 4   ■ 23

Figure 2: Ethnic/family background

Education and career

The individuals we studied had a broad range of academic and career attainments, making it difficult to discern patterns. Some had been expelled from school, including Mahmoud Abdullatif in Year 11 and Khaled Sharrouf in Year 9, for bashing another student. Others left school early: Bilardi, Dahman and Elmir dropped out in years 10, 11 or 12 to join ISIL. Prakash was reportedly bullied at school and dropped out in Year 10. On 8 May 2015, a 17-year-old minor was arrested in Melbourne. He was charged with preparation of a terrorist act, in contravention of section 101.6 of the Criminal Code. Media reports indicate that this person had also dropped out of school, before starting to post extremist material online (ABC 2015). (We haven't included the young people who were subject to the 8 May police operation in our assessment of average age, as they haven't been named in open sources.)

More commonly, individuals completed school education (for example, Benbrika, Tareq Kamleh and Mohammed Kiad). A number studied at private Christian schools, including Baryalei, who attended two Catholic high schools and Amira Karroum, who attended an Anglican girls' school.

A number of people we studied were recruited to terror groups shortly after completing their school studies. They included Suhan Rahman, Amira Karroum, Muhammed Sheglabo and Yusuf Yusuf. Others had begun tertiary education before committing an extremist act. Haider had been enrolled in an electrical engineering course at Dandenong TAFE, and Rahman was studying building management at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Tareq Kamleh, who appeared in an ISIL propaganda video calling for medical professionals to join him in Syria, completed medical studies at Adelaide University in 2010.

The growing number of young Australians radicalising has been the focus of government attention and points to the need to address the role of schools. In some cases, jihadists may have recruited young adults who hadn't yet developed the cognitive ability to make considered decisions and distinguish propaganda from truth. More research is needed into whether young recruits in some way lack the cognitive skills and judgement necessary to make rational decisions. Perhaps some are reaching a peak rebellious phase and their impulses are being misdirected into violent Islamist extremism.

Many Gen Y jihadists work in blue collar jobs, much like the first post-9/11 generation of Islamist extremists. Ahmed Succarieh was a bricklayer and Sulayman Khalid a part-time labourer. Mohamed Elomar was a champion featherweight boxer who received a boxing scholarship at the Australian Institute of Sport. Sammy Salma was a boxing trainer; Baryalei was a bouncer; Sharrouf was described in the media as 'muscle for hire' in the construction industry.

Among white collar professionals, Benbrika was an aviation engineer. Caner Temel served in the Army as a construction engineer at Enogerra Barracks in Brisbane before going missing from the ADF in 2010 and leaving to fight in Syria in July 2013. Kamleh was a paediatrician. Researchers Clark Jones and Greg Barton (2015) describe his radicalisation as follows:

> While working in far north Queensland in 2013, Kamleh underwent a dramatic conversion. After returning from a camping trip with mysterious new friends he announced that he was giving up drinking and womanising and was turning his life around to obey God. Up until this point he had been running away from the religion of his parents. His mother, born a German Catholic, had converted to Islam to marry his Palestinian father.

A small number of jihadists worked in jobs associated with fringe organisations. Abdul Salam Mahmoud was a preacher in the Street Dawah movement in Sydney. Agim Kruezi was employed by the iQraa Islamic Centre. He was prevented from travelling overseas at Brisbane Airport in March 2014. In general, however, Australian Gen-Y jihadists had mainstream jobs. From working at Sea World (Karroum) to serving pizzas (Hussein El Sabsabi) and from being a 'male model' (Sharky Jama) to a being a bricklayer (Succarieh), they had diverse jobs that defy easy categorisation. One generalisation worth making is that most of them seemed to be drifting, moving between jobs with little advancement or success and on the lookout for something better.

Mental health

Of the 16 individuals for whom we developed detailed profiles, only three were reported to have mental health problems—most prominently, the Lindt Cafe terrorist, Man Haron Monis. The joint Australian and NSW government report into the incident (PM&C 2015a) stated that:

> Monis experienced bouts of mental illness. He presented at public hospitals on at least two occasions, was treated at a community mental health service between 2010 and 2011, and was assessed a further two times as part of Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Screening assessment. Reviewing those cases, the NSW Chief Psychiatrist found that at no time in his multiple encounters with mental health professionals was Monis assessed to represent a potential risk to others or to himself.

A second individual was reported as using Islam as a solace for undefined mental health issues. A third individual who posted graphic images from Syria on social media, was said to suffer from schizophrenia. In line with international findings, we found that mental health problems haven't been prevalent among Australian jihadists. However, the youngest recruits may lack critical thinking and risk assessment skills.

Subsequent sections in this report consider the role of social and community engagement as vital elements in radicalisation. Again, the striking feature is the diversity of experience of Gen Y jihadists. Overall, our assessment shows a group of people clearly failing to gain satisfaction or friendship in mainstream Australian life. Finding communities of like-minded people online or in the street, as was the case with Abdul Numan Haider at the al-Furqan Centre, can be a trigger for rapid radicalisation. But it's also striking how some people can radicalise apparently without their families knowing—as in the case of the 17-year-old arrested in Melbourne on 8 May. Families may also perceive a worrying process but not know how to reverse it.

Communities

Research presented in *The Australian* newspaper identifies a number of geographic clusters of radicalised individuals, primarily in suburban Sydney and Melbourne. Although it remains the case that individuals can radicalise without an apparent social framework, the process is facilitated if there is a family or network of likeminded individuals. *The Australian* quoted an individual working with 'at risk' individuals in Sydney: 'People feel that they're being attacked by media and politicians and so on' … 'I think the end result is (that) once these youths feel they need to do something, they get caught up in this mission that's going on … then they try to justify it ideologically' (Schleibs 2015).

Geography and personal relationships remain critically important factors in radicalisation. This is reflected in the cases of a number of Australian jihadists who have strong familial, friendship and association bonds. A senior Australian ISIL figure prior to his death in June 2015 was Mohamed Elomar; his uncle, Mohamed Ali Elomar, is currently serving a 21-year jail term for his role in the 2005 Operation Pendennis plot (Maley 2015b). Mohamed Elomar's first wife Fatima and their four children were unsuccessful in their attempt to join him in May 2014. Counterterrorism police who stopped them as they tried to board a flight to Malaysia allege Fatima Elomar was carrying cash, camouflage equipment and medical supplies (Chettle 2015). Mohamed Elomar was also believed to have married Khaled Sharrouf's 14-year-old daughter Zaynab in Syria (Olding 2015b).

Neil Prakash, another Australian ISIL figure, was in contact with Abdul Numan Haider (Calligeros 2015). Haider was also in contact with Sevdet Besim and Harun Causevic, charged with an Anzac Day terror plot in April 2015 in Melbourne, hours before he died (Akerman 2015). These individuals were known to have attended the Al-Furqan Islamic Centre in Springvale (Baxendale 2015), which closed days after the raids disrupting the Anzac Day plot.

The journey to becoming a violent Islamist extremist is a process, not a pass/fail exercise. People can tip at a point that will incline them to travel to Syria without necessarily understanding ISIL ideology. Indoctrination and the experience of combat in the Middle East can complete the process. A tipping point in Australia might be the person's reaction to having a passport withheld or their response to ISIL propaganda, such as the declaration of the caliphate in mid-2014.

Australian foreign fighters

Route

The numbers of Australian extremist fighters in Iraq and Syria over the past few years is significantly larger than the 30 or so Australians who travelled to fight in Afghanistan between 1990 and 2010 (Australian Government 2015a, Bishop 2015a).

There's no standard route taken by Australians into Iraq and Syria, although most that are successful go to Turkey before crossing the border into the conflict region. There are reports that foreign fighters from the West leapfrog between several different places before finally ending up in Turkey to travel overland into Syria (Schliebs 2014). This is presumably done to elude authorities.

In a bid to address Turkey's role as a foreign fighter transit point, Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu issued a joint statement on 22 April 2015, pledging to increase cooperation on counterterrorism. The pledge included Turkey's commitment to introduce stricter border controls and increase information exchanges (World Bulletin 2015).

Many aspiring fighters are stopped at airports; in addition to the 284 people taken off flights, 116 passports have been cancelled since September 2012 and a further nine passports suspended since December 2014 (Varghese 2015 p.96).

Arrival

While a number of Islamist militant groups operate in Syria and Iraq, most Australian foreign fighters inspired by extremist Islamist ideology are currently joining ISIL. Before ISIL's rise to dominance, Australian jihadists mainly flowed to Jabhat al-Nusra; fewer are now joining that group.

When recruits arrive, they are reportedly given a new name, required to swear an oath of allegiance and must tear or burn their passports in a display of commitment to the caliphate. Mohamed Elomar echoed this ritual on his Twitter page, announcing that 'burning his passport was the best day of his life' (News.com.au 2014).

During their induction, would-be fighters are assessed to determine their most suitable role in the group. Attorney-General George Brandis has described Australians' prospective roles as 'cannon fodder, suicide bombers and propaganda tools' (ABC 2014b). There is propaganda value in having foreigners willing to die on the front lines. It's also a means of dealing with foreigners whom ISIL decides have limited military or other value.

Jabhat al-Nusra has a stricter recruitment process. It's been reported that before they are officially accepted into the group, would-be fighters must fight—and survive—on the front line (Australian Government n.d.). The group has developed a strategy that's based more on elite fighters and has sought a lower profile than ISIL, so it relies less on injections of foreign fighters to sustain its efforts, although some Australians have joined the group, as is discussed below.

Roles

Despite Senator Brandis's portrayal of Australians' options with ISIL as being restricted to 'cannon fodder', some have taken leadership roles. Those individuals are of concern because they tend to have maintained or strengthened links to Australia and mentored aspiring foreign fighters remotely. Baryalei was considered to be the most senior Australian member of ISIL before his reported death. He's believed to have assumed an operational command position and to have facilitated the travel of up to 30 recruits for both ISIL and Jabhat al-Nusra (Olding 2014b). It's also been claimed that he ordered Sydney-based Omarjan Azari to commit an on-camera 'execution' in Australia. Following Baryalei's reported death in October 2014, counterterrorism officials believe that Neil

Prakash replaced him as the top Australian recruiter for ISIL and that Prakash ordered the foiled Anzac Day attack (Wroe 2015).

Mostafa Mahamed (Sheikh Abu Sulayman Muhajir), a former extremist preacher in Australia, is believed to be a top official in Jabhat al-Nusra. Authorities have deemed him a 'magnet' for foreign fighters (Chambers 2014). The head of Sydney's al-Risalah Islamic Centre likened Sulayman to Anwar al-Awlaki, the spiritual leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) (Maley 2014a). Parallels with al-Awlaki are concerning, given his role in inspiring attacks in Western countries.

Australians in such leadership roles can establish themselves as mentors, recruiting more foreign fighters and ordering domestic attacks. Baryalei, Prakash and Sulayman show that people needn't return to Australia to pose a threat to national security.

Frontline fighters and suicide bombers

Kurdish and Iraqi commanders have stated that foreign fighters make up almost all suicide bombers and first-wave attackers in the current conflict (Lake 2015). Australians who are reported to have fought on the front line include Sharrouf (convicted for a 2005 plot to attack the Lucas Heights nuclear reactor) and his accomplice, Elomar. Former ADF member Temel was on the front line for Jabhat al-Nusra before joining ISIL.

Australian suicide bombers have included Brisbane man Ahmed Succarieh, who drove an explosives-laden truck into a Syrian military checkpoint, killing 35 people. The most prominent Australian suicide bombers for ISIL were two unrelated 18-year-olds from Melbourne: Bilardi died in Ramadi, reportedly causing no fatalities other than his own, and Dahman died in a marketplace near a Shia mosque in Baghdad, killing five people.

Propaganda

Australians have featured consistently in ISIL's regular stream of online videos over the past year and used strategically to attract further Western recruits, as in the cases of 17-year-old Elmir and Bilardi, who were heralded by ISIL online. Zakaryah Raad and Abu Yahya ash Shami were messengers in a June 2014 propaganda video titled *There is no life without jihad*. Kamleh also appeared in a recent ISIL clip that featured him in a purportedly ISIL-run hospital appealing to other skilled Muslims to aid the caliphate.

Foreign fighters are also engaged in unofficial propaganda via personal Facebook and Twitter accounts. Most notoriously, Sharrouf posted videos and photos on Twitter, including a picture of his child holding a decapitated head in August 2014. Rahman has also made many posts, including one calling for other Australians to 'spill blood'.

Non-military activities

Foreign fighters are said to control operations in ISIL's self-declared capital, Raqqah, which it seized in June 2013 (Trofimov 2015). ISIL apparently allocates city residences to foreign fighters in areas where there's a reduced risk of airstrikes (Sly 2015). *The Economist* reported in August 2014 that ISIL-held territory received steady deliveries of goods and had satellite internet access, shortly after the airstrikes campaign began (Economist 2014). Residents report that the city's immigrant population has grown by thousands as a result of the arrival of foreign ISIL recruits. The newcomers are reportedly 'living in the best houses with free electricity and health care', while Syrians in the area are treated 'like slaves' (Crowcroft & Limam 2015). It's unclear how many Australians are present in Raqqah; however, Elomar and Sharrouf are believed to have been senior ISIL leaders in the town prior to news of their recently reported deaths in Mosul, Iraq. Former business student Yusuf Yusuf announced on social media that he's 'chillen' in Raqqah (Chambers 2015). In April 2014, a video made by British ISIL fighter Rawat al-Tahweed was filmed to contradict the perception of a 'five-star jihad' lifestyle propagated online (Ensor 2014).

Returning fighters

Early in 2015, the Australian Government announced that more than 30 Australians had returned from the conflict. While there's been a sharp media focus on a small group of alleged foreign fighters returning from Syria—including the high-profile case of Adam Brookman—several factors should temper concerns about the problem. Many foreign fighters will never have the opportunity to return—reports indicate that nearly one in five have already been killed (Kimmorley 2014). Most of the at least 20 Australians killed so far reportedly died on the front lines, including Temel, kickboxing champion Roger Abbas and Rahman. Notably, Sharky Jama was reportedly disillusioned with ISIL and was planning to escape before he was killed (SBS 2015). Irfaan Hussein, it's been claimed, may have been beheaded for attempting to leave ISIL (Owens 2015).

In the May 2015 Budget Estimates Committee hearings, the Director-General of ASIO, Duncan Lewis said of returning fighters:

> There are about 30 Australians who have returned from Syria, but they were—I think it is true to say without exception—individuals who had returned … before ISIL became a recognised entity. In other words, they were young Australians who went away to involve themselves in the Syrian civil war (Lewis 2015 p. 80).

It is not yet clear if ISIL and Jabhat al-Nusra have provided foreign fighters with financial or training support to attack Western targets, in the same way that al-Qaeda 'central' and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) have done. The individual's motivations are relevant too: many Australian foreign fighters express a desire to help fellow Muslims and to join the Syrian civil war, rather than focusing on grievances about the West. For example, relatives of Amira Karroum have stated that she was 'desperate' to help women and children.

Many foreign fighters' motivation to join the caliphate suggests that they don't want to return. They include Sharrouf and Elomar, who both attempted to move their families to Syria (Sharrouf succeeded, but Elomar's family was stopped at the airport) and expressed disdain for Australia and the West.

The Profiles section of this ASPI Strategy points to the importance of networks between foreign fighters and Islamist extremists based in Australia. The conflict in Iraq and Syria provides fertile ground for solidifying those networks and expanding them to recruit others. Terrorism researcher Dr Thomas Hegghammer's study on European foreign fighters concluded that less than one in nine returning fighters will commit a terrorist act at home (Hegghammer 2013). However, of the 25 Australians who returned from the Afghan war, 19 subsequently took part in 'activities of security concern', and eight were convicted of offences (News.com.au 2015b).

Australia's Caliphettes

In 2014, the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium estimated that as many as 15% of ISIL's foreign recruits could be female, and that up to 200 women from at least 14 different countries had travelled to Iraq and Syria to join the group (Shubert & Naik 2014). By March 2015, the number of Western women known to have joined ISIL was estimated to have risen to around 550, and women may account for nearly one-fifth of all foreign recruits.

In an address to the Australian Parliament in February 2015, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop advised that up to 40 of the 550 or so Western women taking part in or supporting terrorist activities in Syria and Iraq are Australian.

The involvement of Western women in jihadist activities isn't new. Samantha Lewthwaite (also known as the 'White Widow'), the British wife of one the perpetrators of the 2005 London bombings, is the most wanted female terrorist suspect in the world. Muriel Degauque, a 38-year-old Belgian woman, became Europe's first female suicide bomber when she attacked a police patrol in Iraq in November 2005. And American Colleen LaRose, known as 'Jihad Jane', is currently serving time in the US for plotting to kill a Swedish cartoonist who satirised the prophet Mohammed in 2009.

More recently, Frenchwoman Hayat Boumeddine came to international attention after her husband, Amedy Coulibaly, killed a policewoman and four people in a Parisian kosher grocery store in an attack allegedly coordinated with the *Charlie Hebdo* gunmen. Boumeddine, believed to now be in Syria, recently featured in a French language ISIL propaganda magazine praising the actions of her husband and calling for others to join her (Drury 2015).

A new target audience

Sophisticated and targeted recruitment campaigns developed by groups such as ISIL are a major factor in the movement of radicalised Western women to the Middle East. Mia Bloom, author of *Bombshell: women and terrorism*, notes that ISIL and similar groups attract women and girls through social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr.

Bloom explains that women such as Aqsa Mahmood, a 20-year-old Briton who travelled to Syria in 2013, and 21-year-old Australian Zehra Duman, widow of Mahmoud Abdullatif and family friend of Khaled Sharrouf, have become spokeswomen in ISIL's recruitment campaigns. They use social media to entice vulnerable Muslim women with tales of a utopian existence and spiritual rewards (Bloom 2014).

Duman has painted a romanticised picture of life in the Islamic State that reflects the descriptions of male recruits. Despite being widowed, she took to the internet to celebrate her husband's 'martyrdom' and to ask others to make the same sacrifice. She also posts pictures of herself and other women clad in full Islamic dress and brandishing AK-47s. In one photo, Duman and three other women pose on top of a new BMW (Thackray 2015).

According to one commentator, the online 'peer-to-peer … girl-to-girl' accounts of women such as Aqsa Mahmood and Zehra Duman have created a 'jihadi girl power subculture', in which becoming a 'Caliphette' is empowering (Pandith & Havelicek 2015).

The motivations of women who pledge allegiance to groups such as ISIL vary. Like their male counterparts, some do so out of a desire for adventure, while others are motivated by a sense of inequality, alienation or Islamic duty.

A report by the UK-based Institute for Strategic Dialogue suggests that there are three primary reasons driving women to travel to Syria and Iraq to join groups such as ISIL. The first is the belief that Muslims across the world are oppressed by non-believers. Traveling to Syria and Iraq to join the newly created caliphate allows these women to join a society which, according to their ideology, is in direct contrast to the 'oppressive' West. The second rationale put forward is the belief that in joining the caliphate they are part of establishing an 'ideologically pure state', and by fulfilling a female role—as mother, nurse or teacher—they can also contribute to the state-building effort. The final motivation is the belief that there's a religious duty to support the caliphate; in return, a place in heaven is guaranteed (Hoyle et al. 2015).

The key role for women in the Islamic State is as caregivers. As a result, most women travelling to Syria and Iraq marry fighters, if they haven't done so already, and quickly take up domestic roles. A document released this year by one of ISIL's media arms, titled *Women of the Islamic State: a manifesto on women by the Al-Khanssaa Brigade*, confirms the primarily domestic role of women in the caliphate. The main emphasis of the manifesto is on motherly duties and familial support (Al-Khanssaa Brigade n.d.).

Not all women take up purely domestic roles, at least not initially. In a seemingly unusual step for ISIL, the all-female armed Al-Khanssaa Brigade has been established in the stronghold of Raqqah. The brigade is made up of single women aged between 18 and 25 and is thought to include a high number of Western women. Its role is to enforce sharia law dress codes and perform searches of women at checkpoints. The brigade also conducts patrols, looking out for inappropriate mixing of men and women or engagement with Western culture.

#Al-Australi—networked radicalisation

Internet penetration in Australia has reached 89.92%, meaning that a vast majority of citizens can access the benefits that this brings. However, they can also access the sophisticated propaganda materials that terrorist groups such as ISIL create. Direct conversations with frontline fighters in Syria and Iraq, recruiters and facilitators are a keystroke away. This means that individuals can connect to the battlefield from their bedrooms and become involved in the fighting more easily than at any previous point in history.

We shouldn't be surprised that extremist groups have adopted the internet as a key avenue for their messages and recruitment, as it reflects broader adoption of the online environment by all. The challenge for governments is to set the right balance of control, enforcement and enablement online.

What's clear is that Australia has found itself in a similar position to many other Western nations, in that ISIL propaganda is reaching a wide audience within its borders and is inspiring individuals to travel to Syria and Iraq and plan attacks within Australia. The government's struggling to understand the role that ISIL's online propaganda is playing in the radicalisation of young Australians and how to counter it.

Online radicalisation—what do we know?

In the past 15 years, a great deal of research has been conducted to understand radicalisation, and various schools of thought have emerged about the key factors driving individuals to radicalise to the point of using violence. That research concludes that there are a range of global, sociological and political drivers that will influence someone to become involved in those activities, all of which matter just as much as ideological and psychological drivers (EGVR 2008).

Most of those who have become radicalised have had some vulnerability in their lives that made them receptive to extremist ideology. For most, radicalisation tends to take a long time, yet there's potential for more rapid radicalisation with the level of propaganda that's now available online. The key vulnerabilities making people more open to extremist ideology include the experience of migration to a country where the person faces marginalisation and racism; a serious criminal past; religious misunderstanding and naivety; failure to find anything but low-level employment, despite holding degrees; and travelling abroad and having direct contact with extremist networks.

That's not to remove blame from the individual who becomes involved in terrorist activity; people make choices and have to face the consequences. But a common feature in most cases of radicalisation is the presence of an influential individual or group—a radicalisation 'broker'—that assists and guides the individual towards a certain path. Involvement with such a group can provide a purpose and a sense of belonging to something bigger than oneself.

What does current research tell us about the role that the online environment plays in an individual's radicalisation? Work by von Behr et al. (2013) examined the radicalisation process for 15 subjects and reflected broader conclusions from academic study of the issue over the past 10 years:

• The internet creates more opportunities to become radicalised. It enhances opportunities to become radicalised because it's available to many people and enables connections with like-minded people across the world, 24/7.

• It acts as an 'echo chamber', tending to confirm existing beliefs.

• It not only facilitates radicalisation but accelerates the process.

• It doesn't substitute but complements physical meetings.

• The idea of 'self-radicalisation' online is misleading. The presence of other influential individuals, either online or in person, is needed.

While the internet plays a role in making available a range of material and exposure to those who facilitate a person's journey into a terrorist group, that journey doesn't take place in isolation from their interactions in the physical world. Those interactions are most critical in the person's pathway to radicalisation.

Online Australia

The Australian Government is no different from other governments that must counter a recruitment drive by a technologically savvy group that manipulates its narrative and medium to suit its audience. We've reached a new stage in the evolution of modern jihadist propaganda. ISIL members who've grown up with technology are adept at using the entire range of disseminating tools at their disposal. JustPaste is used to publish summaries of battles that have taken place, SoundCloud to release audio reports of activities, WhatsApp and Kik Messenger to communicate and send images and videos, and Instagram, Facebook and Twitter to share images, propaganda and messages from the front lines. ISIL even uses Q&A sessions about joining the group on Ask.FM. Its messages are tailored to its audience, and change depending on whether they are intended for a local audience or for would-be Western recruits. The message is aimed to permeate deeply online to make it available to as many as possible in order to maintain a steady stream of recruits. ISIL's online recruitment campaign is about the quantity of recruits rather than their quality.

As of March 2015, Facebook had some 1.441 billion active user accounts, and Twitter had 288 million (Statistica 2015). Within Australia, it's thought that 14 million people (58.8% of the total population) have Facebook accounts, 13.7 million have YouTube accounts (57.6%) and 2.8 million have Twitter accounts (11.8%); 58% of the total Australian population use a social media platform of some kind (FRANk 2015). ISIL and its supporters are estimated by the Australian Government to create over 100,000 new posts a day on Twitter (News.com.au 2015a).

In the 54 Australian cases that have been examined for this research, 79.6% had some form of social media presence that showed a link to Islamist extremist beliefs, and at the very least had a degree of online literacy. Most social media users are under the age of 35, and the 54 cases examined for this research have an average age of just over 25, so it's unsurprising that so many had a social media component. We are dealing with people who are far more active in social media networks than the average Australian. Any responses to counter extremism must directly tackle this challenge online, as well as in the physical world.

Examining the social media platforms that are being used, we found that 59.3% of those researched in our study had Facebook accounts, which is fractionally higher than average for Australia. Yet 27.8% of the sample had Twitter accounts, which is more than twice as high as the 11.4% average for Australia. This indicates the importance of this platform for those who are becoming radicalised or who are involved in extremist activity, and most importantly reflects the way ISIL is disseminating its information.

Figure 3: Social media usage
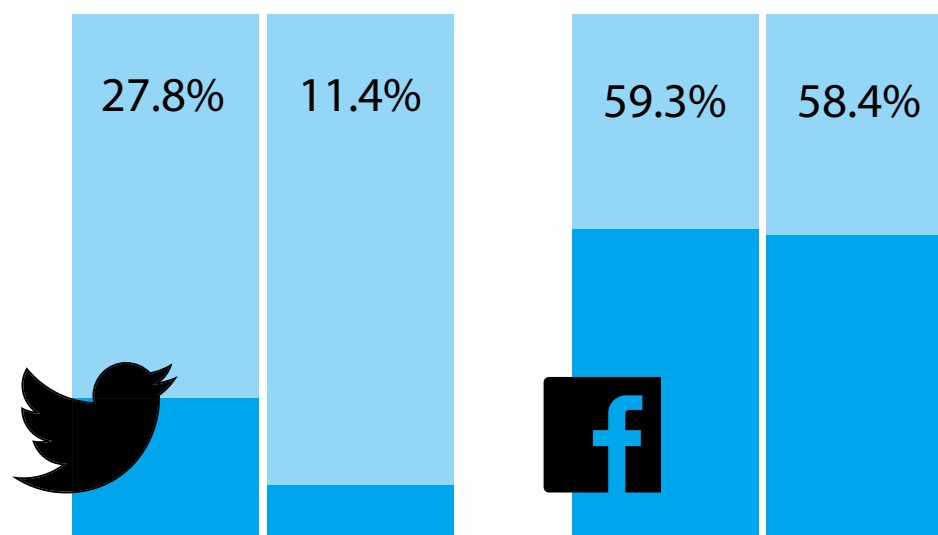
These figures reflect only the social media profiles that are available from open sources. It's likely that a great deal of interaction online takes place on platforms that are largely untraceable. This problem will grow as increasing numbers of online service providers begin rolling out encrypted email and messaging services as standard for their increasingly privacy-focused customer base. There's also increasing evidence of moves by ISIL to use the Darknet and anonymised browsing software such as Tor to connect and communicate (Starr & Crawford 2015). ISIL advises supporters not to tweet names or locations or post identifiable pictures of individuals, and provides instructions on how to avoid detection online and how to wipe metadata from content placed online. Manuals have been published in Arabic and English to this end (Jones 2014, Tharoor 2015).

While we know that ISIL is quick to exploit any online advantage we do not fully understand what role the online environment played in radicalising Australians. Social media profiles can point to changes in attitudes and beliefs such as in the case of Amira Karroum, who moved from posting on Facebook about buying Prada sunglasses and working at a Sea World resort in her teenage years, to writing 'the blood of a martyr does not dry' in later posts (Olding 2014a). Jake Bilardi's case gives us a valuable insight. An intelligent young man who researched international political issues, conflicts and ideologies, he documented his process of radicalisation on his online blog in a post called 'From Melbourne to Ramadi: My Journey'. It indicates that most of his research on international affairs was conducted online, and outlines his use of the internet to establish contacts with violent Islamist groups:

> My main interest though was the mujahideen in the land of Sham, I found myself drawn to Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham…I was eager to make hijra and join either of these two organisations. Despite my eagerness though, I met one key roadblock, how was I to get in? I had no contacts to assist me. After failed attempts at finding a contact I gave up all hope of making hijra…It was my conversations with brothers from the [Islamic] State online though that began getting me to question my view of the organisation and the stories I had heard about it…. I now had the determination to finally remove myself from this land. I continued my search for a contact, even at one point considering simply crossing the border alone without any assistance. Finally, I made contact with a brother online who promised to bring me across the border, it was a risky decision to trust someone online but I was desperate to leave and was confident the brother was genuine.

His story did not include other events taking place in his life during this time, namely the death of his mother in 2012 which appears to have triggered him becoming more removed from his peers and family, or his time attending two suburban Melbourne mosques after converting to Islam. Bilardi's case illustrates how the internet can become a valuable tool to re-enforce beliefs and assumptions without peer challenge to those ideas. His case also demonstrates how an individual can move from exploring extremist beliefs online to actively making connections that facilitate joining such groups. Bilardi would have found it much harder to join ISIL without the facilitation of 'brothers online'.

More research is needed to explore how individuals use the internet to radicalise, the impact of content and the role it plays in pathways to radicalisation. We also need to know what role the internet can play in stopping that journey and in bringing people back from advocating violent ideologies.

Australians in ISIL propaganda

A trend in late 2014 and 2015 is for Australians to be used in ISIL recruitment videos. Neil Prakash, Abdullah Elmir, Abu Yahya ash Shami, Abu Nour al-Iraqi, Tareq Kamleh and Jake Bilardi were all involved in ISIL propaganda aiming to attract Australians to the conflict. Foreign fighters are prized, because they are a powerful tool for recruitment and for showing that ISIL can appeal to a wide range of backgrounds, making it seem like a pathway worth following for a broad cross-section of society.

Also of note are the indirect roles that individuals can play on social media platforms. As a recent International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence report outlined, the online propagandising of individuals 'can be seen as lending support, encouragement, justification and religious legitimacy for the decision of some to join the Syrian conflict as fighters' (Carter et al. 2014). Researchers named Robert (Musa) Cerantonio as one of

the two most popular online authorities in relation to this activity (Carter et al. 2014). There are also 'cheerleaders' or disseminators, often referred to as 'ISIL Fanboys', who support the group online and play a role in the wide dissemination of the ideology shaping ISIL's online image. In April 2014, Tahmid Mirza's Twitter account was named in the top 10 'disseminators' of propaganda followed by English-speaking foreign fighters. The report said the account was followed by 48.6% of the 190 foreign fighters it had studied online (Carter et al. 2014). When Mirza was contacted about this by *The Australian* in October 2014, he explained that he had changed his position and no longer supported ISIL or violent jihad (Stewart and Schliebs 2014). Although it's recently been removed, the Twitter account of *Australi Witness* was used to distribute not only information pertaining to ISIL's propaganda, but also information on potential targets. Before the account was taken down, the person using it was found to be in communication with Elton Simpson, the man recently shot dead in Garland, Texas, during an attack on the American Freedom Defense Initiative's Mohammed cartoon competition.

The response

Governments face considerable difficulty in countering an online narrative that is dispersed so quickly and is alluring to a small, self-selecting group of people. This was demonstrated in the UK crackdown on Twitter in the wake of ISIL's execution of American journalist James Foley. The crackdown drove extremists onto other platforms, as they began using Diaspora, a largely untraceable social media platform. If the ideological narrative is not confronted skilfully, ISIL and like-minded groups will keep the advantage online. What should governments do?

The US State Department has opened a department-branded YouTube channel, which hosts videos that accuse ISIL of hypocrisy and war crimes against Muslims. This operates alongside a Twitter account and Facebook page linking stories and pictures of atrocities committed by ISIL against women and children. The State Department is fighting an uphill battle: while its Twitter feed boasted 7,400 followers in June 2015, the feeds of those involved in the fighting often have more than 10,000, and there are many of them. Governments will find it difficult to reach the people that they need to, because such people often dismiss government-generated content as not credible. What governments can do is ensure that their agencies and political leaders are using consistent language and that their policies back-up their public statements. Better coordination of government messaging would be a step in the right direction.

As Roslyn Richardson found in her November 2013 ASPI report, *Fighting fire with fire: target audience responses to online anti-violence campaigns*, governments aren't the best source to offer compelling counter-narratives, but they can help build the online capacity of influential voices in the most affected communities. Governments should learn from Silicon Valley and other centres of technological innovation, and to benefit from their experience communicating with young audiences. We should bring those lessons and companies into contact with local communities.

Tech firms can teach communities skills enabling those with counter-narratives to go online and engage with radicalisers and their targets. There may be many within our communities able to develop potent counter-narratives to ISIL and other extremist groups, but don't have the capacity to promote that message to a wider audience. Governments and the private sector can assist in providing the skills needed for natural community influencers to emerge.

This is happening overseas. For example, Imamsonline.com was created to act as an online portal, voice and information source for prospective Islamic leaders, imams and broader society. It recently began publishing a magazine, *Haqiqah* (Arabic for 'reality'), to try to counter ISIL's online propaganda (Warraich n.d.). The magazine features articles by scholars detailing how ISIL's caliphate is illegitimate and how there's no basis in Islamic texts for the group's jihad. This work has been supported by Twitter, Facebook and Google in order to facilitate the widest possible distribution of the key messages in the text (Dean 2015).

Allowing effective counter-narratives to emerge will, at times, require the use of voices that are controversial and may have been involved in some form of extremist activity in the past. Such people are prime agents for delivering

messages that challenge dangerous narratives, as they have direct experience of being on the receiving end of those narratives. One example is the individual who created Abdullah-X (n.d.), an online cartoon character used to directly challenge the message of ISIL. It's the brainchild of a former extremist who once followed the teachings of notorious clerics Abu Hamza and Omar Bakri—both of whom are clearly not good role models. However, the individual who created the character understands personally the journey that impressionable young men and women may be on, giving them credibility in the eyes of those toying with extremist ideas.

Giving evidence before the US Senate Committee on Homeland Security, Mubin Shaikh, a former extremist jihadist who deradicalised and worked for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, provided an insight into how the online environment could be used to counter extremist propaganda:

> I can say that for almost 2 years following my recruitment by the Service, I conducted several infiltration operations both online and on the ground involving religious extremists. … In addition, I have spent the past few years on Twitter having watched the very start of the Foreign Fighter phenomenon and directly observed recruitment and propaganda by ISIL types online I have directly engaged with many of them – some of whom are now deceased – male and female as well as some of their victims that they have tried to recruit. My approach is to show how wrong they are and to criticize and delegitimize them from the very Islamic sources that they misquote and mutilate (Shaikh 2015).

The picture of online radicalisation in Australia is similar to other Western nations, but our geographical location offers a more powerful demonstration of the enabling role the internet can play. Being some 12,000 kilometres from Syria and Iraq makes the physical journey that aspiring Australians have to make one of the longest of their foreign fighter peers. This re-enforces the importance of the role of the online environment which has meant that the tyranny of distance is no more and that the philosophical journey, and the tools and knowledge required to make the trip, are just a 'click' away. While not isolated from other 'real' world factors which influence an individuals' pathway to radicalisation, the fact that 79.6% of our 54 cases researched had a social media presence, demonstrates the important role these platforms play in connecting ideas, propaganda, conversations and contacts. Governments need to put more priority on increasing our understanding of how individuals interact with these platforms while radicalising.

Profiles

Australia's Gen Y foreign fighters

Mahmoud Abdullatif

Other names: Abu Jihad, the Playboy Jihadist.

Date of death: 19 January 2015.

Approximate age at death: 23.

Residential location in Australia: Coburg, Melbourne.

Travel history: Travelled to Syria in September 2014 with Suhan Rahman, where he met with Mohammed Elomar and Khaled Sharrouf.

Education: Abdullatif was expelled from Brunswick Secondary School in Year 11 for failing class and causing damage to a neighbouring school (Olding 2015a).

Religious organisations attended: Unknown.

Known associations with organisations abroad: ISIL.

Known associations with individuals of significance: Suhan Rahman, Mohammed Elomar, Khaled Sharrouf (Olding 2015a).

Online activity: Reported to have had Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts that he used while fighting in Syria (Shliebs 2014).

Mohammed Ali Baryalei

Other names: Abu Omar.

Date of death: October 2014.

Approximate age at death: 33.

Residential location in Australia: Sydney.

Travel history: Baryalei left Afghanistan in 1981 with his family and arrived in Australia as a refugee seven years later. He travelled in April 2013 to Syria in order to fight for Jabhat al-Nusra (he changed allegiance to ISIL within two months of arriving) (Rubinsztein-Dunlop 2014c).

Education: Reported to have attended Catholic schools including Sydney's Terra Sancta Catholic College (Rubinsztein-Dunlop 2014c).

Religious organisations attended: Street Dawah.

Known associations with organisations abroad: Jabhat al-Nusra, ISIL.

Individual associations of significance: Omarjan Azari, Tyler Casey, Amira Karroum, Khaled Sharrouf, Mohamed Elomar, Abu Salayman and other unnamed foreign fighter recruits.

Online activity: No known personal social media accounts. Baryalei featured in Street Dawah YouTube clips and he is reported to have requested that Omarjan Azari post a video online of the execution of 'any random unbeliever' from the Sydney streets, and that the act take place in front of an Islamic State flag (Hall 2015).

Jake Bilardi

Other names: Jihadi Jake, Abu Abdullah al-Australi.

Date of death: 11 March 2015.

Approximate age at death: 18.

Residential location in Australia: Craigieburn, Melbourne.

Travel history: Travelled to Iraq in August 2014 to fight with ISIL.

Education: Attended Craigieburn South Primary School and Craigieburn Secondary College. He dropped out of Niddrie's Rosehill Secondary College in 2014 (Spooner et al. 2015).

Religious organisations attended: Hume Islamic Youth Centre, Meadow Heights Mosque.

Known associations with organisations abroad: ISIL.

Individual associations of significance: Unknown.

Online activity: Bilardi published a 4,300-word manifesto describing his path to radicalisation. The blog was published under his ISIL name, Abu Abdullah al-Australi (Alfred 2015). His alleged Twitter account also sent tweets to the Australian Federal Police (AFP) about the Lindt Cafe siege in Sydney.

Tyler Casey

Other names: Yusuf Ali.

Date of death: 11 January 2014.

Approximate age at death: 22.

Residential location in Australia: Redcliffe, north of Brisbane.

Travel history: Casey travelled between Australia and the US during his youth. During an interview with the ABC, Casey's half-brother Josiah Turnbull claimed Casey has travelled frequently overseas under the pretence of being a missionary in his later years. During this interview it's also claimed the CIA and FBI had intelligence that Casey had trained with Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (Rubinsztein-Dunlop 2014b).

Religious organisations attended: Street Dawah.

Known associations with organisations abroad: Jabhat al-Nusra, Al-Qaeda.

Individual associations of significance: Amira Karroum, Mohammed Ali Baryalei, Hamdi al Qudsi.

Online activity: Casey was an active Facebook user (Olding 2014a).

Adam Dahman

Other names: Abu Bakr al Australi.

Date of death: 17 July 2014.

Approximate age at death: 18.

Residential location in Australia: Northcote, Melbourne.

Travel history: Travelled from Sydney or Perth initially, before travelling to Syria and then to Iraq.

Education: Attended Northcote High School; was supposed to graduate in 2013.

Religious organisations attended: Hume Islamic Youth Centre.

Known associations with organisations abroad: ISIL.

Individual associations of significance: Ezzit Raad and Ahmad Raad, who was Dahman's brother-in-law.

Online activity: Dahman is known to have had a Facebook account that he used while in Syria (White et al. 2014).

Mohamed Elomar

Other names: Abuhafs al Australi.

Date of death: 22 June 2015

Approximate age at death: 30.

Residential location in Australia: Western Sydney.

Travel history: In 2013, he travelled to Syria, via Malaysia and Turkey, to join ISIL. He met his friend Khaled Sharrouf in Malaysia.

Education: Known to have received a boxing scholarship at the Australian Institute of Sport.

Religious organisations attended: Global Islamic Youth Centre, Liverpool.

Known associations with organisations abroad: ISIL.

Individual associations of significance: Khaled Sharrouf, Mohamed Ali Elomar Snr, Fatima Elomar.

Online activity: Elomar had multiple Facebook and Twitter accounts shut down. Most of his social media friends have been ISIL supporters, mostly located in Sydney. He loudly supported the Lindt Cafe siege on Twitter. He was also infamous for posting shocking images on his Twitter account.

Amira Karroum

Other names: Squid.

Date of death: 11 January 2014.

Approximate age at death: 22.

Residential location in Australia: Granville, Sydney.

Travel history: In December 2013, Karroum travelled to join her husband in Syria, where they were killed shortly after her arrival.

Education: Attended St Hilda's Anglican girls school on the Gold Coast, despite her Muslim upbringing. She graduated in 2009 and went on to study graphic design.

Religious organisations attended: Masjid Al Noor mosque, Granville.

Known associations with organisations abroad: Jabhat al-Nusra, al-Qaeda.

Individual associations of significance: Tyler Casey.

Online activity: Karroum's radicalisation process over the two years before her death is clear from her Facebook page. Her final posts describe paradise as her goal and her motive. She stated that 'everything is temporary' shortly before leaving for Syria, along with 'May Allah make us the generation that will raise the flag of Islam'. She also stated that she was proud of being a Muslim on 11 September 2011, the 10th anniversary of 9/11.

Tareq Kamleh

Other names: Abu Yousef Al-Australie.

Approximate age (at date of publication): 29.

Country of birth: Australia.

Residential location in Australia: Subiaco, Perth.

Travel history: Travelled to Syria in April 2015. His earlier travel history is unclear, but it's been reported that he originally stated that he was going to Syria to work with Doctors Without Borders.

Education: Graduated from medical school at Adelaide University in 2010.

Religious organisations attended: None known. While his mother, who is a convert, is reported to be a strict Muslim, there are conflicting reports about his devoutness. He's reported as both a womaniser and a practising Muslim and appears to have been torn between a hedonistic lifestyle and his religious beliefs.

Known associations with organisations abroad: ISIL.

Individual associations of significance: None known.

Online activity: Kamleh used JustPaste.it and Facebook to publicly post his response to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. His post also referred to media speculation about his radicalisation and journey to join ISIL (Kamleh 2015). Kamleh has also been actively involved in ISIL's online propaganda.

Mostafa Mahamed

Other names: Abu Sulayman al Muhajir.

Approximate age (at date of publication): 30.

Residential location in Australia: Sydney.

Travel history: Travelled to Syria in 2013.

Religious organisations attended: al-Risalah Islamic Centre – Sulayman was a speaker at the al-Risalah Islamic Centre in Sydney.

Known associations with organisations abroad: Jabhat al-Nusra and al-Qaeda.

Individual associations of significance: He's been threatened by Mohamed Elomar and Khaled Sharrouf. Bilal Khazal, a jailed preacher from Sydney, is one of his colleagues. He has been compared to Anwar al Awlaki.

Online activity: Jabhat al-Nusra named his Twitter account one of their top three official accounts. He appeared in a Jabhat al-Nusra propaganda video in March 2014 and is also considered the most important English-speaking person to officially address the conflict between Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIL. His Twitter feed reportedly had around 7,000 followers in March 2014, when the video was released (Joscelyn 2014).

Neil Prakash

Other names: Abu Khaled al-Cambodi.

Approximate age (at date of publication): 23.

Residential location in Australia: Melbourne.

Travel history: Claims to have converted to Islam after travelling to Cambodia with family in 2012. Travelled to Syria in September 2013.

Education: Prakash reportedly dropped out of school in Year 10 (Maley 2015). He enrolled in a number of TAFE courses.

Religious organisations attended: al-Furqan Islamic Information Centre.

Known associations with organisations abroad: ISIL.

Individual associations of significance: Mohammad Ali Baryalei.

Online activity: Prakash has used Twitter and Ask.fm to promote ISIL propaganda and create connections with foreign radicals. He has appeared in official ISIL propaganda video clips.

Suhan Rahman

Other names: Abu Jihad.

Date of death: 18 March 2015.

Approximate age at death: 23.

Residential location in Australia: Roxburgh Park, Melbourne.

Travel history: Travelled to Syria in September 2014 with Mahmoud Abdullatif, where he met with Mohammed Elomar and Khaled Sharrouf.

Education: Studied building management at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

Religious organisations attended: Unknown.

Known associations with organisations abroad: ISIL.

Individual associations of significance': Mahmoud Abdullatif, Mohammed Elomar, Khaled Sharrouf.

Online activity: Rahman was active on Twitter and Facebook. He used Twitter to support the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks and used Facebook to send a series of messages to Fairfax Media expressing support for Islamic State.

Khaled Sharrouf

Other names: Abu Zarqawi.

Date of death: 22 June 2015.

Approximate age at death: 33.

Residential location in Australia: Wiley Park, western Sydney.

Travel history: Sharrouf travelled to Syria in late 2013 via Malaysia and Turkey, using his brother's passport, to join ISIL.

Education: Chester Hill High School—expelled in Year 9 for bashing another student.

Religious organisations attended: al-Risalah Islamic Centre, Bankstown; Global Islamic Youth Centre, Liverpool.

Known associations with organisations abroad: ISIL.

Individual associations of significance: Mohamed Elomar, Mohamed Ali Elomar Snr, Mohammad Ali Baryalei.

Online activity: Sharrouf maintained an extensive social media presence while fighting with ISIL in Syria. In August 2014, he posted a photo of his son holding up the severed head of a Syrian soldier. Sharrouf also taunted the AFP via Twitter upon his arrival in Syria.

Ahmed Succarieh

Other names: Abu Asma al Australi.

Date of death: September 2013.

Approximate age at death: 26.

Residential location in Australia: Brisbane.

Travel history: Travelled to Syria before September 2013.

Education: Attended Runcorn State High School.

Religious organisations attended: Unknown.

Known associations with organisations abroad: Jabhat al-Nusra.

Individual associations of significance: Omar Succarieh and Abraham Succarieh (both his brothers).

Online activity: While Succarieh wasn't active on social media, there is footage of his suicide bombing online that includes a speech by him outlining his motives for committing the act. He was Australia's first known suicide bomber.

Australia's domestic jihadists

Abdul Nacer Benbrika

Other names: Sheik Abu Bakr.

Approximate age (at date of publication): 54.

Status: Convicted – serving sentence.

Residential location in Australia: Dallas, Melbourne.

Travel history: Left Algeria in 1989. Arrived in Australia on a visitor's visa with a friend who had also come from Algeria, and obtained work as a process worker in Campbellfield.

Education: Graduated with an aviation engineering degree, school unknown.

Religious organisations attended: Taught at the Islamic Information and Support Centre of Australia.

Known associations with organisations abroad: Benbrika has returned to the media spotlight after rumours surface that he is recruiting for ISIL from prison. It's claimed that he has more visitors than any other inmate in Victoria (Al-Furqan Centre 2015).

Individual associations of significance: Ahmed Raad, Ezzit Raad, Adam Dahman, Abdullah Merhi, Aimen Joud, Fadl Sayadi, Amer Haddara, Sheikh Omran, Abu Qatada, Khaled Cheikho, Moustafa Cheikho, Mohamed Ali Elomar, Abdul Rakib Hasan, Mohammed Omar Jamal.

Online activity: Authorities are worried about Benbrika's influence on young extremists, as he is praised online as a 'martyr' and a 'king'.

Abdul Numan Haider

Other names: None.

Date of death: 23 September 2014.

Approximate age at death: 18.

Residential location in Australia: Narre Warren, Melbourne.

Travel history: Haider's family left Afghanistan for Australia in the mid-2000s.

Education: Lyndale Secondary College, graduating in 2013; was enrolled in electro-engineering at Dandenong TAFE at the time of his death.

Religious organisations attended: al-Furqan Centre in Springvale, Melbourne.

Known associations with organisations abroad: Haider drew inspiration from ISIL, but it's unclear whether he was acting on the group's behalf or of his own accord. The cancellation of his passport in September 2014 revealed authorities' suspicions that he was planning to leave the country to fight with ISIL.

Individual associations of significance: He had reportedly been associating with unnamed 'hardline Muslims' at the al-Furqan Centre, but he had moved away from the group at the time of his death.

Online activity: Haider was active on Facebook. He posted an image on Facebook of him holding up an ISIL flag in response to the Sydney and Melbourne terror raids. Images of members of ISIL were also on Haider's Facebook account.

Man Haron Monis

Other names: Manteghi Boroujerdi, Mohammed Hassan, Sheik Haron.

Date of death: 16 December 2014.

Age at death: 50.

Residential location in Australia: Bexley North, Sydney.

Travel history: Monis left Iran in October 1996 for Australia, where he promptly sought and was granted asylum. After 1996, he travelled overseas on 21 separate occasions, including 10 times to Bangkok. His trips, the purposes of which are unknown, generally lasted less than a week (PM&C 2015a).

Education: In 1982, Monis commenced study at Tehran's Imam Sadiq University, where he studied political science.

Religious organisations attended: No known associations, but he converted to Sunni Islam (announced on his webpage) in early December 2014. He was said to be 'isolated' from the Australian Muslim community.

Known associations with organisations abroad: None known, but he drew inspiration from ISIL.

Individual associations of significance: None known.

Online activity: Monis was active on Facebook and ran a page where he criticised Australian Government officials and their treatment of him.

CHAPTER 3

Jihad in the West

Australia is one of many Western countries grappling with the domestic impact of the Syrian civil war. Although demographic, geographical and historical differences have influenced the nature of violent Islamism and radicalisation in each country, Australia can draw on lessons from other Western countries' experiences to help frame its response. Countries such as Denmark, France, the UK and the US have been dealing with a larger domestic threat from violent Islamism for over a decade.

Attacks in the West

Significant Islamist attacks since 2010 in the West have included the Toulouse and Montauban shootings, the Boston bombings, the killing of Lee Rigby in the UK and the *Charlie Hebdo* attack in Paris. The picture that emerges over this period is markedly different from that in the early 2000s, when the West was rocked by 9/11 and the Madrid and London bombings. More recent attacks have been smaller, more ad hoc and perpetrated by people acting alone or with a partner, rather than by organised groups.

There is no single profile of a person likely to carry out Islamist-inspired violence. However, an examination of the perpetrators of attacks in the West in recent years shows three patterns of action that authorities should bear in mind when forming policies to address this threat. The first is that training abroad with Islamist militant groups will enable perpetrators to deliver more severe attacks (Hegghammer 2013). A second pattern points to connections between perpetrators and a facilitating social network, spiritual mentor, or both. The third pattern concerns individuals who have attempted and failed to travel abroad to join a militant Islamist group—perhaps having been blocked by authorities by withholding or withdrawing passports—who have then carried out an attack domestically.

Links to Islamist militant organisations

It's important to consider the aims of the group that individuals are leaving to join, as this affects the likelihood of people returning from the group to attack in the West. ISIL has distinctly different immediate aims from al-Qaeda, which has focused more directly on waging jihad in the West. ISIL's current focus is on entrenching its Sunni caliphate in the Middle East and North Africa. While some domestic attacks in Western countries during 2014 and 2015 may have been inspired by ISIL, it is at times difficult to be clear of the group provided anything more than online encouragement.

Two attacks in the West have been solidly linked to ISIL: Mehdi Nemmouche's attack on the Jewish Museum of Belgium (2014) and the siege carried out by Amedy Coulibaly at a kosher supermarket in France following the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings (2015). Martin Couture-Rouleau's attack on Canadian Armed Forces members in a parking lot (2014) has also been linked to loose inspiration from ISIL. There's speculation that Elton Simpson, one of the shooters at

the Mohammed drawing contest in Texas in May 2015, was linked to the group. ISIL claimed responsibility, but it's unclear whether there was any two-way communication between Simpson and ISIL before the attack.

Nemmouche is the only known returned foreign fighter to carry out an attack since 2010. He joined ISIL between late 2012 and early 2014 and is reported to have acted as a guard for the group's hostage sites (Dickey 2014). He carried out his attack on the Jewish Museum of Belgium shortly after returning to France. ISIL didn't make statements about whether Nemmouche was a member of the group or whether ISIL was responsible for ordering the attack. Evidence seems to suggest that Nemmouche didn't have the direct support of the group.

Coulibaly, who killed five people, claimed allegiance to ISIL in a video released by the group following the incident. He didn't have physical contact with the group before his attack, but his wife escaped from France and has since been used in the group's propaganda. Links between ISIL and Coulibaly before the attack are difficult to discern. It doesn't appear that the group provided material or financial support or training, but rather that Coulibaly was inspired by ISIL's meteoric rise and that the group seized the opportunity to be aligned with the perpetrator. The same story appears to have been repeated in the case of Simpson in Texas.

Other recent attacks show evidence of inspiration by and links to al-Qaeda and its affiliates, although this trend has declined with the rise of ISIL since 2014. These attacks have most notably included the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings by Cherif and Said Kouachi (2015), which were purportedly inspired and supported by AQAP. Mohamed Merah's deadly shooting spree in France in 2012 also showed potential links to al-Qaeda and its affiliates. And there are the two cases of botched bombings in 2010 in New York and Stockholm, which were both linked to al-Qaeda. Tamerlan Tsarnaev, the older of the brothers behind the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings, had links to Islamist groups abroad, although not to al-Qaeda or ISIL. He reportedly made contact with groups operating in Dagestan during a trip to the region in 2012. Finally, Michael Adebolajo, one of the killers of Lee Rigby in the UK (2013), attempted to join al-Shabaab in 2010 in Kenya but was arrested.

The *Charlie Hebdo* shootings figure prominently in the list of attacks. The attack was the most deadly in the timeframe covered here and showed the most tangible link between perpetrators and a militant Islamist group. Reports suggest that either one or both of the Kouachi brothers had established links with AQAP,[1] had travelled to train with the group in Yemen and had been provided with funds by the group to carry out the attack. The brothers also stated their link to the group when they contacted French media while on the run from the authorities.

The training, support and inspiration gained during trips abroad can have a lasting effect, as was seen most clearly in the *Charlie Hebdo* attack. In three high-profile cases since 2010, security surveillance of the attackers (Cherif Kouachi, Michael Adebolajo and Mohamed Merah) was ended shortly before the attacks, even though the perpetrators had previously travelled abroad with the intent of linking up with a militant Islamist group.

Recent attacks suggest that those who have trained abroad or travelled abroad with the intent of gaining training and support for a domestic attack may prove a more serious threat than those who have travelled abroad to fight in a civil conflict. This speaks to the importance of understanding the aims and ideology of groups operating abroad and the motives of those travelling to join them.

The organisational structure, aims and motives of ISIL currently suggest that its focus isn't on conducting attacks in the West, although it's happy to gain further notoriety by aligning itself with the perpetrators of fresh attacks.

Facilitating networks and mentors

Individuals' links to facilitating networks also appear to affect their decisions to carry out domestic attacks. Those links can occur in local communities or online. A connection to a spiritual mentor who advocates attacks in the West

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1   Initial reports based on Yemeni intelligence and Said's travel history stated that he had travelled to Yemen. However, his wife (who has no proven links to the attack or extreme Islamist elements in Paris) has stated adamantly that he couldn't have gone to Yemen at the time authorities argued he had, as she was heavily pregnant and he didn't leave her for more than three days in that period. It's therefore been suggested that Cherif Kouachi may have travelled using his brother's passport. There have also been claims in the media that both brothers travelled to Yemen to meet with AQAP.

is important. This connection can be one-sided (for example, the perpetrator might watch online sermons by a prominent extremist preacher, but not be in direct contact with the preacher). While the term 'lone wolf' has gained traction in media reports about recent cases of violent Islamism in Western countries, probably because of the trend towards attackers operating alone, it gives the false impression that radicalisation and the planning of attacks occur in isolation.

Cherif Kouachi, Tamerlan Tsarnaev and the killers of Lee Rigby were linked to radical Islamist elements within their communities. Adebolajo was closely associated with the now banned anti-military Islamic group al-Muhajiroun in the UK. It's also believed that other Britons travelling to Kenya around 2010, such as Adebolajo, had links to the group (Peachy et al. 2013). Cherif Kouachi was part of an elaborate network of Islamist extremists in Paris, which he developed through his attendance at the Addawa mosque and then his time in prison. Finally, Tamerlan Tsarnaev attended the Islamic Society of Boston, which has been alleged by reporter Oren Dorell (2013) to support a brand of Islam that encourages grievance against the West. He also became involved in Islamist organisations via his family connections in Dagestan during his travels there (Shuster 2013). While links with organisations and groups that espouse radical interpretations of Islam probably come after initial engagement with extremist ideology, social connections that allow individuals to openly express their beliefs and find support and encouragement fuel and sustain radicalisation and may encourage attacks.

Several other recent attacks have shown that physical connections to radical Islamist groups or to a local facilitating network aren't necessary to engage with extreme ideology. That Anwar al-Awlaki was a radicalising online force for many perpetrators is testament to the capacity of charismatic individuals to create mentor-like roles online to inspire vulnerable people to carry out attacks. Al-Awlaki is considered to have helped motivate Faisal Shahzad, Roshonara Choudry, the Tsarnaev brothers and the Kouachi brothers in their attacks. AQAP's *Inspire* magazine continues to be identified as a radicalising force in recent attacks.

Failure to launch

At least five perpetrators of attacks since 2010 attempted but failed to travel abroad to join or link up with Islamist militant groups. In each case, authorities halted their plans. Canada experienced two attacks in short succession in late 2014 by perpetrators who had both previously attempted or expressed an intention to travel abroad to join ISIL. Couture-Rouleau attempted to travel to Turkey in mid-2014, to then join ISIL in Syria and Iraq. He was stopped at the airport by authorities and his passport was seized (Payton 2014). Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, who attacked the Canadian Parliament two days later, had expressed his intention to travel to Syria prior to the attack. He had applied for a passport, purportedly to travel to join ISIL, but it had been held up. Other perpetrators who tried but failed to travel abroad included Cherif Kouachi,[2] Adebolajo and Simpson.

Western foreign fighters

In February 2015, Vice Admiral David Johnston, the ADF's Chief of Joint Operations, stated that ISIL had between 20,000 and 31,500 available fighters (Johnston 2015). A study of Western foreign fighters by King's College London estimated that 20,730 foreign fighters had mobilised as at 26 January 2015 (Neumann 2015). Most are Sunni Islamist militants, while some have joined Shiite and Kurdish militias. Officials from the US National Counterterrorism Center estimated foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq to have come from 90 countries (Bora 2015). 11,000 of those foreign fighters are thought to hail from the Middle East, and 3,000 are believed to be from countries that comprised the former USSR. 4,406 are understood to be from Western countries, including nearly 4,000 from Western Europe (Table 3). Up to one-third of the 20,730 foreigners mobilised over the years of fighting are thought to have returned to their home countries; another 5%–10% are estimated to have been killed in theatre (Neumann 2015).

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2   Cherif Kouachi tried to travel to Iraq in 2005 to fight but was stopped and put into jail in France, as such travel was an offence at the time. It appears that he may have succeeded in travelling to Yemen to train in 2011 for the *Charlie Hebdo* attack along with his brother, although this remains unclear.

Not only are France, Germany and the UK the largest countries in the European Union by population, they've also contributed the greatest numbers of foreign fighters to the conflict in Syria and Iraq. The problem is much more acute on a per capita basis in Belgium, Denmark and Sweden, which have contributed a disproportionately large number of fighters. Peter Neumann suggests that peer-to-peer relations and community networks are primary motivators and means of recruitment to ISIL. He notes that this can lead to a clustering effect as seen in Norway, where 'almost all of [the country's] recruits had left from not only the same town, but the same street' (Liddy & Gourlay 2015).

Table 3: Western foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq

Country	Estimated number of foreign fighters (upper figure)	Range (where indicated)	Per capita (up to; per million population)
Austria	150	100–150	17
Belgium	440	–	40
Denmark	150	100–150	27
Finland	70	50–70	13
France	1,200	–	18
Germany	600	500–600	7.5
Ireland	30	–	7
Italy	80	–	1.5
Netherlands	250	200–250	14.5
Norway	60	–	12
Spain	100	50–100	2
Sweden	180	150–180	19
Switzerland	40	–	5
United Kingdom	600	500–600	9.5
Australia	250	100–250	–
New Zealand	6	–	–
US	100	–	–
Canada	100	–	–
Total	4,406	–	–

Source: Neumann (2015).

The responses

In seeking to address the phenomenon of foreign fighters, Western governments have been motivated by two primary concerns: first, that the behaviour of foreign fighters joining the conflict will 'accentuate its duration, sectarian nature and barbarity' (Vidino et al. 2014); second, that foreign fighters will use their contacts, training and radical ideology to carry out attacks in their home country once they've returned. A variety of policy responses have been deployed to address this difficult issue. They fall into two broad categories: the punitive, encompassing criminal and administrative measures; and the preventive (or rehabilitative), employing so-called 'softer' counter-radicalisation approaches.

As extremist activity in Syria and Iraq gained traction and Western attention through mid-2014, the flow of foreign fighters became a significant concern to many nations. On 24 September 2014, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2178, compelling member states to take action to address the threat posed by foreign fighters (US Government 2014). It required that domestic legislation be updated to better meet the foreign fighter challenge;

travelling abroad for terrorist purposes was criminalised, as was the facilitation and financing of such travel. Resolution 2178 also called on states to expand and improve international cooperation and information sharing, and recognised 'countering violent extremism' (CVE) initiatives as a core component of the response—the first time the Security Council had done so (US Government 2014).

Preventing departure

Western states have pursued a multilayered approach to prevent people from travelling for terrorist purposes. Confiscating or cancelling passports of those suspected to be planning to travel to fight in Syria and Iraq is one of the more tangible signs of the policy shift. Several states have pursued this approach, including New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Denmark, while others such as the US maintain the power to cancel passports. Efforts to interdict those suspected of being aspiring foreign fighters also include travel bans, short-term surveillance and detention. Some European jurisdictions have legal mechanisms to investigate and prosecute foreign fighters before their departure in certain circumstances.

States have also sought administrative arrangements that focus on disrupting travel for terrorist purposes. In February, the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, Nicholas J Rasmussen, testified to the US Congress that 'we see an increased political willingness among our foreign partners to review and enhance border controls and institute stronger watchlisting and information sharing arrangements' (Rasmussen 2015). Despite such efforts, a significant number of foreign fighters don't come to the attention of authorities before they travel, hampering global tracking and interdiction efforts. Western states, particularly those in Europe, have also put an emphasis on strengthening border security as a complement to effective information exchange.

It's also important to recognise that some states pursue policy measures that focus on preventing citizens from becoming foreign fighters. In Denmark, authorities engage potential recruits, alongside family members and community leaders, in a conversation that seeks to dissuade them from the foreign fighter route. A range of states have well-developed strategies and structures in place to engage with individuals, build resilience and ultimately seek to prevent radicalisation. They include Britain's Prevent program and Germany's Hayat program and *Gefährdeansprachen* (hazard talks) initiative, in which the authorities approach those suspected of planning terror-related travel to remind them of the implications should they follow through (Vidino et al. 2014).

Returning foreign fighters

As has been highlighted, many foreign fighters who join extremist groups such as ISIL in Syria and Iraq won't return to their home countries. That's particularly true of those from the West. As with efforts to prevent the departure of aspiring foreign fighters, Western states have deployed a range of criminal and administrative measures, along with CVE efforts.

The fundamental choice that states have to make in dealing with returned foreign fighters is whether or not to pursue prosecutions. Officials in the UK have the power to detain returnees from Syria for up to 14 days without charge. Norway has arrested returned foreign fighters. Authorities in Canada and France can 'question, monitor and seek to prosecute' returnees (Vidino et al. 2014). However all jurisdictions face the same significant challenge of gathering enough admissible evidence. But using the judiciary won't prevent terrorist incidents; it's been argued that prosecuting all returnees offers a 'false sense of finality', as jail stints are often short and sometimes do more harm than good when those convicted are 'exposed to hardened jihadists and radical religious leaders' (Byman & Shapiro 2014a) .

Some states have varying degrees of power to revoke the citizenship of those involved in terror activities abroad. In both France and Canada a dual citizen can have their citizenship revoked, at the discretion of a minister, in a limited range of circumstances related to terrorism or national security as determined by a court. There's also scope in the US Code for the deprivation of citizenship—a process requiring judicial involvement. The United Kingdom has broad powers to revoke the citizenship of even sole UK citizens if the Secretary of State is satisfied that such a move is 'conducive to the public good' (Pillai 2015).

If returned foreign fighters aren't detained and prosecuted or don't have their citizenship revoked, the state can put them under surveillance with or without their knowledge. The US, for example, elects to use surveillance on returned foreign fighters rather than arrest them. While it's a resource-intensive approach, it enables the state to gather intelligence on jihadist networks and reach out to those who aren't a threat. Authorities in Denmark seek to monitor returnees in order to assess whether they pose a threat (Vidino et al. 2014:8–9).

Many jurisdictions have introduced preventive efforts aimed at disengaging and reintegrating returned foreign fighters through rehabilitation, religious mentoring, and counselling and careers advice. In the Danish city of Aarhus, officials evaluate returnees for risk, after which they can be monitored, arrested, referred for treatment or assisted to re-join society. The authorities have 'specific re-training programs that aim to capitalise on the fatigue and disillusionment that some returnees feel and to offer them the possibility of re-integration into their home societies' (Byman & Shapiro 2014b). These efforts are sometimes a complement or alternative to prosecution.

At the heart of the struggle to confront the phenomenon of foreign fighters is an understanding that there exists no archetype of a foreign fighter, nor is there a consensus on how best they be dealt with. The inability of Western nations to predict the circumstances of aspiring or returned foreign fighters requires a policy framework that's flexible enough to deal with a range of contingencies, doesn't overstate the threat and strikes the right balance between preventive, punitive and rehabilitative measures. In dealing with aspiring or returned foreign fighters, the state should assess individuals on a case-by-case basis. Authentic engagement and cooperation with local Muslim communities is central to meeting this challenge.

CHAPTER 4

Australia's policy response

While the Australian Government was aware of radicalised Australians travelling to Syria since early 2012 (Irvine 2012), it took ISIL's dramatic expansion in 2014 and imagery showing the complicity of Australians in ISIL crimes to trigger a broader government response to the mounting crisis.

That response has included military intervention, new legislation, new budget funding, a significant review, and changes in the nation's counterterrorism machinery. These changes have occurred in the midst of numerous disruption operations against plots to attack domestically, a large increase in those travelling to the Middle East, a siege inspired by radical Islam, and a range of other attacks in Canada, Denmark, France and the US.

This section reviews the government's response to the jihadi threat, including modifications to the terror alert system, legislative change, military operations, organisational innovation, Commonwealth–state relations and international cooperation.

A turbulent period (selected events)

- **January 2014:** ISIL forces commence attacks into Anbar Province, Iraq.
- **June 2014:** ISIL forces extend their actions in Iraq, including in Mosul and Tikrit. A 'caliphate' is declared on 29 June.
- **July 2014:** Graphic scenes of involvement by Australians in ISIL atrocities and bombings are shown in newspapers after online postings.
- **5 August 2014:** The Australian Government increases funding for counterterrorism by $630 million. This money is to build intelligence and border control capacities, improve security at Parliament House and provide resources to engage people at risk of radicalisation. The government announces new counterterrorism legislation.
- **August 14:** A humanitarian mission is launched to relieve trapped Yazidis near Srinjar, Iraq.
- **12 September 2014:** The Australian Government raises the national terror alert to 'High', in the first-ever revision of this alert.
- **14 September 2014:** The government announces its intention to deploy 600 troops and aircraft to join multinational coalition against ISIL in Iraq.
- **18 September 2014:** 800 police are involved in Operation Appleby raids in Sydney and Brisbane; two people are arrested.
- **24 September 2014:** Two police officers are severely injured by an assailant with ISIL sympathies in Melbourne.
- **20 and 22 October 2014:** Attacks take place in Canada.

- **September–November 2014:** Two tranches of new counterterrorism laws targeting foreign fighters and removing some barriers to interagency coordination are introduced, debated and passed.
- **15–16 December 2014:** Two people and a gunman are killed during a siege in the Lindt Cafe, Sydney.
- **24 December 2014.** Two people in Sydney are arrested on terrorism-related charges.
- **9–11 January 2015:** Attacks take place in Paris.
- **20 February 2015:** Attorney-General Brandis announces new programs to counter terrorist propaganda and calls a regional summit for June 2015.
- **22 February 2015:** Prime Minister Abbott makes an address on counterterrorism, announces counterterrorism arrangements and releases a review of the Lindt Cafe attack. ASIO is investigating 400 terrorism cases.
- **1 March 2015:** An anti-terrorism package for selected schools is announced.
- **2 March 2015:** Travel to Mosul in Iraq is banned.
- **3 March 2015:** The government announces 300 extra soldiers for Iraq; New Zealand joins this group in April.
- **7 March 2015:** Airport officials stop two Sydney teenagers from flying to the Middle East.
- **March 2015:** A Melbourne teenager dies as a suicide bomber in Iraq.
- **18 March 2015:** A terrorist attack at a Tunisian museum takes place.
- **28 March 2015:** Data retention laws are passed.
- **1 April:** The Kenyan university massacre takes place.
- **18 April 2015:** Five Melbourne teenagers are arrested over an alleged plot set for Anzac Day.
- **10 May 2015:** 17 year old boy arrested in Melbourne, charged with plotting a terrorist attack set for Mother's Day.
- **15 May 2015:** The strategically located Iraqi city of Ramadi, 110 kilometres west of Baghdad, falls to ISIL fighters after a lengthy siege.
- **26-30 May 2015:** New political-level appointments and National Counter Terrorism Coordinator announced; Australian government flags changes to citizenship laws.

Legislative change

A mix of planned and opportunistic change

Australia's legislative regime for counterterrorism has undergone constant refinement and expansion since 2002, to the point where *The Economist* describes it as 'pushing the limits' of the balance between individual freedoms and security (Banyan 2014).

This refinement took the form of four tranches of legislation presented and passed in late 2014 and early 2015 (see box). The legislation was extensive: it followed the Australian Government's generally reactive approach to amending or adding to counterterrorism legislation, and aimed to make it easier for agencies to disrupt plots at the earliest possible time. These four tranches won't be the last word: more legislation concerning citizenship has been flagged for consideration in mid-2015.

Recent counterterrorism legislation

Tranche 1: *National Security Legislation Amendment Act (No. 1) 2014*

(Introduced July 2014, passed both houses 1 October 2014)

This law modernises and improves the legislative framework that governs the activities of the Australian intelligence community, primarily the *Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act 1979* and the *Intelligence Services Act 2001*. Its provisions include new or revised laws to modernise ASIO's employment framework, modernise and streamline the agency's warrant-based intelligence collection powers, strengthen its ability to conduct covert operations, clarify some information-sharing powers, and increase protections for intelligence information. The Act also improves interagency cooperation and renames some defence agencies.

Tranche 2: *Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Foreign Fighters) Act 2014*

(Introduced 24 September 2014, passed both houses 30 October 2014)

This law creates 'a suite of measures which are specifically designed to strengthen and improve Australia's counterterrorism legislative framework to respond to the foreign fighter threat. It will provide additional powers for security agencies to deal with the threat of terrorism within Australia and that posed by Australians who participate in terrorist activities overseas.' It includes measures to improve information sharing among agencies, introduce the ability to suspend passports (including suspension or cancellation without notification), change ASIO's warrant powers, introduce the delayed notification warrant, lower the threshold for arrest on terrorism charges, create the new offense of 'advocating terrorism', incorporate the Foreign Incursions Act into the Crimes Act, change the admissibility of evidence gained from overseas sources, and add a requirement for the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor to review a number of aspects of Australia's counterterrorism laws. In addition, laws were introduced to allow welfare payments and visas to be cancelled on security grounds, and enhance the ability of Customs officers to detain suspects. Some older measures, including control orders and preventative detention orders, were extended and modified.

Tranche 3: *Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment Act (No. 1) 2014*

(Introduced 29 October 2014, passed both houses 2 December 2014)

This Act includes a package of amendments to the *Criminal Code Act 1995* and the *Intelligence Services Act 2001*. The Act strengthens the control order regime and implements agreed changes to the 'Foreign Fighters' Act, including the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security's role in listing terrorist organisations. Also included were specific amendments that make it a role of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) to provide assistance to the Australian Defence Force in support of the military operations and cooperate on intelligence matters.

Tranche 4: *Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Amendment (Data Retention) Act 2015*

(Introduced 30 October 2014, passed both houses 26 March 2015)

This Act requires telecommunications service providers to retain data (not content) prescribed by regulations for two years; provides for a review of the mandatory data retention scheme no more than three years after the end of its implementation phase; limits the range of agencies that are able to access telecommunications data and stored communications; provides for record-keeping and reporting the use of, and access to, telecommunications data; and requires the Commonwealth Ombudsman to inspect and oversee those records for compliance.

The impacts of these new laws are starting to be seen, especially in the early disruption of some terrorist plots and efforts to stop travel by potential foreign fighters. Still, critics such as the Human Rights Law Centre, representatives of associations for Muslim lawyers and some prominent Australian legal scholars claimed that the law poses problems for human rights in Australia (Om 2014, HRLC 2015). Others, including highly respected Bret Walker SC, didn't see the changes as necessary (ABC 2014a). The Australian Government and the Opposition, which supported the passage of the legislation, disagreed.

Speaking after the 2014 'foreign fighters' laws came into effect, Attorney-General Brandis said, 'The strong measures which we have introduced, which are subject to robust safeguards and parliamentary oversight, protect our citizens without jeopardising our freedoms' (AGD 2014). The public seems generally supportive of that line. While metadata retention was controversial (Smith 2015), around 77% of respondents in an August 2014 Newspoll supported the proposal to ban travel to areas of civil war, such as Iraq or Syria (Newspoll 2014).

Aims of the legislation

This new legislation has approached the challenge of countering terrorism with three main aims in mind. The first priority is to facilitate a law enforcement strategy of disruption. Several measures lower the threshold for action so that police and security agencies can prevent terrorist plots from becoming more sophisticated and threatening. Measures in the 2014 package of legislation included delayed notification warrants for use in terrorism cases and created the new offence of 'advocating terrorism'. The thresholds for questioning by Customs officers were also lowered.

A second aim of the legislative package was to redress the relative disadvantages of law enforcement when acts are committed outside Australia. While terrorism has a status as an international crime, evidence is still needed to obtain convictions. This has led to changes in the *Foreign Evidence Act 1994* to broaden the sources of evidence that can be presented in court, and has also led to laws that allow the government to declare areas as 'no go' zones. Under this provision, a person can now be prosecuted for entering a proscribed area, unless they were there for a purpose listed as an exemption or defence, such as visiting family in the declared area.

The third aim has been to improve the ability of agencies to work together. The laws made explicit the ability of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service and the ADF to work together (but didn't extend the powers of either), gave the AFP an ability to share information from delayed notification warrants with specified agencies, and increased the number of agencies that can obtain information from Australia's financial intelligence unit, AUSTRAC. These and related changes are improving cooperation between agencies.

The Abbott government has recently focussed on citizenship as a new measure. In a May 2015 discussion paper, *Australian Citizenship, Your Right, Your Responsibility* the government set out options to remove citizenship from dual nationals:

> The Government intends to modernise the Australian Citizenship Act to enable the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection to take action in the national interest to revoke the Australian citizenship of dual citizens who engage in terrorism that betrays their allegiance to Australia. These powers would be used against dual citizens who join or support listed terrorist groups such as ISIL, or engage in terrorist acts alone. …

> The Government is also considering enabling the Minister to revoke Australian citizenship where there are reasonable grounds to believe the person is able to become a national of another country under their laws and would not be made stateless, as is the case in UK law (Australian Government 2015c).

According to reports, this legislation could be introduced in the middle of 2015. Debate has thus far centred on whether Ministers or the Court system should have the powers to strip dual nationals of citizenship. The further possible step of removing citizenship of Australian born individuals is legally complex and likely to be hotly debated.

The Prime Minister stated on 26 May that 40-50% of Australians fighting with terrorist groups in the Middle East could be dual nationals (Abbott 2015b). Of the individuals we studied just over 42.5% were reported to have been

born in Australia, while almost 30% were reportedly born overseas. Ascertaining citizenship status of the individuals is difficult through open-source material. However, Abdul Nacer Benbrika (Stewart 2015), Mehmet Biber (Olding 2013) and Tyler Casey (Rubinsztein-Dunlop 2014a) are all reported to have held or hold dual citizenships.

A war on two fronts

The Australian Government's military response to ISIL's expansion from Syria into Iraq in early 2014 has been one of contrasts. From a purely military perspective, the response has been graduated and relatively small, although significant in terms of the sophisticated military capabilities deployed and the symbolism of an early and sustained commitment. The public explanation of that commitment, however, has been less agile. ASPI's review, *Strike from the air: the first 100 days of the campaign against ISIL*, released in December 2014, explained Australia's initial military engagement in Iraq and the challenges it faced:

> Australia's role in the international coalition is currently limited to airstrikes on targets in Iraq and an evolving commitment to training elements of the Iraqi security forces. Both roles are indefinitely sustainable, given the ADF's capacity to rotate forces and projections of defence spending. The broader challenge for Canberra will be to explain how this fits into a credible international strategy with a realisable political objective.

> The campaign to 'degrade, and ultimately destroy, ISIL through a comprehensive and sustained counterterrorism strategy' is essentially a work in progress. ISIL's rapid advances of mid-2014 have been checked, but the group has shown itself to be tough and able to adapt its tactics. In 2015, it will become apparent how much more can be done to degrade ISIL via airstrikes. The first half of the year will be decisive for the Iraqi Army in showing whether it can retake and then effectively administer territory. Including the Sunni minority, especially in the west and north of Iraq, and limiting Iranian influence will both be critical to subsequent phases of the campaign. More broadly, a credible political solution in Syria and Iraq remains elusive. The absence of an international interest in or commitment to tackling the region's deep-seated political problems will constrain the effectiveness of the campaign against ISIL into the future.

In May 2015, there was no greater clarity about the broad direction of the military campaign. The US Department of Defense claimed that, as a result of coalition airstrikes in Syria and Iraq, 6,278 ISIL targets had been damaged or destroyed, and that as a result:

> ISIL can no longer operate freely in roughly 25 to 30 percent of populated areas of Iraqi territory where it once could. These areas translate into approximately 13,000 to 17,000 square kilometres. (US DoD 2015)

Against this remarkably optimistic assessment we have to offset renewed ISIL territorial gains, including the capital of Iraq's Anbar Province, Ramadi. ISIL has shown itself to be a determined force able to mount conventional style military operations and to prosecute military objectives under heavy fire. By contrast, Iraqi forces are struggling to take or hold territory, and Baghdad is increasingly turning to Iran and Iranian-backed Shia militia forces to take the fight to ISIL in predominantly Sunni areas.

In Syria, ISIL continues to control the city of Raqqah. In mid-May, US special operations forces successfully conducted a remarkable operation, killing Abu Sayyaf, an ISIL leader said to be in charge of the group's valuable oil business, and capturing his wife. While this is a useful tactical gain, the direction of events in Syria points to a weakening of President Assad's position and a strengthening of extremist Islamist groups, most particularly ISIL and Jabhat al-Nusra. There's no credible coalition military strategy for Syria.

The Australian Foreign Minister's visit to Tehran in April 2015 and her discussions on low-level intelligence sharing suggest an emerging pragmatism in our Middle Eastern diplomacy, in which we acknowledge the Shia–Sunni divide and seek a regional solution. The challenge facing the government is to translate these actions into a strategy that accounts for redefined national interests. It should go beyond operational outcomes limited to Iraq or Syria and develop an approach that ensures Australia's credible contribution is a step towards a realistic and stable outcome in the Middle East.

One domestic challenge that the government faces is to show how Australia's role in the coalition addresses an upsurge in radicalisation domestically. ISIL's slick propaganda machine takes advantage of its victories and defeats to appeal to individuals around the world. The saturation media coverage encourages the recruitment of fighters, women to marry fighters and bear children for the caliphate, and financial backers. In early February 2015, Defence Minister Kevin Andrews told the Australian media that ISIL was estimated to have 31,500 fighters—a fivefold increase since June 2014. In the ruthless calculations of ISIL leaders, their military losses are acceptable as long as they promote even faster recruitment.

The government must continue to explain the rationale behind Australia's national interests as the situation in the Middle East rapidly deteriorates. A key question confronting the government now is: how will prolonged military stalemates in Iraq and Syria affect domestic radicalisation?

In announcing the deployment of a combined Australian and New Zealand military training unit to Iraq in April 2015, Prime Minister Abbott indicated that the mission would last two years. While Australia gears up for the long haul, it's important to recognise that this conflict links the battlefront and Australia's domestic heartland far more closely than any previous Australian military deployment. This is a war on two fronts, placing demands on our leaders to justify our involvement, show the connections between overseas and domestic developments and present a credible strategy to deal with the threat in both locations.

Changes to counter domestic terrorist threats

The Commonwealth government has responded to the evolving domestic terrorist situation since mid-2014 with changes including new ministerial positions and a new national-level coordinating body. In addition, additional units have been raised within existing organisations to either make use of existing powers, or provide support to new initiatives that deal with new aspects of the threat such as travel by potential 'foreign fighters'. Importantly, these new arrangements have built upon an already-significant body of collaborative work that's occurred since September 11 2001.

Levels already achieved

The report of the 2015 Review of Australia's Counter-Terrorism Machinery (PM&C 2015b) describes the vast expansion of agencies involved in counterterrorism from 2001 to 2014. Before then, only 11 agencies were involved in a limited range of activities to undermine terrorist activity and disrupt attacks. Attacks were very sporadic in the period from 1970 to 2000, and often linked to grievances about overseas issues. Little was done to engage the community about terrorism.

That situation changed after the September 2001 attacks in the US. Budgets increased significantly, more agencies became involved, and counterterrorism efforts were extended across the entire plausible range of activities. A strategic preference to disrupt terrorist activity emerged, along with efforts to build community cohesion and resilience.

The increased attention to counterterrorism was operationalised through an expansion in the functions and activities of the 21 agencies now involved. While the arrangements have taken time to evolve, interagency and interjurisdictional cooperation in the counterterrorism space is generally described as very good today. Since 2001, joint counterterrorism teams have become well established, joint operations are the norm. The Australia – New Zealand Counterterrorism Committee (ANZCTC) has proven to be a useful and longstanding forum for practical multijurisdictional cooperation, including developing national counterterrorism plans and handbooks, many training and exercise opportunities and purchasing equipment. The committee has helped coordinate policy advice to governments and promoted cooperation that's been useful in different kinds of crisis, including natural disasters.

While the ANZCTC has been a central contributor to the members' national approaches, the efforts of the state and territory governments in counterterrorism have been individually and collectively important too, as they are

the governments most responsible for protecting the safety of people. The heightened threat has required closer attention, new spending and new organisations. State governments have done much work on related areas, such as promoting community cohesion and resilience.

The high level of national cooperation was maintained despite falling budget allocations for counterterrorism. After reaching a peak of $790 million per year in 2007–08, funding steadily declined to around $523 million in 2013–14. Areas finding their spending reduced included the ANZCTC (which lost $13.4 million over four years in 2012–13), the 'building community resilience' element of the CVE Program in the Attorney-General's Department, which was discontinued after 2014–15 (it was budgeted for $7.9 million over the previous four years), and the AFP, the numbers of which stopped growing after the 2013 budget. At the same time, money for new functions, such as the Cyber Security Operations Centre, was taken from existing budget allocations.

No new counterterrorism initiatives were funded in the May 2014 Budget. However, when faced with the prospect of an increasing threat, the government announced a $630 million package to boost agency funding on 5 August 2014. This package increased intelligence resources, improved security at Parliament House, and added to border security with three new initiatives. On top of this, the government added another $1.2 billion in the May 2015 Budget; the money was allocated to continued operations in Western Asia, helping telecommunications companies to implement metadata retention, building new capability in the Australian Secret Intelligence Service, and countering online terrorist propaganda.

New initiatives

The multiagency National Disruption Group was announced as a new $32.7 million initiative on 26 August 2014. The *Daily Telegraph* reported it as a 'multi-agency group to focus on the investigation, prosecution and disruption of foreign fighters and their supporters'. This group, which borrows from the National Anti-Gangs Squad concept, now consists of Commonwealth representatives from the AFP, Customs, ASIO, the Australian Taxation Office, Centrelink and AUSTRAC. Liaison officers from state police forces are also involved. This coordination is important because there's some concern about 'double targeting' of individuals by different agencies. Funding has also been provided for an Australian Federal Police Community Diversion and Monitoring Team 'for returning foreign fighters and those who support them' (Abbott and Brandis 2014).

Another initiative designed to help provide intelligence for the National Disruption Group and others was a 'foreign fighters taskforce' within the Australian Crime Commission, which was funded as part of the August 2014 spending announcement. Using a cash injection of $24 million over four years, the taskforce will use the commission's 'power to compel witnesses on pain of contempt proceedings', according to the Prime Minister. Broadening the Australian Crime Commission's mandate into terrorism was unusual: previously, this was the province of ASIO and the AFP. It's clear that, despite it being illegal for a person to withhold information when being questioned by ASIO under warrant (under the section 34L(2–4) of the ASIO Act), the government felt it necessary to use the commission's coercive powers.

The ability of the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service to detect and prevent potential foreign fighters from travelling to the Syria–Iraq conflict was also enhanced. Part of the $150 million provided in the August 2014 funding package was assigned to a new Border Force Counter-Terrorism Unit. In addition to allowing Customs to increase their visibility at airports, the unit would also provide specialist officers to detect and question potential foreign fighters. We've seen the impact of these measure since, with the head of the new Australian Border Force, Mr Roman Quaedvlieg, reporting that 284 passengers had been 'offloaded' from flights since 22 August 2014 after being assessed as 'national security risks' (Australian Senate 2015a, p. 47).

Changes have also been made to Commonwealth coordinating arrangements and ministerial responsibilities for counterterrorism. As recommended in the *Review of Australia's Counterterrorism Machinery* (PM&C 2015b), a new coordinating body has been established within PM&C to coordinate the policy aspects of Australia's ongoing

response. Led by diplomat Greg Moriarty, this centre will work closely with other agencies, including state and territory agencies, on 'operations, policy challenges and capability development' (PM&C 2015b, p. iv).

Changes have also been affected at the Ministerial level, with Justice Minister Michael Keenan adding 'Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter-Terrorism' to his role, and NSW senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells adding Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney-General to her current duties in the social services portfolio. Both roles will have a strong focus on countering violent extremism and, in Keenan's case, policy supervision through Moriarty's new centre. The veteran Liberal MP Philip Ruddock, a former Attorney-General, will also become the Prime Minister's special envoy for Citizenship and Community Engagement. These appointments reflect the growing workload in the counterterrorism space, and a new emphasis on community engagement by the government. But they also create some complex working arrangements, as Senator Brandis explains (see the box below) and we've tried to depict in Figure 4.

The government has also taken the initiative to revise the National Terrorism Public Alert System and introduce new programs aimed at countering violent extremism. These initiatives will be discussed in the following sections.

Attorney-General, Senator the Hon George Brandis. Comments to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee, 27 May 2015

'Hitherto, the Attorney-General's portfolio comprised two ministers: me and the Minister for Justice, Michael Keenan, who reported to me. Now, the Attorney-General's portfolio will comprise three frontbench positions: me, Mr Keenan, who will continue to report to me, and Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells who, as well as being the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services, is also the Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney-General. In relation to those aspects of the Attorney-General's portfolio, she will also report to me. As well, Mr Keenan has been sworn as the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter-Terrorism. I will explain what that means in a moment, but in that respect he will report directly to the Prime Minister.

Mr Keenan's two particular functions are to be, at the political level, the minister responsible for counter-terrorism coordination; and his position is the parallel political position of Mr Greg Moriarty, who will be an associate secretary within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Mr Moriarty will be the Counter-Terrorism Coordinator which means, to use a phrase the Prime Minister has used, he will have a helicopter view of all the different counter-terrorism functions across departments and agencies.

As you probably know, Senator, ASIO is in the Attorney-General's Department. That is the principal national security agency. ASIS, which is the foreign intelligence agency, is in DFAT. ASD and AGO are in the Defence department, and ONA, which is the Office of National Assessments, which is an assessor and analyst rather than a collector, is in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. All of those agencies contribute to the overall counter-terrorism intelligence framework of the government, and then there are the law-enforcement agencies, particularly the Australian Federal Police, which also sit within the Attorney-General's Department. Because not all of the agencies with a role in the counter-terrorism response sit within the one department, the Prime Minister took the view, at my recommendation, that there should be an individual above all within PM&C whose role is to coordinate all, and his ministerial equivalent is Mr Keenan. That is the first aspect of Mr Keenan's augmented role. Secondly, Mr Keenan has been given particular responsibility for CVE programs run by the Attorney-General's Department, and in that respect he will continue to report to me. Senator Fierravanti-Wells will also have responsibility for the multicultural aspect, or the multicultural dimension, of CVE, and community cohesion and engagement generally. She will report to me insofar as those programs are delivered by the Attorney-General's portfolio, and to Mr Morrison insofar as those social cohesion programs.' (Australian Senate 2015b, pp. 112-13)

Figure 4: Outline organisational chart for counter-terrorism arrangements at Commonwealth level
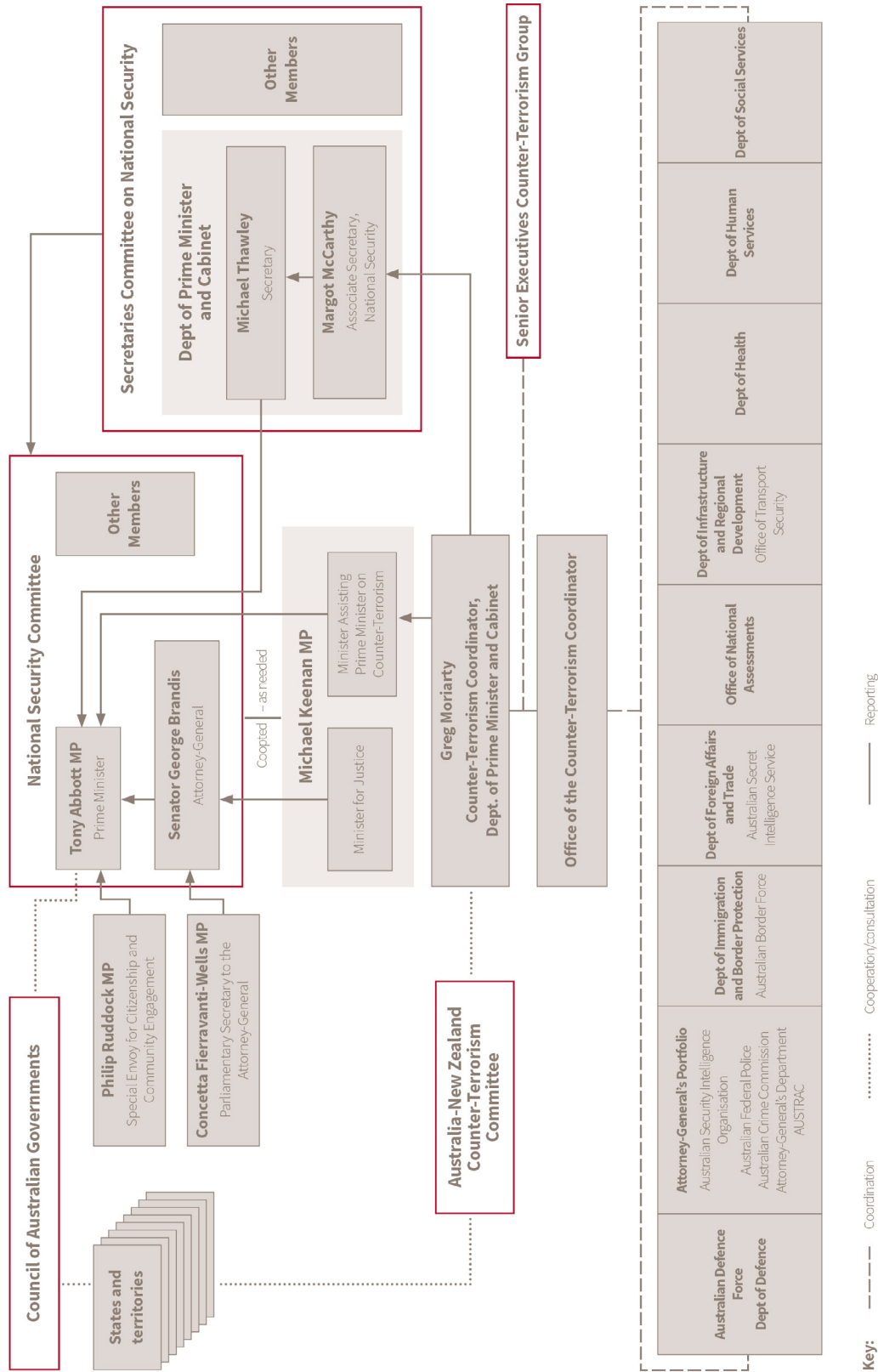
The National Terrorism Public Alert System

Australia has a two-level system to categorise the threat of domestic terrorism: the threat level, which is classified and determined by the Director-General of ASIO, and the alert level, which is public and determined by the Prime Minister on the advice of ASIO.

The public alert system was revised in 2002 to include four levels: low, medium, high and extreme. On 12 September 2014, the alert level was raised from 'medium' to 'high' by the Prime Minister on the advice of ASIO—Australia had been on 'medium' for 13 years before then. The previous day, outgoing ASIO Director-General David Irvine revealed that the classified threat level had gone up to 'high'. This was the first time this information was made public.

However, the distinction between 'threat' and 'alert' isn't always clear, and nor are the reasons for changing either. Some suspected that the move to elevate the public alert last year was driven by the government's interest in garnering support for contentious aspects of its counterterrorism legislation, such as the mandatory retention of metadata.

Terrorism alert systems vary around the world, from formal and detailed tier systems to informal arrangements. Some Western countries don't have any public alert system.

Absolute security from terrorism via a public warning system remains a pipedream. Unlike a fire or flood warning, a terrorism advisory will be much more general. But, despite its limitations, such a system can be useful in increasing community awareness about terrorism risks. It can also be helpful to security and law enforcement agencies asking for public assistance, since a change in the alert level can make the public more sensitive to anomalies. Terrorism advisories can also provide critical infrastructure operators with guidelines as to what a heightened threat means for them and how that might best guide their operations.

Findings from the January counterterrorism arrangements review

The report of the January 2015 *Review of Australia's Counter-Terrorism Machinery* (PM&C 2015b:44) made the following findings on our terrorism advisories:

- Having two systems in place is unnecessarily complex, both for the public and for many officials.
- There isn't enough flexibility or precision in the definition of the levels, making it difficult to raise and lower the alert level in response to a temporarily increased threat.
- As the threat of terrorism dominates the media, there's a public expectation that the government will provide better information on such threats.
- Effective public communications should contain useful advice about required changes to behaviour.

The review recommended that the threat and alert systems be collapsed into one public system that would be determined by ASIO's Director-General.

The new system should adopt new, clear language designed to better inform the public. It would also include an additional level, aimed at creating more granularity in the advice, see Figure 5. The review suggested that the new system would include narratives providing relevant information that could be updated to reflect different circumstances without having to change the threat level.

Our terrorism advisory system needs further reform. The review's recommendations, along with our own, are discussed in Chapter 5.

Figure 5: Current 'public alert levels' and proposed 'threat levels'
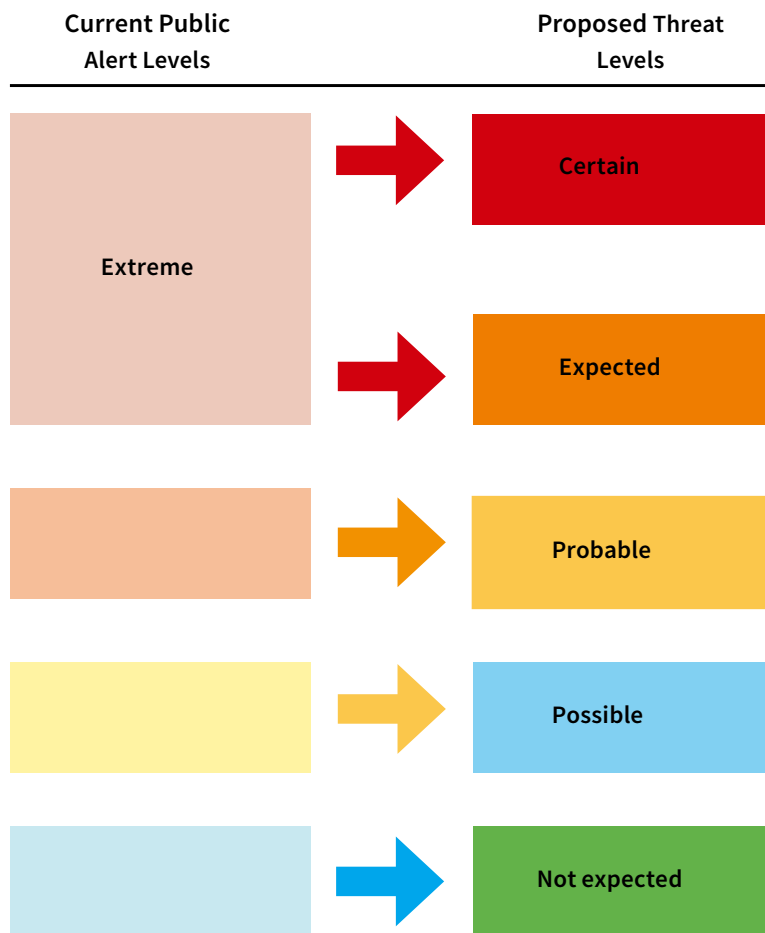
Source: PM&C 2015b, p. 46

Programs to counter violent extremism

The Australian Government has had programs in place since the mid-2000s to counter the 'use or support of violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals' (AGD n.d. a). This element of a counterterrorism strategy is often the most controversial and difficult to implement, and it's difficult to measure its effectiveness in tackling the root causes of terrorist activity.

Despite a lowering of funding to CVE programs in the 2013–14 Budget (Chan 2014), in August 2014 the Australian Government announced that it would include substantial funding for CVE-related work as part of its $630 million investment in counterterrorism mechanisms. This included $13.4 million towards the CVE Program. As well as working more broadly at strengthening community relationships, the focus of this work will be on:

- *Community engagement*—working with communities so they can help prevent at-risk individuals from moving down the path of radicalisation to violence
- *The CVE intervention framework*—early intervention and counter-radicalisation activities to help support at-risk individuals to deradicalise and disengage from violent ideologies, including through diversion activities such as mentoring, education and employment support and counselling (SSCLCA 2014).

To counter the threat from online propaganda, the government invested a further $22 million (Australian Government 2015b). The focus of this work will be to:

- establish real-time social media monitoring and reporting capability to better understand extremist narratives and their impact on Australians
- limit the appeal of terrorist narratives
- empower community and civil society voices to combat terrorist narratives
- reduce access to extremist material online. (Brandis 2015b)

As part of this work, the government has asked for applications from organisations involved in CVE work for incorporation into the Directory of CVE Intervention Services, which 'will be used by state, territory and Commonwealth authorities when coordinating specific intervention programs for individuals in need' (AGD n.d. b). The directory will initially include six broad categories of services: religious and multicultural mentoring; specialised mental health services; education and employment counselling; youth and community work; case management; and telephone and online counselling. The government has allocated around $1 million for the Living Safe Together Grants Programme in 2014–15 only, stating that 'there will be no further funding rounds available in coming years' (AGD n.d. c). As things currently stand, there's less information available on the contents of the remaining practical components of the CVE Programme, which need to be addressed soon in order to progress this difficult but essential area of work.

Australia recently hosted a Regional Summit to Counter Violent Extremism which was an excellent contribution to not only regional, but national level efforts to build capacity in this important area of work. The summit included workshops to raise awareness about using social media for CVE, developing CVE strategies and community-led intervention programs. In the coming months it will be important to see this rolled out across the states and territories to raise awareness of what can be done and the support that the government can provide.

The Muslim community response

The increased focus on the terrorist threat in Australia since 2014 has revived a narrative similar to the one that emerged after the 2005 London bombings. References to 'homegrown' terrorism in the wake of those attacks created concern in Australia that Muslims, especially youth, might opt for similar militant actions.

That fear appeared to subside over the years, but concerns have re-emerged with reports of Muslim youth leaving Australia to engage in jihad as foreign fighters. Video footage of some young Muslims fighting on behalf of ISIL has emerged—and been continuously discussed in the media—against the background of the government's legislation and announcements of practical measures to deal with the problem. Research suggests that this has reinforced perceptions in some sections of Australia's non-Muslim communities that Muslims are the 'other'—they are perceived as not belonging. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this sense of Muslims as the 'other' might be present among younger Australians as well. Political leaders have continued to demand that Muslim leaders do more to counter radicalisation. On 23 February 2015, for example, Prime Minister Abbott said, 'I've often heard Western leaders describe Islam as a "religion of peace". I wish more Muslim leaders would say that more often, and mean it.' Such demands and assessments are likely to lead to more non-Muslim Australians developing a distrust of Muslims living among them.

Elements within Muslim communities have responded to stronger anti-terrorism rhetoric and policies by strengthening their view that there's a deeply entrenched hostility towards them. In the West, this has contributed to a heightened fear of the state in Muslim communities. It has also led some other sections of society to view Muslims—not just youth but all Muslims—as unreliable citizens or even as non-citizens. As in the immediate aftermath of the London bombings, some Muslims have opted to play down their Islamic identity to avoid being noticed. Others have shared stories of harassment by the authorities when leaving or returning to Australia.

Against this background, qualitative interviews with a small cohort of Muslim and non-Muslim respondents under 35 years of age suggested a pattern of growing anxieties. For example, some young Muslims argued that the wider community in Australia is against Islam and not just Islamophobic. They acknowledged that the failure of Muslim

communities to engage with the wider community might be an explanation, but they felt that the government's emphasis on the terrorist threat posed by Muslims creates the possibility of innocent Muslims being subliminally doubted by the wider community. As one respondent said, 'When they hear about a Muslim joining ISIL, they may not say it to you but they may think that you are like them too.' This 'reflected identification' of all Muslim youth carries the risk of alienating them or reducing their participation as full citizens in Australia.

Those who participated in interviews to discuss their perceptions of government responses to the terrorist threat seemed rather unconcerned about the nature of the threat. The threat of terrorism seemed to attract less of their attention than we initially assumed to be the case.[3]

It could be argued that the reactions of the Australian Muslim and non-Muslim communities partly reflect fear and concerns about personal and communal safety. But scepticism, a focus on exploring causes for the tendency among some Muslims to opt for terrorism-related activities, and the heightened media focus on the terrorist threat posed by some Muslim extremists run the risk of sending a message that could be subliminally internalised by some young non-Muslim Australians. This may also be creating disillusionment among some Muslims about being 'othered'. In the long term, the current focus could emerge as a factor contributing to reduced communal harmony.

International cooperation

Australia has maintained a strong counterterrorism cooperation program for the past decade. This important investment, which has cost about $5 million over the past three years, opens communications channels and makes it easier for Australian authorities to work with Southeast Asian and other international counterparts. Importantly, cooperation spans a wide range of activities, including education, hardware acquisition, operations and information exchanges.

The relationship with Indonesia has been deeply important for counterterrorism over the past decade. It has included close cooperation on investigations and information sharing, and cooperation in related areas, including the general educational field. There's also been a number of law enforcement capacity-building activities, including in the areas of intelligence, cyber-investigations, disaster victim identification, prisons and chemical explosives precursors. Despite some recent turmoil in the bilateral relationship, counterterrorism cooperation remained strong. That will be increasingly important over the next few years. Indonesia faces real challenges as radicalised fighters in Middle East conflicts return from organisations such as ISIL, and terrorists imprisoned after the Bali bombings are released to join the existing groups that have been conducting constant low-level attacks in Indonesia.

Australia's cooperation with Indonesia extends to the joint management of the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation. The centre, which has been running for over 10 years, conducts courses on terrorism-related issues, including in the cyber domain. It's also active in investigations, disaster victim identification and forensics. The centre's a significant resource for regional counterterrorism: it's professional, trusted and highly regarded.

Australia has developed cooperative activities with a number of other Southeast Asian states. Cooperation with the Philippines has probably been second to the relationship with Indonesia. It reflects humanitarian, criminal and security concerns shared by the two nations. This cooperation has included work on prisons, counter-kidnapping and grassroots initiatives for inter-faith dialogue. Other areas of regional cooperation include work with Interpol in such areas as the movement of foreign fighters, explosives precursors, and chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive materials.

Broader international cooperation will also be important. In addition to taking part in the military operation in Iraq, Australia has been an important voice in the UN. This has involved leading the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, which has taken a role in monitoring terrorist groups in Syria over the past year. This work builds on long-term

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3   These findings are based on qualitative research conducted by contributor Samina Yasmeen.

contributions to other activities, such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum and the international centre for countering violent extremism, Hedayah.

With this track record, Australia and the region are well placed to ramp up cooperation on today's key problem areas—foreign fighters and terrorism financing. However, our discussions with regional experts have identified only a patchy ability among Southeast Asian states to implement the relevant UN Security Council resolutions concerning these two problem areas (see box).

What's needed now is a new round of regional cooperation, including in the areas of information sharing, legislative tools, harmonisation, capacity building and best practice to prevent travel by foreign fighters. New examples of this type of cooperation include the agreements between Australia and France, and—more problematically—between Australia and Iran, to share intelligence about terrorism (Australian Government 2014, Bishop 2015b).

UN Security Council resolutions 2170, 2178 and 2199

The UN Security Council is concerned about foreign terrorist fighters. Three resolutions passed in late 2014 and early 2015 aim to stop the flow of foreign fighters to the Middle East, in particular, and to cut off any resources that might assist their activities.

Resolutions 2170 and 2178 require member states to stop the travel of foreign fighters, prevent arms and funds movements to ISIL and report relevant individuals to the sanctions committee, while encouraging engagement with those at risk of radicalisation.

More specifically, Resolution 2199 condemns any direct or indirect trade with ISIL in oil, hostages or antiquities, as well as the making of donations that might be used by the organisation. This resolution also notes the destruction of cultural heritage by ISIL.

CHAPTER 5

Policy recommendations

Australia's counter terrorism policies cover a vast range of responses, from military operations in the Middle East to community resilience and deradicalisation programs. Over more than a decade, and with renewed emphasis since late 2013, there's been intense federal and growing state government policy activity. Here we recommend nine steps, in some cases building on current or nascent programs, to strengthen the Australian response to defeat terrorists and Gen Y extremist jihadists.

1. Explain the reasons for Australia's Middle East deployments more persuasively

Australia has a long history of fighting wars in the Middle East. Participation in those conflicts was based on contemporary judgements about our strategic interest, but our policy focus on the region has been inconsistent and driven by crises. We have few deep specialists in the Middle East in any part of public administration. The strategic drivers of change in the Middle East are seldom publicly explained or related to the purpose of Australian military involvement. A deeper knowledge of the region will produce more effective counterterrorism policies. The government should ensure that our diplomatic presence in the Middle East is sufficient to address the security interests that we claim to have there. This calls for modestly increased investment in Australian diplomatic, intelligence and defence engagement in the region. The opening of an Australian diplomatic mission in Doha, announced in May 2015, is a welcome development.

Based on a developing deeper understanding of the region, the Australian Government should continue the practice adopted in recent years of making regular statements to Parliament about Australia's military operations and counterterrorism interests in the Middle East, including setting out the strategic rationale for those activities. The government should also engage more directly with online critics of Australian policy by using means such as ministers' and senior officials' speeches, opinion pieces in newspapers and credible websites.

2. Urgently expand counterterrorism cooperation with key international partners

Following a late April 2015 visit to Paris, Prime Minister Abbott and President Francois Hollande issued a joint statement promising to:

- deepen our exchanges on national security policy, including responses to terrorism, countering violent extremism and online radicalisation
- extend our dialogue on the challenges posed by the phenomenon of foreign fighters
- further strengthen intelligence cooperation
- establish a program of exchanges in counterterrorism policing, including on tactical response policing (Abbott 2015a).

This is a welcome measure, albeit one that challenges Canberra's dogged orthodoxy that Australia's foreign policy interests reside solely in Asia. Australia has a deep interest in working with like-minded countries not only on police and intelligence cooperation but to strengthen policy thinking on domestic counter-radicalisation. That should prompt an expansion of the Prime Minister's initiative to Germany, Belgium and the Scandinavian countries. These countries are in effect the new front line in dealing with a wave of radicalisation sweeping Western societies. Substantial international cooperation already takes place, most effectively with Australia's Five Eyes intelligence partners—the US, the UK, Canada and New Zealand. But the tempo needs to be stepped up if it's to address the demands of domestic security in an accelerating threat environment.

Australia could play an important international role by gathering the best thinking on policy, intelligence and policing on counterterrorism and de-radicalisation strategies. This should include more active sharing of the profiles of individuals who have been radicalised, as a foundation for thinking about necessary responses. The Establishment of a Foreign Fighters Taskforce under the auspicious of the Australian Crime Commission (ACC) is directed to strengthening international cooperation in this area. The Commission reported to Senate Estimates hearings in May 2015 that it was 'deploying officers in the coming year to Asia, the USA, Canada, Europe and the Middle East. We are doing that in conjunction with the Australian Federal Police and other partners internationally' (Dawson 2015, p.52). The ACC has coercive powers to compel individuals and organisations to provide information when questioned. In September 2014 the ACC advised that they had 'conducted 40 coercive hearings on 24 individuals' in the previous twelve months (Keenan 2014).

Of course, cooperation with European and North American partners shouldn't come at the expense of regional engagement, but, with the exception of work with Singapore and Japan, this engagement will be more likely to focus on responses than on preventive measures.

3. Set a new basis for collaboration with Australian Muslims

Writing in *The Australian*, Deakin University academic Shahram Akbarzadeh (2015) set out the challenging reality for Australian Muslims:

> … let's not forget Muslim community organisations have a big role to play. It may not be clear to some, but Australian Muslims are the first to suffer the consequences of terrorism. The shame of having a member of the faith commit acts of violence in the name of religion, and the subsequent anti-Muslim backlash, affect all Australian Muslims. They have a stake in addressing extremism and need to be acknowledged as partners for an effective counterterrorism strategy.

There's no escaping this difficult situation. While the vast majority of Australian Muslims have no sympathy for or engagement with Islamist radicals, the Muslim community must be part of a coherent national response to terrorism. Australia as a whole must find a way to work with Australian Muslims that's creative and respectful and doesn't blame the community for the behaviour of a tiny group. There's no substitute for dialogue at many levels, but counterterrorism presents something of a linguistic minefield. In late 2014, Prime Minister Abbott used the term 'Team Australia' to describe his sense of the community effort needed to address terrorism:

> I can't make myself plainer. This is not about any particular community, this is about crime and potential crime … [A]s far as I am concerned, every Australian is part of our team. Every Australian is part of our team. The phrase I like is 'Team Australia' and the beauty of Team Australia is that anybody who is prepared to show a commitment to this country is part of it. (Abbott 2014)

Although well intended, arguably the language didn't resonate well with people who felt alienated from the community and unable to benefit from mainstream community life. It's notable that the Prime Minister has ceased to use the 'Team Australia' phrase. An important way to restart this discussion would be for the Prime Minister, perhaps with the involvement of the Leader of the Opposition, to establish an advisory council on counterterrorism and the community.

Any engagement program needs to operate on the basis that there is no single Muslim community in Australia; there are a variety of diverse communities based on different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and on different interpretations of Islam. Understanding diversity and accommodating this to policy is key.

Initiatives to foster resilience within communities, as set out in Living Safe Together, should be continued. We should also recognise that those disengaged and possibly more susceptible to extremism are not likely to listen to community leaders. There's a need to ensure that attempts to engage at-risk people filter down to the levels of the community where it is most needed, and that these messages will indeed be accessible.

An effort should be made to include young people and others who aren't part of formal community groups, as well as respected Muslim community leaders. Empowering young members of Muslim communities in their religious and secular endeavours could enable new forms of community leadership. A platform to tell 'success stories' of Muslims Australians might help to promote social cohesion amongst Muslims and non-Muslims nationally. A key task will be to build trust within this group, which will happen only after a sustained effort to discuss, listen and collaborate.

4. Engage schools in a practical discussion about terrorism and counter-radicalisation

A younger group of people is being attracted to violent jihad in the Middle East. The internet and social media may just be the latest communications channel available to terror groups, but they are particularly effective means to direct unfiltered messages to specific groups at the same time as allowing communication between like-minded people. As jihadists get younger, our attention must turn to what schools teach and how they manage at-risk students.

On the curriculum front, schools face substantial time pressures to teach all necessary subjects. But there's surely a case to start discussing Australia's contemporary role in the Middle East—perhaps as a follow-on to studies on Gallipoli, which was also a key strategic challenge a century ago. The New South Wales History K–10 syllabus, for example, allows for at least the possibility of classes on contemporary security issues in the subject 'Australia and the modern world' (Board of Studies, n.d.). This should be broadened so that students can access balanced information on the Middle East and terrorism, rather than relying on radical online material.

How schools should deal with students showing potential signs of radicalisation is an even more delicate topic. Under the Living Safe Together initiative, the Australian Government provides online advice aimed at helping people to recognise whether an individual may be radicalising (AGD, n.d. d). Counter-radicalisers say that early intervention is advisable and point to the range of social and healthcare services available to all Australians but, aside from that, thinking about the early intervention roles that schools could play is at a promising but tentative stage. In May 2015, the Victorian Government announced that it would provide $25 million over four years 'to enlist young role models to engage with people at risk of radicalisation' (Tomazin 2015). The initiative will involve the state's education, youth, multicultural affairs and police agencies and community representatives. It's likely that more state government initiatives will follow. Although welcome, the proliferation of governments, agencies and groups all pursuing counter-radicalisation initiatives has the potential to create confusion.

Given the complexity of this issue and the numbers of players involved, a useful approach would be for the Australian Government to raise this issue in discussions at the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The COAG meeting of 17 April 2015 agreed that a new national counterterrorism strategy would be developed. This would include developing strategies to 'work with communities to identify and manage individuals at risk of radicalisation', and lead to further discussion at a COAG retreat in July 2015 (COAG 2015). The role of schools should be front and centre in this discussion. On 24 May 2015, it was announced that Education Minister Christopher Pyne is seeking to develop a 'national strategy to combat radicalisation and extremism in schools' and that this is to be discussed with state education ministers. This is a necessary and welcome development.

5. Start a discussion with the media on reporting terrorism

Australian media reporting of the December 2014 Lindt Cafe siege in Sydney was sensibly restrained, and local media outlets refused to broadcast demands made by the gunman. The media's use of ISIL propaganda videos, particularly of purported executions, has also become noticeably more restrained in recent months. This approach reflects the difficult balance that media organisations try to keep between informed reporting and inflaming tensions. There are many examples in which reporting has been less than helpful, either by broadcasting the latest ISIL video or by using headlines that generate community anger rather than inform people.

Under its mandate for 'promoting good standards of media practice' the Australian Press Council developed advisory guidelines for the use of religious terms in headlines:

> The Press Council advises newspapers and magazines to be careful about using in their headlines terms for religious or ethnic groups that could imply that the group as a whole was responsible for the actions of a minority among that group. The use of the words 'Islam', 'Islamic' and 'Muslim' in headlines on reports of terrorist attacks has caused problems both for the Muslim community in Australia and the Australian media. (APC 2004)

In addition to restating that advice, an updated set of guidelines should consider:

- appropriate terminology to describe ISIL
- handling strategies for using ISIL's and other terrorist organisation's propaganda (both violent material and non-violent recruitment videos)
- the suitability of adapting media standards for reporting on suicide and depression to reporting about individuals vulnerable to radicalisation
- the reporting of matters relating to the Muslim community in the context of terrorism.

The best way to develop a new advisory guideline would be for the government to start an open dialogue with a wide range of media representatives and, ultimately, for the Press Council to codify its own recommendations. Because of our engagement with government agencies and with the media, ASPI is prepared to assist in further developing this proposal.

6. Develop individual case management strategies for at-risk people

The government's Living Safe Together initiative, which began in August 2014, emphasises the importance of early identification and early intervention to assist people who are on a path to radicalisation and divert them onto more productive paths. The Living Safe Together website points to 'Intervention programmes [that] may include youth diversion activities, healthcare initiatives, mentoring, employment and educational pathway support and counselling' (AGD n.d. e). This reflects a broadening of the government's approach to cover counterterrorism mitigation strategies that include social services delivery. This approach offers promising possibilities, but a great deal of additional work will need to be done to define how an intervention process might work, where authority to decide to intervene will reside, and how to handle an individual from the point of intervention. The handover point from law enforcement to social service agencies will need careful definition, as will the nature of cooperation between federal and state agencies and community groups. Early and important work is already underway in this area, but much more needs to be done.

An important starting point to think through what's needed to manage people being diverted from radicalisation would be to bring security and social services delivery agencies together to discuss cooperation. These are different worlds, so substantial give and take will be needed to develop a shared understanding. The value of a successful diversion program would be great, given the massive costs of policing operations to thwart terror plots and the human and social costs of terrorist acts.

7. Combat online propaganda

Online propaganda produced by ISIL and other terrorist groups presents a different and more serious threat than al-Qaeda's slower and stodgier efforts of a decade ago:

• Production values are higher, and the products are designed to appeal to people with a false image of the adventure that awaits a radicalised recruit.

• Response times in producing propaganda are faster, so producers can take advantage of current developments being reported by mainstream media.

• Online presentation is not diluted by media outlets and can easily be switched to other sites if internet service providers or governments block distribution.

• A receptive audience seeks the product and can be reached globally.

• The online environment facilitates networking and the broader dissemination of the propaganda.

These qualities of the online environment make combating ISIL propaganda more challenging. However, the internet's just a channel: the key task for counterterrorism is to undermine the content of the propagandist's message.

A major ASPI study by Roslyn Richardson, *Fighting fire with fire: target audience responses to online anti-violence campaigns*, found in November 2013 that government online counter-radicalisation campaigns were unlikely to succeed (Richardson 2013). Based on detailed research with young Muslims in Sydney, Richardson found that young people were unlikely to trust governments, didn't regard them as being on the same side, and didn't consider that CVE strategies addressed issues of most importance to them. The report recommended that governments assist efforts underway within the Muslim community to develop the community's own alternative online material opposing radicalisation. This approach needs to be complemented by face-to-face engagement, a process of trust building, recognition of the importance of selecting the right language to describe the problem, and an understanding of the significant differences of attitude that exist within the Muslim community.

Where government offers content online, it needs to ensure that this material has the quality, timeliness, reach and attention to language that's needed to engage and persuade a sceptical audience. For a number of years, the government, with the Attorney-General's Department leading the way, has assisted in developing thinking about online counter-radicalisation. The need now is to deploy a range of responses able to rapidly change to meet new propaganda challenges and to find ways to build community acceptance. Harnessing the expertise of communication, marketing and social media experts could facilitate this. Some $21 million has been spent so far on limiting the impact of terrorist narratives on domestic audiences (AGD n.d. b).

8. Revise the public terrorism advisory system

Anthony Bergin and Clare Murphy (2015) have pointed out the following about Australia's threat and warning system.

Our usually classified terrorism threat level and public alert level were both raised to 'high' in September 2014. This was the first time that ASIO made the threat level public and raised it to 'high': we'd been on medium level for 13 years. There was some confusion about how the public was supposed to react to the raised alert level, and about the role that terrorism advisories play in our counterterrorism machinery.

Five immediate changes could help. First, it would be sensible to collapse the two systems into one public alert system, decided by the Director-General of ASIO, that can be made public and accompanied by an unclassified narrative. Second, there should be a sunset clause that mandates the expiry of a raised level after six months unless there's evidence that it shouldn't be changed. Third, a generic alert level system isn't appropriate for a country as large as Australia. Our terrorism warning system should offer more advice about likely areas at increased risk. This would strengthen the system as an effective tool for communicating useful information to the public.

Our fourth suggestion is that the language used for terrorism advisories shouldn't be arbitrary or ambiguous. It would be prudent to test the narratives, and especially what the system suggests that people do, at each level to see how useful the public finds them. Finally, a public awareness campaign communicating any changes to our terrorism advisories would be helpful. This should include social media. The Australian Government should have a national security Facebook page and Twitter account to provide information on terrorism warnings. We set out the case for these changes in more detail in our study, *Sounding the alarm: terrorism threat communications with the Australian public* (Bergin & Murphy 2015).

9. Explain how government agencies use counterterrorism powers

The Australian Parliament has given law enforcement and intelligence agencies extensive new powers to deal with the terrorism threat. While some measures have been controversial, experience to date has shown these changes to be necessary and proportional. Australian agencies are also deeply engaged in counterterrorism operations here and overseas and conduct many cooperative activities with international partners. However, community support for these powers and actions is essential for maintaining confidence in the existing arrangements and for arguing the case for any future additions or expansions to powers.

Australian governments, through COAG, should promote confidence in our agencies by presenting a 12-monthly public update on the use of counterterrorism powers in Australia. That report should include all information required by law (for example, reporting on the use of delayed notification warrants and the data retention scheme) but also detailed information on relevant matters such as the use of control orders, passport cancellations, numbers of continuing investigations, individuals referred for diversion programs, international cooperation activities, relevant financial actions, court outcomes, and reporting about police and military operations. Of course, the report should respect the privacy of individuals and the security of intelligence and operations. Beyond that, it should present a comprehensive explanation of how and why the agencies have used their powers, and what's been done in the Australian public's name to supress terrorism here and overseas.

APPENDIX 1

This table includes those individuals named in open-source materials as having allegedly advocated or participated in violent Islamist activities since 2011. The table has been updated to 23 May 2015. The profiles and database information in this report are based on open-source material. This has mostly included online media articles and some government reporting. Sources can be found in the online version of the Appendix 1 at www.aspi.org.au.

Name	Year born*	Age at time of publication or death*	Country of birth	Ethnicity	Australian citizen	Comment
Roger ABBAS	1989	23	Unknown	Lebanese	Y	Reported to have been a foreign fighter for Jabhat al-Nusra. Reportedly killed in October 2012.
Hodan ABBY	1996	18	Unknown	Somali	Y	Reportedly travelled to Syria to join ISIL with Hafsa Mohamed in December 2014. The pair is cited as the first known Australian women to travel to Syria/Iraq independently.
Mahmoud ABDULLATIF	1991	23	Australia	Unknown	Y	Travelled to Syria in September 2014. Reported by his wife to have been killed in January 2015.
Ahmed Mohammed AL-GHAZZAWI	Unknown	Unknown	Lebanon	Lebanese	Y	Reported foreign fighter for ISIL, killed 26 December 2014.
Abu Nour AL-IRAQI (birth name unknown)	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Y	Reported foreign fighter for ISIL. Featured in an ISIL recruitment video (There is no life without jihad), which was released in mid-2014.
Omar AL-KUTOBI	1990	24	Iraq	Iraqi (assumed)	N	Charged with plotting a terrorist attack in Sydney on 10 February 2015, using a knife and machete, with Mohammed Kiad.
Hamdi AL-QUDSI	1974	40	Unknown	Unknown	Y	Charged with offences after allegations that he recruited and assisted seven Australians to travel to Syria and fight with extremist forces, including Jabhat al-Nusra in early 2013. Allegedly the liaison for Mohammad Ali Baryalei.

Name	Year born*	Age at time of publication or death*	Country of birth	Ethnicity	Australian citizen	Comment
Mehran AZAMI	1995	19	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Charged with acting as the weapons supplier for the Anzac Day 2015 plot to kill a police officer, steal his weapon and use it to attack as many people as possible.
Omarjan AZARI	1992	22	Afghanistan	Afghani	Y	Charged with plotting with Mohamed Ali Baryalei to publicly execute a person in Sydney, cover them with an ISIL flag and film the ordeal. Also faces charges arising from allegations that he made funds available to ISIL.
Mohammad Ali BARYALEI	1981	33	Afghanistan	Afghani	Y	Travelled to Syria to join Jabhat al Nusra in April 2013, converted to ISIL by June 2013, and believed to have adopted operational command position for ISILfacilitating passage for 30-60 Australians. Reportedly killed in October 2014.
Abdul Nacer BENBRIKA	1960	54	Algeria	Algerian	Y	Convicted for directing the actions of terrorist organisation that planned attacks at the 2005 AFL Grand Final at the MCG in Melbourne. Reportedly coaching new jihadists from jail.
Sevdet Ramden BESIM	1996	18	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Charged with conspiring in the Anzac Day plot.
Mehmet BIBER	1993	21	Unknown	Turkish	Y	Allegedly facilitated by Hamdi Al-Qudsi to travel to Syria to join an extremist group.
Jake BILARDI	1996	18	Australia	Anglo-Australian	Y	Reportedly left Australia in August 2014 to join ISIL, leaving a collection of materials to create an explosion in his family home. Reportedly detonated a bomb in Ramadi, on 11 March 2015, killing only himself.
Oliver BRIDGEMAN	1996	18	Australia (assumed)	Anglo-Australian	Y	Reportedly left Australia in April 2015 to join Jabhat al-Nusra, before trying to return home. Concedes that he's living in an area controlled by Jabhat al-Nusra but denies taking part in fighting.

Name	Year born*	Age at time of publication or death*	Country of birth	Ethnicity	Australian citizen	Comment
Adam BROOKMAN	Unknown	Unknown	Australia	Anglo-Australian (assumed)	Y	Reportedly travelled to Syria and joined ISIL. Self-reported that he was undertaking aid work as a nurse and was forcibly held in an ISIL hospital after injury. He is negotiating with Australian authorities for his return at time of publication.
Tyler CASEY (Yusuf Ali)	1991	22	US	African-American /Anglo-Australian	Y	Reportedly travelled to Syria allegedly to join Jabhat al-Nusra between June and August 2013, allegedly facilitated by Hamdi al-Qudsi. Reportedly killed with his wife Amira Karroum in their Syrian home in January 2014.
Harun CAUSEVIC	1996	18	Unknown	Bosnian	Y	Charged with conspiring in the Anzac Day plot.
Adam DAHMAN	1996	18	Australia	Unknown	Y	Known as Australia's second known suicide bomber, reportedly killed five people in a marketplace in Baghdad on 17 July 2014.
Zehra DUMAN	1993	21	Australia	Turkish	Y	Reportedly travelled to Syria in 2014 to marry Mahmoud Abdullatif. Emerged as strong supporter of ISIL online, encouraging women to join.
Abdullah ELMIR	1997	17	Australia	Anglo-Australian	Y	Reportedly left Melbourne in June 2014 to join ISIL, and appeared in two ISIL propaganda videos.
Fatima ELOMAR	1985	29	Unknown	Unknown	Y	Arrested in May 2014 after attempting to board a flight to Malaysia with her four children. It was alleged that she intended to travel to Syria to join her husband, Mohamed Elomar, carrying money and supplies, including camouflage gear. Charged with supporting incursions into a foreign state with the intention of engaging in hostile activities.
Mohamed ELOMAR	1984	30	Australia	Lebanese	Y	Australian foreign fighter who was reportedly based in Syria. He was reportedly killed in June 2015.
Abdul Numan HAIDER	1996	18	Afghanistan	Afghani	Y	Shot and killed in stabbing attack on police in Melbourne on 23 September 2014.

Name	Year born*	Age at time of publication or death*	Country of birth	Ethnicity	Australian citizen	Comment
Zia Abdul HAQ	1981	33	Afghanistan	Afghani (assumed)	Y	Reported foreign fighter for ISIL. Left Australia in August 2014 and was reportedly killed in fighting on 3 October 2014.
Irfaan HUSSEIN	1995	19	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Reported foreign fighter for ISIL. Believed killed while fighting in March 2015, as a result of either a beheading or a bomb blast.
Sharky JAMA	1989	25	Somalia	Somali	Y	Reportedly left to fight with ISIL in August 2014, approximately the same time as friend Yusuf Yusuf. Reportedly killed in April 2015.
Dullel KASSAB	1986	28	Unknown	Unknown	Y	Reportedly travelled with her 4-year-old daughter and 2-year-old son to Raqqah in mid-2014 after her husband was killed in Syria. Owner of a Twitter account that's followed by many female ISIL supporters.
Amira KARROUM	1991	22	Australia	Lebanese / Anglo-New Zealand	Y	Travelled to Syria to join her husband Yusuf Ali in December 2013 but both were killed in their Syrian home after her arrival.
Tareq KAMLEH	1985	29	Australia (assumed)	German / Palestinian	Y	Reportedly travelled to Syria to join ISIL. He has self-reported that he is using his medical training to assist with medical services in ISIL held territory.
Sulayman KHALID	1994	20	Australia	Iraqi / Italian	Y	Wore Islamic State flag on SBS Insight, and stormed out after being questioned about his beliefs, in August 2014. Charged in December 2014 with possessing hand-written notes allegedly planning to target an AFP building and an attack in the Blue Mountains.
Mohammed KIAD	1989	25	Kuwait	Kuwaiti (assumed)	N (Family & spousal visa)	Charged with plotting to execute a terrorist attack in Sydney on 10 February 2015, using a knife and machete, with Omar al-Kutobi.

Name	Year born*	Age at time of publication or death*	Country of birth	Ethnicity	Australian citizen	Comment
Agim KRUEZI	1993	21	Australia	Albanian	Y	Stopped at Brisbane Airport on 9 March 2014 because of suspicions that he was travelling to fight in the conflict in Iraq and Syria. Arrested in police raids in Queensland in September 2014. Charged with recruiting people for ISIL between July 2013 and September 2014, possessing numerous objects and transporting a firearm in preparation for a terrorist act.
Mostafa MAHAMED (Abu Sulayman al Muhajir)	1984	30	Egypt	Egyptian	Y	Extremist preacher in Sydney who reportedly travelled to Syria to join Jabhat al-Nusra.
Abdul Salam MAHMOUD	Unknown	Unknown	Sudan	Sudanese	Y	Self-reported to have travelled to Syria, stating that he was undertaking humanitarian work. Was active on social media; posted supporting ISIL and Numan Haider, and calling for Muslims to retaliate against US-led air strikes. Reportedly killed in March 2015.
Hafsa MOHAMED	1995	20	Unknown	Somali	Y	Reportedly travelled to Syria to join ISIL with Hodan Abby in December 2014. The pair is cited as the first known Australian women to travel to Syria/Iraq independently.
Man Haron MONIS	1964	50	Iran	Iranian	Y	Committed the Sydney Siege (2 victims killed, 4 others injured) on 15-16 December 2014. Killed by police on 16 December 2014.
Ahmad MOUSSALLI	1983	30	Unknown	Lebanese	Y	Reportedly studied Arabic in Egypt from late 2012 and then is believed to have travelled into Syria around 2013. He was reportedly killed in February 2014.
Tara NETTLETON	Unknown	Unknown	Australia	Anglo-Australian	Y	Reportedly travelled to Syria with her five children to reunite with her husband, Khaled Sharrouf, in 2013.
Neil PRAKASH	1991	23	Australia	Fijian-Indian / Cambodian	Y	Reportedly travelled to join ISIL and has reportedly become a top recruiter for the organisation.

Name	Year born*	Age at time of publication or death*	Country of birth	Ethnicity	Australian citizen	Comment
Ezzit RAAD	1981	33	Australia	Lebanese	Y	Convicted for involvement in 2005 Operation Pendennis plot to bomb Melbourne landmarks. Soon after his release from jail, he reportedly left Australia to join ISIL in 2013.
Zakaryah RAAD (thought to be Abu Yahya ash Shami)	1992	22	Australia (assumed)	Lebanese	Y	Reported ISIL foreign fighter. Featured in ISIL video, 'There is no life without jihad', released on 20 June 2014. Understood to have been appointed by ISIL as military commander of town of Jalula. Reportedly killed shortly after the filming of the video.
Suhan RAHMAN	1991	23	Australia	Bangladeshi	Y	Reportedly travelled to Syria in 2014 and joined ISIL. Reportedly killed in March 2015.
Hassan El SABSABI	1991	23	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Charged with funding terrorist organisations overseas, including ISIL and Jabhat al-Nusra, with approximately $12,000 over the period from March to September 2014.
Sammy SALMA	1990	22	Unknown	Unknown	Y	Reportedly travelled with Roger Abbas to join Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria in October 2012. Killed in an explosion in Aleppo in April 2013.
Khaled SHARROUF	1981	33	Australia	Lebanese	Y	Reportedly travelled to Syria to join ISIL using his brother's passport. He was reportedly killed in June 2015.
Zaynab SHARROUF	2000	14	Australia (assumed)	Anglo-Australian / Lebanese	Y	Allegedly left Australia with her mother and four younger siblings to go to Syria to join the ISIL caliphate in February 2014. Reportedly made posts on social media indicating that she'd married Mohamed Elomar and other posts supporting ISIL.
Muhammed SHEGLABO	1991	23	Libya	Libyan	Unknown	Reportedly travelled to join ISIL in January 2015. Posted photos on social media of him wearing combat clothing, holding weapons and using the ISIL hand gesture.
Abraham SUCCARIEH	1985	29	Australia	Lebanese (assumed)	Y	Reportedly travelled out of Australia on 10 September 2013 and is believed to be fighting with Jabhat al-Nusra.

Name	Year born*	Age at time of publication or death*	Country of birth	Ethnicity	Australian citizen	Comment
Ahmed SUCCARIEH	1986	27	Australia	Lebanese	Y	Reported to be Australia's first suicide bomber, allegedly killing 35 people at a military checkpoint in Syria in September 2013. Video of the incident was reportedly posted by Jabhat al Nusra.
Omar SUCCARIEH	1983	31	Australia	Lebanese	Y	Arrested in Brisbane terror raids in October 2014 and charged with funding Jabhat al-Nusra and assisting Agim Kruezi to prepare for a hostile act in Syria. His bookstore was also raided.
Caner TEMEL	1991	22	Australia	Turkish	Y	Went missing from the ADF in mid-2010 and reportedly left for Syria in July 2013. He was allegedly facilitated by Hamdi Al-Qudsi. Reportedly fought with Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIL. Reportedly killed in January 2014.
Yusuf YUSUF	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Somali	Y	Reportedly travelled to join ISIL approximately the same time as friend Sharky Jama in August 2014. Reportedly preaches to former friends online from Raqqah, Syria.
Mohamed ZUHBI	Unknown	Unknown	Syria	Syrian (assumed)	Y	Bank accounts closed in June 2014 after he voiced support for ISIL online. Self-reported that he's currently living in Syria and that he's doing humanitarian work.

* Approximate

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADF   Australian Defence Force

AFP   Australian Federal Police

ANZCTC Australia – New Zealand Counterterrorism Committee

AQAP   Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

ASIO   Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation

COAG   Council of Australian Governments

CVE   Countering Violent Extremism

ISIL   Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant

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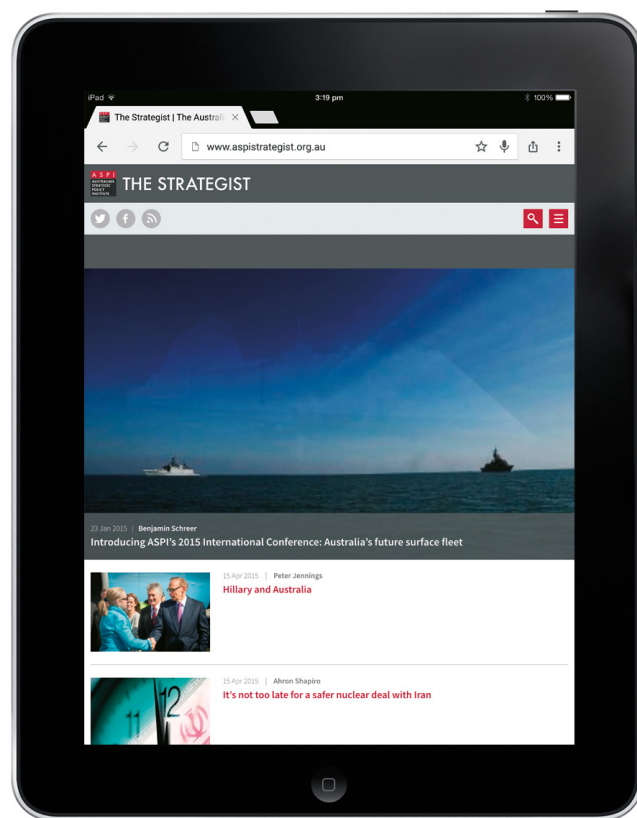
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Based on the findings from this research, the STRATEGY assesses policy responses by the government to date and offers recommendations that focus on taking new approaches with existing organisations or reinforcing old approaches that have proved effective.

Defeating terrorism and removing the sources of inspiration for radical extremism calls upon a massive array of policy responses covering everything from military operations in the Middle East to school curricula and involves a bewildering collection of state and federal government agencies and community groups. There is surely no more complex policy problem currently facing the country. It is also clear that governments cannot successfully develop counter-terrorism policy without the closest engagement of all sections of the community. Nothing less is at stake than the nature of Australian society.

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