Australian Muslim Leaders’ Perspectives on Countering Violent Extremism: Towards Developing a Best Practice Model for Engaging the Muslim Community

Submitted by

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFP</td>
<td>Australian Federal Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFIC</td>
<td>Australian Federation of Islamic Councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANIC</td>
<td>Australian National Imams Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASIO</td>
<td>Australian Security Intelligence Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCR</td>
<td>Building Community Resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COAG</td>
<td>Council of Australian Governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHOGM</td>
<td>Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLT</td>
<td>Community Liaison Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Code</td>
<td><em>Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVE</td>
<td>Countering Violent Extremism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVESC</td>
<td>Countering Violent Extremism Sub-Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIAC</td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTI</td>
<td>Global Terrorism Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GWOT</td>
<td>Global War on Terrorism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HREOC</td>
<td>Human Rights Equal Opportunity Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCEIS</td>
<td>National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCES</td>
<td>National Community Engagement Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-government organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PaVE</td>
<td>People Against Violent Extremism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAVE</td>
<td>Struggle Against Violent Extremism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWOT</td>
<td>Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GLOSSARY</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
<td>Individuals who come together to form groups or organisations based on specific interests and shared common purpose, belonging and identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community capacity</strong></td>
<td>The total sum of skills, competencies, resources and ability needed to enable communities to bring about sustainable outcomes to meet the needs of the community. It:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…consists of the networks, organisation, attitudes, Leaders and skills that allow communities to manage change and sustain community-led development…” (H. Smith, Pereira, Hull, &amp; Konijnendijk van den Bosch, 2014, p. 60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capacity building:</strong></td>
<td>Developing the skills, abilities, relationships, networks and resources within and between groups and community organisations and their members within their community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community engagement</strong></td>
<td>The process by which community benefit organisations and individuals build ongoing, permanent relationships for the purpose of applying a collective vision for the benefit of a community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community engagement can generally be summarised as a:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“… mutual communication and deliberation that occurs between government and citizens. It allows citizens and government to participate mutually in the formulation of policy and the provision of government services …” (Cavaye as cited in Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2016 para. 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It can also imply a relationship built over a period of time between government and identified groups or communities that fosters mutual interest in or an ability to influence outcomes that is beneficial to society at large. In the context of</td>
</tr>
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countering violent extremism, the Muslim community is a target community for government engagement under the Government’s CVE strategy.

**Extremist**

In a terrorism context, “an extremist is a person who passively supports the advancement of a political, religious or ideological cause through threats or actions of others” (*Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995*, section 100.1).

**Home-grown terrorism**

According to the Australian Government Resilient Communities’ definition:

> Home-grown terrorism refers to the locally-generated cultivation of violent extremism by individuals who were born, raised or live in Australia, although their motivations may stem from local or global influences (*Commonwealth of Australia, 2013b, p. 12*).

**Imams**

Islamic religious leaders

**Islamophobia**

Fear of Islam

**Mussalah**

Place of prayer

**Ummah**

Particularly refers to the global Muslim community of believers

**Radicalisation**

The process that leads to a person being radicalised.

**Resilience**

Described as

> harnessing the strengths of Australia’s inclusive and open society in the face of divisive violent extremist narratives … it is about the ability of the population to challenge violent extremism and to recover from a potential terrorist attack (*Commonwealth of Australia, 2013b*).

**Social cohesion**

Defined as a dynamic process that reflects a group’s tendency to bond together and remain united in satisfying member needs. Social cohesion refers to positive relationships – it is
the bond or ‘glue’ that binds people. A socially cohesive society is one that works towards the wellbeing of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015a).

| Terrorism | “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, by causing harm to people and property, creating a serious risk to the health and safety to the public or seriously disrupting trade, critical infrastructure or electronic systems.” (Criminal Code Act 1995, section 101.6). |
| Violent extremism | A term that describes the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals. This includes terrorism, other forms of politically motivated violence and some forms of communal violence. According to the Australian National Counter-Terrorism Committee Framework, violent extremism is defined as: a willingness to use or support the use of violence to further particular beliefs, including those of a political, social or ideological nature. This may include acts of terrorism. The Australian Government has identified violent extremism as: a crime and a real and persistent threat to Australia’s security. Violent extremism undermines the security and social cohesion of the Australian community, and extremists often exploit adverse political, social and |
economic conditions to indoctrinate, recruit and motivate others (Attorney-General Fact Sheet).
CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis.

Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged. I agree that this thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the Executive Director, Library Services or nominee, for the care, loan and reproduction of theses.

Nada Roude

March 2017
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My goal from the outset was to undertake research that will make a significant contribution to knowledge at local and global levels. My mission has always been and will continue to be how to best serve humanity. The opportunity to listen to the voices of those being overlooked or ignored and help them bring about needed change is empowering. To them, I owe a debt of gratitude for their time, sincerity and courage.

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My appreciation is also extended to Kim Woodland for editing and proofreading chapters 4 and 6 of the thesis.
ABSTRACT

The events of September 11, 2001, Madrid, 2004, London and Bali in 2005 generated new government responses and approaches to the threat of terrorism by the US and its close allies—the Five-Eyes Partners, including the UK, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Since 2001, the Australian Government has identified the community as a collaborator to defeat terrorism. This is supported by literature in Australia and the UK, which has reiterated the importance of community engagement to governments’ success in countering extremism (Briggs, 2010; Gunaratna, 2011; Klausen, 2009; Pickering, McCulloch, & Wright-Neville, 2008; Spalek & Intoual, 2007; Spalek & Lambert, 2008).

This research explores the Australian Government’s counter-terrorism policies and the countering violent extremism (CVE) strategy that was implemented at state and federal levels. The CVE strategy commenced under the Rudd government in 2009 with the creation of a CVE national framework, which was the first of its kind in Australia.

The research employed a mixed method of gathering data. A purposive sample was selected focusing on leaders of peak, state and local organisations and its leaders (or representatives) from Australia’s diverse Muslim community. 32 participants completed an online questionnaire focused on the leaders’ responses to September 11 and their interaction with the government’s CVE strategy and issues such as trust building, media coverage, political rhetoric and foreign policy. In phase two of the research, forty-three leaders were interviewed on the impact of terrorism as measured within their respective Muslim communities; and the efficacy of the government’s community engagement strategies and the CVE programme within their respective communities, and the impact of political and media rhetoric on community trust and contribution to extremism. The
The study reveals that the CVE programmes were criticised by participants for being short-sighted in failing to interact with youth or build on community strengths. Participants further identified the programmes as having poor evaluation processes and accountability. The number of Muslim organisations receiving government funding for CVE is very small, and the percentage of funding allocated to youth projects is limited, which is of vital importance in countering extremist ideologies. Participants highlighted that extremism is being addressed through a range of community-based channels that are not CVE funded.

Trust building was considered a critical activity essential for promoting government/community partnership. Participants stressed that government agencies need to work more closely with the Muslim community to build trust aimed at enhancing partnership.

Inaccurate, insensitive and negative media portrayal of Islam and Muslims has had a significant detrimental impact on the Australian Muslim community. The participants felt overwhelmed by this social challenge, particularly in relation to inadequacy of resources and skills, and the contribution to extremism.

There has been an increase in mistrust of the government since September 11. Participants viewed government rhetoric as strongly associating Islam with terrorism.

Participants felt that public discourse of politicians’ views had directly contributed to youth marginalisation. Participants felt improved communication and understanding of Islam is needed in the public arena, where Muslim community initiatives should be promoted to generate greater social acceptance and ultimately shift public discourse to
focus on the politics of countering extremism within all Australian communities and separate this from the Muslim community.

Participants felt that addressing foreign policy with greater sensitivity and having more consistent, long-term co-ordination with the entire community, popular youth groups, service providers and families could result in more resilient and effective partnerships towards countering violent extremism.
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

How to engage effectively Muslim communities in the ‘fight against terrorism’ has been a subject that has occupied governments and researchers all over the world, especially post-September 11, 2001. Since this horrific tragedy and the tragedies that followed, governments have introduced new measures, policies and legislation to protect their nations and people from the threat of a terrorist attack. The Australian Government’s response to the threat of terrorism was comprehensive, including new terrorism legislation, policies and arrangements aimed at preventing future attacks. Australia’s counter-terrorism policies were largely borrowed from the United Kingdom’s (UK) counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST and CONTEST 2) during the Howard and Rudd/Gillard governments. Community engagement in the fight against terrorism has featured significantly in government policy and literature as an essential component for the success of any anti-terrorism strategy.¹

Since the London bombings of 2005, there is some evidence that home-grown terrorism in the UK and Australia may present a threat that has its roots in the Muslim community. This potential threat has been acknowledged in literature and government-backed research (Australian Government, 2010; Kara-Ali, 2007). It is therefore important for “communities to play a central role in many different areas of the counter-terrorism

¹ Throughout the thesis, references to international experiences that relate to the research question have been cited highlighting the historical development of terrorism and CVE programmes. Whilst these are relevant and useful as a guide, they are not wholly applicable to the Australian context.
strategy” (Briggs, 2010, p. 972; Klausen, 2009; McElroy, 2011; Pickering et al., 2008; Spalek & Intoual, 2007; Spalek & Lambert, 2008)).

Until 1997, factors affecting radicalisation, such as foreign affairs policy, social and economic disadvantages, were not considered as contributing to acts of terrorism. A shift in the discourse about the causes of terrorism has also meant a revised approach to the way in which communities are engaged for the purposes of implementing the government’s ‘countering violent extremism’ strategy.

In 2010, the Australian Government announced $9.7 million in measures aimed at “building strong and resilient community to resist violent extremism and terrorism” on the ‘home front’ (Attorney-General’s Department, 2010). Like the UK, Australia’s countering violent extremism (CVE) strategy is located under the Prevent strand of the Community Resilience section, which addresses strategies that deal with disadvantage, grievances, and social and economic participation aimed at preventing alienation that may lead to radicalisation. This strategy focuses heavily on prevention by building capacity and resilience in communities to divert young people who are at risk of being radicalised away from the influence of extremist ideology. Most importantly, the success of this strategy relies heavily on community engagement and community involvement. This raises a number of issues for communities who are now expected to work with the government in the sensitive and complex area of policing in a ‘new terrorism’ environment where Muslims are identified as ‘suspects’ due to the association of Islam with terrorism.

The severity of the attacks on New York and Washington in 2001 and the devastation it caused to human lives and infrastructure shocked the world. The reaction of the US government, its allies and the global community at large, was to move swiftly to ensure
such a ‘heinous crime’ (Howard, 2005) does not happen again. President George W Bush declared a War on Terror, which saw the beginning of a whole new approach to terrorism. Australia, as an ally of the US, joined the UK and other Western nations in supporting President Bush’s ‘new war.’

Although Australia did not experience a terrorist attack directly on its soil, before 2014, fears were heightened following the attacks in Madrid in 2004, and London and Bali in 2005. These tragic events reinforced a climate of fear that a terrorist attack could occur in Australia as well. It was further revealed in an Australian study (Kara-Ali, 2007), especially following the attacks in London, that Australia has ‘home-grown’ extremists who are being influenced by radical Islamist ideology.

The terrorist attacks of September 11 and those that followed have focused attention on Muslim extremists as posing a threat to the world. This new enemy has often been referred to as ‘jihadist’ or ‘Islamist’ with an extreme Islamic ideology. The Australian Government introduced a multifaceted, comprehensive approach with new laws and policies to protect the country and the people from the perceived terrorist attack (Australian Government, 2010). These new policies and legislations have generated a considerable amount of controversy within Muslim and non-Muslim communities, especially as they were perceived by some to be in violation of basic civil and human rights (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008; Australian Muslim Civil Rights Advocacy Network, 2007).

The building of trust and long-term relationships is identified in the literature as a significant issue vital to the success of countering extremism (Gunaratna, 2011; New South Wales Police, 2011; Pickering, Wright-Neville, McCulloch, & Lentini, 2007; Spalek, 2010). However, policies and legislations have singled out the Muslim
community in Australia, subjecting it to increased scrutiny. Increased surveillance and the association of Muslims with terror have further increased Australian Muslims’ lack of confidence and trust in government political leaders and law enforcement agencies. This breakdown in the Muslim community’s trust and confidence resulting from political and media discourse can have considerable impact on the way those communities are effectively engaged. Other important factors that may impede the effectiveness of the Muslim communities’ engagement with the government as partners in countering extremism include the impact of political and media rhetoric on Muslim communities and its implications on capacity building, resourcing and trust.

The Australian Government counter-terrorism strategies have received bipartisan support from the country’s two main political parties. A government white paper introduced by the Howard Government in 2006 and the Rudd Government in 2010 highlighted the importance that communities play in supporting the government’s counter-terrorism strategies. Besides, community engagement has also been recognised widely in counter-terrorism literature as a significant component in the fight against terrorism (Briggs, 2010; Klausen, 2009; McElroy, 2011; Pickering et al., 2008; Spalek & Intoual, 2007; Spalek & Lambert, 2008). Although both government and anti-terrorism literature has recognised Muslim communities as partners in countering extremism, it is not clear whether the desired objectives of government programmes have yielded the result expected from such a partnership.

Gaining new insights and perspectives from the Muslim community involved in the implementation of counter-terrorist strategies was an important aspect of this study. This investigation has evaluated the effectiveness of current government community engagement practices in countering extremism, by identifying factors that contribute to
its success. The outcome from this evaluation will help illuminate the success or otherwise of engaging communities in countering extremism. The findings will help inform a best-practice model for the Muslim community’s engagement.

Achieving this objective requires an holistic approach by the government to build community capacity, driven in part by the allocation of resources to enable communities to work effectively as partners in a complex and sensitive area of policing, where trust is a serious issue. It is important to keep in mind that the Australian Muslim community is ethnically and linguistically diverse, representing over 70 different countries with thirty-five per cent born in Australia (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2004). This diversity brings with it considerable challenges, and local and global events ultimately affect differently on the Muslim community’s ability to respond to its needs. In particular, engaging effectively these diverse Muslim communities as partners in times of crisis can be quite difficult, especially in addressing complex issues such as policing and counter-terrorism.

Since the mid-1950s, Muslim organisations and Mosques were established in Australia to meet the diverse cultural, religious, educational, welfare and faith needs of their members (Akbarzadeh, 2015; Akbarzadeh & Saeed, 2001; Ali, 2012; Bouma, 1994; Kabir, 2005). The overwhelming majority of these organisations are community-based, not-for-profit and run by volunteers. Without adequate funding, skills and resources, they are often unable to respond adequately to the demands placed on them by members, the public and the government. As a consequence, effective engagement and partnership can be difficult to achieve. This can have serious implications for the government and the Muslim communities it seeks to engage, especially in counter-terrorism strategies.
Following the attacks of September 11, combined with other local issues such as the Lebanese gang rapes (2000), the Cronulla Riots (2005), have placed considerable strain on Australian Muslim community organisations’ already limited resources. The demands placed on these organisations have often drained communities of their limited resources due to the need to react to the backlash that is created by the media or statements by political leaders. In times of crisis and major turbulence either locally or globally, there is great potential for instability and conflict. The outcome can be destructive and can ultimately affect community harmony and social cohesion.

Of importance to this research is an exploration of the role and discourse of the media in contributing to radicalisation, especially among young Muslims. Freedom of the press is a significant and valuable component of Australian life. When that freedom is abused, however, the impact on people’s lives and government–relations can be damaging. So far, the role played by local and global media has only heightened fears. Government research and scholarly literature (HREOC; Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales & McCausland, 2003; 2004; Dunn, 2004, 2006; Pickering et al., 2008; Saeed. 2003; Kabir, 2004) and in the UK (Briggs, 2010) have shown the media has played a negative role in its portrayal and coverage of Arab and Muslim communities both in Australia and overseas.

A report by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) called *IsmaÆ–Listen: National consultations on eliminating prejudice against Arab and Muslim Australians* (‘the IsmaÆ Report’)² found, since the terrorist attacks of September 11 and October 2002 Bali Bombings, members of Muslim and Arab communities have

² IsmaÆ is the Arabic word for ‘listen.’ The last letter ‘ع’ is pronounced ‘ayn’ and is one of the letters of the Arabic alphabet.
experienced increased levels of discrimination, fear and insecurity. It also reported that Australian Muslims were feeling alienated and losing trust in government authorities (Dreher, 2006a, 2006b; Human Rights Equal Opportunity Commission, 2004; Poynting & Perry, 2007).

Research published in Australia (Dunn, 2004; Human Rights Equal Opportunity Commission, 2004; New South Wales Government, 2003; Pickering et al., 2008) and in the UK (Briggs, 2010) has also highlighted the media’s contribution to Islamophobia and corresponding alienation of Muslims, especially following the events of September 11. The HREOC’s submission on human rights breaches in Australia further highlighted that, “Over the past few years this has been an increasing issue for Arab and Muslim Australians in particular, some of whom have been subjected to discrimination, harassment or violence” (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2009, p. 19).

In an environment of alienation, fear and increased surveillance, Australia’s Muslim communities are losing trust in authority. Research by Spalek and Intoual (2007) noted, without trust, community engagement strategies aimed at preventing radicalisation are ineffective. Community engagement, especially within the context of building resilience through increasing trust, needs to be recognised as central to the success of counter-terrorism strategies. As Briggs points out, “low trust and confidence in the government could have negative impact on the willingness of Muslim communities to accept, support and engage with counter-terrorism measures” (Briggs, 2010, p. 979). Other literature (Klausen, 2009; Pickering et al., 2008; Spalek, 2010) concludes, without trust existing there can be no community–government partnership. These feelings and understandings of ‘trust’ will be investigated throughout this thesis for the purpose of engaging Muslim communities in combating extremism.
1.2 **Rationale**

Engaging communities is not a new phenomenon. The role and function at every level of government is to work closely with diverse stakeholders and ensure that services and programmes cater to the needs identified by those communities. One of the key challenges confronting each level of government is to ensure it is aware of the changing demographics and needs of the wider society they are serving. The events of September 11, Madrid 2004, and London and Bali in 2005, generated comprehensive new government responses and approaches to the threat of terrorism by the US and its close allies, including the UK and Australia.

The Australian Government’s approach to the threat of terrorism has focused on prevention by building capacity and resilience in communities to divert young people at risk of being radicalised away from the influence of extremist ideology. Importantly, it relies on community engagement and involvement for the strategy to work. Community involvement has been identified as an essential component for the success of anti-terrorism strategy under the Leaders of the Howard, Rudd/Gillard, Abbott and Turnbull governments. The Australian Government has reiterated that the source of strength and resilience comes from Australia’s rich and pluralist society—an asset from which Australia must draw in the campaign against extremism that may lead to acts of terrorism.

This strategy continues to focus on prevention by building capacity and resilience in communities to divert young people at risk of being radicalised away from the influence of extremist ideology. Importantly, it relies on community engagement and involvement for the strategy to work.

Issues arising for Muslim communities include: (1) working with Commonwealth and State governments in the sensitive and complex area of policing in a ‘New Terrorism’
environment; (2) Muslims being identified as *suspects* in cases of terrorism due to the perceived association of Islam with terrorist activities. This study offers commentary on the Australian Government’s current community engagement practices in addressing violent extremism in order to evaluate if they are achieving their objectives.

The ultimate objective of the study is to explore how Australian Muslim leaders may effectively engage with Government to develop more effective approaches in countering violent extremism.

This study aims to contribute to improved approaches to Muslim community engagement, including influencing future Government policy thereby strengthening social cohesion, harmony and resilience in a climate of increased insecurity.

Since 2010, there have been a number of developments in the Middle East leading to the operation of terrorist and extremist groups, which have had the potential to influence extreme violent ideologies. There are concerns the propaganda used by these groups could reach Australian communities and potentially give rise to a terrorist attack on Australian soil, allow these people to aid-and-abet others overseas, recruit them to fight overseas, and/or donate money or other forms of support here and overseas. In particular, there are fears Australians may engage in foreign conflicts, and if they return to Australia, this would pose a threat to Australia’s security. Consequently, the Australian Government strengthened its ability to deal with Australians participating in foreign conflicts. Parliament passed the Counter-Terrorism Amendment Bill (No. 1) to give powers to law enforcement agencies, intelligence and defence to arrest, monitor and prosecute foreign fighters and onshore extremists (Australian Government, 2015, p. 9). To understand whether these approaches have been effective, a study into this issue could provide insights that might aid policy or influence practice.
In recent years, conflicts in the Middle East, and especially in Syria, have given rise to the insurgency of the Islamic State of Iraq and Al Sham (also known as Daesh, ISIS/ISIL) and the attraction of large numbers of ‘foreign fighters’ from all over the globe to join the group. As at September 2015, there are nearly 230 Australians the government is investigating for taking part in this conflict or for supporting extremist groups. A recent government Review of Australia’s Counter-Terrorism Machinery notes around 90 young people have travelled overseas in solidarity with ISIS to engage in fighting in Syria, Iraq and the region. The plight of these young men and women, and their support for violent extremist ideologies that might lead to acts of terrorism on our home soil, are a matter of great concern to the Australian Government. The main challenge facing the government is to keep Australia safe from terror by preventing young people from being influenced by ideologies that lead to violent extremism. To achieve this end, the government needs to work in partnership with communities to lessen the appeal of such extreme ideologies (Australian Government, 2015, p. 35). In January 2015, the Federal Government launched a Review of Australia's Counter-Terrorism Machinery in response to the changing national security environment because of the emerging terrorist threats posed by the activities of violent fringe groups.

Central to these counter-terrorism policies and strategies is the important role that communities play in defeating terrorism. In the new security environment, government reports and scholarly publications have identified communities as key players in the fight against terrorism. Scholars and the global community (Briggs, 2010; Klausen, 2009; McElroy, 2011; Pickering et al., 2008; Spalek & Imtoual, 2007; Spalek & Lambert, 2008; Gunaratna, (2011); Holmer, (2013); and Omar, 2016, has identified the role that communities play as a key feature in the fight against terrorism Gunaratna, (2011) highlights the importance of community engagement in effectively combating terrorism.
He argues that the fight to combat terrorism will not be accomplished unless Muslim communities are engaged. He proposes a formal and informal mechanism to increase awareness in the public arena with emphasis on educating mass media and stakeholders. In addition, he seeks to build resilience within sections of the community who are vulnerable to radical influence. Gunaratna suggests that this will require leadership, resources and dialogue across the political community and private sector to enable communities to defeat terrorism.

Moreover, Homer, (2013) stresses the importance that communities play by contributing to methods and approaches that develop in-depth understanding of violent extremism, while building resilience and resistance to the drivers of violent extremism. Additionally, Omar, (2016), posits that communities, and especially religious leaders, need to be engaged in developing strategies that are community driven and provide a sense of ownership. The views articulated by Gunaratna, (2011), Holmer, (2013), and Omar, (2016) are supported by the following sources (Ali, 2012; Nasser-Eddine, Garnham, Agostino and Caluya, 2011; Schmid, 2013; Schmid, 2015; Spalek & Lambert, 2007; Weine & Younis, 2015; Romaniuk, 2015; Ellis, 2015; Droogan & Waldek, 2015; S. Mansour & J. Droogan, 2015), who all highlight the crucial role communities play in countering violent extremism. Since 2001, an important and critical aspect of the government’s counter-terrorism agenda has focused on the need for active community participation and engagement if the strategies are to have any success. An understanding of the workings of the Muslim community in Australia is an integral part of how community leaders are dealing with the impact of these tragic events in their communities. It is clear that a shared vision exists in the interest of national security in an increasingly insecure social milieu, which is under intense scrutiny and in fear.
As pointed out by Senator Brandis, the Attorney-General: “there is a need for government, industry and civil society to work collaboratively to limit the impact of extremist narratives and reduce support for terrorist groups …” (Brandis, 2015). It was also recognised by the current Attorney-General, Senator Brandis that the government must work with community leaders and groups to confront the threat facing Australia from violent extremists through close working relationships. The shooting of Curtis Cheng by 15-year-old Farhad Khalil Mohammad Jabar outside Parramatta Police Headquarters on Friday 2 October 2015 further highlighted the urgent necessity for effective engagement. Current Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull reinforced the importance of partnership by saying: “The Muslim community are our absolutely necessary partners in combating this type of violent extremism” (Brandis, 2015).

The Australian Government recognises the need for successful engagement strategies and has strived towards securing trust with the community and working as a team. However, the findings from this research indicate that engagement to date has not been effective. This highlights the need to better understand the feelings in the Muslim community regarding engagement with the government and authorities in relation to CVE, and that more needs to be done to develop inclusive strategies to enhance trust and partnerships that will aid the development of counter extremist strategies.

1.2.1 Social Cohesion and Community Engagement Approach

National approach to social cohesion

Australia is a culturally and religiously diverse society. Enhancing and promoting social cohesion and harmony requires effective social policies that enable the full integration and participation of all Australians to actively participate in society without fear of
prejudice and discrimination (Commonwealth Government, 2010, p.22). Maintaining and enhancing Australia as a harmonious and socially cohesive nation is the responsibility of all Australians, and this includes accepting and respecting each other’s choices of faith and lifestyles.

Following the George W. Bush War on Terror, the Australian Government’s national security policy aimed to address extremism, including the promotion of violence and intolerance. In response to the increased threat of global terrorism, social cohesion and harmony were emphasised as a framework for the government to achieve its objectives of keeping Australia and Australian safe from acts of terror on its soil. (Commonwealth Government, 2010).

The destructive impact of exclusion or marginalisation on individuals, groups, and society as a whole, has been widely recognised. The Australian Government built their policies in relation to terrorism around counter-terrorism strategies adopted from the United Kingdom (Roach, 2011, Hockey, 2003; Abraham, 2006; McClellan, 2006). The Australian Government White Paper (2010, p. 65) notes exclusion “can affect a society’s cohesiveness, economic performance and the security and stability of the community as a whole”.

This paper seeks to address issues of disadvantage, real and perceived grievances, and the provision of opportunities that enhance active participation in Australia’s society. It argues this will reduce the potential to commit acts of terror for those at risk from marginalisation and radicalisation. In addition, the national counter-terrorism strategy includes security measures, law enforcement responses and broader strategies to
enlarge social cohesion and resilience, and lessen the appeal of extremist ideologies that fuel terrorism (Australian Government, 2010).

In the Department of Immigration and Citizenship National Action Plan (NAP) Final Evaluation Report (2010), the London Bombings of 2005 highlighted the potential risks of home-grown terrorism and served as the catalyst for the development of the NAP.

The NAP took a social policy response in countering the threat of home-grown extremism by focusing on Muslim communities. A considerable number of projects and consultation under NAP have involved and engaged these communities.

The NAP objectives are consistent with the Australian Government’s priorities under the Social Inclusion Agenda, addressing economic and social disadvantage in Australia.

As discussed throughout the thesis, the States and Territories are identified as critical players in working with communities as they are strategically placed “to identify, implement and manage local solutions to local problems and to develop local level resilience” (Australian Government, 2010, p. 20).

The key national objective of the CVE program is aimed at preventing harm before it happens by focusing on de-radicalisation. The Commonwealth, States and Territories are working cooperatively to develop and implement approaches to countering violent extremism. These approaches will form an integral part of Australia’s national counter-terrorism strategy.

The Commonwealth Government recognises that solutions must be appropriate to local circumstances, and strong partnerships between all levels of government and communities are critical to success of this approach.
1.2.2 Defining Community and Community Engagement

The terms community and community engagement are linked. From a sociological perspective, a community is broadly defined as a group or groups of people who identify with or share a common interest. Community engagement describes a range of activities undertaken to involve groups or communities to bring about a desired change. The purpose of working closely with groups of people or communities is to identify and address issues that affect the life of the community targeted. Within the context of the Australian Government seeking to engage communities in countering terrorism and violent extremism that lead to terrorism, the expression ‘community engagement’ is defined as “the mutual communication and deliberation that occurs between government and citizens” (Department of Sustainability and Environment, 2005). This study has adopted a community-based approach by examining the Australian Government’s counter-terrorism policy that focuses specifically on the CVE strategy, which is being implemented by government departments at state and federal levels. Its history goes back to the Rudd government, which in 2009 established a permanent subcommittee called the Countering Violent Extremism Sub-Committee (CVESC), and the creation of a CVE national framework. Following the launch of the inaugural CVE programme in 2010, a CVE Unit was established in the Attorney-General’s Department. The CVE programme was located under the “Prevent” strand of the Community Resilience section, addressing strategies focussing on disadvantage, grievances, social and economic participation aimed at preventing alienation that may lead to radicalisation (Attorney-General’s Department, 2010, 2012b, n.d.). Prevention and early intervention were key objectives of the CVE programme. In 2014, the Australian Government launched a new CVE programme. The programme’s strategy was centred on a “more direct approach to identifying and providing support to individuals at risk of radicalisation” (Australian
Early intervention is one aspect of the new CVE programme and works closely in conjunction with the Australian Federal Police’s National Disruption Group whose aim is to “manage the return of Australian Nationals involved in conflict overseas” (Australian Government, 2015, p. 9).

1.3 Research Question

This study investigates the extent to which government approaches have succeeded in effectively using the community’s diverse capacities to enhance the government’s policies on countering extremism. The media and the language political leaders use are also examined to determine how language has contributed to the radicalisation of young Muslims. Arguably, the media has adversely affected past political discourse. The media’s comments, along with adverse commentary by political leaders, have generated increased anti-Muslim sentiment, leading to a further marginalisation of Australian Muslims, particularly among its youth.

As previously highlighted the language used by politicians and the mass media has been identified as an area of concern by members of the Muslim community and its leaders as contributing to an increase in Islamophobia and marginalisation. Political and media rhetoric have had a negative impact on community trust and, consequently, community leaders’ willingness to engage with the government (Gunaratna, 2011; New South Wales Police, 2011; Pickering et al., 2008; Spalek, 2010; Islamic Council of NSW, 2005). As discussed at length throughout the thesis, the impact of the media and political rhetoric are examined with a view to building stronger partnerships between the government and Muslim communities.

As argued throughout the thesis, the language used by politicians and the media impacts on young Muslims. Therefore, if the language used by politicians and the media is
inappropriate then this may be counter-productive and has the potential to contribute to racial hatred and the problem of radicalisation of young Muslims. As highlighted by Poynting and Perry (2007, p.167) in their study on the treatment of Muslims in Canada and Australia, failure to “adequately recognise and to act against hate crime, and in modelling anti Muslim bias by practicing discrimination and institutional racism through ‘ethnic targeting’, ‘racial profiling’, and the like, the state conveys a sort of ideological licence to individuals and institutions to perpetrate and perpetuate racial hatred”).

Political rhetoric may adversely affect Muslim communities by creating more divisions and racial animosity as well as damaging social cohesion. Consequently, the language used may have the effect of contributing to the community’s sense of belonging and inclusion. Additionally, the language used by politicians is important because of the implications this has on how the government’s CVE strategy design and implementation is received and interpreted.

As research has shown, political and media rhetoric has had a negative impact on community trust and, consequently, community leaders’ willingness to engage with the government. Increasing our understanding of the impact of political and media rhetoric on the effectiveness of Australia’s CVE programme may assist in developing more effective approaches for government and community engagement in countering violent extremism. Aims and Objectives and Approach of the Study

1.3.1 Main Objective

The ultimate objective of the research is to gain insights from community leaders on the effectiveness of Australia’s CVE programme in order to assist in developing more effective approaches for government and community engagement in encountering violent extremism.
1.3.2 Specific Aims

This research presented in this thesis covers two broad aims:

1. To investigate the extent to which government approaches have succeeded in effectively using the community’s diverse capacities to enhance the government’s policies on countering extremism.

2. To examine the rhetoric of the media and political leaders to determine how language has contributed to the radicalisation of young Muslims.

The study will explore how effective the Australian Government has been in engaging Muslim communities as partners in developing and implementing counter-extremist strategies, as stated in the two broad aims.

This study focuses on community leaders’ perspectives on the reasons, factors and suggestions for improving the government CVE programme’s approach to countering violent extremism.

1.3.3 Basic Approach

To understand community leaders’ perspective on the CVE programme and its effectiveness, a mixed method approach was used involving quantitative and qualitative approaches. This involved a survey and personal interviews. A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis was used to analyse data collected from the research.

A purposive sample was selected for the study, targeting participant community leaders, religious leaders and representatives of community organisations. Specifically, the study
looked at Muslim communities in Sydney, New South Wales, and their interactions with the Federal government through discussions with Muslim leaders.

1.4 Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2: Literature review begins with a brief discussion about terrorism, the threat of terrorism in Australia and government reactions prior to September 11. This is followed by a more detailed overview of the Australian Government’s counter-terrorism policies following the September 11 attacks on the US, and the Bali tragedy. Australia’s response to the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) is discussed in the context of the changed security environment following concerns that an attack could occur in Australia.

Australia’s counter-terrorism policy and the introduction of a raft of counter-terrorism laws aimed at protecting the nation and its people from an act of terror are discussed. Australia’s approaches to countering terror on the home front are outlined followed by an examination of the government and community responses to the introduction of new anti-terror legislation.

The diversity of responses to the tragedy of September 11 in Australia are explored including the reaction to the new counter-terrorism legislation and its impact on civil liberties and human rights violations. Specifically, the views of academics, legal experts, human rights organisations and community groups are discussed. This is followed by an overview of the impact the new terror laws have had on the marginalisation and demonisation of Australia’s Muslim community.

Chapter two also includes a section that outlines the shift from the GWOT to a focus on countering violent extremism. Next, there is a detailed overview of the key features of the CVE strategy with a focus on resilience and the importance of addressing disadvantage.
as a way of lessening the appeal for extremist ideologies. The government’s approach and focus on building resilient communities and the effectiveness of the CVE funding programme in meeting the objectives of luring young people away from violent extremism also makes up a significant part of this review.

Finally in this chapter there is a brief historical overview of Daesh or ISIL and how these groups have affected Australia’s security by raising the Australia’s National Terrorism Threat Level to High for first time in its history.

**Chapter Three: Methodology** outlines the methods used to collect and analyse the data obtained for this research.

In **Chapter Four: Results**, the findings from the data collected from the online questionnaire and interviews with community leaders are presented using a SWOT analysis.

**Chapter Five: Discussion** covers the overall results from the responses to the research questions in the survey and interviews. Using a SWOT analysis, the implications and ramifications of the study’s results in the context of the problem under investigation (i.e. background and rationale), the theoretical base and the research question are discussed.

**Chapter Six: Conclusions** brings home the importance of this research and its implications for policy by highlighting the challenges faced by communities in a changing security environment. The chapter also highlights new insights that may assist in keeping young people away from the influence of violent extremist ideologies. Finally, it conveys the key findings from the study and provides evidence-based recommendations, which are hoped to assist in the future development of a best-practice model for engaging the Muslim community in fighting violent extremism.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Defining Terrorism

The term terror was first introduced during the French Revolution to describe the French reign of terror (1795) (Matusitz, 2013, p. 1). As Weir (2012, p. 1) noted, “For around 200 years the word terrorism has been in the public sphere, has been used by political leaders, and has been used in academia—to the extent that there is now a whole ‘terrorism industry.’”

Discourse about what constitutes terrorism has existed for decades. Scholars and researchers have written extensively about and attempted to define terrorism only to conclude such attempts are difficult and problematic. Despite the longstanding debate about what terrorism is and what it is not, it has not been possible to reach consensus about the term’s definition. According to Schmid and Jongman (1988), in their book Political Terrorism, “there are no less than 109 definitions of terrorism,” and according to Simon (as cited in Matusitz, 2013, p. 2) there are over 212 definitions of terrorism.

Arriving at a definition of terrorism has been a contentious issue even for the United Nations, as it has not been able to achieve consensus. There has been considerable debate around a definition of terrorism that is internationally accepted. At the heart of this debate is the old cliché that “One man’s freedom fighter is another man’s terrorist.” Given this failure to agree on a definition, “states have been compelled to develop their own definitions for the purposes of enacting legislation to counter the threat” (Australian Government, 2004b, p. 3). Consistent with this, in 2001, Hancock described terrorism as being subjective. It is a label that is “both political and pejorative.” The classic statement is that:
What might appear as an evil act of terrorism to people in an affluent Western society may seem like a reasonable and legitimate political action to a liberation or rebel movement operating in the poverty-stricken and desperate conditions in the Third World. One person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom fighter (Hancock, 2001).

Nonetheless, while there is a diversity of definitions and complexity in reaching consensus on an agreed definition of terrorism internationally and in academia, there is “a most universally accepted definition of it, which is the use of violence to create fear (i.e. terror; psychic fear), for political, religious or ideological reasons” (Matusitz, 2013, p. 21). Matusitz (2013) draws a comparison between old and new terrorism by pointing out that old terrorism strikes only selected targets, while new terrorism is synonymous with Sam Huntington’s (1996) Clash of Civilizations suggesting cultural and religious differences between civilisations across the world have become the primary source of terrorism today.

The terms extremism, violent extremism, political violence, political terrorism and terrorism have all been used interchangeably in Australian and in international literature. A distinction between violent extremism and terrorism is still evolving, given the failure to reach agreement on the definition of these terms. According to Neuman (as cited in Borum, 2011):

Extremism can be used to refer to ideologies that oppose a society’s core values and principles. In the context of liberal democracies this could be applied to any ideology that advocates racial or religious supremacy and/or opposes the core principles of democracy and universal human rights. The term can be used to describe the methods through which political actors attempt to realise their aims, that is, by using means that ‘show disregard for the life, liberty, and human rights of others.’

Violent extremism also describes the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals. This includes terrorism, other forms of politically motivated violence and some forms of communal violence.
Although many definitions have been offered in the scholarly literature and government policies on terrorism and violent extremism, for the purpose of this thesis, I will be referring to the definitions used by the Australian Government.

2.1.1 The Australian Government’s Definition of Terrorism

Prior to September 11, the Commonwealth legislation in Australia defined what constitutes an act of terrorism. Under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth) (‘Criminal Code’), a terrorist act means an action or threat of action where the action causes certain defined forms of harm or interference and the action is done or the threat is made with the intention of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause (Australian Government, 2010). Under the Act, it is an offense to commit a terrorist act, provide or receive training connected with terrorist acts, possess a thing connected with terrorist acts, collect or create documents likely to facilitate terrorist acts, or do any act in preparation for or planning of terrorist acts (Australian Government, 2010, p. 3).

For the first time under Australian law, changes were made to the Criminal Code to encapsulate the offence of terrorism and its definition (University of Technology, 2005, p. 1). A terrorist act is defined 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, by causing harm to people and property, creating a serious risk to the health and safety to the public or seriously disrupting trade, critical infrastructure or electronic systems” (National Counter-Terrorism Committee, 2012, p. 4). Coupled with this was the creation of a number of offences based on the new definition (Divisions 101 and 103 of the Commonwealth Criminal Code) (Saul, 2007, p. 17). Section 101.6 of the Criminal Code states:
1. A person commits an offence if the person does any act in preparation for, or planning, a terrorist act (penalty: imprisonment for life)

2. A person commits an offence under sub section (1) even if:
   
   (a) A terrorist act does not occur; or
   
   (b) The person’s act is not done in preparation for, or planning, a specific terrorist act; or
   
   (c) The person’s act is done in preparation for, or planning, more than one terrorist act.

According to the Australian National Counter-Terrorism Committee Framework, violent extremism is defined as:

…a willingness to use or support the use of violence to further particular beliefs, including those of a political, social or ideological nature. This may include acts of terrorism (Attorney-General’s Department Countering Violent Extremism Unit, 2012).

The Attorney-General Department’s website, states the Australian Government has described violent extremism as “a crime and a real and persistent threat to Australia’s security” (Attorney-General’s Department, n.d.). Violent extremism is further defined by the Attorney-General’s Department as: “The ideologies and actions of people who use violence or support or advocate the use of violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals” (Australian Government, n.d.-b). Another definition of violent extremism offered by the Australian government is:

…a willingness to use unlawful violence, or support the use of violence by others, to promote a political, ideological or religious goal. VE includes terrorism, other forms of politically motivated violence and some forms of communal violence (e.g. racially motivated violence) (Council of Australian Governments, 2015, p. 7).

In addition, the Attorney-General’s Fact Sheet states violent extremism undermines the security and social cohesion of the Australian community, and extremists often exploit
adverse political, social and economic conditions to indoctrinate, recruit and motivate others (Australian Government, 2014).

2.2 Terrorism and Threats of Terrorism in Australia prior to September 11

Violence and acts of terror have existed throughout human history. Whatever the justifications, these horrific acts cause enormous loss of life, destruction to infrastructure and an increase in fear and insecurity. It is the responsibility of government to ensure that necessary measures are taken to keep its people and country safe.

Throughout Australia’s history, much has been written about what constitutes Australian values and what it means to be an Australian. The values debate has continued well into the twenty-first century to include new and diverse perspectives on what Australians value in the light of Australia’s cultural and religious diversity especially following the September 11 attacks. Regardless of the ongoing debate about Australian values, it can be said that among the values that have defined Australia’s cultural identity is the tendency to avoid extremism. Australia is a country that traditionally avoids extremism. Richmond suggests “an entrenched part of our culture … values mainstream political activity and finds extremism of either side unpalatable” (Richmond, 1980, p. 195). This view was also supported by Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran and Vieten Yuval-Davis, Kannabirān, and Vieten (2006, p. 181) who state these themes have featured prominently in Australia’s history and extremism is among the values, beliefs and lifestyles that are deemed un-Australian. An example of where extremes are disliked includes the New Guard Movement and Menzies’ vigorous but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to ban the Communist Party in 1950-51.
An equally important Australian value noted by G. Williams (2003, p. 3) “is the undermining of accepted and revered Australian values such as the presumption of innocence, freedom of belief and speech, and the rule of law.”

Although acts of terrorism or armed violence against the state have not played a major part in the Australian political landscape to date, this does not mean Australia has been devoid of terrorism altogether. This section provides an overview of the history of terrorism and threats of terrorism in Australia prior to September 11, and outlines the legislative responses.

### 2.2.1 An Overview of Terrorism in Australia prior to 2001

Australia has had a brief history of political violence (Bronitt, 2003; Onyx, Dalton, Melville, Casey, & Banks, 2008 Casey, & Banks, 2008; Rose & Nestorovska, 2005; Wright-Neville, 2005). Patrick O’Neill (2010) defines political violence as “violence outside of state control.” According to section 4 of the *Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act 1979* (Cth), politically motivated violence is summarised as:

1. An act or threat of violence intended or likely to achieve a political objective, inside Australian borders and or internationally, including acts carried out for the purpose of influencing policy or acts of Government, or

2. Acts which involve violence or are intended or likely to involve or lead to violence and are directed to overthrow/destroy or assist in either of the government or constitutional system of the government

Australia’s early colonial history was rife with low scale violence and riots led by Irish convicts against colonial forces. In the mid-1800s, ‘bushranging’ by rural bandits had become a feature of colonial life (Bronitt, 2003). This led to the passing of the *Bushrangers Act 1830* in New South Wales as a way of protecting the colony from criminal activities.
In terms of Australia’s long term history of terrorist activity, one could also examine, for example, incidents which took place in Australia during the mid-nineteenth century when Australia recorded its first assassination attempt in 1868 on an English Royal, Prince Alfred, by Irish Catholic nationalist Henry O’Farrell. O’Farrell identified himself as a Fenian, but he was later found to be insane (State Library of NSW, n.d.). The Fenians, were the last Irish nationalist convicts to be transported to Australia following their failed uprising against British rule in their homeland in 1865 (Sutton, 2013). They had taken part in earlier rebellions in 1798 and 1803 which had also resulted in transportation. Bronitt (2003) recently noted that authorities in the early British colony of New South Wales were always monitoring potential uprisings from Irish Catholics.

While traditionally Australia tends to dislike extremes, it could be argued that there is also a history of institutionalised racism in Australia’s immigration policies that may indicate an extremist streak in the Australian national character.

Despite this, the former Prime Minister Menzies unsuccessfully attempted to ban the Communist Party, there have been additional moments in the nation’s history when acts of terrorism and responses to radical ideologies, i.e. communism have existed.

Australia has a long history of immigration and, sadly, a long encounter with racism. Australia’s approach to immigration, for example, has up until the latter part of the twentieth century, excluded non-European immigration. The ‘White Australia’ policy, which has been one of the defining characteristics of immigration, remained in place until after World War II, before shifting towards policies around assimilation and ‘integration’. Racism was a key feature of Australia’s White Australia Policy up until the introduction of multiculturalism.
The introduction of multicultural policies initiatives that address inequities (access and Equity Strategy in the 1980s) adopted by various governments at state and federal level in 1978 replaced Australia’s racist policy. This was a significant shift in the way in which the Australian government dealt with diversity. (Commonwealth of Australia, 2017, p4; (Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism, Department of the Senate, 2017). As a result, diversity was seen as an asset which should be celebrated. The main feature of this policy is the entitlement for all people of non-English speaking background to maintain their heritage and language and the provision of services and programs to enable their participation on Australian society.

As highlighted by the former Prime Minister, Malcom Fraser in a speech at the opening of the Institute of Multicultural Affairs, “multiculturalism is concerned with far more than the passive toleration of diversity. It sees diversity as a quality to be embraced, a source of social wealth and dynamism…Not least, multiculturalism is about equality of opportunity for the members of all groups to participate in and benefit from Australia’s social, economic and political life (Fraser, 2002, pp.237-8).

2.2.2 Acts of Terrorism Against Indigenous Australians

Australia’s history of encounters with domestic terrorism typically records that, until 2001, “Australia has a short history of enacting laws aimed at terrorism” (Ramraj, Hor, Roach, & Williams, 2012, p. 546; L. Williams, 2016). However, Jalata (2013) has argued that acts against the indigenous population could be considered terrorism. Jalata points out that “English settlers started terror and genocide on indigenous Australians to expropriate their economic resources and to take over their homeland” (2013, p. 2). It is also pointed out that “these crimes against humanity had continued in the 19th Century until the indigenous peoples were almost destroyed and the ownership of their land was
entirely transferred to the English colonial settlers and their descendants” (Jalata, 2013, p. 2). This section does not attempt to delineate this sordid record.

2.2.3 Australia’s Response to the Threat of Communism

In Australia’s history, communism has been perceived as an enemy. The Communist Party of Australia was formed soon after the Russian Revolution of 1917. Communism was believed to pose a real danger to Australia and many believed urgent action was needed to protect national security during World War II from the ideology of communism. George Williams (2003) notes, during World War II, Prime Minister Menzies introduced strong measures to protect national security. The open anti-communist political provisions of the Commonwealth Crimes Act, which had been inserted in 1926, were used to persecute any activities even though they may have been distantly associated with communism. These provisions, strengthened over the years, made communism a crime. To those who administered the state, anything that challenged any aspect of the social system was ‘communist.’ Communism became synonymous with criminals and was treated accordingly (Hill, 1989).

The National Security Bill 1939 (Cth) was introduced on 7 September 1939. G. Williams (2003, p. 2) states Australia was also grappling with external and internal threats that generated fear fuelled by political and media hysteria about the threat of communism. The rhetoric used by the Country Party during the 1946 federal election concerning communism as posing a threat featured as a key policy.

Phillip Deery, as cited by George Williams, highlights that anti-communist hysteria was also prevalent in the media; An editorial in the Sydney Morning Herald on 7 November, 1949 presents Communism as “cold, harsh and ruthless…and anyone who embraces it is a traitor… and people must choose to be either loyal or disloyal” were common
sentiments at the time (Deery as cited by G. Williams, 2003, p. 192). Fear of communism was also openly expressed in the 1946 federal election policy statement articulated by the Country Party. It was described as “a venomous snake to be killed before it kills” (McKinlay as cited by G. Williams, 2003, p. 192). As noted by McClellan, during this time “most Australians saw communists as a real danger—indeed, their doctrine of world revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat was widely viewed as a kind of political terrorism” (McClellan, 2006, pp. 11-12).

Hostilities between communist and Western nations increased during the Korean War and Cold War. This led to the enactment of legislation aimed at suppressing communist activity in Australia. In response to heightened concerns about the need to deal with the threat of communism, the Menzies government attempted to criminalise communism in 1950. The Communist Party Dissolution Bill 1950 sought to “dissolve the Australian Communist party, criminalise membership of community organisations, and prohibit those believed to hold Marxist views from public service” (Abraham, 2006, p. 35). The Bill was passed and “enabled the proscription or banning of anyone declared by the Governor-General to be a Communist.” C. C. Williams (2004, p. 2) notes, as a result of the Bill, 53 leading Australians were listed as communists.

George Williams (2003) expressed serious misgiving about the anti-communism bill and considered it as “one of the most draconian and unfortunate pieces of legislation ever to be introduced in the Federal Parliament” (p. 193). McClellan (2006) and C. C. Williams (2004) point out that debates about giving absolute power to the Governor-General to ban people and organisations rendered the High Court irrelevant. However, the Act was subsequently defeated, first by the High Court of Australia declaring it to be invalid and second in a popular referendum.
2.2.4 Legislation Introduced for Unlawful Associations Offences

Proscription of associations in Australia dates back to World War I, and expanded drastically following the Russian Revolution of 1916. Under the *Unlawful Associations Act 1916* any organisation which “by its constitution or propaganda, advocates or encourages … the taking or endangering of human life, or the destruction of property” was an unlawful association. The *Unlawful Associations Act 1917* expanded these measures by empowering the Governor-General to declare unlawful associations, creating offences relating to membership, contributions, and dealing with forfeiture (Hancock, 2001, pp. 12-13).

According to Hancock, the provisions, which focused on revolutionary and seditious conduct, were introduced primarily by the *Crimes Act 1926*. As noted by the authors, “the provisions, were introduced alongside provisions dealing with powers of arrest without warrant and offences related to serious industrial disputes, were considered to reflect a ‘clear and definite mandate’” (Hancock, 2001, p. 12) to “defeat the nefarious designs of the extremists in our midst.” They were “aimed chiefly at the rising Communist Party.”

It is important to note that “Part IIA of the Crimes Act 1914 declares unlawful any association which directly or indirectly ‘by its constitution or propaganda or otherwise advocates or encourages the overthrow of the Constitution … by revolution or sabotage’ or the overthrow by force or violence of the established government of the Commonwealth or of a State.’ The Federal Court, on the motion of the Attorney-General and after providing a hearing, may declare an association to be unlawful. It is an offence to be a member of, or to represent, an unlawful association. Similarly, it is an offence to publish, sell or distribute material produced by an unlawful association, or to let premises to such an association (Hancock, 2001, p. 13).
The authors also state as “with proscription, there is no Commonwealth Act which deals explicitly with contributions or assistance to terrorist organisations or forfeiture of terrorist property. However, under the unlawful associations provisions in the Crimes Act 1914 it is an offence to ‘give or contribute money or goods’ or ‘receive or solicit subscriptions or contributions of money or goods’ for an unlawful association (s. 30D) and any property held by or for the benefit of an unlawful association is forfeited to the Commonwealth (s. 30G) (Hancock, 2001).

During World War II, a number of attacks were carried out on Australian soil that could be described as acts of terrorism. There have been sporadic encounters with politically and religiously motivated violence during the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and since. The large-scale immigration intake following World War II conflicts, which originated in many nations outside of Australia, turned into terrorist campaigns that eventually had their own expression on Australian soil. This form of violence is referred to by scholars as “international terrorism” and is characterised by high jacking, bombing, assassinations and hostage taking.

According to Justice McClellan (2006), prior to the 1960s, there had not been any act in Australia that could accurately be deemed “terrorism” in the modern political and strategic sense of the word. Politically motivated violent incidents were rare, usually isolated, and for the most part driven by issues arising from political legislation, greed, or individuals being singled out. For example in the case of the attempted assassination of Australian Labour Party Leader, Arthur Calwell, in 1965 over his stance on the Vietnam War. Similarly, the 1968 attack on the US Consulate in Melbourne was also regarded as an isolated incident protesting the US’s involvement in Vietnam. The two exceptions are
the assassination attempt on the Duke of Edinburgh in 1868 and the 1915 attack in Broken Hill by Afghan supporters of the Sultan of Turkey.

Duyvesteyn (2007, p. 64) observed, a “major resurgence in terrorism occurred in the 1970s, with nationalist separatist tendencies.” He also pointed out the discourse at the time of the Cold War focused mainly on ‘freedom fighters’ in search of independence from (European) occupation. The label ‘terrorists’ or ‘freedom fighters’ was used to describe the role of non-state armed groups whose fight was regarded as “honourable and legitimate” (Attorney-General’s Department, n.d.) and the discourse as to whether the fight was honourable or legitimate continued to be debated in the “post-colonial and Cold War period depending on who was being attacked, who was attacking and which of the two superpowers (USA or USSR) were supporting them” (Attorney-General’s Department, n.d.). Of course, this influenced how they were perceived by civilians, domestic, regional and international governments, and the media.

The attacks that occurred on Australian soil after World War II and prior to 2001 highlighted that Australia now faced religious and political violence that was not confined to one ethnic or religious group. Incidents of political violence or “acts of terrorism have generally involved attacks against foreign interests – including those of Turkey, Iran, India, and Israel” (Australian Government, 2004b, p. 5), indicating that most incidents since World War II originate from ‘international terrorism.’

Several incidents that have occurred in Australia since World War II had their origins in international terrorism. Australia was the venue for a number of terrorist bombing campaigns, which started in the 1960s with the Croatian anti-communist Ustasha organisation and continued until the 1980s. At the time, there were a number of Ustashi-based resistance groups operating in Melbourne and Sydney, and their activities involved
military training and violent campaigns against Yugoslav officials and individuals within Australia. As Koschade (2007) observes, from 1966 onwards, violence escalated to death threats and attempted murders. One of the first recognised terrorist acts on Australian soil was the 1972 bombing of the Yugoslav General Trade Agency in Sydney, in which 16 people were injured. The bombing was undertaken by a group affiliated with the Croatian Liberation Movement, HOP. The 1972 bombing was one of seven separate bombings carried out against Yugoslav and Serbian officials and individuals based in Sydney and Melbourne during the mid-1960s to 1970s. By 1974, the number of these groups began to decline, largely due to increasing scrutiny and responses from agencies such as the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO). This was following the inquiry of Justice Hope in 1974, which lead to greater accountability within Australia’s security agencies (Koschade, 2007). As Justice Hope has highlighted in the Protective Security Review, the threat of international terrorism in Australia was more significant than the threat of civil unrest: “the greatest risk appears to be the possibility of international terrorist activity originating from abroad.” (Justice Hope, as cited in Hancock, 2002, p. 2)

Another important encounter with politically motivated violence with terrorist overtones in Australia occurred in 1978 when a bomb exploded outside the Hilton Hotel in Sydney. The bomb was located in a bin outside the hotel and exploded when the bin was emptied into a garbage truck, killing three people and injuring 11 others. The intended targets of the attack were believed to be foreign leaders staying at the hotel at the time for a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). Three members belonging to the Ananda Marga religious organisation from India were arrested; however, responsibility for the attack continues to be a mystery. Conspiracy allegations have suggested ASIO may have orchestrated the bombing or were aware of it, but allowed it
to happen. A state-federal inquiry into the bombing was unanimously called for in New South Wales parliament in 1991, but this was rejected by the Federal government.

In 1980, the Turkish Consul-General, Sarik Ariyak, and his bodyguard were assassinated in Sydney. This represents the first instance of political assassination in Australian history. The attack was orchestrated by members of an obscure terrorist group known as the Justice Commandos of Armenian Genocide. Those who claimed responsibility for the attack cited revenge for the genocide of Armenians by Ottoman Turks during World War I as the motive behind their attack. No charges were made, as those responsible for the attack have not been identified.

In December 1982, the Israeli Consulate in Sydney was bombed, leaving two people seriously injured and causing significant damage to the building. On the same day, in the evening, there was another explosion at the Hakoah Club carpark in Bondi. No one was injured, but at least two other vehicles were damaged. No one has claimed responsibility for the two bombings to date. However, in June 2013, the NSW Government offered a $AU 100,000 reward for anyone with information relating to the explosions as part of a re-investigation into the bombings undertaken by the NSW police Force Counter-Terrorism and Special Tactics Command’s Anti-Terrorism and Security Group and the Australian Federal Police (AFP) (New South Wales Police, 2013).

An incident targeting Turkish interests occurred when a bomb exploded at the Turkish Consulate in Melbourne in November 1986. The bomber was killed after failing to correctly operate the explosive device. An Armenian man from Sydney called Demirian, who was linked to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, was charged over the attack. The government responded by condemning the bombing and undertook to review diplomatic security procedures. On 27 November 1987, Demirian was sentenced to life
imprisonment with a 25-year minimum, which had to be served in full under Victorian law. The murder conviction was overturned following an appeal and he subsequently served ten years (Koschade, 2007).

There were also incidents of politically motivated violence in Australia during the 1990s. According to ASIO all of these incidents had terrorist overtones (Rose & Nestorovska, 2005). An example is the violent protests that occurred against the Iranian Embassy in Canberra in 1992. The embassy was vandalised and staff assaulted by Mujahideen-e-Khalq supporters.

A terrorist incident occurred in 1995 in Perth when the French Consulate was set on fire and destroyed by protesters against France’s decision to resume nuclear testing in the Pacific. It has been suggested this is the only act in the history of Western Australia regarded as politically motivated terrorism (Weber, 2004). A group named the Pacific Popular Front claimed responsibility for the fire. Bosco Boscovich and Maya Catts were arrested and charged with causing “damage by fire,” after allegedly starting the fire with two Molotov cocktails. Boscovich was sentenced to three years’ jail and Maya was sentenced to 12 months, which was doubled on appeal on 20 March 1996.

Another incident, which has been described as a protest rather than an act of terrorism, involved the pro-Kurdistan Workers Party protesters who occupied the Greek Consulate-General in Sydney in 1999, when their leader Abdullah Ocalan was arrested (Rose & Nestorovska, 2005).

The Australian White Papers (Australian Government, 2004b, 2010) on counter-terrorism and national security state that acts of terrorism pre-2001 were largely directed against foreign interests and politically motivated. Australians were not killed in these attacks.
Government literature further points to the fact that Australia was not a target of the attacks. Australia instead became an outlet for the expression of extremist violence directed at other nations’ governments, in reaction to events overseas (Australian Government, 2004b, p. 5).

2.2.5 Australia’s Legislative Response to Terrorism Before 2001

While there were a number of incidents of politically motivated violence on Australian soil prior to 2001, Australia’s response to terrorist threats was largely dealt with under criminal law. Terrorism-specific laws were not introduced into Parliament until the late 1970s. It has been argued by Professor Williams (Weinberg, 2012, p. 15) that criminal law during this period was not focused on preventing terrorism nor did it have the capacity to adequately deal with matters such as those relating to terrorist organisations.

Terrorism-specific legislation came in 1979 primarily in response to the bombing of the Hilton Hotel, which saw the establishment of the AFP. Up to this time, in the opinion of Rose and Nestorovska (2005), most of the acts of violence had been politically motivated and in response to international contexts.

However, Australia also witnessed other “acts of violence, which were directed at the Australian Family Court.” For example, in 1980, one judge was shot and another judge’s wife died in an explosion in 1984. While there was consensus that the attack was a result of a “disgruntled father seeking revenge over a decision that went against him,” the attack was not considered to be a “tactic in political conflict” (Rose & Nestorovska, 2005). Taylor, however, argues, given the violent nature of the attack and targeting of individuals and institutions to be an expression of a demand on the community, such violence may be deemed terrorism (Rose & Nestorovska, 2005, pp. 15-16).
Prior to 2001, the Commonwealth Government dealt with the threat of political violence primarily through the proscription of organisations. These included:

- *Unlawful Association Act 1916 (Cth); Unlawful Association Act 1917 (Cth)*
- *Crimes Act 1914 (Cth) Pt IIA*
- *National Security Act 1939 (Cth)*
- *National Security Regulations 1940 (Cth)*
- *Communist Party Dissolution Act 1950 (Cth).*

As noted by Lynch, McGarrity and Williams (2009), of all the laws enacted between 1916 and 1950, only Part IIA of the *Crimes Act 1914* (as amended) is still in force.

There were no state legislated terrorism-related laws in Australia (except in the Northern Territory). However, there were several acts of legislation in place that gave Commonwealth agencies a range of powers, which could have been used to deal with criminal conduct and terrorist-related offences. Legislation covered offences such as aircraft hijacking, murder, bombing, as well as criminal investigation (Australian Parliament, n.d.). Several acts of legislation had also been passed to implement international treaties on terrorism. (See list of acts at Appendix D.)

### 2.2.6 ASIO and the AFP

In Australia, the primary instrument of government responsible for national security, including protecting the country against terrorism, is ASIO. In this section, I provide a brief overview of the history and of ASIO prior to 2001.
ASIO was established in 1949 following the highly classified Venona (crypto-analytic cables breakthrough) project, which revealed Soviet espionage networks had extensively spread in the West. Venona identified key Soviet spies and the “spymaster” in Australia was pursued by ASIO was Wally Clayton, codenamed “Klod” by the KGB. ASIO was believed to have been effective in neutralising the Klod “spy ring,” but, in order not to compromise the secrecy of the Venona, no arrests were made.

Deery (2011) argues that ASIO was not established in 1949 “because of concerns about the political or industrial strength of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), which by that time was already declining in influence, prestige and membership,” but instead it was formed to hunt spies. He highlights that, following pressure from American and British intelligence services, the Chifley Labor government reluctantly agreed to a new security organisation. The organisation would be modelled on the British MI5. The impetus or justification for this newly-founded organisation was referred to as ‘The Case’: “the identification of the nature, extent and source of the leaks of classified information provided by the British, pilfered by Australians and transmitted to the Russians” (Deery, 2011, p. 56).

Since the 1970s, successive governments have reviewed and altered the shape of legislation and the agencies that enforce it to cope with the changing security environment emanating from the threat of terrorism. It was not until after the attacks of September 11, however, that Australian policy began to change its approach to terrorism to reflect a growing threat against Australia and Australians specifically. Until then, the view held from the 1960s had been that terrorist actions in Australia were considered a problem imported from conflicts overseas and concerned with foreign targets on Australian soil (McClellan, 2006).
2.2.7 The Role of ASIO and the AFP in Dealing with Terrorism

The revelation that Klod had provided copies of highly secret documents prepared for the British War Cabinet by the Post-Hostilities Planning Staff to the head of Soviet Foreign Intelligence, ‘Viktor’ (Lieutenant-General Pavel Fitin), had caused great concern. Identifying, locating and interrogating Klod was of considered central to ‘The Case’ (Deery, 2011). The defection of Vladimir Petrov in 1954 and evidence provided confirmed that ASIO had identified a group who were involved in espionage in Australia and spies had passed top-secret information to Russia.

In 1973, a key event occurred in making Australia’s security services more democratically accountable. The ‘Murphy raid’ was significant because it marked one of the first times the Australian Government regarded terrorism as a major security issue. Concerns were raised that ASIO had neglected a key security issue by failing to respond to the increase levels of violence generated by the surge of Ustasha bombings in Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane during 1972 (which injured people and damaged property but fortunately caused no deaths) and the authorities appeared helpless.

The raid and subsequent events prompted security services to focus more on terrorism than before. This led to the establishment of the first National Anti-Terrorist Plan, and much of the counter-terrorism architecture that has lasted to today (Head, 2002). Later legislative changes ensured terrorism would become one of ASIO’s prime security concerns.

By 1974, the Royal Commission on Intelligence and Security had commenced a comprehensive inquiry into the state of national security in Australia during the Whitlam government. The report outlined the history of Australian security and intelligence agencies, making recommendations about how they could best serve to protect Australia.
as efficiently and effectively as possible, including the direction and coordination of all security and intelligence services in Australia.

In 1977, Justice Robert Hope delivered his Royal Commission on Intelligence and Security report and recommended ASIO’s areas of investigation be widened to include terrorism. A further Protective Security Review by Justice Hope in 1978, following the Sydney Hilton bombing, designated ASIO as the government agency responsible for producing national threat assessments in the field of terrorism and politically motivated violence. The commission produced a series of eight reports outlining procedures, the state of security in Australia and the need to establish a securities appeal tribunal. Their findings have only been made available to the general public since 2008 (National Archives of Australia, 2014).

The commission recommended extended powers to ASIO. These new powers were outlined in the *Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act 1979* and included extending ASIO’s powers to deal with sabotage and terrorism by giving the agency the lawful authority to open mail, enter premises, use listening devices and intercept communications under warrant. ASIO’s powers were traditionally only focused on intelligence-gathering functions. The laws as noted by Weinberg (2012, p. 2) “were originally enacted as a temporary response to the terrorist attacks that took place overseas.”

According to Justice Mark Weinberg, Australia has only once before been subjected to a significant terrorist attack, during the 1978 CHOGM. The attack on the Hilton Hotel in 1978 posed a serious threat to national security necessitating the need for armed forces to be called into action to protect the leaders for the remainder of CHOGM. This decision by then Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser was unprecedented, as this was the first time
since 1901 that the Commonwealth Government deployed military personnel to maintain order against a domestic threat during peacetime (Rose & Nestorovska, 2005).

Roach (2011, p. 314) describes the response in what he calls an “echo of warlike response to the Hilton bombing” when the government responded by deploying 2000 soldiers, an approach based on the militarised British model. The Commonwealth government justified this response on the basis the Constitution allowed it to exercise such powers by virtue of “its responsibility to protect people against possible acts of terrorism” (Roach, 2011, p. 316). Justice Weinberg (2012, p. 2) argues this “incident was regarded as an aberration and did not result in anything like the response generated after Sept 11.” He further highlights it is not uncommon for Australia and other nations to enact legislation during wartime intended to protect national security. He stresses the point that legislation was limited to a specific time and normally in a context where Australia was at war. When the war was over, the legislation ceased to exist.

The Australian Government’s response to the Hilton hotel bombing in Sydney in 1978 was the establishment of a committee comprising Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies. The aim of the committee was to establish a set of national arrangements and agreements, which would respond to threats or acts of politically motivated violence. The Standing Advisory Committee on Commonwealth and State Cooperation for Protection against Violence was formed in February 1979. This was in response to the realisation that Australia was not immune to the effects of global political violence.

The Commonwealth Government also commissioned the former London Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Robert Mark, to advise on policing resources and protective security. Of importance was the recommendation for the establishment of an anti-terrorism squad within the AFP, as well as the amalgamation of the Commonwealth and
Australian Capital Territory police forces. Simultaneously, Justice Hope was commissioned to review protective security powers and arrangements. He did not recommend an increase in powers for intelligence gathering and law enforcement authorities, as he was of the view that they had sufficient powers under existing legislation (Hocking, 2003).

According to the *ASIO Act 1979*, Section 4, terrorism was defined as including “acts of violence for the purpose of achieving political objective in Australia or in a foreign country” (Australian Government, 1979). Furthermore, the *ASIO Act* was amended in 1979 giving ASIO a specific mandate to “include the collection of intelligence about terrorism” (Roach, 2011, p. 316). ASIO was also granted powers to conduct searches and engage in electronic surveillance on the basis of warrants issued by the Minister. ASIO’s powers to collect intelligence about a range of people were confirmed in a 1982 High Court decision.

In 1986, the Inspector General watchdog was established to ensure ASIO did not become politicised and to ensure ministerial accountability as the “security agency was mired in Cold War politics and was slow to take the threat of diaspora terrorism seriously” (Roach, 2011, p. 316).

According to Rose and Nestorovska (2005), the mastermind behind the Hilton bombing was convicted for murder in 1990. Two years later he was pardoned “amid suspicions of the culpability of the NSW Police ‘Special Branch’ for the blast.” It was alleged the special branch, in collusion with ASIO, was responsible for staging the bombing to show that secret services served an imperative security need at a time when their powers were under serious attack. This matter generated considerable and intense suspicion and
antagonism towards intelligence agencies that has continued in some circles (Rose & Nestorovska, 2005, p. 11).

Despite the confession by Evan Pederick, a member of the Ananda Marga, to planting the bomb, ambiguity continues to loom over who was responsible. Abraham (2006, p. 35) states this event continues to occupy a significant chapter in Australia’s social history and is seen as Australia’s first realisation that we are not immune from global political violence.”

According to Head (2002), the 1978 Hilton bombing was used to dramatically restructure the police–military apparatus, including a significant boost to the powers of the political police, ASIO, the establishment of the AFP, the creation of SWAT-style\(^3\) squads in every state police force and the formal involvement of the army’s Special Air Service in “counter-terrorism” operations.

2.2.8 The History of Australian Counter-terrorism Laws

As noted by MacDonald and Williams (2007, p. 1) in *Combating Terrorism: Australia’s Criminal Code Since Sept 11*, “Australia had no national laws on terrorism” prior to September 11. The authors observe the Australian legal system “reflected complacency about the potential for political violence in Australia and the region” (MacDonald & Williams, 2007, p. 1). As a result, political violence was dealt with using ordinary criminal law.

Healy (2011) and Rose and Nestorovska (2005) also point out that Australia had not experienced what could be accurately deemed as ‘terrorism’ in the modern political and strategic sense of the word before the 1960s. He further adds it was not until the late 1970s

\(^3\) A term for law enforcement units that use specialised or military equipment and tactics.
that the Australian Parliament introduced what could be described as terrorism-specific laws. As MacDonald and Williams (2007) observe, that the Australian legal system prior to September 11 reflected complacency about the potential for political violence in Australia and the region.

Australia has always depended heavily on Britain in lawmaking. In the early stages of development of counter-terrorism, Australia drew heavily on the British model, despite clear differences in the nature and extent of political violence between the two countries. Hockey (2003) states the British model has been essentially a militarised one, reflecting its focus on Northern Ireland. She further points out this model drew on “the use of exceptional legislative measures; the maintenance of vast intelligence collections; the development of pre-emptive controls on political activity; military involvement in civil disturbances and the development of a strategy of media management in times of crisis” (Abraham, 2006; Hocking, 2003).

Roach (2011) highlights the basic principle, which governed the way in which terrorism was dealt with, was traditionally under criminal law. Essentially, criminal law was concerned with punishing crimes that have been committed. Common law, in its earliest state, did not penalise even those who attempted to harm others, but only those who had brought about such harm. This approach continued to shape the way in which terrorism was dealt with in Australia. It was simply treated as a crime within the Criminal Code. Historically, the origins of the Criminal Code prior to and after September 11 have largely been borrowed from the UK, as highlighted by Australia’s history of common law and the handling of various forms of political violence by ordinary criminal law. As Roach states: “Throughout Australia’s history, even before September 11, Australia was closer
to the British model of counter-terrorism, as opposed to more libertarian North American models” (Roach, 2011, p. 316).

Australia did not introduce terrorism-specific laws into Parliament until the late 1970s. In 1977, after a three-year inquiry into Australia’s intelligence services, Justice Robert Hope delivered the findings of his Royal Commission on Intelligence and Security, which recommended the ASIO areas of investigation be widened to include terrorism. A further Protective Security Review by Justice Hope in 1978, following the Sydney Hilton bombing, designated ASIO as the government agency responsible for producing national threat assessments in the field of terrorism and politically motivated violence.

According to O’Neill, Rice & Douglas (2004), before 2002, Australian legislation made little express provision for terrorist acts. There was a period during which the Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations (Cth) reg 4A forbade the importation of media that advocated terrorism. In 1982, the Northern Territory was the only jurisdiction to make the terrorist nature of an act an element of an offence. Otherwise, terrorist acts and acts done in association with those acts fell within more general provisions of criminal law (O’Neill et al., 2004, p. 250). As Justice McClellan notes, the Northern Territory Criminal Code 1983 (NT) creates a specific offence of terrorism punishable by life imprisonment. The definition of ‘act of terrorism’ that forms the basis of the offence is set out in s50:

In this Division –
‘act of terrorism’ means the use or threatened use of violence –
(a) to procure or attempt to procure –
(i) the alteration of;
(ii) the cessation of; or
(iii) the doing of, any matter or thing established by a law of, or within the competence or power of, a legally constituted government or other political body (whether or not legally constituted) in the Territory, the Commonwealth or any other place;

(b) for the purpose of putting the public or a section of the public in fear; or

(c) for the purpose of preventing or dissuading the public or a section of the public from carrying out, either generally or at a particular place, an activity it is entitled to carry out;

‘organization’ means an association, society or confederacy;

‘unlawful organization’ means an organization that uses, threatens to use or advocates the use of unlawful violence in the Territory to achieve its ends;

‘violence’ means violence of a kind that causes, or is likely to cause, the death of, or grievous harm to, a person (Golder & Williams, 2004).

As Ramraj et al. (2012, p. 546), point out:

… only the Northern Territory had such a law, and in other Australian jurisdictions politically motivated violence was instead dealt with by the ordinary criminal law…. It emphasised the need to deviate from the ordinary criminal law- with its emphasis on punishment of individuals after the fact- by pre-empting terrorist acts from occurring in the first place.

Gray (2004) also observes:

The criminal laws of the Northern Territory can claim to be the most interesting in Australia, and that the Territory more than any other jurisdiction has had to confront a world where a substantial percentage of offenders are Indigenous and, until recently, Aboriginal people who had a closer empathy with traditional tribal law than with the imposed Western criminal law. The result is criminal law which differs in a number of important respects from both the Criminal Codes and from the Common Law.

According to Justice McClellan (2006, p. 6) “the Northern Territory was the only Australian jurisdiction to have enacted specific terrorist offences” and potential terrorist activities in other jurisdictions were catered for and therefore did not require further legislation. Provisions for dealing with terrorism have been in operation since 1984 and were modelled on the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974 (UK).
2.3 Terrorism and Acts of Terrorism in Australia Post-September 11

The term ‘terrorism’ and approach to addressing this phenomenon took on a whole new meaning following the tragic events of September 11. Often referred to as the event that changed the world, it saw the birth of the declaration of the Global War on Terrorism or the War on Terror. The US response to this phenomenal act of terror resulted in a comprehensive and multifaceted approach that changed the way terror was understood and dealt with. Megoran describes, “the war on terror as a phrase used by President George W. Bush to describe the element of his foreign and domestic policy formulated in response to the attacks of September 11 2001” (Megoran, 2007, p. 17).

Since the tragedy of September 11 involving attacks on Washington, New York and Pennsylvania, as well as the tragedies that followed in Madrid in 2004 and London and Bali in 2005, governments have introduced new measures, policies and legislation to protect their nations and people from the threat of a terrorist attack. These events reinforced a climate of fear that a terrorist attack could occur in Australia as well. It was further revealed in an Australian study (Kara-Ali, 2007), particularly following the attacks in London, that Australia has home-grown extremists who are being influenced by radical Islamist ideology. This led to heightened concerns that Australia could be at risk of a terrorist attack and the subsequent emergence of new anti-terror laws to signal, as a society it does not tolerate any form of violence.

2.3.1 Counter-terrorism Policies in Australia Post-September 11

The severity of the attacks on New York, Washington and Pennsylvania, and the devastation they caused to human life and infrastructure, shocked the world. American President George W Bush’s declaration of the War on Terror or the Global War on Terrorism sparked a cascade of immediate support from US allies and the global
community, who together moved swiftly to ensure such a “heinous crime” (Howard as cited in Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2006, p. 50) did not happen again. President Bush’s War on Terror saw the beginning of a whole new approach to terrorism and the introduction of an unprecedented new tranche of terrorism-related measures and legislation in Australia.

The changed security environment led the Australian Government to introduce new policies and legislation aimed at keeping Australia and Australians safe from a possible terrorist attack on home soil. Since 2001, the Australian Government has introduced many pieces of anti-terrorism legislation as part of its campaign to guarantee Australia’s security and to comply with international obligations. Furthermore, Australia was also required to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001) and Resolution 1566 (2004) to cooperate fully in the fight against terror. Australia has been a signatory to a number of counter-terrorism conventions, which have agreed to extradite terrorists to face prosecutions for their actions and to ensure they do not enjoy impunity.

As the literature has highlighted, the ‘fight against terrorism’ continues to be a subject that has occupied governments and researchers all over the world, especially since September 11. Consequently, the use of the expression the “War on Terror” became “one of the defining conflicts of the early Twenty-First Century” (Michaelsen, 2003, p. 276) and this has led to a surge in counter-extremism policies on an international scale.

2.3.2 Growing Fears of Terrorism in Australia

Since 2001, a number of attacks around the world have occurred causing massive destruction to infrastructure and the loss of countless human lives, leaving feelings of intense fear and insecurity. Over 100 Australians have been killed in terrorist attacks overseas since 2001 (Australian Government, 2010, p. 7). As the Australian Government
has pointed out repeatedly, Australians are now at risk of being targeted for a terrorist attack on home soil. As such, the government argues necessary measures are needed to protect Australians from an attack and at the forefront of government priority is national security.

Although Australia has previously not been a direct target for a terrorist attack, its fears were heightened after the attacks on Madrid in 2004 and London and Bali in 2005. With the 2005 London bombings, Australia came to the realisation that terrorism can be *home-grown*. According to the Australian Government Resilient Communities’ definition, “Home-grown terrorism refers to the locally-generated cultivation of violent extremism by individuals who were born, raised or live in Australia, although their motivations may stem from local or global influences” (Australian Government, n.d.-b). This led to the passing of new anti-terrorism laws in mid-December 2005. A joint arrangement was made between the Australian Federal Government, and Australia’s states and territories, to enable deterrence and prevention of terrorist acts from occurring; and to prosecute and restrict the movement of those who put Australians at risk of an attack. Since 2001, a number of plots have been disrupted by the co-ordinated efforts of Australia’s security and law enforcement agencies as well as our international partners. As at 2016, 37 men had been charged under Australia’s anti-terrorist laws (ABC News, n.d.; Weinberg, 2012), with 35 prosecutions and 26 convictions.

### 2.3.3 The “New Enemy”

This climate of fear and possibility that Australia was a terrorist target was reinforced in an Australian study (Kara-Ali, 2007). In this study, Kara-Ali discussed that the attacks in London heightened the fear that Australia has home-grown extremists who are being influenced by “radical Islamist ideology.” The terrorist attacks of September 11 and those
that followed focused attention on Muslim extremists who were referred to as the new 
enemy who posed a grave threat to the world (Australian Government, 2004b, p. 4). This 
new enemy has been identified in a few ways including: transnational extremist-Muslim 
terrorist, Muslim extremists, jihadist or Islamist (Australian Government, 2004b, p. ix).
The perpetrators were referred to as extremist followers of the Islamic faith and, as a 
result of this, Muslims around the world and in Australia have been under increased 
scrutiny and known as the suspect community (Spalek & McDonald as cited in Spalek, 
2010). Blanket statements were made connecting Islam and al-Qaeda, and equating Islam 
with terrorism in particular and extremism more generally. This fuelled a lot of anti-
Muslim sentiment in Australia. In 2001, Hardy indicated:

\[
\text{[n]ot since the early 1970s … has terrorism swung around into the sharp global focus that it has today. It has a particular emphasis on extremism from}
\text{the Middle East and a religious flavour. Regrettably, this stereotyping has}
\text{caused all people of Middle Eastern background and Islamic faith to become}
\text{the target of suspicion, mistrust and occasional abuse. As a nation, we need}
\text{to take care not to equate Islam with terrorism or Islam with religious}
\text{extremism (Greig as cited in Hardy, 2011, p. 340).}
\]

2.3.4 Government Measures to Safeguard Australia’s Security and Interests

Australia has an obligation to safeguard its interests in Australia and overseas. In fulfilling 
this obligation, the Australian Government introduced measures to protect the nation and 
its people from a perceived terrorist attack. The source of this threat to Australia and 
Australians was attributed directly to “transnational extremist-Muslim terrorism” 
(Australian Government, 2004b, p. xi). The result was the action taken by the Australian 
Government to develop a multifaceted, comprehensive approach to the threat posed by 

The Australian Government’s response to the threat of terrorism was comprehensive, 
including new terrorism legislation, policies and arrangements aimed at preventing future
attacks. In addition, community engagement in the ‘fight against terrorism’ has featured significantly in government policy and literature as an essential component for the success of any anti-terrorism strategy.

### 2.3.5 Australian Anti-Terrorism Legislation since 2001

Since 2001, national security became higher on the Australian Government’s policy agenda than it had been for decades (probably not since the Cold War), and consequently major resources have been invested to deal with the perceived threat. National security was strengthened with the aim of lessening the appeal for extremists to threaten Australia’s security. According to the Department of Defence, government expenditure on national security (including defence) was significantly increased from $AU 18 billion between 2001 and 2002 to over $AU 33 billion between 2011 and 2012. This increase in expenditure reached $AU 37.4 billion between 2013 and 2014 until this date.

In 2002, Commonwealth, State and Territory leaders agreed to a new national framework, and the National Counter-Terrorism Committee was formed. To ensure everything was being done to combat terrorism, it was also agreed that states and territories would review their legislation and arrangements for countering terrorism. This agreement was officially signed as the *Inter-Governmental Agreement on Australia’s National Counter-terrorism Arrangements Committee* in 2002. Subsequently, the National Counter-Terrorism Committee held its first meeting. A key outcome of the meeting was that states and territories committed themselves to refer constitutional powers relating to terrorism to the Commonwealth. It was also agreed the Commonwealth would be responsible for the strategic coordination of Commonwealth, state and territory resources in the event of a terrorist attack. State parliaments around Australia then enacted *Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002*. 
In September 2005, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) met to consider the adequacy of Australia’s counter-terrorism arrangement. It reported:

COAG considered the evolving security environment in the context of the terrorist attacks in July 2005 and agreed that there is a clear case for Australia’s counter-terrorism laws to be strengthened. Leaders agreed that any strengthened counter-terrorism laws must be necessary, effective against terrorism and contain appropriate safeguards against abuse, such as parliamentary and judicial review, and be exercised in a way that is evidence-based, intelligence-led and appropriate. (Council of Australian Governments, 2005)

According to the Parliamentary Library website, (Hancock, 2001) over 50 pieces of legislation relating to terrorism have been introduced since 2001 by government agencies or parliamentary committees such as:

- The Commonwealth Parliament Intelligence and Security
- Parliamentary Joint Committee
- Advisory report on the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2015—February 2016

As previously mentioned in Chapter One, the Australian Government counter-terrorism strategies received bipartisan support from the country’s two main political parties. In 2004, the Howard Government introduced the first government publication entitled *Protecting Australia against Terrorism* (Australian Government, 2004a), which was updated in 2006. Both publications stressed the importance that communities play in contributing to counter-terrorism efforts. In 2007, the Rudd Government came into power and continued to emphasise the need for community engagement in the fight against terrorism, and in 2010 the Gillard government followed suit. Although the Howard and Rudd governments recognised Muslim communities as partners in countering extremism,
it is not clear whether the desired objectives of government programmes yielded the results expected from such partnerships.

After September 11, Australia made a significant shift in its approach to dealing with politically-motivated violence. The Australian Government’s response to September 11 was similar to that of many other countries. It emphasised the need to deviate from ordinary criminal law, with its emphasis on punishment of individuals after the fact, by pre-empting terrorist acts from occurring in the first place. Therefore, the focus of counter-terrorism strategies aimed at preventing acts of terror from occurring became the priority for Australia and governments worldwide. For the first time in Australia’s history, the government introduced comprehensive counter-terrorism legislation to address the emerging security environment. The Australian Government justified its counter-terrorism measures because of its responsibility to keep Australia and Australians safe from a possible terrorist attack.

Since 2002, Australia has passed over 60 new laws aimed at pre-empting terrorist attacks. It was argued by the Howard Government that these new laws were needed to send a strong message that “as a society we reject violence and to ensure that our police and other agencies have the powers they need to protect the community” (MacDonald & Williams, 2007, p. 1). It was also stated “a legal response was also required as a good international citizen to fulfil our obligations as a member of the United Nations” (MacDonald & Williams, 2007, p. 1).

2.3.6 Australia’s Legislative Approach to Anti-Terrorism

Australia’s strategic approach to terrorism recognises the need to prepare for, prevent, respond to and recover from a terrorist act. Australia established a criminal offence regime to maximise the potential for preventive actions. Of particular importance to this
regime is the clear definition of a terrorist act. A terrorist act is defined as an action or a threat intended to advance a political, ideological or religious cause by coercing or an Australian or foreign government or the public, by causing serious harm to people or property, endangering life, creating a serious risk to the health and safety of the public or seriously disrupting trade, critical infrastructure or electronic systems (National Counter-Terrorism Committee, 2012, p. 4). Built around this definition are a set of terrorism offences, including penalties for preparatory and support activities for terrorism.

Counter-terrorism legislation and policies were first introduced and passed in 2002, providing a new definition of terrorism and introducing new terrorism offences targeting anyone “who engages in, trains for, prepares, plans finances or otherwise supports terrorist activities” (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2006, p. 32). These offences were contained under part 5.3 of the Criminal Code division 101, providing heavy penalties ranging from 10 to 25 years to life in prison depending on the offence.

According to George Williams, 48 anti-terror laws were enacted in parliament between 2001 and 2007, focussing on deterrence and prevention of future terrorist attacks, including the radically changed Security Legislation Amendment (Terrorism Act 2002). The thrust of the new laws enacted by Parliament was to ensure everything possible was done to prevent any form of extremism leading to acts of terrorism on the home front. The process of ensuring every aspect of government operations was well-equipped to act swiftly in preventing any potential attack from occurring was also undertaken. Federal, state and territory government agencies were required to work in partnership to implement the new laws and strategies required to achieve the desired objectives of eliminating terrorism, thereby keeping Australia safe from an attack.
In December 2005, another law enacted was preventative detention through the *Anti-Terrorism Act (no.2) 2005* (Cth), which inserted Division 105 of the Criminals Code, which allowed, among other things, the detention of an individual for up to 48 hours to prevent an imminent terrorist act occurring or to preserve evidence. In addition, the *ASIO Legislation Amendment Act 2006* introduced even more extensive powers, such as detention of individuals for questioning purposes for up to seven days continuously on any one occasion. These questioning powers were deemed justifiable for the sake of national security.

Since the introduction of the new terror legislation, law enforcement agencies (notably the AFP and Customs) have transformed from focusing on specific Commonwealth crimes to organisations that deal with a broad range of threats including terrorism and control of the borders (Australian Government, 2016). At the time of writing, Australia was served by a complementary suite of anti-terrorism legislation enacted through Part 5.3 of the Criminal Code, which addresses the following matters: defining terrorism (division 100); terrorist acts (division 101); terrorist organisations (division 102); terrorism financing (division 103); terrorism prevention – control orders (division 104); and terrorism prevention and mitigation – preventative detention orders (division 105).

Protecting Australia from acts of terror was to become everyone’s business, especially members of the public who were asked to report anything suspicious. A recurrent key theme throughout the government’s counter-terrorism policy is the importance it gives to engaging individuals and communities in preventing acts of terror. To this end, a major information campaign was launched in 2002 reinforcing the message that it was the responsibility and obligation of all citizens to “remain vigilant and report possible signs of terrorist activity” (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2006, p. 24). A
National Security Hotline was launched in 2002 to enable members of the public to report anything suspicious. A public information campaign urging people to “be alert but not alarmed” and “report any suspicious or unusual activity or behaviour” to the National Security Hotline was launched the same year (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2006, p. 25).

Phase one of the campaign was called *Let’s Look Out for Australia* (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2006, p. 24). A pamphlet was distributed to over 7.8 million Australian households. The campaign sought to increase awareness about the government’s activities in protecting Australia against terrorism through print, radio and electronic mediums. In 2004, phase two of the campaign *Every Piece of Information Helps* was launched to “remind Australians to remain vigilant” and to continue calling the National Security Hotline. The Government’s advertising campaign was then diversified to include “television, press, transit, and outdoor advertising” (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2006, p. 24). This was recommended following the Bali Bombings in July 2005 and continued through to March 2006. Since 2007, under the Rudd/Gillard government, and until this date, the National Security Hotline continued to operate encouraging people to report strange and suspicious behaviour.

The government’s strategy to counter extremism and radicalisation among Muslim youth gained increased focus with its efforts to actively engage community. Thus, while the campaign may have been successful in achieving its objective in reinforcing the need for citizens “to remain vigilant and report possible signs of terrorist activity” to the National Security Hotline, it simultaneously contributed to reinforcing the notion that Muslims were a ‘suspect community’ (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2006, p. 24). The campaign, due to its alarmist nature, caused major backlash against members of the
Arab and Muslim community who were subjected to harassments and vilification. The *ISMA’ Listen: National consultations on eliminating prejudice against Arab and Muslim Australians* (Human Rights Equal Opportunity Commission, 2004, p. 10) provided reports of unprecedented levels of racism and discrimination due to anti-terrorism legislation and associated campaigns. This further highlighted the fact that the government’s multi-layered counter-terrorism strategies were dependent upon community intervention being successful.

### 2.3.7 Anti-Muslim Sentiments in new Legislation

The Australian Government counter-terrorism publication entitled *Securing Australia-Protecting our Country* also states “The main source of international terrorism and the primary terrorist threat to Australia and Australian interests today comes from people who follow a distorted and militant interpretation of Islam that calls for violence as the answer to perceived grievances” (Australian Government, 2010, p. ii). The Australian Government has reiterated, since the 2001 attacks on the US and the major attacks that followed in Bali, Madrid and London, Australia has remained under serious threat from a possible terrorist attack and that the threat of terrorism comes mostly from the Muslim community (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2006) and the actions of al-Qaeda extremists (Australian Government, 2004b), Australia and Australians are directly threatened by transnational extremist-Muslim terrorism (Australian Government, 2004b, p. xi).

With the belief that potential home-grown terrorism in Australia has its roots in the Muslim community it has become important for “communities to play a central role in many different areas of the counter-terrorism strategy” (Briggs, 2010, p. 972; Kara-Ali, 2007). The need to engage communities in the fight against terrorism has been reflected...
in the scholarly literature (Briggs, 2010; Klausen, 2009; McElroy, 2011; Pickering et al., 2008; Spalek & Intoual, 2007; Spalek & Lambert, 2008), and government policies of pivotal importance if counter-terrorism strategies are to be successful. Australia’s national counter-terrorism policy and arrangements publications (Australian Government, 2010; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2004; Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2006) have highlighted the important role communities play in countering terror. Further to this, the “government recognises that measures to build social cohesion and community harmony, and to empower those who may feel disaffected or marginalised, are an important part of the broader strategy to combat terrorism in Australia” (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2006, p. 16). Government approaches to community engagement in the aftermath of September 11, and community leaders’ perspectives on their effectiveness in engaging the Muslim community as active partners in the fight against terrorism, will be examined further in the discussion chapter in light of the findings from the study.

New counter-terrorism laws generated a considerable amount of controversy within the Muslim and non-Muslim community, especially as they were perceived to be in violation of basic civil and human rights. The Australian branch of the International Commission of Jurists “denounced the Australian Government’s Anti-Terrorism Bill 2005 as an overly aggressive encroachment on precious liberal, democratic values.” Moreover, it stated, “the Geneva based rule of law organisation also doubts that the new laws will be effective in reducing the risk of terrorist attacks in Australia. The alienation of certain minorities through these laws may in fact prove counterproductive in the long run.” The Honourable John Dowd, AO, QC, president of the Commission at the time, said:

These Laws create imminent potential for abuse, and have such wide application that they will inevitably ensnare innocents in their net. The
Australian people are facing a critical fork in the road, and our Federal and state governments are about to take us down the wrong path from which there may be no return (International Commission of Jurists, 2005).

It has also been argued by many scholars that the anti-terror legislative regime was not necessary when the existing laws adequately dealt with “terrorist” offending behaviour. Yehia stresses “the question remains whether we have struck the right balance between protecting the community against criminal conduct on the one hand, and protecting individuals against human rights abuses, on the other” (as cited in O’Donnell, 2008).

In 2005, a press release for the public gathering held by Muslim organisations and Australian Muslims, speakers said they “are particularly concerned about the campaign of inciting hatred against Islam and Muslims, which is having severe repercussions on Australia’s Muslim community. It is also unhealthy for Australia as a country to have one section of the community unfairly targeted.” (Islamic Council of NSW, 2005). As Hardy (2011) has pointed out, emphasis on extremism emanating from the Middle East and a particular religion has caused all people of Middle Eastern background and Islamic faith to become the target of suspicion, mistrust and occasional abuse. This view is supported by literature, which highlights an increase in harassment and attacks directed at Australian Muslims since September, 2001. Tanja Dreher in her UTS Shopfront Monograph No 2, ‘Targeted’ confirms that in New South Wales, for example, there has been an increase in racially motivated incidents reported by Muslim, Arab and Sikh Communities contributing to a climate of fear and insecurity (Dreher, 2005). The New South Wales Community Relations Commission hotline also reported an increase in the number of complaints received by members of the Muslim community (Dreher, 2005, 2006b; Noble & Poynting, 2004; Poynting & Noble, 2003; Poynting & Perry, 2007).
The end result of these measures has been to single out the Muslim community in Australia, subjecting it to increased scrutiny. Increased surveillance and scrutiny, and the association of Muslims with terror, further increased Australian Muslims’ lack of confidence and trust in government political leaders and law enforcement agencies. According to the Ismael Report conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission, Muslims were far more likely to report they had encountered more racism compared with non-Muslim respondents (Noble & Poynting, 2004). In a parliamentary report, it was mentioned the Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria submitted that the anti-terrorism measures may be seen by some sections of the community as “…justifying harsher treatment of groups more readily identified as the ‘recipients’ of those measures. Sadly, the brunt of hostility in this context has been borne by Australia’s Islamic and Arabic speaking communities.” (Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria submission, as cited in Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, 2006, p. 10).

A breakdown in the Muslim community’s trust and confidence with authorities resulting from political and media discourse can have considerable impact on the way those communities are effectively engaged in support of counter-terrorism measures. The building of trust and long-term relationships is identified in the literature as a significant issue vital to the success of countering extremism (Gunaratna, 2011; New South Wales Police, 2011; Pickering et al., 2008; Spalek, 2010). These issues will be further examined in chapter four, which explores community leaders’ perspectives and suggestions for good practice in engagement between the government and communities, and in countering violent extremism.
2.4 Defining Community and Community Engagement

Community engagement, or public participation as it is often termed, is defined by the International Association of Public Participation as any process that involves the public in problem-solving or decision-making and uses public input to make more informed decisions. Aptly put, “engaging with the community is more than just consulting. Community engagement includes informing, consulting with, involving, collaborating with and empowering the community” (Charles Sturt Council, n.d).

The terms community and community engagement are linked. From a sociological perspective, a community is broadly defined as a group or groups of people who identify with or share a common interest. Community engagement describes a range of activities undertaken to involve groups or communities to bring about a desired change. The purpose of working closely with groups of people or communities is to identify and address issues that affect the life of the community targeted. Within the context of the Australian Government seeking to engage communities in countering terrorism and violent extremism that lead to terrorism, the expression ‘community engagement’ is defined as “the mutual communication and deliberation that occurs between government and citizens” (Department of Sustainability and Environment, 2005).

2.4.1 Community Engagement, Building Resilience and Challenges Faced by Muslim Leaders

Community engagement is identified as a central role in the Australian Government’s counter-terrorism preventative measures (Australian Government, 2004b, 2010, 2015). The challenge for all levels of government in the fight against terror is who and how to best engage with the broader community of Australian Muslims. In particular, there are
concerns for the diverse youth population who have been identified by government sources and literature as being at risk of becoming radicalised.

A key aspect of this new War on Terror is the role of building resilience in communities. Ethno-religious communities have always played a vital role in people’s participation in the wider society (Pe-Pua, Gendera, Katz, O’Connor, 2010; Underabi, 2014; Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2013; Ali, 2012; Bouma, 1997). Muslim families tend to turn to their extended families, friends, settlement services such as the Community Settlement Support Scheme, Migrant Resource Centres, government agencies like Centrelink and their own ethnic communities and religious leaders for support and guidance throughout the settlement process.

Religious and community leaders have become the focal point of reference for members of the community and for advice and guidance sought by those outside the community. Muslims and non-Muslims, the not-for-profit sector, the corporate sector and government sectors often approach these leaders for help. Muslims look to these leaders with respect and consider them as reference points on matters associated with their religious and personal life (Saeed, 2004; Akbarzadeh & Saeed, 2001; Ali, 2012).

In the aftermath of September 11, the Muslim community became increasingly subject to scrutiny and Muslim leaders were increasingly called upon to respond to issues that arose, calling into question Islam’s ability to relate to or its compatibility with the Australian way of life. This form of engagement has continued with more recent global and domestic acts of terrorism. The challenge these leaders face in the wake of such attacks is building resilience against the perception of Islam’s inherent violent character, which is seen to be at odds with Australian and Western democratic values.
Perceptions of Islam as being inherently violent are perpetuated by the printed media, shock jock talk-back radio programmes, ill-informed politicians and a latent xenophobia with Australian society. Building resilience to face these challenges often requires the advice and guidance of Muslim leaders who, in the main, lead by example by promoting positive messages about being and Australian Muslim. Muslim leaders are a crucial link between government agencies and the Muslim community. As noted in the research report on Mosques in Sydney and New South Wales, Mosque leaders, community leaders and imams are concerned about extremism among minority groups of Muslims in the community. Individuals are monitored by community leaders to ensure that they do not spread their ideologies inside the mosque (Underabi, 2014).

Muslim leaders and imams view religious extremism as a challenging problem and they feel they are working hard to deal with it. Well established mosques provide significant access to religiously active Muslims and influence their understanding of Islam through Friday sermons and educational programs (Underabi, 2014). Leaders of Islamic organisations and mosques are cognisant of the immense responsibility they carry in dealing with extremism.

Profile of Muslims in Australia

According to the 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census, 476,300 people identified Islam as their religion, making up 2.2% of the Australian population. The number of Muslims has increased by 5.4% to 340,391 since the last census in 2006.
According to the 2011 census, for the first time since 2006, Islam was ranked in the top five religions in Australian states and territories. In 2006, New South Wales was the only state in Australia where Muslims made up 3.2% of the population, making it the largest Muslim population in Australia. In Sydney in 2006, 3.9% of the population were Muslims and this rose to 4.7% in 2011. As the table below shows, the majority of Muslims in Australia are aged from 0 to 14 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

Table 1: Percentage of Australian population identifying Islam as their religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 census

Table 2: Islam by age group breakdown — NSW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years group</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>85 years and over</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-84 years</td>
<td>871</td>
<td>1 205</td>
<td>1 720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74 years</td>
<td>2 462</td>
<td>3 297</td>
<td>5 451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64 years</td>
<td>6 318</td>
<td>8 614</td>
<td>12 211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54 years</td>
<td>13 017</td>
<td>15 920</td>
<td>21 202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44 years</td>
<td>21 276</td>
<td>24 369</td>
<td>31 005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 years</td>
<td>25 467</td>
<td>31 638</td>
<td>45 105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24 years</td>
<td>26 730</td>
<td>31 301</td>
<td>36 274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-14 years</td>
<td>44 532</td>
<td>52 022</td>
<td>65 973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140 907</td>
<td>168 634</td>
<td>219 301</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 census

According to Riaz Hassan of the Hawke’s International Centre for Muslim and non-Muslim Understanding, University of South Australia (Hassan, 2015), the Muslim population has been steadily rising, globally and nationally. He argues this increase will have significant impact on demographics relating to religious affiliation, political and
social representation, and economic inclusion in the workforce. Hassan further points out the predicted changes will provide important opportunities to bridge the divisions that exist between Muslim and non-Muslim communities working towards a more harmonious and equitable future (Hassan, 2008, p. 63).

The report compares the number of Muslims in the Australian population in 1966 as 200,885 with the 2011 census figures showing a 137% increase to 476,290. This significant growth is due to a natural increase (Muslim women often have more babies on average than other Australian women) (Hassan, 2015, p. 14) and immigration (Hassan, 2015, p. 63). Of the almost half a million Muslims counted in the 2011 census, around forty per cent were “Australian born and the rest came from 183 countries, making them one of the most nationally and ethnically heterogeneous religious communities in Australia” (Hassan, 2015, p. 63). In the report’s foreword, Professor Anthony Elliott, Director, Hawke Research Institute of the University of South Australia, highlights that Australia is in a “strong position to contribute to the global debate regarding what a successful multicultural, inclusive, equitable and indeed genuinely cosmopolitan society can look like” (Hassan, 2015, p. 7). Drawing from 2011 census information, Hassan states Muslims “constitute 2.2% of the Australian population, and it is estimated there will be almost one million more Muslims in Australia by 2050” (Hassan, 2015, p. 14), placing Australia in a key position to build suitable and effective policies, procedures and models for best practice in relation to countering violent extremism.

Of importance to this research is the census data that reveals the inequalities currently experienced by Muslims within the community. Hassan highlights, despite the fact the majority of Australian Muslims have Australian citizenship, are proficient in the English language and are in what Hassan refers to as “the economically productive stage of their
life cycle” (Hassan, 2015, p. 63), they continue to face discrimination in the workforce, high unemployment rates, lower pay rates than their Australian counterparts, lower likelihood of home ownership and overrepresentation in the prison population – 9.3% of the state prison population (Hassan, 2015, p. 34). Muslim Australians are overwhelmingly urban dwellers (three-quarters live in Sydney and Melbourne with populations in other cities also rising) (Hassan, 2015, p. 21) and tend to be younger than the Australian population as a whole.

According to the 2011 profile of the Muslim community, the census noted the following in terms of age profile:

The distinctive feature of the Australian Muslim age profile is that they are significantly younger than the overall Australian population. In 2011, 75% of Muslim Australians compared with 61% of all Australians were below the age of 45, and only 3.4% were 65 years and older, compared with 14% of all Australians. This means that Australian Muslims are adding significantly to the economically active labour force in Australia, thus contributing to economic productivity. Outside the major metropolitan areas the younger age structure is also contributing to the economic activities of small towns and rural areas (Hassan, 2015, p. 22).

The 2011 census reveals, despite Muslim Australians often having the same or similar educational backgrounds as other Australians (Hassan, 2015, p. 14), they face less-than-positive employment opportunities, lower economic return on their level of education than other Australians and an environment that has become somewhat suspicious of Muslims. Furthermore, the report claims more than a quarter of Muslim children in Australia are living in poverty compared with fourteen per cent of all Australian children (Hassan, 2015, p. 14). The socio-economic factors identified by the 2011 census highlighted by Hassan point to young Muslims feeling increasingly vulnerable, disenchanted and disempowered; therefore, they are more likely to be influenced by radicalisation towards extremist doctrines (Akbarzadeh, 2013).
2.4.1.1 Islamic Organisational Structures


Figure 1: Islamic organisational structure

There are many organisations representing the interests of Muslims across and within different ethnic and ideological groups at a local level. According to Keysar Trad, President of Muslim Australia (also known as Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC), there are 200-300 Muslim organisations affiliated to AFIC through their State Councils in Australia. Of all the states, New South Wales and Victoria have the highest number of Muslim organisations in Australia. Some of these organisations run mosques, function halls, schools, youth camps and other programmes catering for the religious, social, welfare and educational benefit of Australian Muslims. The vast majority of these services are self-funded or run voluntarily by community organisations. Government contact with Muslim organisations has historically used this structure to liaise with the community and conduct consultations (Saeed, 2004; Akbarzadeh & Saeed, 2001;
2.4.2 The Role of Muslim Organisations and Leaders

Religious leaders occupy a major place within Australia’s Muslim community and their role in the development of the Muslim community has been significant. Muslims look to these leaders with respect and consider them as reference points on matters associated with their religious and personal life (Katz, 2010; Pe-Pua, Gendera, Katz, O’Connor 2010; Mosques of Sydney and New South Wales, 2014; Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2013; Ali, 2012; Bouma, 1994) This growth in religious leaders occurred from as early as 2000, and rapidly increased following the tragic terrorist events of September 11. Following this time, there was also a visible increase in the number of youth-based organisations and a surge in the number of young Muslims involved in these organisations.

The landscape of the Muslim community has changed considerably since 2001. The last decade has witnessed a visible increase in the number of mussallahs (prayer halls), which have attracted a large number of young people. Australian born, overseas-trained imams (Islamic religious leaders) who have studied Islamic law and theology abroad have also attracted large followers. These leaders have quickly become an important resource for the government’s counter-terrorism efforts, as they speak both English and Arabic. (Underabi, 2014)

According to the religious leaders interviewed in this study, there are over 50 overseas-trained Australian-born Muslim religious leaders who are operating in Australia, most of whom are based in Sydney (ANIC) 2015. This trend in theological training has affected the growth of youth engagement and the establishment of Islamic educational centres and infrastructure led by Australian born, but overseas-trained young imams. Many have
raised funds for the establishment of Islamic colleges, mosques and community-based infrastructures to meet the needs of young people (Underabi, 2014). As a consequence, and as evidenced by findings from this study, there has been a rapid growth in the establishment of educational institutions catering specifically to the religious needs of the community for Islamic-based knowledge and understanding of Islamic beliefs and practices, in particular following the need to counter the increasing anti-Muslim attitudes.

In every state throughout Australia, Islamic colleges, Quran and Arabic courses and educational programmes have flourished. Student enrolments in Islamic studies have simultaneously thrived with student intakes from all age groups, but especially from young people (see Dar Aisha; Dar Ibn Abbas; Dar Abi Bakr Assadiqque; LMA Shariah College, (National Centre for Islamic Excellence, (NCIES) 2005).

This growth in interest and demand for Islamic knowledge has stemmed largely from a desire to better understand Islam and its teachings and to help build and promote a counter narrative that Islam is not a religion of violence but a religion of peace (National Action Plan Report from the Muslim reference Groups 2007). This is also evident in the findings from this study which have highlighted the high demands and calls on the community and its leaders to respond to the public, media and political discourse.

The Australian Government’s Final Evaluation Report (September 2005 to June 2010) on the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security (NAP) is an initiative of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). It was developed in the aftermath of the London Bombings on 7 July 2005 as a response to the pressures Australian communities faced as a result of increased intolerance, and the promotion of violence arising from events around the world and in Australia since 2001. (Commonwealth Government, 2010, p.3).
The NAP complemented community relations programs like the former ‘Diverse Australia Program’, in that it was unique in its whole-of-government and community approach to building resilience against extremism and terrorism and improving social cohesion, harmony and security.

The Australian Government’s action to fund educational institutions such as the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies enables universities to teach courses that assist Muslims and non-Muslims to learn about Islam and Muslim cultures in the Australian context. The Commonwealth Government committed $8 million to establish the centre as part of its National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security. This highlights the commitment of the Commonwealth Government to advance knowledge and understanding of Islam.

In addition, the NSW Government Community Relations Commission and Education Department received funding to develop a uniform education kit for schools on Islam. The University of Newcastle also received funding to develop a document that provides information about Muslim beliefs and practices for the wider Hunter regional community, and to challenge common myths and misconceptions held about Islam and Muslims.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship Final Evaluation Report *National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security* (2010) highlights that there has been an increase in awareness of Islam and Muslim Australians. The report states that this increase is a result of the Commonwealth and State Government and community grants projects funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), (Commonwealth, 2010).
2.5 Anti-Terrorism Laws Enacted to Target Terrorist Organisations

In 2002, the Australian Government recognised, for its counter-terrorism strategies to work, it was essential that laws not only target terrorist acts, but also the organisations that plan, finance and carry out such acts. In 2002, a range of terrorist organisation offences were inserted into the Criminal Code.

In 2004, parliament passed a law allowing the Attorney-General to proscribe organisations reasonably believed to be involved in terrorist activities, negating the requirement for prior permission from parliament. This means the government now had an independent power allowed to ban organisations. While the listing of banned organisations is useful for people to know, some have argued that anti-terrorism laws and legislation seem to specifically target Muslims, hence reinforcing concerns they are all Islamic. By September 2006, nineteen organisations had been banned under Australian law.

According to the Attorney-General’s Department website, as of 2017, twenty-three terrorist organisations were listed as banned in Australia, all of which are Muslim (Attorney-General’s Department, 2016; Australian Government, 2017). This has generated serious concerns among human rights groups, civil libertarians and the Security Legislation Review Committee (Lynch et al., 2009, p. 22).

It has been argued by various communities and groups that this targeting reinforces the view that Muslims are perceived as terrorists and thereby treated as suspect. This has simultaneously reinforced perceptions within the Muslim community that they are viewed as a ‘suspect community’ (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2006, p. 24).

4 For the full list see https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/default.aspx
2.5.1 Countering Violent Extremism that Leads to Terrorism

An understanding of the government’s CVE and Building Community Resilience (BCR) programmes, located in the Attorney-General’s Department, is particularly important to this research. At the time of writing, the programme was in its seventh year of operation. Although the Australian Government has stated that an evaluation of the CVE programme was conducted, it is yet to be determined whether it has been effective in steering young people away from violent extremism and extremist ideologies, which may lead to acts of terrorism. In the following section, I discuss the origins of the CVE programme and its preventative approach to steer young people away from ideologies that lead to violent extremism and terrorism. The BCR programme began in 2010 and is now called Living Safe Together.

The Australian Government’s Counter-Terrorism White Paper (Australian Government, 2004b) policy focuses specifically on the CVE programme that is being implemented by government departments at state and federal levels. When it was first launched, the Australian Government committed $AU 9.7 million in measures aimed at “building strong and resilient communities to resist violent extremism and terrorism” on the “home-front” (Attorney-General’s Department, 2010). The term resilience is described as “harnessing the strengths of Australia’s inclusive and open society in the face of divisive violent extremist narratives … it is about the ability of the population to challenge violent extremism and to recover from a potential terrorist attack” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013b).

The literature on radicalisation has generally agreed that there are numerous factors that may cause people to become violent extremists and contribute to acts of terrorism (Rosand, 2016; Romaniuk, 2015; Mastroe, 2016; Australian Government, 2010; Spalek
& Imtoual, 2007; Akbarzadeh, 2013). Addressing the root causes such as socio-economic disadvantage, marginalisation and grievances that fuels radicalisation is central to the CVE strategy. (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2014; Zammit, 2011). Accordingly, the CVE programme was located under the Prevent strand of the Community Resilience section, which addresses strategies that deal with disadvantage, grievances, and social and economic participation aimed at preventing alienation that may lead to radicalisation.

The Commonwealth Government’s Protecting Australia Against Terrorism policy also stressed the need to “work closely with state, territory and local governments, the private sector and the community to build an affective, nationwide counter-terrorism capability, and by contributing to regional and wider international efforts to counter-terrorism” (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2006, p. i). Former Prime Minister John Howard commented that countering the threat of terrorism “requires us to maintain a clear strategic focus, underpinned by robust and sustainable capabilities” (as cited in Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2006, p. i).

The involvement of a broad range of departments in the War on Terror is reflective of the government’s approach to counter-terrorism strategies. Specifically, ASIO and law enforcement agencies like the AFP are at the forefront in their charge of taking all the necessary actions needed to prevent a potential threat. Other Australian Government agencies and services involved include: National Security Hotline; Australian Customs Service; the Australian Transactions and the Reports Analysis Centre; the Department of Defence; the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, now named Immigration and Border Protection; and the Department of Infrastructure and Transport.
An important and critical aspect of the government’s counter-terrorism agenda is focused on the need for active community participation and engagement if the strategies are to have any success. It reiterates that the source of strength and resilience comes from Australia’s rich and pluralist society—an asset from which Australia must draw in the campaign against extremism that may lead to acts of terrorism.

The Muslim Community Reference Group was formed by the Howard Government in 2005 in response to the London bombings and a growing awareness of the threat of home-grown terrorism. The reference group comprised 14 Muslim community representatives who met over a 12-month period from 2005–2006, and advised the government on strategies for addressing the radicalisation of Muslim youth and other Muslim community issues.

Furthermore, a government National Action Plan was developed, which built on existing cultural diversity policies and programmes at all levels of government (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2006, p. 28). To support this plan, a SAU 35 million package was allocated by the government to enable the implementation of initiatives, which included a focus on a new values-based education initiative, employment coordinators, employment workshops for young job seekers, sporting programmes, and mentoring programmes for young people. The National Action Plan also funded the establishment of the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies (NCEIS) with the University of Melbourne to play a leading role in exploring the place of Islam in modern society. The plan supported interfaith dialogue, counselling and a support helpline run by volunteers similar to a successful project that was operating in the UK, specialist training, educational materials and forums to bring law enforcement agencies and Muslim
communities together to resolve issues; as well as crisis management training for Muslim communities to plan for and respond to issues, incidents and crises.

2.5.2 Overview of Australia’s CVE Strategy

The Australian Government’s multifaceted approach to national security and its response to terrorism is focused on preventing a possible attack from occurring on Australian soil. This became a government priority when the world’s security environment changed in 2001.

The threat from violent ‘jihadists’ continues to be an area of major concern to the Australian Government, especially following the unrest in Syria and Iraq, and the evolution of ISIS/ISIL or Daesh, as it has become commonly known. The Australian Government’s counter-terrorism white papers (Australian Government, 2004b, 2010, 2015) have focused attention on jihadist terrorism being the most immediate threat to Australia and the idea that communities have an important role to play in preventing acts of terror. In describing the source of the threat from home-grown terrorism in Australia, the Counter-Terrorism White Paper stated: “since 2004 there has been an increase in the terrorist threat from people born or raised in Australia, who have become influenced by a violent jihadist message” (Australian Government, 2010, p. ii). It was argued “the real threat is globally-inspired but locally generated attacks in Western democracies, including Australia” (Australian Government, 2010, p. ii) and there are Australians born from diverse backgrounds influenced by this ideology “who might be prepared to engage in violence” (Australian Government, 2010, p. ii).

Australia’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy states “Australians are facing the most significant ongoing threat from terrorism in our nation’s history” (Council of Australian Governments, 2015, p. iii). As a result of the significance of the threat, in 2014, and for
the first time in Australia, the Australian Government raised the threat level to ‘high,’ noting “the heightened threat level is likely to endure” (Council of Australian Governments, 2015, p. v).

2.5.3 The London Bombing and Focus on Home-Grown Terrorism

As previously mentioned, the London bombing in 2005 raised serious concerns that acts of terror could occur on Australian home soil. This led to an increased focus on deterrence and the introduction of a preventative strategy aimed at countering violent extremism.

Similarly, in the wake of the 2005 London bombings, the US also introduced a new approach to countering terror. In the same year, US special force commanders, intelligence directors and its closest allies met in Florida to discuss the new approach to counter terror. It was later announced, by US officials that the Global War on Terrorism had come to an end and was to be replaced by the Struggle Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) (Fox, 2005, p. 15).

Australia’s shift towards strategies that focus on CVE began during the Rudd government in 2007. The emphasis of the CVE strategy was on prevention. However, for the first time since the introduction of counter-terrorism policies and programmes, this new approach heavily emphasised the need to address the factors that lead to violent extremism and radicalisation. From this time, addressing the root causes that prevent those at risk of being radicalised, from being influenced by extremist ideologies that lead to acts of terror, became known as CVE.

The CVE programme forms an integral part of the Australian Government’s comprehensive policy to address the threat of terrorism on Australian soil. The CVE strategy supports Australia’s broader counter-terrorism efforts by addressing “factors that
make people vulnerable to extremist influences and recruitment by terrorists” (Australian Government, n.d.-a). Since its introduction, the CVE strategy has been implemented by government departments at state and federal levels. The thrust of the CVE programme is on early intervention and prevention: luring young people away from the influence of violent ideologies became a key priority for the government. The 2015 Australian Government’s Review of Australia’s Counter-Terrorism Machinery notes a number of convictions were made in 2009 and 2010 as a result of operations Pendennis and Neath (p. 8).

The CVE strategy forms part of the Australian Government’s counter-terrorism policy aimed at keeping Australia safe from acts of terror. Its history goes back to the Rudd government, which, in 2009 established a permanent subcommittee called the Countering Violent Extremism Sub-Committee, and the creation of a CVE national framework. Following the launch of the inaugural CVE programme, in 2010, a CVE unit was established in the Attorney-General’s Department. The CVE programme was located under the Prevent strand of the Community Resilience section, addressing strategies focussing on disadvantage, grievances, and social and economic participation aimed at preventing alienation that may lead to radicalisation.

In 2010, the government announced $AU 9.7 million in funding for the CVE programme, which was administered by the Attorney-General’s Department. Part of this funding, totalling $AU 1.1 million, was allocated to seven projects in 2011 and went towards the Building Community Resilience Youth Mentoring Programme. This programme provides activities that “directly assist young people to disengage from intolerant and radical ideologies and encourage positive and constructive participation in the community.”(Attorney-General’s Department, 2012b). The majority of the projects
funded focused on training and mentoring young people to become mentors. This was a pilot project, which was rolled into a broader CVE grants programme called the Building Community Resilience grants programme. Funding was allocated to diverse groups, including community organisations, religious groups, local councils, universities and sports clubs. A total of $AU 1.7 million was awarded to 22 projects for activities that focussed on intercultural and interfaith education in schools; peer support and team building for at risk individuals; development of curricula; promoting understanding and inclusion through sports activities; teacher education; developing skills and Leaders training aimed at improving social and economic opportunities and online resources; as well as activities to connect with scholars (Barker, 2015).

In 2011, a National CVE strategy was developed with the aim of identifying and diverting violent extremists and to dissuade them from violent extremist ideologies that lead to terrorism. The strategy was developed by the CVE unit located in the Attorney-General’s Department and it also focussed on identifying and supporting at-risk communities, building community cohesion and resilience, and challenging extremist messages with alternative narratives. The CVE unit managed the funding programme. The Resilient Communities website provided information on the strategy and services available to communities to discourage violent extremism narratives.

In 2014, the government launched another CVE programme. The focus of the new programme centred on a “more direct approach to identifying and providing support to individuals at risk of radicalisation” (Australian Government, 2015, p. 9). This early intervention programme worked closely in conjunction with the AFP’s National Disruption Group whose aim is to “manage the return of Australian Nationals involved in conflict overseas” (Australian Government, 2015, p. 9).
Unfortunately, inadequacies in the Australian Government’s ability to engage communities in countering violent extremism highlight that it has had limited success. Chapter 5 of the Australian Government *Review of Australia’s Counter-Terrorism Machinery* states, while the Australian Government has worked towards achieving these objectives, it notes, nevertheless “the government’s effort in the area have not been effective” (Australian Government, 2015, p. 30). The Review further notes that strengthening relationships between the government and communities at risk of radicalisation have been undertaken through “small scale activities aimed at building resilience to violent extremism” (Australian Government, 2015, p. 30).

2. 6 Australia’s CVE Efforts: Building Capacity and Resilience

The shift towards recognising the destructive impact of excluding or marginalising individuals or groups, on both those being marginalised and society as a whole, has been built around counter-terrorism strategies adopted from the UK. The white paper (Australian Government, 2010) notes exclusion “can affect a society’s cohesiveness, economic performance and, as we have seen overseas, the security and stability of the community as a whole” (Australian Government, 2010, p. 65). A key focus of this policy, therefore, seeks to address issues of disadvantage, real and perceived grievances, and the promotion of active “participation in Australia’s social and economic life.” It argues this will reduce the potential for those at risk from marginalisation and radicalisation to commit acts of terror. In addition, the national counter-terrorism strategy comprises security measures, law enforcement responses and broader strategies to enhance social cohesion and resilience, and lessen the appeal of the extremist ideologies that fuel terrorism. As discussed previously, the states and territories are also identified as being critical in working with communities as they are strategically placed “to identify,
implement and manage local solutions to local problems and to develop local level resilience” (Australian Government, 2010, p. 20).

The key national objective of the CVE programme is aimed at preventing harm before it happens by focusing on de-radicalisation. To ensure this, the Commonwealth and individual states and territories are working cooperatively to develop and implement this approach to countering violent extremism, which will form an integral part of Australia’s national counter-terrorism strategy.

The government recognises that strong partnerships between all levels of government and communities are critical to success, and solutions must be appropriate to local circumstances. The Australian Government’s Counter-Terrorism White Paper (Australian Government, 2010) states that terrorist planning within Australia is present, and as a result of counter-terrorism activities, “numerous terrorist attacks have been thwarted” (Australian Government, 2010, p. ii). It adds that “thirty-eight people have been prosecuted or are being prosecuted as a result of counter-terrorism operations and 20 people have been convicted of terrorism offences under the Criminal Code” (Australian Government, 2010, p. ii). The Attorney-General’s Department publication states, “since 2001, four mass casualty attacks within Australia have been disrupted because of the joint work of intelligence and law enforcement agencies” (Attorney-General’s Department, 2012b, p. xviii). The Australian Government’s Resilient Communities website (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013b) also notes, since 2001, 22 individuals have been convicted of terrorism-related offences in Australia.

The Commonwealth Government has relied on coordinated and cooperative relationships between intelligence, security and law enforcement agencies nationally to prevent and disrupt terrorist attacks within Australia. This has been further facilitated by the provision
of greater powers to agencies to enable the prosecution of people seeking to commit acts of terror. Australia’s counter-terrorism strategy has included a combination of appropriate security and law enforcement responses, and broader strategies to enhance social cohesion and resilience, and lessen the appeal of the extremist ideologies that fuel terrorism. The Australian Government has further argued that the success of such strategies is also contingent upon community cooperation to complement the role of intelligence and law enforcement agencies and other instruments of government.

2.6.1 The Vital Role of Communities in Countering Violent Extremism

As reiterated previously, communities are identified as key players in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism in literature, government reports, policy and publications (Australian Government, 2004b, 2015; Commonwealth of Australia, 2013b; Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2006). Similarly, the role that communities play in countering terrorism and ideologies that contribute to violent extremism have been identified by scholars and the global community (Briggs, 2010; Klausen, 2009; McElroy, 2011; Pickering et al., 2008; Spalek & Imtoual, 2007; Spalek & Lambert, 2008) as a key feature in the fight against terrorism. Community involvement has been identified as an essential component for the success of anti-terrorism strategy under the Leaders of the Howard, Rudd/Gillard, Abbott and Turnbull governments. Furthermore, it continues to be very much at the forefront of current discourse under the Turnbull government.

Counter-terrorism literature has also stressed government and community partnership in countering extremism is vital to prevent radicalisation in youth at risk (Council of Australian Governments, 2015; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2014). This has been recognised on a global scale with many government policies making community engagement in countering extremism imperative (Spalek & Imtoual, 2007).
A government-backed study entitled *Australia—A Home for Radical Islam* (Kara-Ali, 2007) identified that Muslim youth in Australia are seen to be at the highest risk of becoming radicalised. Moreover, a large proportion of Australian Muslim youth are at risk of turning to “radical Islam” than any other Western nation, with up to 3000 Muslim youth in ‘ideological sleeper cells’ in Sydney alone, according to the findings of this report. It was found that some two to three thousand youth, or one per cent of the 200,000 strong Australian Muslim population have already been targeted by radical Islamic teachings, indicating the threat of radicalisation in Australia, particularly in Sydney, is serious.

The results of Kara-Ali’s report are supported by a Victorian study (Pickering et al., 2007; Aly, 2015; Weine & Younis, 2015; Schmid, 2015; Romaniuk, 2015; Malik, 2013; Droogan & Waldek, 2015), who found the involvement of the community can have a significant, positive impact on countering extremism. One important contributing factor is the way in which police–community engagement is approached. Police work that goes beyond encouraging community participation and nurtures partnership has the potential to increase engagement for the purposes of countering terrorism.

The sections that follow include a review of government-funded programmes that focus on countering violent extremism and enhancing social cohesion to discourage youth from being influenced by extremist ideologies. I will focus mainly on the CVE programme managed by the Attorney-General’s Department.

### 2.6.2 Building Resilient Communities

Australian Government publications have repeatedly pointed out that Australia aims to counter violent extremism by building a strong and resilient community that resists the development of any form of violent extremism or terrorism on the home front. It calls
upon communities to build on Australia’s culturally diverse inclusive society and to resist any propaganda that seeks to promote hate and division, which can potentially ignite acts of terrorism. Through ongoing collaborative approaches and by learning from local and overseas experiences, the government’s aim is to lessen the appeal of violent extremism by addressing the needs of those at risk of being radicalised.

Successive governments have identified Australia’s inclusive, multicultural society as a strength that can be a useful tool in countering the divisive nature of extremists, whose intention is to promote hatred and dissension within Australian society. A commitment to promoting feelings of respect, inclusion and a sense of belonging among marginalised groups is emphasised. It is also clear that removing impediments to social cohesion by addressing issues like socioeconomic disadvantage is central to the fight against extremist ideologies that threaten the fabric of Australia’s culturally and religiously diverse society. Nonetheless, there are no quick or simple solutions. As the *Australian Government Counter Terrorism Review* states, “activities designed to build cohesive and resilient communities have not themselves proven to be sufficient to stop all individuals heading down a pathway of radicalisation” (Australian Government, 2015, p. 32).

### 2.6.3 Countering Home-Grown Terrorism and Violent Extremism through Community Engagement

The Counter-Terrorism White Paper 2010, *Securing Australia – Protecting our Community*, outlines Australia’s domestic and international counter-terrorism objectives. It explains the nature of the terrorist threat within Australia’s broader national security context. The Australian Government’s strategies and policies include details relating to how they will be implemented. This publication also emphasised the real possibility of a direct terrorist threat to Australia, recognising that effective alleviation of terrorist attacks
involves a combination of appropriate security response with broader strategies to enhance social cohesion and resilience and to lessen the appeal of radical ideology.

The white paper summarises the overarching comprehensive strategy to be implemented nationally to prevent a terrorist attack by integrating domestic and international counter-terrorism measure. It focuses on policies that reinforce social cohesion, harmony and security (Australian Government, 2010, p. 67), seeking to provide socioeconomic opportunities, reduce inter-communal conflict and explain Australian counter-terrorism policies. It acknowledges the risk of home-grown terrorism and highlights the importance of building a strong and resilient community to resist violent extremism and terrorism.

In 2010, the government’s counter-terrorism strategy comprised the objectives: Analysis, Protection, Response and Resilience. Under the Resilience section, the government aimed to build “a strong and resilient Australian community to resist the development of any form of violent extremism and terrorism on the home front” (Australian Government, 2010, p. 65). It states, to challenge ideologies that promote violence, it is essential that all Australians work together to reject such ideologies that destroy the fabric of a democratic society that Australia wants to protect.

Since 2001 and the tragedies that followed, the Australian Government has repeatedly stated that Australia has remained at risk and vulnerable to terror attacks perpetrated by jihadists who have a violent interpretation of Islam. The Australian Government states:

Australia is, and will remain, a terrorist target for the foreseeable future with jihadist terrorism being the most immediate threat (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. xviii).
This statement encompasses the very real fear that the threat of terrorism has generated within Australia. Therefore, it is essential to develop effective strategies for addressing this fear, and keeping Australia safe has been a priority for our government.

Notably, scholarly research has argued that communities can contribute by addressing the “broader long-term causes of terrorism and violent extremism, and the conditions in which they thrive” (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2014; Aly, 2015; Weine & Younis, 2015; Schmid, 2015; Romaniuk, 2015; Malik, 2013; Droogan & Waldek, 2015).

In line with this, the Australian Government has indicated (2010, p. 65) that “states and territories are ideally placed to work with the community to identify, implement and manage local solutions to local problems and to develop local level resilience … aimed at building social cohesion”. Thus, in conjunction with government, communities can play an important preventative role, as they are best placed to help identify and address potential home-grown terrorists. Government community programmes seeking to build social cohesion through the promotion of trust, respect and a sense of belonging within Australian society are an essential component of the CVE strategy, which serve to undermine the appeal to violent extremism.

Engaging communities as partners in countering terrorism features strongly in current counter-terrorism strategies. As highlighted earlier, research indicates that approaches involving communities as active partners offer greater success in dealing with the threat of domestic terrorism. Hence, the commitment of the Australian Government to community engagement is twofold. First, the Australian Government has an obligation and a commitment to ensure the safety of the Australian people, and this obligation extends to protection from terrorist attack. Second, it is committed to discouraging young
people from the influence of violent extremism due to the concern that violent extremism may lead to home-grown acts of terror.

2.6.4 Approaches to Engage Muslim Communities in the Fight Against Terrorism

From 2007, the Rudd government took a strong position on engaging Muslim communities and reinforced the need for bridge-building activities with the Muslim community so that it did not feel further alienated. It also sought to maximise community cooperation for the government’s efforts to work with those most at risk of being radicalised or becoming invested in radical ideologies. Its approach to engagement was thus different to that of the Howard government. The Rudd government preferred approaches to engage communities, which did not lock the government into a fixed approach, but instead allowed for more diverse mechanisms of engagement. As Bergin (2009) notes, Rudd often highlighted the need to use community engagement to undermine the influence of violent ideologies and preserve social cohesion.

One goal, which was also heavily emphasised during the Rudd government, was the importance of building bridges with the Muslim community. The idea that Australia may harbour home-grown extremists highlighted for the Rudd government that the community had a vital role in the fight against terrorism, and community engagement and trust with the government was critical to prevent extremism that may lead to acts of terrorism.

The Attorney-General’s Department began the engagement process by conducting community forums to discuss the CVE strategy. The forums were the beginning of a broader community engagement strategy on countering violent extremism. In addition, the Attorney-General’s Department provided funding to community organisations to build respect and tolerance, and reduce marginalisation in communities and challenge
extremist ideologies. For instance, the Building Community Resilience grants programme provided funding for projects to reduce the appeal for violent extremist ideologies.

In response to growing concerns about the threat posed by terrorism, the government also boosted the resources and the role of the AFP to combat this threat. As the leading law enforcement agency of the Australian Government, the AFP plays a significant role, especially since September 11 when it was given greater powers in the fight against terrorism. The AFP and its partner agencies have the responsibility of ensuring a terrorist attack does not happen in Australia.

The Rudd government supported diverse initiatives that were undertaken by state governments involving civil society, government departments, the police and Muslim communities in building bridges. Under the guidance of the National Community Engagement Strategy (NCES), AFP Community Liaison Teams (CLT) (previously called Islamic engagement teams) were established to help build and strengthen a trusting relationship with the community. The aim was to increase resilience to extremist behaviours, thereby enhancing social cohesion and reducing the potential for those at risk of being radicalised. Furthermore, these teams engaged in strategies to promote the exchange of dialogue, particularly with young Muslim people who are most at risk of marginalisation.

One of the objectives of the NCES is the provision of alternative narratives to extremist rhetoric and the development of performance measures that identify gaps in community engagement, and provide solutions to remedy those gaps. The CLTs engage in partnership with groups and government organisations that seek to support the community in the shared purpose of creating social cohesion and harmony. The AFP has committed to a “broad-based and inclusive engagement with a wide range of partners, including
communities, business and faith-based groups” (Australian Government, 2010, p. 68), which together form an integral part of promoting social cohesion and community resilience.

Jointly, the AFP, state and territory police, and Australian security agencies recognise the Australian Muslim community as a critical partner in protecting Australia from terrorism and providing a valuable source of information regarding terrorist-related activity. Therefore, these community engagement programmes and those of other Commonwealth agencies are designed to build social cohesion, harmony and security. The New South Wales and Victorian governments have already engaged Muslim communities in the area of counter-terrorism.

Protecting and assisting the poorest, most vulnerable and most marginalised populations can also help address local sources of grievance, frustration and disenfranchisement that terrorists try to exploit. Improved access to health, vocationally relevant education and employment opportunities are some ways to create conditions less conducive to extremist views and propaganda.

In July 2010, January 2012 and 2014, the Attorney-General held community engagement forums in Sydney and Melbourne titled ‘Countering violent extremism-partnerships between communities and government.’ These forums were an important opportunity to meet and discuss how government can better support communities to lessen the impact and appeal of violent extremist influence and ideologies (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013a).
The Australian Government’s Review of Australia’s Counter-Terrorism Machinery in 2015 noted there was an evolving terrorist challenge and it is almost inevitable there will be more terrorist attacks on Australian soil. The review stated that:

Whatever we do, there is no short-term solution to our evolving terrorist challenge. It is almost inevitable that we will have more terrorist attacks on Australian soil.

Long term, we must put a greater effort into reducing – rather than managing – the pool of terrorists, their supporters and sympathisers.

The 2015 Review also reiterated the view that the community is key in building resilience to terrorist ideologies. It emphasised that “working with at-risk communities” is key to countering violent extremism. (Australian Government, 2015, p. v). The focus is placed on building “resilience to terrorist ideology, and to assist individuals to disengage and de-radicalise from violent extremist beliefs and influences” (Australian Government, 2015, p. v).

2.7 The Current Threat

Since September 11 and all of the tragic events that have followed around the world, Australia’s security environment and anti-terrorism legislation has undergone significant changes. One of the most significant concerns in recent years is that the propaganda used by terrorist groups can easily through the internet reach Australian communities and potentially give rise to a terrorist attack on Australian soil. As civil conflict continues to proliferate in Syria and other parts of the world, the issue of foreign fighters has come to the fore. In particular, there are fears Australians may engage in foreign conflicts, and if they return to Australia, this would pose a threat to Australia’s security.
2.7.1 Historical Overview of Daesh and the Current Threat to Australia

Conflicts in the Middle East, and especially in Syria, have given rise to the insurgency of the Islamic State of Iraq and Al Sham (also known as Daesh or ISIS/ISIL), and large numbers of ‘foreign fighters’ from all over the globe have joined the group. As of September 2015, there were nearly 230 Australians being investigated by the government for taking part in this conflict or for supporting extremist groups. The Australian Government Review of Australia’s Counter-Terrorism Machinery notes around 90 young people have travelled overseas in solidarity with ISIS to engage in fighting, in Syria, Iraq and surrounding regions (Australian Government, 2015). The plight of these young men and women, and their support for violent extremist ideologies that might lead to acts of terrorism in Australia, is a matter of great concern to the Australian Government. The government’s approach is one of prevention. Therefore, a key focus for CVE strategies is the prevention of young people from joining armed conflicts in other countries. Furthermore, to keep Australia safe from terror, the aim is to prevent young people in particular from being influenced by ideologies that lead to violent extremism. To achieve this, the government needs to work in partnership with communities to lessen the appeal of such extreme ideologies (Australian Government, 2015, p. 35).

2.7.2 ISIS: The New Enemy Within

On 22 September 2014, a spokesperson for ISIS called for sympathisers to engage in attacks in Western countries. ISIS’s designation of the West includes Europe, the US, Canada and Australia. This call was a result of direct military intervention to fight ISIS by the US and its coalition partners. ISIS has succeeded in spreading fear in Europe by committing ‘lone wolf’ suicide bombers attacking Paris and Brussels in 2015. Prior to the rise of ISIS, however, the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) indicated “Islamic
fundamentalism was not the main cause of terrorism in the West over the last nine years.” The GTI notes “eighty per cent of deaths by lone wolf terrorists in the West were driven by right wing extremism, nationalism, anti-government sentiment and political extremism and other forms of supremacy” (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014, p. 5).

As ISIS overshadowed al-Qaeda, Western powers directed their efforts to degrade ISIS’ military capabilities, especially as many thousands of Westerners joined its cause, which posed a great risk to national security when foreign fighters return home.

Australia was named by ISIS as a potential target because the Australian military has contributed to the international coalition in degrading ISIS’ military capabilities. A major concern of the Australian Government in the aftermath of its intervention against ISIS was the threat of possible terror attacks that may be committed at the hands of ideological sleeper cells and returned foreign fighters.

The London-based International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence estimates more than 20,000 foreign combatants were fighting in the civil war zones of Syria and Iraq at the end of 2014. Of these, approximately 20 per cent came from Western European countries. Europe is thus the second-most important recruiting ground for ISIS (Zelin, 2014). As Kelly (2014) pointed out “ISIS’s online propaganda campaign effectively targets disenfranchised westerners.”

The GTI indicated

The flow of foreign fighters into Iraq and Syria continued in 2014 and 2015. The current estimates are that since 2011 between 25,000 and 30,000 fighters, from 100 different countries, have arrived in Iraq and Syria. The flow of foreign fighters is still high with estimates suggesting that over 7,000 new recruits arrived in the first half of 2015. This highlights that the attraction of these jihadist groups is still strong. Europe comprises 21 per cent of all foreign
fighters, while 50 per cent are from neighbouring Middle-East and North Africa (MENA) countries (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014, p. 3).

2.7.3 Australian Foreign Fighters

According to News Corporation (“Why young Australians choose to fight with ISIS in Syria and Iraq,” 2015) “Australia contributes one of the largest numbers of foreign fighters per capita from any country outside of the Middle East to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. Many of them are young, second-generation immigrants who grew up in Australia, far from the war-torn countries that their parents fled” (Chambers, 2015, para. 2). Some government resources have pointed out that 61 Australians are involved with the ISIS jihadi movement (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014, p. 5; Weiniger, n.d.). The GTI also indicated “Lone wolf attackers are the main perpetrators of terrorist activity in the West. Seventy per cent of all deaths from terrorism in the West since 2006 were by lone wolf terrorists with the rest being unknown or group attacks by more than three attackers” (as cited in Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014). The majority of terrorist attacks in the West are not carried out by well-organised international groups. Lone wolf terrorists are individuals or a small group who commit an attack in support of a group, movement or ideology without material assistance or orders from such group.
Since the emergence of ISIS, two acts of terror have occurred in Australia. These acts were committed by lone wolves, whose connections to ISIS were not clear. The first incident dated in November 2014, the Lindt café siege in Sydney, was carried out by Man Haron Monis, cleric, and resulted in the killing of two hostages. There are many arguments about whether this was a terrorist act considering his mental state and involvement in the murder of his ex-wife. The second incident was carried out by 16-year-old Farhad Jabber, who shot a police contractor outside Parramatta police station in November 2015. Before this Parramatta shooting, the AFP raided many houses in Sydney South and arrested potential sleeper terror cells. The Australian security agencies intensified their surveillance operations targeting ‘radicalised Muslim youth’ over social media platforms. As a result, the AFP foiled a mass shooting plot during Anzac day celebrations on 25 April 2016, as the perpetrator posted his intention on his Facebook page.

In the light of these events, Australian security agencies were given extra funds and powers to eradicate the terror threat on home soil. Additionally, they adapted the CVE
strategy to deal with the Islamic terror threat. The Director-General of ASIO David Irvine told the ABC’s 7.30 Report, “the threat of an attack has been building over the last year, and that he has an “elevated level of concern.” Also he was quoted in the Adelaide Advertiser as saying, “In Australia, we’ve been very lucky in that we have avoided an attack on Australian soil … but we’ve also had to stop terrorist attacks occurring in Australia” (Smith, 2014, p. 5).

The Australian Government has described the foreign fighter threat as its “number-one national security priority” (Zammit, 2015, p. 11). ASIO has estimated, as of February 2015, around 90 Australians were fighting for jihadist groups in Syria and Iraq, up to 30 have returned and over 20 have died. Several have appeared in propaganda videos for Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS, three are believed to have carried out suicide bombings and some Australians are occupying Leaders positions. Some have also boasted of war crimes and explicitly threatened Australia (Zammit, 2015, p. 10). As Australia partnered the US coalition in its fight against ISIS, Australia has repeatedly been named as a target by ISIS. Zammit observed, “All of Australia’s jihadist terror plots during that time period featured the involvement of at least one foreign fighter” (Zammit, 2015, p. 11). Hence, current concerns about those returning from Syria and Iraq are based not only on events abroad, but on Australia’s experiences with returnees (Zammit, 2015, p. 9; Zammit, 2016).

The publication Australian Counter-terrorism Strategy: Strengthening our Resilience (Council of Australian Governments, 2015) identified three types of Australian recruits joining the conflict in the Middle East. The first group is Australians who joined jihadist groups such as ISIS and Al-Nusra by travelling to Syria and Iraq and becoming involved in fighting. The second group is Australians who were motivated to join the fight in the Middle East, but were prevented because their passports had been confiscated or
cancelled. The third group is Australians who travelled to the Middle East to take arms up against ISIS. Many Australian jihadists have been killed in battles; others have decided not to return home. However, it is those who return from fighting that the Australian Government fears most and who pose the greatest security threat. According to the *Strengthening our Resilience* (2015) report, the Australian Government has identified over 30 jihadists out of 120 Australians who have returned from Syria and Iraq between 2011 and 2015 (Council of Australian Governments, 2015, p. 3). Based on the above knowledge, the Australian Government introduced a counter-terrorism legislation amendment that criminalised foreign fighters.

2. 8 **Australian Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the Return of Foreign Fighters**

Australian security agencies have addressed the risk of acts of terrorism by the return of foreign fighter and self-radicalised individuals. Recent studies suggest “a clear minority of returning fighters presented a true and lethal risk” to Australia (as cited in Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014, p. 88). However, the GTI indicated, “The rise of ISIL has brought with it several challenging dynamics for counter-terrorism. One of the many concerns is the increasing prevalence of foreign fighters joining armed groups, especially in Iraq and Syria” (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014, p. 45).

The risk of returning foreign fighters carrying out terrorist attacks in their home countries has prompted different responses from Western governments. For example, Denmark has established a reintegration programme, whereas Australia has criminalised travel to certain areas. France is estimated to have 180 returnees, and as of April 2014, 76 individuals had been arrested (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014, p. 46). For the purpose of this chapter, I will shed light on the counter-terrorism measures the Australian Government adapted to eliminate a terrorist threat on Australian home soil. As the
government’s main concern is foreign fighters and radicalised individuals, it has established a new CVE approach and passed new anti-terror legislation.

2.8.1 Legislation that Addresses the Threat of Foreign Fighters

Prime Minister Abbott met with Muslim community leaders in 2014 in an attempt to persuade them of sweeping new counter-terrorism powers aimed at stopping Australian militants fighting overseas (Veiszadeh, 2014). Abbott said Australia faces a serious threat from radicals who travel overseas to fight with terror groups in Syria and Iraq and then become “militarised and brutalised” by the experience.

Then in October 2014, the Federal Government passed significant legislative amendments to existing counter-terrorism laws introduced in the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Foreign Fighters) Act 2014. This Act has significant changes compared to the Foreign Incursion Act. The Act includes: “new criminal offences related to terrorism, unprecedented powers afforded to government agencies and restrictive measures with the aim of strengthening national security” (Philipp, 2015, p. 62). These new amendments are a result of a threat posed by Australian foreign fighters and fear of radicalised Australian Muslim youth travelling to conflict zones and possible lone wolf attacks on Australian soil. However, “the expedited passing of the Act raises human rights concerns for its encroachment on fundamental liberties and its capacity to both repeal and amend significant domestic statutes” (Philipp, 2015, pp. 62-63). The Australian Government has defined foreign fighters as: “non-citizens of conflict states who join insurgencies during civil war define foreign fighters; the emergence of Western foreign fighters like the ‘Australian Taliban’ David Hicks and more recently, ‘jihad Jake’ indicates an increased mobilization of Australians recruited and fighting amongst transnational, armed conflicts” (Philipp, 2015, pp. 62-63).
The new foreign fighter amendments also include depriving those who take up arms with ISIS or travelled to war zone without justification of passports, visas and nationality.

The Act has proposed emergency cancellation powers to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection under amendments of the Migration Act 1958 (Cth). Under section 134B (a), the Minister is obliged to cancel a visa where an assessment by ASIO advising whether a person is a risk to security (Philipp, 2015, p. 64).

These amendments lower the threshold for the government and organisations such as ASIO to suspend passports and visas if persons are suspected to be a risk to security or of leaving the country to engage in conduct that may threaten Australian security; it has the power to detain persons without charge that are suspected of committing a federal offence or preparing to commit an offence that is punishable by more than 12 months imprisonment, extending previous detention powers for specific offences punishable by more than three years imprisonment (Philipp, 2015).

The offence states persons attempting to travel to a declared zone without legitimate purpose may be detained by customs on reasonable grounds that the person intends to commit an offence or is a threat to national security or the security of a foreign country. In response to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, section 119.2 of the Criminal Code make it an offence for a person to enter or remain in a declared area, where the Minister of Foreign Affairs is satisfied a listed terrorist organisation is conducting hostile activity. Pursuant to the provisions contained in the Act, the Australian Government has exercised this power, declaring Syria’s Raqqa province, known as ISIS’ self-proclaimed caliphate and de facto capital, as such a designated declared area to combat the radicalisation of Australians joining Islamist militant groups.
The changes target dual nationals who join or support listed terrorist groups and “who engage in terrorist activities here in Australia or on foreign soil, including that of our friends and allies” (ABC News, 2015). The changes allow the immigration minister the sole power to strip dual nationals of Australian citizenship.

2.8.2 The Role of the Attorney-General’s Department and its Response to the Evolving Threats of Terrorism

Since September 11, the Attorney-General’s Department has played a key role in strengthening Australia’s national security by enacting laws, and in delivering programmes and policies aimed at keeping Australia safe. According to the Attorney-General’s Department 2014-15 Annual Report:

the first responsibility of the Attorney-General’s Department in its service to the nation is to provide timely and effective support to the Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts, the Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter-Terrorism, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney-General. … A flourishing society is protected by the rule of law. Its citizens are safe and secure, have access to a sound justice system and enjoy a rich cultural life. Delivering these building blocks of a thriving nation is the responsibility of the Attorney-General’s Department.

2.8.3 Initiatives to Address the Threat of Terrorism

The threat of terrorism continues to evolve and the need to respond is a key priority of the Attorney-General’s Department and the government. According to the Attorney-General’s Department Annual Report, 2014-15, the threat of terrorism “has grown in an unpredictable and disturbing manner” (Attorney-General’s Department, 2015). In response to this disturbing threat, the department has developed and implemented a number of initiatives aimed at addressing the threat of terrorism. The emphasis of these national security measures is on preventing and disrupting violent extremism. In addition, the Attorney-General’s Department undertook “legislative reform to address the security
risks posed by foreign fighters; and improvements in the technical capabilities of our agencies and international partners” (Attorney-General’s Department, 2015, p. 3).

In June 2015, Australia hosted the Regional Summit to Counter Violent Extremism. The Attorney-General’s Department organised the summit, which provided regional leaders and Australian community partners with an opportunity to exchange ideas and discuss lessons learned in CVE. The department led development of the *Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Amendment (Data Retention) Act 2015*, passed in March 2015, to ensure telecommunications data is available into the future to support the investigation of serious offences and security threats. The department also supported international efforts to combat money laundering and corruption. They did this through Australia’s Presidency of the Financial Action Task Force, the international body responsible for global standards on combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism, and as co-chair of the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group.

According to the Attorney-General’s Department Annual Report 2015/2016, national security and addressing the evolving threat of terrorism remain key priorities. The Secretary of the Attorney-General’s Department, Chris Moraitis, states “We will focus on delivering and maintaining effective national security policies, laws and programmes and continue working with Australian communities to counter risks posed by terrorist narratives territory partners to implement effective national responses to organised crime” (Attorney-General’s Department, 2015, p. 3).

### 2.8.4 Countering Violent Extremism

What is commonly agreed from the available data is that there is no single terrorist profile that can be used reliably to identify at-risk individuals (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014, p. 33). Given that radicalisation can happen very quickly, in months or weeks in
some cases, CVE needs to take a broad view of risk factors and assess vulnerability accordingly (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014, p. 67). A common policy recommendation of CVE approaches is the need to propose counter-narratives to the messaging of jihadi and right-wing extremist groups. This can be in the form of religious refutation and reframing common myths around the attractions of violent extremism (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014, p. 74; Weiniger, n.d.). Positive steps towards the goals of CVE include effectively communicating such experiences to youth at-risk while focusing on social cohesion, inclusion and providing adequate opportunities (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014, p. 74). Georgia Homer states that recently, the term countering violent extremism has entered public debate for just this reason, the aim being to understand the interplay of the social, economic, political and ideological push and pull factors to inform prevention programmes (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014, p. 89). The CVE programmes target factors, individuals and groups before violent extremism is pursued. These can include whole-of-community approaches, such as educating students at schools to the dangers of violent extremism. CVE programmes can also be directed at individuals and groups identified as being at-risk of being drawn to violent extremism and offering alternatives path (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014, p. 75). The findings of this report emphasise the increasing intensity and spread of terrorist activity globally and point to the key underlying factors that give rise to terrorism. Understanding the factors that are associated with higher levels of terrorism is vital to informing CVE policy. As highlighted in the GTI, without solutions to the underlying grievances or causes that lead to extremism, tackling terrorism will be more difficult (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014, p. 3).

A report by Nasser-Eddine et al, (2011) points to the difficulties in understanding CVE and the most effective ways to address it. This has been undertaken with the broader
analysis of radicalisation and social cohesion theories, models and government policies and how they may impact on or contribute to best practice and policy in countering violent extremism.

Furthermore, Everington (2015), argues that a fresh approach is needed in countering violent extremism and that it is essential to seek out and partner with NGOs, while providing social services such as education and health. The author stresses that capacity-building efforts can counter violent extremist messages.

Measuring the Success of the CVE Programme

Since their inception, there has been increased interest and debate regarding the effectiveness of CVE strategies and whether they have been successful in steering people away from violent extremism. Research undertaken in Europe, the UK and Australia has considered CVE programmes’ strengths and weaknesses, and worked to determine what is needed to enhance best practice of current and future CVE models. According to Peter Romaniuk (2015), measuring the success of programmes designed to steer people away from radicalisation and violent extremism has proven to be difficult. Not only is it difficult to quantify how many people have altered their views due to CVE programmes, it is also difficult to measure their success when it is an ever-changing field, shifting according to societal changes and altered terrorist and extremist tactics. Despite various governments’ best intentions to thwart the doctrine of extremist thought, a report compiled by Romaniuk for the Global Center on Cooperative Security on whether CVE programmes work, highlights there is a lack of coherence in a field that has “risen in prominence in a manner disproportional to its achievements” (Romaniuk, 2015, p. v). One of the key points to emerge from Romaniuk’s report is, while evaluating CVE programmes is challenging, a commitment to evaluation is “key to achieving the goal of evidence-based CVE”
Continued assessment is advocated to identify local sources of resilience to violent extremism that can ultimately be incorporated during policy development (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 13). Assessments can also “bring to light the important social and cultural factors that provide the backdrop for CVE implementation” (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 13).

One of the most consistent criticisms to emerge from the various reviews of CVE programmes world-wide was the unintentional consequences of CVE measures, particularly in what Romaniuk refers to as ‘first wave’ CVE (Romaniuk, 2015, p. v). Common to first wave CVE programmes was the unintended consequence of damaging existing and future state–civil relationships on to which CVE measures are imposed. In many instances, it has been noted that “actors in civil society have often felt to be the subjects of CVE measures” (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 3). Caitlin Mastroe’s article, which appeared in Perspectives on Terrorism, also refers to this stigmatisation of Muslim communities stating “scholars have presented the argument that Muslim communities are being treated as suspect communities” (Mastroe, 2016, p. 56), thus making members of said communities feel as though they are always being watched. The result of such sentiment is that members will be disinclined to take part in further initiatives. It has since been proven, for CVE messages to penetrate targeted communities, NGOs and other actors within the communities are the best resources for more positive messages (Weine & Younis, 2015) (Schmid, 2015) (Romaniuk, 2015) (Malik, 2013).

The results of this research highlight that rather than the government funding CVE programs they should instead focus on addressing the needs of Muslim young people in the areas of social resilience, connectedness within the community, their perceived anger at Australian foreign policy, and the influence, rightly or wrongly, of the United States
on that policy. In Chapter 6 this writer recommends changes to the way governments address the needs of Muslim youth.

This view is supported by Briggs, (2010) as cited by Droogan & Waldek (2015, p.64) who argue that one of the contributing factors impacting the success of the Federal Government’s policy in countering violent extremism is that CVE has itself been a “badly conceived and…divisive concept in both the UK and Australia…often [reinforcing] the very process of marginalisation that they are attempting to address”.

Aly et al indicate that for CVE messages to penetrate targeted communities it has since been demonstrated that NGO and other actors within communities are the most effective source for more positive narrative counter violent ideologies (Aly, 2015; Weine & Younis, 2015; Schmid, 2015; Romaniuk, 2015; Malik, 2013; Droogan & Waldek, 2015). Scholarly literature has also emphasised the importance of engaging religious leaders in meaningful partnerships and in at each stage of CVE program development (Omar, 2016). Omar argues that central to CVE is the idea that communities, and especially their religious leaders, need to feel ownership over these projects, and that the best way to do this is to help them develop their own solutions. He elaborates further by stating that if the policies are perceived as driven by the ‘West’ achieving widespread community involvement is nearly impossible (Omar, 2016). In addition, Holmer (2013) highlights the important role of religious leaders in CVE stressing that they may give impetus to enabling conditions for effective engagement for advancing efforts to prevent extremist violence.

Akbarzadeh (2013, p.461) suggests there is “overwhelming consensus” that the provision of authentic Islamic knowledge and education can be an important tool in shifting the
narrative utilised to challenge, reverse or prevent extremist ideologies. As such, academically qualified Islamic scholars have the capacity to engage young people by refuting the legitimacy of violence against civilians through reference to Quranic text and Prophetic traditions. This engagement has the potential to effectively contribute to the development of a balanced understanding of Islam, the concepts of Jihad, and the adoption of violence.

However, Akbarzadeh (2013) cautions that any counter-extremist strategy must consider other factors and not ignore the broader context within which young Australian Muslims are radicalised. He posits that factors such as political alienation and socio-economic marginalisation make young Muslims vulnerable to extremist ideologies.

Similarly, in Chapter 8, Challenging the narrative of the ‘Islamic State’, Schmid (2015) argues that: “It is vital that Muslim scholars are involved in all phases of developing such counter-narratives, not just at the delivery end”. Huda, (2006), as cited in Nasser-Eddine et al, (2011) further points to the need to recognise the contributions that Muslim groups make in their efforts in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, interfaith dialogue, education and others, and that such expertise should be utilised as a source in counter narratives. Kessels (2010), as cited by Nasser-Eddine et al, (2011), p.52 supports these views and argues that the best sources for counter-narratives are located within local communities, religious leaders, social workers, young Muslims and their families and former violent extremists.

Schmid (2015) also raises concerns that efforts to counter the ideology that drives terrorism have not made much progress in all these years largely due to lack of funding as well as for lack of development of effective and tested soft power instruments that target the hearts and minds of would-be-jihadists.
He points to the need to invest more in developing better counter-messages and more persuasive counter-narratives which appeal to Muslims on both the emotional and the intellectual level.” (Schmid, 2015 p.77).

In 2010, evaluators of the UK’s Prevent programme were concerned that “Prevent initiatives were stigmatising the Muslim community and leading to misperceptions that Prevent … was being used for intelligence gathering purposes” (Mastroe, 2016, p. 53). This sense of being watched because one is Muslim was an early concern regarding the Prevent strategy, seeming to target all Muslims as potential terrorists. In Romaniuk’s report, Does CVE Work? (2015), Lasse Lindeklde’s theory on ‘backfire mechanism’ is discussed. This backfiring refers to “self-silencing, hushing, reactive pride, and disenchantment” within Muslim communities (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 10). Lindeklde is quoted in the document as saying, “Organisations tasked with countering radicalisation lack a shared understanding of the behaviours that constitute violent radicalisations…and a shared understanding of what counter-radicalisation programs are trying to achieve” (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 12). It has been suggested that two important lessons from early CVE programmes that could be learnt are that assessments of extremism across different locations is necessary and a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach was counter-productive. Romaniuk states “Prevent programs were ventured without fully understanding how Muslim communities think about the issues of violent extremism” (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 17) resulting in a mismatch of agendas and concerns of governments and communities. Further, he notes that “it is problematic to assume that one can gauge the views of any community by talking only with elites” and thus selecting who to speak with is difficult given that communities are often diverse (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 19).
Additionally, *Does CVE Work?* devotes a section of the report to the ‘second wave’ of CVE programmes and the changes made from first wave experiences. For instance, it is noted that “states have tended to come to similar conclusions about CVE as a result of their first wave experience, especially regarding community-level interventions” (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 23). The UK’s Prevent programme, which was previously lead by the Department of Communities and Local Governments, now falls under the auspices of the Office for Security and Counterterrorism in the Home Office and places greater emphasis on ‘integration’ of which “tackling extremism and tolerance” is a part (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 23). Romaniuk also notes that new or revised guidance on the implementation of the Prevent programme, along with reissued advice regarding the sharing of information between the police and communities (were additional refinements to the earlier model. Despite these changes, there remained concerns about the ‘battle of ideas’ between the government and extremists. Further concerns centred around the notion of statutory duties and criticised the government for setting up teachers and others to “act like spies” (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 24). Mastroe also cites a growing concern relating to new statutory duties, particularly among teachers, to report potential signs of vulnerability to radicalisation. Not only is it creating fear among teachers, but it also has the potential to “lead to further alienation of individuals and, in this case, youth” (Mastroe, 2016, p. 57).

The *Does CVE Work?* report argues there is sometimes a gap in the understanding of issues surrounding terrorism and violent extremism, and government bodies and policy-makers incorrectly assume communities know more than they actually do (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 17). A lesson learnt from the first wave of CVE programmes is that productive engagement and open communication with communities may engender a more positive outcome. Stigmatising the Muslim community as ‘suspect’ and treating it, as
homogenous and unified in a way that other … communities are not” (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 17) is naturally counter-productive to having these same communities work with governments to circumvent radicalisation. Additionally, there has been an increased suspicion of the police and security services, where people felt they were always being watched rather than protected. Concern surrounding stigmatisation of Muslim communities has been raised across a number of countries employing CVE approaches. Considering alternative labels to that of ‘CVE’ has been proposed to avoid further isolating the communities whose engagement is needed to make a long-term difference (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 18).

Comparing the first and second waves of CVE programmes, Romaniuk cites the move towards “targeting those most at-risk of committing extremist violence and not simply those that may be sympathetic to extremist ideas” as a welcome development in CVE initiatives (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 5). The author also sanctions much-needed commitment to the evaluation of CVE programmes (Romaniuk, 2015, p. v). He notes that frustrations with various governments’ handling of CVE programmes has led to a number of NGOs taking it upon themselves to initiate changes and discussions. This reflects the desire for greater ownership of initiatives to counter the rise of ISIL, which, as the report states, “has shocked, saddened and offended Muslim civil society around the world” (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 27).

Mastroe suggests “future CVE strategies would strongly benefit from increased transparency regarding funding, actors involved, projects available in local communities, and evaluations on these projects … [I]ncreased transparency may help ease some of the concerns held by communities” (Mastroe, 2016, p. 58). She argues that existing projects “may not always meet the needs of a local authority” (Mastroe, 2016, p. 58), proposing
that projects that are more specific to respective communities may be more successful. 

Mastroe refers to the notion of a lack of “community buy-in” as a consequence of standardisation and centralisation. A Home Office employee commented, while they received a number of Prevent programme attendees, they were not always the ones who would most benefit (Mastroe, 2016, p. 56). Further to this, one Home Office employee commented that “Prevent [was] a hard sell amongst certain communities, especially those most affected. As a result, there [was] not a whole lot of community engagement” (Mastroe, 2016, p. 57). Eric Rosand expresses support for more local actors taking part in current and future CVE programmes. Writing for the Policy Brief for the Global Center on Cooperative Security (2016), Rosand suggests, that in order to facilitate and ensure collaboration among local actors, international architecture for addressing terrorism and violent extremism must be updated. The previous and current architecture is dominated by multilateral bodies and “driven by the interests and needs of national governments and [therefore] ill-suited to facilitate and sustain cooperation among local CVE actors” (Rosand, 2016, p. 1). This point reiterates a common thread emerging from a range of CVE evaluations in that “the traditional fora can and should do more to engage local actors on an ongoing basis” (Rosand, 2016, p. 2). Rosand comments that “local, rather than national actors, are more likely to be best positioned to prevent the spread of violent extremism within their communities” (Rosand, 2016, p. 2). This assertion will be explored in Chapter 5.

Rosand further advocates greater support of new platforms along with mobilising funding for them “without micromanaging or undermining their independence and credibility” (Rosand, 2016, p. 2).

New platforms are being developed to facilitate the sharing of challenges, best practices, and information among subnational stakeholders … new
global and regional CVE networks focused on bringing cities and local researchers together … to connect youth, women and other civil society players (Rosand, 2016, p. 2).

As Romaniuk points out, the issue of funding is an ever-present concern for any organisation. He states community organisations have limited capacity in this area, yet still need to raise funds, allocate said funds and try to achieve their objectives. What was revealed from the Prevent programme in the UK was that groups were divided over whether to accept funding for fear of being labelled as ‘sell-outs’ and there were misgivings about the strategy. The funding of Prevent was also called into question as “not risk based but rather correlated strongly with demographic indicators i.e. money was disbursed proportional to the number of Muslims in the area” (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 16).

From a Canadian perspective of CVE, Romaniuk points to grave concerns held within the Muslim community regarding the impacts of terrorism and counterterrorism. Canada’s engagement with Muslim communities has continued to diversify; it is employing innovative attempts at partnership with Muslim communities. One such example was the Royal Canadian Mounted Police “partnership with Muslim groups to develop a handbook for communities on extremism and measures to stop it” (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 26).

2.9 The Australian Federal and State CVE Experiences

In this section, I will discuss the degree to which CVE strategies within Australia have been received and deemed successful; this will include community, government departments and expert perspectives.

2.9.1 Federal Government CVE Programme

In its 2012 Submission to the Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia the Attorney-General’s Department noted that “The CVE Unit is currently developing an evaluation
strategy that will incorporate best practice in program evaluation” focusing on five key areas: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability (Attorney-General’s Department Countering Violent Extremism Unit, 2012, p. 7). The Attorney-General’s Department stated “a full assessment of the initial four years [was] to be made after 2013-2014 … [where] some aspects of the evaluation would be made public and others would not, due to national security considerations” (Barker, 2015, p. 3). An achievement under the CVE programme in 2012-2013 was listed as “commissioning research and completing an evaluation baseline of quantitative and qualitative data to support a comprehensive evaluation of the CVE program” (Attorney-General’s Department, 2012a). To date, the outcome of this assessment remains unclear.

As early as 2012, communities were recognised as:

play[ing] a vital role in achieving CVE objectives … [given that] communities and community leaders are often well placed to notice changes in individuals that may indicate they are heading down a path to violent extremism … [c]onsultation gives communities an opportunity to express their needs, share ideas for new approaches to address violent extremism, promote respect and tolerance, and reduce marginalisation” (Attorney-General’s Department, 2012a, p. 5)

The Australian CVE experience, as noted in Does CVE Work, encountered similar problems faced by other states in the form of stigmatisation of Muslim communities as well as “capacity gaps among implementing NGOs” (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 25). “Following a change in government, and subsequent review, it was concluded that the initial range of activities missed the mark and did not respond adequately to the emerging threat” (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 25). The unintended result was that extremist ideologies were still enticing to some individuals. Prime Minister Gillard’s government saw the creation of two grant schemes: the Building Community Resilience and the Building Community Resilience–Youth Mentoring Grants programmes. A common criticism of these
programmes was that they “tended to be targeted too broadly rather than directly engaging with at-risk individuals” (Zammit, 2015, p. 12). With a revision of the Building Community Resilience programme in 2014, to its replacement, the Living Safe Together initiative, a stronger emphasis on community-level engagement was highlighted, along with greater emphasis on behavioural radicalisation (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 25).

In 2013, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute *Fighting Fire with Fire* Report (Richardson, 2013) sought information from young Muslim Sydney-siders regarding Australia’s online efforts in CVE. Many of the study’s respondents felt that government-produced CVE websites presented agendas that fuelled a sense of Islamophobia, thus rendering online attempts at CVE as counter-productive and highly damaging. They felt stereotyping the Muslim community was a distinct outcome, which made them more vulnerable to discrimination, including verbal and physical attacks (Richardson, 2013, p. 2). The author states “With regards to online counter-narratives … research suggests that community groups are better placed to create and deliver anti-violence messages than governments are” (Zammit, 2015, p. 16). The thread of the discussion regarding online CVE supports my findings that government agencies would benefit from involving Muslim communities’ human and cyber resources to tackle the influx of extremist doctrine espoused online.

What is clear is that extremists continue to use social media and the internet to disseminate their messages, so online CVE programmes are essential to minimising and counteracting extremist rhetoric. Online CVE strategies are considered well-defined with a number of methods employed to block, censor, filter or remove internet content, as well as the use of monitoring and positive counter-messaging (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 32). However, it is not without its own hurdles, such as the unintended consequence of governments being
accused of censoring or discrimination. In addition, materials that have been removed cannot necessarily be stopped from appearing elsewhere. Romaniuk quotes Humera Khan, author of *Why Countering Extremism Fails*, regarding messaging: “The objective of counter-extremism messaging should be to dissuade people from supporting violence, not to defend policy changes by lawmakers and politicians. This messaging is best done by non-government actors, but they are unfortunately few and far between” (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 33). Further, it is argued that a stronger commitment to evaluation would have assisted in revealing any dilemmas of community engagement earlier in the process.

Concerns were articulated by leaders within the Muslim community regarding the implementation of CVE strategies and funding of Australia’s CVE programme. Samier Dandan, President of the Lebanese Muslim Association in Sydney, summarised the discontent of many when he openly criticised the Federal government’s approach to counter-terrorism. In a message to the association’s members, he expressed disappointment in the lack of government and community consultation: “There are many voices in the Muslim community which can articulate the problem and recommend solutions based on these root causes, but they are excluded” (Dandan, 2015, para. 11). Dandan suggested the Abbott government’s realisation that Muslim voices need to be heard was an admission that the original strategy was essentially flawed (Dandan, 2015). He points out that previous consultations were merely “box-ticking exercises” with little or no constructive purpose (Dandan, 2015). Dandan ends his message by referring to government strategies as continuing “to use taxpayer dollars on pointless programs that do little to address the genuine concerns of both the Muslim and the wider Australian community, all without true consultation,” instead continuing on a “delusional path” (Dandan, 2015). Mohamad Abdalla (2015, pp. 5-6), in a speech at the Australian Police Commissioner Forum, reinforced the views expressed by Dandan by stressing “there is a
need to work smarter and not harder with Muslim community.” Abdalla further emphasised the need for reviewing the way the Muslim community is engaged: “it is prudent to reconsider the way authorities and government has engaged Imams, leaders and the youth” (p. 6).

Further criticism from within the Muslim community came from Kuranda Seyit, Director of the Forum on Australia’s Islamic Relations. Seyit suggested that “CVE programmes were often misplaced by being focused on entire communities” (Zammit, 2015, p. 12), leaving a crucial gap where those in need were not able to access support. The effectiveness of CVE strategies in Australia has been affected by “poor consultation by the government with the Muslim community … as well as the Prime Minister’s [Abbott] claim that Muslim leaders are not doing enough to speak out against radical ideas” (Zammit, 2015, p. 15). Impatient with the negative rhetoric from then Prime Minister Tony Abbott, counter-terrorism expert and Australian academic Anne Aly is quoted as saying “Tony Abbott’s language has set [the work of PaVE (People Against Violent Extremism)] back 10 years … He makes countering violent extremism all about targeting Muslims and puts people off wanting to be part of our activities” (Laurie, 2015 para. 25).

Despite the same government funding Aly’s independent organisation PaVE, set up in 2013, she nonetheless, accuses the Abbott Government as saying, “If you can’t adhere to Australian values, you don’t deserve to be Australian. The message is ‘to be Muslim is not to be Australian.’ And who else is giving out that message? Islamic State” (Laurie, 2015).
There was a significant decrease in programmes approved for CVE funding between 2011 and 2014. In 2013-2014, the level of funding provided was only 30% of the sum distributed in 2011-2012. [source](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1415/Quick_Guides/Extremism)

The total volume of programmes reduced by 55% when comparing 2011-2012 with 2013-2014. During the same period, organisations operated by Muslims saw a 60% drop in programmes approved for CVE funding. [source](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1415/Quick_Guides/Extremism)
It was noted that the Australian government failed to allocate CVE programme funds appropriately to organisations or conduct assessments of the programmes goals and objectives to deter people from radicalisation towards extremist doctrine. An article appearing in the *Australian* on 7 September 2016 by Tessa Akerman claimed that grant assessments and allocation of funds relating to the Australian Government’s Living Safe Together programme were essentially flawed (Laurie, 2015). A report delivered by the Australian National Audit Office “found that only 21 of the 42 recommended and approved applications should have been successful” (The Australian National Audit Office, 2016, p. 19) claiming deficiencies in the Attorney-General’s Department. While the department considered the Living Safe Together programme to have successfully met its key objectives, it was criticised for not adequately following up referees and not making it clear to applicants that grant recipients would register with the Countering Violent Extremism Intervention Services Directory. It was also found that four applications were granted funding despite scoring poorly against key policy criteria (Akerman, 2016; The Australian National Audit Office, 2016).

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet’s 2015 *Review of Australia’s Counter-Terrorism Machinery* clearly states “more must be done to strengthen cross agency coordination and leadership” as well as “improv[ing] our cooperation with at-risk communities” (Australian Government, 2015, p. v). The review noted Australia’s “efforts to detect and undermine terrorist support have been effective despite increasing volume, complexity and significance of matters involved” (Australian Government, 2015, p. 14). Australia’s CVE strategy emphasises building and maintaining community cohesion in terms of resisting messages and actions related to violent extremism. The review states that diminished support of violent extremist ideology has been achieved through greater engagement with individuals “at all levels within communities” (Australian Government,
Despite improvement in information exchanges, the review points out there are still many problems:

The increased threat of home-grown terrorism has changed the landscape of Australia’s domestic CVE efforts. Terror groups are running increasingly sophisticated propaganda campaigns and social media is affording them a broad and dynamic reach into vulnerable cohorts. The rapid increase in the scale of direct threats is a result of increasing ideological support for violent extremism within parts of the community. To manage this long-term increase, we must degrade the ideological support so that we shrink the potential pool of terrorists and facilitators. Current CVE efforts are likely to be having some impact, but more needs to be done – not all priority individuals, areas or organisations are being addressed (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2015, p. 20).

Chapter 5 of the review states unequivocally that “Our [i.e. the Government’s] efforts in this area have not yet been effective” (Australian Government, 2015, p. 30). Further, it notes that “Not all of the programmes have been successful. Some of the efforts may have been somewhat piecemeal or short term … the programme of activities did not constitute a comprehensive approach to all priority individuals, locations and organisations” (Australian Government, 2015, p. 30). When discussing the programmes tailored towards diverting people from violent extremism, the review comments that “[a]ctivities designed to build cohesive and resilient communities have not themselves proven to be sufficient to stop all individuals heading down a pathway of radicalisation. Individuals within these communities are still being drawn towards extremist ideologies” (Australian Government, 2015, p. 32). For future CVE programme success, the review suggests:

A new CVE strategy should include measures to:

- better partner with communities and private sector partners to reach at-risk or radicalised individuals
- prioritise broader community cohesion efforts to address the social and economic causes of violent extremism
- challenge the reach of extremist narratives in Australia (Australian Government, 2015, p. 32).
The review supports the notion that “Faith leaders and peak groups can credibly engage their communities on ideological and religious issues” (Australian Government, 2015, p. 32) and the Department of Social Services is well-placed to lead programmes centred on broader social cohesion and social policies (Australian Government, 2015, p. 33). Developing and delivering counter-narratives to challenge extremist propaganda via credible voices within Muslim communities may increase their reach and effectiveness the review states (Australian Government, 2015, p. 33). As the review points out, “[p]artnering with communities does not mean they will agree with all aspects of government policy, and they may be open with their criticism” (Australian Government, 2015, p. 34), but it is still viewed as a positive step.

When looking towards more effective CVE programmes steering vulnerable youth in Australia and overseas away from violent extremism, Aly argued that “When you work closely with young people you see the possibility for change … What works is what young people tell us works” (Laurie, 2015 para. 9). When asked how Aly believes one can reach the most alienated individuals in society, her response is disarmingly simple, “Through the ones who aren’t yet radicalised and are still talking to me” (Laurie, 2015 para. 10). Aly states that “change is incremental and it often happens one-on-one between peers” (Laurie, 2015 para. 33).
In 2011–2012, the funding provided to Muslim organisations for youth programmes superseded that of non-Muslim organisations. However, by 2013–2014, the Muslim organisations received only 53% of the non-Muslim-led programmes. http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1415/Quick_Guides/Extremism

Droogan & Waldek (2015) argue that young people need to be engaged with directly, in particular they should be integrated into the leadership process. The community is challenged in several ways: youth are not necessarily part of any formal community and youth leadership is often at odds with established community leaders who are frequently perceived as being out of touch or ingratiating themselves with government officials.

As Romaniuk extrapolates, the dilemma of engaging communities is not that governments should desist from efforts to engage them, but rather to determine the terms of engagement – terms that “should reflect the breadth of concerns within the communities without signalling counterterrorism as the primary motivation for engagement” (Romaniuk, 2015, p. 21). In an address to Parliament in November 2016, Australia’s Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, outlined very succinctly that the general requirement for the future success of CVE programmes relied on “all levels of Government and
communities … working together to help prevent people from being drawn to violent extremism” (Turnbull, 2016, para. 88).

2.9.2 **State (NSW) CVE Experience (COMPACT)**

This section examines the State (NSW) CVE experience under the NSW COMPACT Program and how it differs from the Federal CVE Programme.

In 2015, former NSW Premier, Bruce Baird, announced $4m in funding for the COMPACT Program. This figure was doubled to $8m due to the overwhelming response from communities enabling the NSW Government to expand the overall scope of the program and include more community partners. (NSW Government, 2015a)

Multicultural NSW describes the program as: COMPACT which stands for Community, in partnership, taking action to safeguard Australia’s peaceful and harmonious way of life against extremist hate, violence, fear and division. (NSW Government, 2015a). The COMPACT Program, administered by Multicultural NSW, is entirely motivated by the agency’s core purpose of promoting social cohesion and community harmony. (NSW Government, 2015a)

The Community Relations Commission (CRC) for a Multicultural NSW is the state based multicultural agency charged with the responsibility of overseeing Multicultural Policies and Services Program (MPSP) by supporting NSW Government agencies in meeting their obligations to implement the principles of multiculturalism. The CRC consults widely with diverse ethnic and religious communities to identify issues of concern relating to government policy and programs. Its key role is to promote social cohesion, harmony, and access to services and programs aimed at facilitating participation of Australia’s culturally and religiously diverse communities.
The COMPACT Program is especially concerned that the rise of ISIS-inspired extremism, linked to the ongoing conflict in Syria and Iraq, has given fuel to the reactive hate-based rhetoric and activities of far right-wing extremist groups in Australia. (NSW Government, 2015a). In response to these concerns, the NSW government, through the CRC consulted ethnic communities widely on ways in which young people can be protected from the influence of violent extremist ideologies. This led to the development of the COMPACT Program which aimed at building resilience to the effects of overseas conflicts by promoting community harmony and social cohesion.

The fact sheet points out that that the COMPACT is different to CVE and de-radicalisation programs. Unlike the Federal CVE Programme, COMPACT is not a “de-radicalisation program, and it is not motivated by a national security agenda…the Compact Program is entirely motivated by our agency’s core purpose of promoting social cohesion and community harmony”. (NSW Government, 2015a, p.2).

Addressing the issue from a social cohesion perspective, rather than a national security perspective, requires a different methodology from the individualised interventions often associated with “CVE” or “de-radicalisation” programs. COMPACT is a unique, innovative program that provides an entirely new model for a whole-of-society, resilience-based response to current threats to social cohesion. The FAQ points out that the “model has been co-designed in close consultation with communities and academic experts”. (NSW Government, 2015a, p.2).

The engagement of the federal government with the CVE programme was not sufficient to allay the fears that Muslim leaders have of the CVE program, but programs such as the NSW Compact launched in 2016 has focused on responding to the community concerns by allowing the community to deliver the CVE program differently. While a number of
Muslim organisations have been funded under this new program, it remains to be seen as to whether the program has been effective in meeting the communities’ desired outcome. The outcomes of the funded projects will help to minimise the gap between the State Government and the community.

Conclusion:

Chapter 2 provided an overview of terrorism, the threat of terrorism in Australia, and Commonwealth and State Government responses to terrorism pre and post September 11, 2001. Following concerns that terrorist attacks could occur in Australia, the Australian Government’s counter-terrorism policies post September 11, 2001 attacks on the US, together with the Bali 2005 tragedy, are also discussed in the context of a dramatically changed security environment.

The Australian Commonwealth Government’s approaches to countering terror included the introduction of new anti-terror legislation; in addition, these approaches have impacted the marginalisation and demonization of the Australian Muslim community. The shift from the GWOT to a focus on countering violent extremism (CVE) has identified the key features of the CVE strategy. This strategy focused on resilience and the importance of addressing disadvantage as a way of lessening the appeal for extremist ideologies.

The emergence conflict in the Middle East and the emergence of Daesh in 2011 significantly affected Australia’s security by raising the National Terrorism Threat Level to ‘high’ for the first time in its history. This lead to the introduction of new legislation to combat these threats, for example, the “Foreign Fighters Bill”. 

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In 2015 a government review of the Australian CVE program highlighted that CVE efforts to date have had limited success.

However, the NSW Government’s COMPACT Program which commenced in 2015 offers an alternate approach that potentially facilitates more effective outcomes for Muslim communities’ engagement in countering violent extremist ideologies. Contrarily, the NSW Parliamentary Research Service Report *Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Causes and Responses* notes that the State Government’s CVE measures have received criticism for being poorly targeted and counterproductive (Angus, 2016). This program is still in its infancy, and has not as yet demonstrated achieving the desired CVE objectives.
3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study investigated Muslim community leaders’ perceptions and experiences on the Australian Government’s counter-terrorism policy and, specifically, the CVE programme implemented by the Commonwealth government. In this thesis the term ‘leader’ is used to describe those who guide others in the community and specific religious settings. This includes heads/representatives of community organisations, religious leaders, and youth leaders.

The study also explored community leaders’ perspectives on political and media rhetoric, and whether it has affected the Muslim communities’ trust and willingness to engage with the government’s CVE programme aimed at diverting young people from the influence of extremist ideologies.

The aim of the research question is to determine whether the CVE programme has been effective in diverting young Muslims from violent extremist ideologies, and the factors that has affected its success or failure. It also seeks to explore how the government has engaged the community as partners in the fight against violent extremism that leads to terrorism; and to illustrate more effective approaches for government/community engagement in countering violent extremism.

The ultimate objective of the study was to gain insights from Muslim leaders which may contribute towards the development of a best practice approach for government and community engagement in countering violent extremism. Gaining new insights from Muslim community leaders in the implementation of countering terrorism was crucial for this study.
A mixed method approach was employed, which collected quantitative and qualitative data through the use of a survey and personal interviews. A purposive sample was selected, targeting community leaders, religious leaders and representatives of community organisations, most of whom were from Sydney. A SWOT method was used to analyse the data collected from the study.

3.2 Mixed Methodology Approach

Using quantitative and qualitative data, allowed for a more detailed understanding of the participants’ attitudes and experiences. Quantitative data alone would not have provided this level of articulation. As Hughes (2016, para.5) has stated, “The strength of MM [mixed methodology] is the dynamic between the qualitative and quantitative portions of the study … each type of data can mirror the other’s findings.” A mixed method approach allows a researcher to collect, analyse and draw inferences about data on a much broader scale than single mode research (Cameron, 2011).

By including open-ended questions in the online questionnaire, the study applied a mixed method approach from the early stages. By combining the numerical and demographic information supplied by the online questionnaire with the open-ended questions within the questionnaire, a much broader range of responses was possible. Coupled with the interview responses in phase two of the study, the opportunity for more rigorous and authentic interpretation of the data was pronounced. By including the benefits of both methods, the study was able to meet the needs of the research questions by broadening the scope of the inquiry and ultimately adding depth to the analysis. The potential for mixed method research to heighten understanding of the findings is what made it an effective approach for this study, especially given the relatively small number of participants. It also enabled the information gathered from those participants who were
not interviewed to remain relevant despite the limitations imposed by geographical distance.

As Cameron (2011, p. 106) espoused, “mixed methods researchers need to be versatile and innovative with a repertoire of research skills that exceeds those needed for single mode research.” While the online questionnaire could provide vital information to address the research question, the personal interviews further enhanced participants’ ability to provide detailed responses. The interviews reduced some of the potential barriers a questionnaire presents and created a more personal environment within which to explore attitudes and experiences as per the research focus. The mixed method approach allowed the perspectives of Muslim leaders on countering violent extremism to be explored in greater detail. In doing so, it is hoped the findings of the study will positively contribute to best practice for government policy-making.

3.2.1 Sampling frame

Patton (1990) emphasised there is no perfect design for research involving sampling, but the researcher must select the strategy best suited to the study. This includes satisfying the aim of the study, resources available, specific questions being asked and limitations or challenges faced. The technique used in this study was purposive sampling. Teddlie & Yu (2007) outlined a purposive sample as that which is “typically designed to pick a small number of cases that will yield the most information about a particular phenomenon [ultimately leading to] a greater depth of information from a smaller number of carefully selected cases” (p. 80). The framework for a purposive sample is typically based on the researcher’s pre-existing knowledge or on a resource already available (Teddle & Yu, 2007). This type of sampling describes a procedure where the researcher deliberately seeks out participants based on their ability to provide information vital to the research
question being investigated. This technique is especially useful when only select members within a community hold the necessary knowledge and expertise desired by the researcher. In such cases, purposive sampling is seen as the superior choice, leading to the selection of high quality participants tailored to the needs of the study. The sample chosen is largely driven by their ability to provide input, which “will illuminate the questions under study” (Patton, 1990, p. 169).

The suitability of participants for this study was evaluated on their compatibility with the objective of this thesis and the relevance of their experience to the research questions posed. The study also had to consider the most appropriate sample that would allow the findings to be accurately replicated. With this in mind, a purposive sample was selected from Australia’s diverse Muslim community—comprising 75 Muslim scholars, community leaders, religious leaders and youth leaders.

The sample population targeted individual leaders at local, state and federal level who were affiliated with Muslim organisations. The list also included organisations that were not affiliated with established peak bodies to ensure a range of opinions. The list was compiled using publicly available community directories and databases and peak organisations. Leaders were chosen because they are the first point of contact within the Muslim community and are the most called-upon by the government when consultation is undertaken on issues of importance to Australia’s security. By virtue of their role, community leaders provide important insights that aid the government on issues such as programmes and policies.

3.2.2 Participants

Participants came from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Participants who stated their place of birth include: Lebanon (n=13), Egypt (n=6), England (n=1) Fiji (n=1), Sierra Leone
(n=1), Australia (n=7), Syria (n=4), Iraq (n=1), Afghanistan (n=1), Africa (n=3), Bosnia (n=1), Singapore (n=1), Somalia (n=1), Turkey (n=3), Indonesia (n=2), Pakistan (n=1), India (n=1) and Bangladesh (n=2). A large number of the survey participants (22) did not state where they were born. The overwhelming majority of participants were located in Sydney. A smaller number of participants came from Adelaide (n=1), Brisbane (n=3), and Melbourne (n=3).

3.2.3 Data Collection

Data was collected in two phases, first using an online questionnaire, and second via personal semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data was collected from the online questionnaires and semi-structured interview questions, while qualitative data came from the open-ended questions in the second half of the online questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data allowed me to ascertain the demographic characteristics of the study participants along with their attitudes and knowledge regarding CVE programmes. Within the online questionnaire, the open-ended questions were included to gain some insights as to the participants’ attitudes and views, but was limited with respect to the personal interaction and nuances uncovered during the interviews. Coupled with the information gathered during the interviews, the mixed method approach, as a whole, enabled a clearer understanding and insight into the experiences and perspectives of Muslim community leaders. All of the questionnaires and personal interviews were conducted between 2013 and 2015.

3.2.4 Quantitative Data

To discover how a population views certain issues, it is useful to initially conduct quantitative research (Sukamolson, n.d). Being able to quantify opinions, attitudes and behaviours within the groups studied gives the researcher a reasonable base from which
to proceed with greater confidence that the research aims will be met. A disadvantage of the approach was that not all candidates completed every question and, of those that did, some responses were formulaic.

Despite the central place occupied by the Australian Muslim community in the CVE programme experience, there are limited questionnaires addressing their viewpoints. In particular, there was a paucity of research previously undertaken on perspectives held by Australian religious and community leaders regarding the effectiveness and acceptability of CVE programmes. The selective use of focused, closed questions in the study’s initial online questionnaire provided a brief outline of the participants’ points of view on CVE programme. The acquisition of this background information from a broad range of participants allowed a more targeted approach to the personal interviews and, thus, greater depth and relevance of inquiry, particularly when coupled with the responses to the online questionnaire’s open-ended questions.

3.2.5 Qualitative Data

Writing for the *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Sciences*, Patton (2002) (as cited in Etikan et al., 2016, p. 3) stated that qualitative methods of research “are for the most part, intended to achieve depth of understanding,” which contrasts with the breadth of understanding that quantitative research enjoys. Hence, combining the two methodologies provides a much more substantive collection of information.

As this study sought to explore Muslim leaders’ perspectives on the effectiveness of the CVE programme, through an analysis of the lived experiences of those involved, qualitative research methods were employed to clarify and elaborate upon the survey data. This study took the form of personal interviews and, thus, exemplified a phenomenological approach. A key benefit of this approach was that participants were
able to present their experiences through their own viewpoints, thereby allowing normative assumptions to be challenged. The researcher was mindful that the use of qualitative research aims to elicit a respondent’s perspective on how they view the world. As such, an opportunity existed for the researcher to clarify, understand and explain points of view rather than make sweeping generalisations.

As qualitative research is primarily concerned with understanding individual experiences and “how they see or understand their world” rather than “test new ideas and new theories” (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, pp. 33-35), it was particularly suited to the purposes of this study. Additionally, qualitative research was heavily relied upon in the study as it “stresses the process in which individuals create and give meaning to their social experience and lived realities” (Wang, 2015, p.357), while also emphasising the contextual influences underlying these experiences, as reflected in the respondents’ experiences in relation to their perspectives of the effectiveness of the CVE programme.

Qualitative research methods enable greater scope and breadth on topics that are lacking in prior research (Flick, 2014). Hence, the use of open-ended exploratory research methodology (such as personal interviews) was used to empower individuals from within the Australian Muslim community to narrate their experiences and viewpoints.

3.3 **An Auto-Ethnographical Approach**

Because of my connections and affiliations with the Muslim community and its leaders, the study used the theoretical framework and methodologies of auto-ethnography. This approach:

- Recognises the role of the researcher as a member of the community being researched, and therefore is a representative subject of the community. Such an
approach allows the author as the researcher to be both the object and subject of the inquiry, speaking in their own voice.

- Allows the author as the researcher to be personally engaged with the other voices in the data.

- Allows the author to retain their identity as a member of the community, but also to become a self-aware scholar, providing insights and contributing to greater social knowledge within the Muslim community and the broader Australian community.

- Implies the author is an insider of the Muslim community and an outsider, a member of another (academic) community (Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 1999).

In this study, my identity as an Australian Muslim enabled me to overcome some of the traditional barriers and power imbalances that are present between a researcher and their study participants. My connections and affiliations with the Muslim community and its representatives, including religious and community leaders, provided invaluable access to a diverse range of Australian Muslims. As an Australian Muslim woman of Arab background, I was aware of the diversity of Australia’s Muslim community and the challenges this raises in selecting a sample. I was also cognisant that my personal connections, combined with experience working in the public sector, was advantageous in helping to gain the confidence and support needed from participants to undertake this research.
3.4 Ethical considerations

Due process and procedures were followed to gain approval for the research, complying with the ethical standards governing the conduct of the research. An application was submitted to the Charles Sturt University’s Human Research Ethics Committee for the questionnaire and interview schedule. The letter of approval is provided in Appendix C.

3.5 Phase One: Online Questionnaire

The online questionnaire was developed through several iterations of drafting questions and pre-testing with a small group of respondents, including research supervisors and some purposively selected participants. Members of the pre-testing group who also met the target population criteria were invited to participate again by responding to the final online questionnaire. Initially, questionnaires were distributed via email to the list of potential participants and implemented via the online Survey Monkey facility administered by the Manager of SPAN, a research support unit of Charles Sturt University.

One hundred letters of invitations were sent out inviting participation in the research. Thirty-two participants responded to the online questionnaire and 20 paper copies were provided to participants on request with pre-paid envelopes. These responses were manually added to the online data. Although 32 individuals participated, not all of them completed all of the questions in the online questionnaire (see Appendix A). The online questionnaire asked if participants would be interested in taking part in phase two of the research involving a personal interview. Eleven participants agreed to partake in the interviews.
Respondents were asked questions that addressed the research objectives. The online questionnaire sought demographic information from participants and elicited information, awareness of and opinions on the CVE programme. The questionnaire asked specific questions about the participants’ engagement with young people, community responses to crises, the role of leaders in response to the media’s portrayal of Muslims, the government’s agenda on counter-terrorism and how the community addresses extremism. The questionnaire also asked community leaders about their experiences in engaging with the government before and after September 11. It investigated their trust in government agencies and the impact of political rhetoric on that trust. There were questions about sources of funding for countering terrorism that were received by their organisations and the impact these resources have had on capacity building. Together, the questions provided an opportunity for participants to think about these issues in preparation for phase two of this research – a personal interview with open-ended questions and participant-driven discussion to gain insight into their perspectives.

The online questionnaire was used to discover some general ideas, impressions and broad themes that were then used to form the questions raised in the interviews. Despite its utility, the online questionnaire alone was inadequate for the purposes of the study. This was primarily because participants may have been uncomfortable or suspicious to provide detailed information through an online medium due to the sensitivity surrounding the subject matter or Muslims and countering violent extremism that is under investigation. Furthermore, participants’ responses may have been restricted by the time and effort required to formulate a response and the character space limits, thus this format only allowed for a superficial exploration of their experiences and attitudes. Open-ended responses require high-level language, comprehension and communication skills and take time to write – these are reasons for their limitations.
3.5.1 Questionnaire Design

To answer the research question, a number of questions were formulated to gain some insights into Muslim leaders’ perspectives on the merits of the CVE programme, and their perceptions on how the government is engaging the Muslim community in countering extremism.

Section 1 (Qs 1-15) sought participants’ consent to having responses used in the research and demographic information. This included background about birthplace, highest level of education attained, gender, occupation, postcode, languages spoken, main language used when communicating with young people, date of migration to Australia and which mosque (mussallah) they visited to perform prayers. The inclusion of demographic information allowed for a range of perspectives and experiences to be included, as well as providing a platform for others to replicate the study.

Section 2 (Qs 16-31) dealt with the CVE programme, comprising closed and open-ended questions. Information was elicited from participants on their awareness of the Federal government’s CVE programme and how they were involved or consulted about views or experiences in countering extremism in their communities. Participants were asked to identify what aspects of the programme have or have not worked, and where improvements may be needed. Participants were asked to comment on the overall outcome of the CVE programme and whether they think it is the most appropriate and effective way of targeting extremism. There were questions directed towards understanding the participants’ views regarding the way the government engages with the community to counter extremism. In addition, participants were asked about the way in which the community is already engaged with issues of countering extremism and how these efforts could be strengthened.
Section 3 (Qs 32-39) explored participants’ views on their organisations and whether they received government funds specifically designed to steer young people away from extremism. The questions in this section also sought information about the sources of funding, how funding was used and whether funding was successful in achieving its objectives. Further, the questions asked participants to think about better ways to target funding as this information could help pave the way to bettering government and community initiatives for countering violence. This section was important in gaining some insights from the participants on whether the receive government funds to steer young people away from violent extremism and whether it was successful.

Section 4 (Qs 40-41) explored the participants’ roles as community leaders in times of local or global crisis and how often they were consulted by State, Territory or Commonwealth governments on issues affecting the country.

Section 5 (Qs 42-46) dealt with the participants’ experiences in dealing with the media and how they responded to negative media coverage. It also explored leaders’ views on whether media coverage has affected their community.

Section 6 (Q 47-48) sought leaders’ views on if and how they conveyed messages that are aimed at countering extremism in their communities.

Section 7 (Qs 49-50) asked participants of the extent of their knowledge of the Australian Government’s counter-terrorism agenda and its broader aims.

Section 8 (Qs 51-54) sought participants’ experiences and the nature of their contact with the Australian Government immediately following September 11. It asked them to share their level of satisfaction in the way the government engaged the Muslim community at this time.
Section 9 (Qs 55-61) explored the participants’ level of trust in government agencies before and after September 11. If participants experienced any change in their levels of trust in the government, they were asked to provide reasons for this change. Participants were also asked whether contact with government agencies, such as the AFP and State Police, affected the level of trust among individuals in the community and, if so, how this contact affected their trust. Participants were also asked to indicate their level of trust in government agencies including the State Police, ASIO, AFP, Attorney-General and the Department of Immigration, and Citizenship (DIAC).

Section 10 (Qs 62-65) specifically explored participants’ perceptions on whether State and Federal government responses to local or international events affected their level of trust in the government, and if and how political rhetoric has affected their trust in the Australian Government.

Section 11 (Qs 66-69) sought information about funding received by the organisation from State or Federal governments, and the nature and purpose of the funding received. It asked participants if they considered the funding was adequate for their organisation’s capacity to respond to issues affecting their community.

Section 12 (Qs 70-71) asked about the participants’ willingness to take part in phase two of the research – personal interviews. Of the 32 participants who completed the online questionnaire, 11 gave their consent to being interviewed.

3.6 Phase Two: Personal Interviews

Forty-three Muslim representatives from Sydney participated in personal semi-structured interviews. Participants were approached in writing via email using the list of community
leaders generated for the research and followed up with a telephone call seeking their involvement in the research.

Participants were provided with information to enable them to make an informed decision about participating. Further information was provided in writing via email or over the phone where participants requested clarification of the process. This was done on an individual basis tailored to each person’s specific question. Throughout the conduct of the research, participants were continuously reminded that they must give their consent and their identity will be kept confidential and their anonymity protected. Participants were also advised, at any time during their interview, they could opt to withdraw from the research. Naturally, participants who chose not to provide their consent did not participate in the research. The interviews were undertaken between August 2013 and October 2015.

3.6.1 Interview Procedure

The interviews were conducted in a home environment or office to limit outside distractions. They were guided by a set of questions and conducted in a non-judgmental and non-threatening manner. Each participant received a list of questions to review and reflect upon prior to the interview (see Appendix B). The duration of the interviews ranged from one to three hours.

On arrival, the participants completed a consent form and were reminded that they could withdraw at any time. Participants received instructions orally and in writing. After the completion of the interview, participants were asked if they had any questions or insights they wished to add that had not already been addressed.
3. 7 Challenges and Limitations

The study sought the views of Muslim community leaders on the effectiveness of the Australian Federal government’s CVE programme in disengaging young people from the influence of violent ideologies.\(^5\) While a diverse sample of participants were invited to take part in the research, including various sects, there was no scope in the research for exploring Sunni/Shi’a perspectives. This could be an area of further exploration in another study. Funding issues and time constraints limited the researcher’s capacity to expand the interview sample beyond mainly Muslims leaders in Sydney. This research did not elicit the views of the Federal government or law enforcement agencies on the CVE programme and its effectiveness, which was a limitation in the scope of the research. Another limitation was that journalists, editors and media representatives were not interviewed.

The study was aware that undertaking research within the context of post-September 11 terrorism might be a challenging and difficult task given the current security environment. The research topic was highly complex and sensitive, and has been conspicuous on the government’s agenda for some time, as well as generating considerable concerns in the wider community. Given the way in which Muslim communities had been portrayed as ‘problem communities’ and automatically perceived as ‘suspect’ (Spalek & Imtoual, 2007), I had to be more attentive towards community leaders, who may have found the

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\(^5\) The data provided by the respondents drew on their experiences of the events as they occurred up until 2015. An up-to-date timeline of the events has been provided as they occurred at the time of writing the thesis. As such, the research focussed only on the three-year period leading up to 2015 and that further research could bring the data up to date.
events of September 11, and those that followed, disturbing and impactful, as they navigate through a difficult security environment. It was anticipated there would be challenges in the course of the research and that considerable sensitivities needed to be addressed.

As a member of the Australian Muslim community and having enjoyed over three decades of experience working closely with the community and all levels of government to improve service delivery and participation of Muslims in Australia’s culturally diverse society, I enjoy a position of trust and respect. Some participants expressed frustrations that the increasing amount of research currently undertaken was targeting the community and increasing the demands placed on leaders to respond. An important observation made throughout the conduct of the research was that the overwhelming majority of those interviewed and approached expressed and showed signs of fatigue. However, all participants willingly agreed to take part in honest and meaningful discussions with the researcher. Such encounters and challenges were dealt with by offering comfort and understanding in an environment of heightened fear and suspicion of Islam and Muslims as the ‘Other’ and the ‘enemy within’ as posing a threat to Australia’s security through home-grown terrorism.

This research did not elicit the views of the Federal government or law enforcement agencies on the CVE programme and its effectiveness. Thus, this was a limitation in the scope of the research. Another limitation was that journalists, editors and media representatives were not interviewed. REPEATED

3.8 Data Analysis

To address the research questions, a SWOT method was used as the framework to guide the analysis of the data. As stated by Prunckun (2015), in chapter 11 of his book Scientific
Methods of Inquiry for Intelligence Analysis, SWOT is one of “a number of techniques” that analysts could employ “to make sense of unstructured data” (p. 169). He states that the SWOT method was “originally devised for corporate planning in the business community” (Prunckun, 2015 p. 170). This method of analysis has also been adopted in an intelligence setting (Prunckun, 2015). The SWOT analysis, first considers the strengths and weaknesses of the responses, then it moves on to highlight the opportunities presented before considering the potential threats. The findings are discussed based on the evidence drawn from the study, followed by recommendations and conclusion.

By understanding the factors identified via the SWOT analysis, the views of community leaders may assist in the formulation of recommendations that will inform the development of more effective approaches for engaging the community in countering violent extremism.

The data collected from the online questionnaire and the transcribed interviews was read closely and revisited regularly so as to gain an understanding of the information provided. This enabled the sifting of data to make comments or form impressions. Consideration was given to the quality of the data; not all data collected was relevant to answer the research question. The data collected needed to add value or meaning to the research. Accordingly, time and effort was spent by the researcher familiarising herself with the responses to identify the most appropriate analysis required to answer the research question. The approach taken was to first focus on how the participant responded to each question or topic area. The data was compiled for each question, and the responses subsequently grouped for further analysis.

The next step was to organise the information collected by coding the data. Because the essence of qualitative analysis involves reading and understanding the text and
identifying coherent categories, the data was categorised by themes and sub-themes to bring meaning to the responses. This process continued to be implemented until all data was identified and labelled according to all relevant themes.

The Charles Sturt University spatial analysis unit managed and administered the online questionnaire. All interviews were recorded; some were commercially transcribed and the researcher also transcribed some. Each participant was given an identification number linking their questionnaire to the personal interview. All responses to questions were entered using Microsoft Word, including notes and observations. Data was stored in hard and soft copies, while hard copies were compiled according to different themes. All data was filed securely. Key themes were identified and categorised using a colour coding Nvivo software system.

Using data collected from the online questionnaire and interviews ensured the analysis process was not biased and therefore helped to ensure the credibility of the research findings. It also assisted me to reach conclusions and formulate recommendations with confidence and authenticity.

The study was also conscious of the importance of seeking supervisors’ and other experts’ feedback on the draft questionnaire and interview questions and guidance on the SWOT analysis. The feedback received throughout the study proved to be extremely advantageous as it contributed towards the credibility of the research findings.
4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis undertaken on the survey and interview data. Although the survey and interviews explored a wide range of questions, not all of the data yielded results that could be used. This was because some of the data was provided in response to other questions (i.e. repeated), overlooked by the respondent or stated in more articulate terms elsewhere in the instruments.

The data is organised into two broad groups: survey results and interview results (with each presented from the ‘internal government policy environment’ and ‘external Muslim community involvement’ perspectives). Each group is further arranged according to how the data fit within the SWOT factors: that is, internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats). These results are presented according to the themes that emerged from the data.

4.2 Surveys: Internal Government Policy Environment

4.2.1 Strengths

4.2.1.1 The Countering Violent Extremism Program

Community consultation: Fifty-four per cent of respondents stated they had been consulted on the CVE programme (survey question [SQ] 16).

Aspects of the CVE programme that have worked well: Three respondents highlighted aspects of the CVE programme they thought worked well. They noted the professionalism and sincerity of government staff overseeing the projects within the CVE programme. Respondents also noted a positive outcome was achieved by the organisation and staff
responsible for overseeing the funding by enhancing community/government engagement (SQ 23). Direct participants in the CVE programme believed the projects were well-developed and supported the progress and advancement of the individual’s spiritual understanding, maturity and self-awareness (SQ 23).

4.2.2  Weaknesses

4.2.2.1  The Countering Violent Extremism Programme

Community consultation: Although fifty-four per cent of respondents stated they were consulted on the CVE programme, forty-six per cent said they were not, indicating an opportunity for the Commonwealth Government to better target community leaders. (SQ 16). Local Islamic religious leaders and scholars (imams) do not appear to have been consulted. Therefore, there appears to be a gap in the government consultative process (SQ 17).

How Muslim communities learned about the CVE programme: Respondents were more likely to be acquainted with the CVE programme if they were affiliated with a community group. This indicates that communication on the programme appears to be unidirectional—that is, government agencies are only targeting Muslim organisations, but not people who are not associated with these groups (SQ 19).

Involvement in a CVE-funded project: Only five respondents indicated they had first-hand knowledge of the CVE grants programme. The data indicated only two organisations received funding for a CVE-targeted project. The other three organisations were participants in this CVE funded project (SQ 20 and 21).

Seventy per cent of respondents stated they were not involved in the CVE programme, while thirty per cent said they were. There appears to be an issue about the number of
organisations that have not participated in the CVE programme: only a small number received funding under the programme. One of these organisations was based in Melbourne and the other in Sydney (SQ 20).

*Areas of CVE that need improvement:* Respondents indicated, although some aspects of the CVE programme worked, they were of the view that further improvements were needed. Data showed thirty per cent of respondents who were involved in managing or participating in a CVE project criticised the projects for being short sighted, not interacting with youth or building on the strengths of the community, and having poor evaluation or poor accountability to the government and community (SQ 22).

Respondents believed the CVE programme should be integrated into a more holistic community engagement strategy. Programmes to counter violent extremism should be community driven and led by imams who are working to demystify Islam, and community leaders who are mentoring young men and women. Respondents suggested that the only way to make the programme more effective was to develop long-term strategies that addressed the needs of Muslim youth (SQ 22).

*Community leaders’ awareness of the Federal Government’s agenda on countering violent extremism:* Respondents indicated that there were negative connotations associated with CVE terminology and its implications, and they suggested the programme name needed to be changed. One respondent expressed frustration that the Attorney-General’s Department had failed to respond to this concern when it was raised during consultations (SQ 18 and 24).

Respondents said the CVE programme makes a statement about the communities and participants that partake in it: that by signing on to the programme they implicitly
supported extremist narratives. Yet most Muslim groups do not agree with extremist narratives. Respondents argued that the terminology therefore aligns the broader Islamic community with a small problematic element within that society and restricts their ability to use new terminology to describe their journeys and freedom to alter the public discourse surrounding their communities (SQ 24).

Respondent (R) 2: I and many other community leaders expressed our concern at the use of the title ‘CVE.’ This was ignored by the Attorney General’s office.

Appropriateness of the CVE programme in targeting extremism in the community: None of the respondents believed the CVE programme was the most appropriate or effective way of targeting extremism in their community (SQ 24).

Clarity of CVE grant objectives reaching disaffected youth: The respondents indicated there was some confusion as to the actual grant objectives of the CVE programme. One respondent was critical that the CVE programme had not effectively reached those youth who were most affected and indicated that non-Muslim organisations benefiting from grants did not work with at-risk Muslim youth (SQ 24).

Grant management and evaluation, and ineffectiveness of targeting Muslim youth: Respondents raised issues concerning better ways of evaluating CVE programme funded projects. There was criticism that the CVE projects were continually being funded despite “missing the mark.” It was suggested that more detailed evaluations should be conducted on each project to assist in identifying their successes and failures.

One respondent said: “The CVE programme doesn’t reach disaffected youth and that has been its biggest criticism. It’s doing CVE work with young people who believe in moderate Islam even if they are confused” (SQ 24).
R1: No proper evaluation of outcomes after the execution of different funding projects. Funding organisations that are not Muslim, have not the slightest clue about Islam and the sacred knowledge which can be used to combat extremist ideas, and expect them to work with youth at-risk from the Muslim community.

Need for a more holistic approach to address violent extremism: The respondents discussed the need for a more holistic approach to addressing violent extremism and said that the CVE programme funding will not, on its own, solve problems among its perceived target populations. Some respondents even suggested the definition of extremism must be broadened (SQ 24).

One respondent suggested the programme should provide “initiatives on Islamophobia [in addition to] Islamic extremism.” Another respondent broadened the concept further by suggesting the “extremism” targeted under these grants is caused by government foreign policy, issues of drugs and mental health that can affect families, and lack of culturally and religiously sensitive services. Furthermore, the respondents noted the need to use community assets to respond to present dangers (SQ 24).

Need for greater collaboration with and engagement of government with mainstream Islamic religious leaders and Islamic scholars: Respondents suggested that Islamic religious leaders and scholars (imams) have a critical role to play in addressing extremism. It was further suggested that Australian Muslims needed to strengthen their ties with Islamic scholars in other parts of the world (SQ 24 and 26).

R5: The programme needs to engage spiritual leaders/imams from diverse religious understandings because they reach different markets.

Ways the CVE programme could be more effective: When questioned about whether the CVE programme could be more effective, all respondents agreed (SQ 26 and 27). Respondents broadly agreed the CVE projects are missing key ingredients for successful
intervention. Respondents emphasised a bottom-up approach, citing the need for community infrastructure, cooperation between community members (including the business sector), support groups and cooperation with religious leaders. In addition, the development of projects that provide direct benefits to the community as a whole and address real problems at a grassroots level were suggested (SQ 27).

Concerns about the way government engages the community in relation to countering extremism and suggestions for ameliorating these issues: Seventy per cent of respondents indicated they had concerns relating to the manner in which the government engaged with the community about countering extremism (SQ 28). Respondents said there was a need for the government to provide alternative ways to engage young people through authentic Islamic knowledge via a more strategic approach to engagement. They suggested improved and targeted long-term funding to organisations that have the capacity to address the needs of youth and provide services, as well as provision of infrastructure and youth-specific programmes that enhance engagement and promote harmony (SQ 29).

Many said the government should pursue a policy of inclusion and moderation, and avoid stigmatising the community with negative labels implying they are a problem. One respondent said governments should consult communities before developing programmes and characterise their efforts, as ‘prevention’ or ‘de-radicalisation’ while disassociating this from national security matters (SQ 31).

Respondents also stressed the need for imams and religious leaders to play a greater role in promoting moderation, tolerance and the true essence of the teachings of Islam. It was also suggested the government should be investing in imams and scholars – particularly from abroad – who can work with youth and their parents.
The need for the Muslim community to improve its public image through public relations exercises using positive imagery was identified by respondents. In addition to continuing to promote belonging, it was suggested this would help to counter the damage done by media to Muslim youth and society (SQ 31).

*Government-funded programmes aimed at engaging with youth to steer them away from extremism:* Only three respondents had ever received government funding to support their initiatives in steering youth away from violent extremism (SQs 32–39). Two of these initiatives targeted Somali youth and the other was funded to support work with at-risk prisoners, targeting mostly new Muslims and Muslim youth (SQ 32 and 33). The Attorney-General’s Department and the Department of Immigration and Communities funded these projects. Eighty-six per cent of respondents had never received any funding and ten respondents skipped the question.

*Effectiveness of government-funded projects in attracting young Muslims:* SQ 37 and 38 probed the reasons why respondents believed their project was effective in attracting young people. As the responses below show, one respondent noted their project targeted mainly young and new Muslims in the prison system. The other respondent highlighted the challenges experienced in reaching out to and mobilising Muslim youth, and noted that progress was made in gaining their trust and confidence through persistence and the provision of opportunities (SQ 37 and 38).

R3: It certainly did have its challenges. Was definitely not easy reaching out to and mobilising the youth. However, through persistence, different opportunities, winning their trust and confidence … we made good progress.
Ways that funding could be better targeted: Respondents suggested ways that funding could be better targeted. Some suggested funding should be allocated to projects that focus on converts who they believe are at greater risk of being radicalised (SQ 39).

R1: Converts are at the greatest risk of being radicalised because they are so vulnerable. Convert support care are severely under resourced and in dire need of funding.

Consultation by State, Territory or Federal governments on issues affecting the community: When questioned about how often leaders were consulted by government on issues affecting the community, fifty-five per cent said they were consulted intermittently, while five per cent were consulted once only. Fifteen per cent said they were not consulted. Twelve did not answer the question (SQ 41).

4.2.2.2 Media Coverage and its Impact on the Community

Individual/community leaders and media engagement: SQ 42 showed that eighty per cent participants had responded to negative media coverage. On the other hand, only twenty per cent said they did not respond to negative media coverage (SQ 42). While a significant number of Muslim leaders were involved in responding to negative media coverage, the data showed that twenty percent responded to negative media coverage regularly and fifty-three per cent responded intermittently, while twenty seven per cent responded once only (SQ 43).

Ways that negative media affected the community: Respondents described the various ways that negative media coverage affected the community. They cited the formations of stereotypical views, which they perceived were instrumental in inflaming tensions, contributing to heightened fears, increasing incidents of attacks and Islamophobia, and affecting feelings of inclusion, belonging and safety (SQ 44).
How community leaders responded to negative media coverage: Respondents described the different ways they had engaged with the media in their attempt to counter negative media coverage (SQ 45). A number of respondents revealed high levels of anxiety with respect to how they responded towards negative media coverage. Several stated they attempted to minimise the damage by talking personally with journalists or organising media skills workshops (SQs 45 and 46).

Leaders’ engagement with media to promote positive messages about Muslims: In engaging with mainstream media, respondents presented the different activities they have used to engage with the media and promote positive messages about Islam and the Australian Muslim community. Three key activities were noted: engaging with the media to portray positive stories; issuing media statements to correct misinformation about Islam; and promoting positive stories and events in the media about the Muslim community. Respondents also communicated the importance of building relationships with the media and organising meetings with editors to discuss the impact negative stories can have on members of the community and also to promote projects that provide a counter narrative to stories that imply or state Muslims are terrorists (SQ 46).

There was strong advocacy for the importance of better public relations about Muslim communities. The respondents were aware of, or had been involved in, creating positive news stories about Muslims in the newspaper. Several talked about advocacy groups or community media strategy networks that exist to “counter negative reports and inform media appropriately” (R11), but did not define or describe what these groups did. A few respondents went further and described efforts to engage the media to inform them about a story to ensure correct portrayal of information and prevent misunderstanding or bias (SQ 46).
R3: I am involved in a media lobby group ‘Media Strategy Network’ email group, established by Sydney community leaders and [which] includes representation of Muslim community leaders from across the nation. In question 42 I should have pointed out that when I am contacted by media to talk about issues pertaining to Islam I make a concerted effort to correct misinformation and to make media statements and provide key messages that are framed in a positive manner. Media releases are sent promoting positive events in the Muslim community e.g. blood drives.

R12: Our community participated in many positive projects serving the Australian community at large and we try to involve the media as much as we can [to] show that Australian Muslims are [an] integral part of the Australian community.

4.2.2.3 The Government’s Agenda on Countering Terrorism

Community leaders’ awareness of the Federal Government’s agenda on countering terrorism: Responses to SQ 49 showed that over forty-seven per cent of respondents were completely unaware of the Federal Government’s agenda on countering terrorism. Some respondents perceived the government’s counter-terrorism agenda and CVE programme to be specifically targeting Islamic groups and designed to isolate and label the Muslim community (SQ 50). On the other hand, thirty per cent of respondents believed the government’s counter-terrorism agenda targets Islam and Muslims:

R2: To target and monitor hard-line Islamic groups deemed to be of concern.

R9: Isolate and label whole of the Muslim community. (SQ 50)

Language linking Islam with terrorism: Respondents observed the government’s language strongly linked its opposition to terrorism with Islam. Muslims were seen to be responsible or held to account for acts of terror occurring in other countries. As one respondent aptly said, “Trust was lost due to the way the government approached the war on terror, making Muslims responsible for all the problems of the world. It felt as if the war was directed at Islam.” (R1). Respondents believed there was widespread Islamophobia in the public arena and the government did not protect the Muslims or
“show them respect.” It was further pointed out that, after September 11, the government “exploited the situation” (R3) rather than encouraging the public to show restraint. Another said, “The targeting of Australian Muslims intensified.” (R4) The government also stepped up its surveillance of the Muslim community and made regular reports about the security situation within Australia. “Muslims were held accountable for all acts of terror around the world. There is a feeling that the war was directed at Islam and not terrorism” (R5) (SQ 57). Table 3 shows the respondents’ level of trust in the Australian Government after September 11. The table show an increase in the level of respondents’ distrust.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Per cent (%)</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Distrustful</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distrustful</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trusting</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Trusting</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answered question</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped question</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.2.4 Community/Government Engagement Post-September 11

Community leaders’ views on their engagement with the government post-September 11: Responses to SQ 51 indicated that ninety-five per cent of respondents who answered the question were in Australia on September 11, 2001. Thirteen respondents avoided the question, while one was not in Australia at the time.
Contact with government officials: Over forty-four per cent of respondents said they had contact with government officials at the State or Federal level following September 11. Fourteen respondents did not answer the question (SQ 52).

Contact with government officials post-September 11: Responses to SQ 53 showed that contact with government officials was mainly through meetings with State Police, and other law enforcement agencies, such as AFP and ASIO. One respondent said the president of their organisation was nominated to be on the Muslim Community Reference Group set up by the Howard Government (SQ 53).

Level of satisfaction regarding the way the Australian Government engaged the Muslim community post-September 11: Responses to this question highlighted that, overall, fifty per cent of respondents were very dissatisfied, while twenty-two per cent were indifferent. On the other hand, twenty-eight per cent were satisfied. No respondent was very dissatisfied. Fourteen did not answer the question (SQ 54).

4.2.2.5 Community Trust in Government Before and After September 11

Level of trust in the Australian Government before September 11: Twenty-three per cent of respondents indicated they were distrustful of the Australian Government; twenty-nine per cent were indifferent, and forty-seven per cent were trusting. Fifteen respondents avoided the question (SQs 55 and 56).

Most respondents expressed the view that the government was trusted by the community prior to September 11. Respondents expressed feelings that Muslims were not being watched and targeted, and the community had worked hard to develop good working relationships with all levels of government. They thought opportunities were available for
Muslims to achieve real outcomes and be good role models for young people, enabling Muslims to contribute to society (SQ 55).

**Level of trust in the Australian Government after September 11:** Eighteen per cent were either trusting or very trusting of the government after September 11 (SQ 56). Two participants said the government worked closely with the Muslim community, providing funding for programmes, setting up hotlines for assistance, and contacting the community via agencies such as the AFP. Respondents expressed the view that the community received more attention than before September 11.

Notwithstanding September 11, the respondents felt that cooperation was possible where the government cooperated and worked with them first (SQ 57). Fifty-nine per cent indicated they were personally very distrustful or distrustful of the Australian Government after September 11. Twenty-four per cent said they were indifferent while eighteen per cent were either trusting or very trusting of the Australian Government (SQ 57).

**Changes in the level of trust after September 11:** Fifty-nine per cent of respondents indicated that contact with government agencies, such as the AFP and State Police, had changed their level of trust, while forty-one per cent said the contact did not affect the level of government trust in the community. Fifteen respondents overlooked the question. Respondents were evenly divided as to how contact with government sources changed their level of trust (SQ 59).

**Ways that government contact influenced levels of trust:** Respondents were evenly divided as to how contact with government sources changed their level of trust. While a number of respondents suggested the government worked well and engaged with the
community, and offered support and clarification on the anti-terrorism laws, there was recognition this contact was not immediate and it took time to properly develop these protocols. Respondents did not see any positive outcomes from the Government–Muslim community interaction; they felt it was wholly negative and the government’s contact was not sincere. They referred to incidents of law enforcement acting excessively against members of the Muslim community suspected of terrorism (SQ 60).

Some respondents said, due to increased contact with government officials such as the AFP and other government agencies after September 11, their levels of trust increased. They also cited increased engagement and statements issued by former AFP Commissioner Mick Keelty as helpful and contributing to increased trust (SQ 59, 60 and 63).

R3: During times of great crises, the Australian Federal Police sought to engage the Muslim leaders and the community to help them to understand that these are difficult times but sought to increase communication and engagement not previously experienced. (SQ 59)

R7: Gradually after a period of time. It takes time to earn the respect and trust and I would say the consistency and long-term commitment the authorities showed made an important difference. (SQ 60)

R3: I have worked with and met many VIC police, AFP agents who seem like they have a genuine respect for the Australian Muslim community. Also media statements made by Mick Keelty (former AFP Commissioner) have been very helpful. (SQ 63)

Responses to Question 61 (see Table 4) indicate that respondents still had trust in State Police, Federal Police, the Attorney-General’s Department and DIAC following September 11. Some respondents, however, expressed concerns about trusting ASIO, the Attorney-General’s Department and DIAC.
Table 4: Level of trust in government agencies after September 11 (SQ 61)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Answer Options</th>
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<th>Little Trust</th>
<th>No Trust</th>
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</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
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<td>Australian Federal Police</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Security Intelligence Organisation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
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*Effects of State or Federal Government responses to local or international events on levels of trust:* Ninety per cent of responses to SQ 62 indicated that State and Federal government responses to local or international events had affected their level of trust in the government. On the other hand, ten per cent said no or not at all.

The majority of respondents agreed the government’s response to international events was not handled well and this led to their mistrust. As examples, they referred to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the targeting of Australian Muslims unjustly, lack of “respect to the community,” lies about weapons of mass destruction, and scandals such as the boat people. They felt these actions worked hand-in-hand to fuel media and public stereotyping of Muslims. There was a sentiment that the police and ASIO were part of the problem, especially at grassroots level. Some recognised the government and police had tried to reach out to communities, but thought their actions on the whole spoke louder about their agenda. Interestingly, a few participants felt, despite the perceived negative actions of the government, it was still important to remain positive and have a good opinion of them (SQ 62).
Changes in the level of trust: Some respondents explained the reasons for the change in their level of trust, pointing to examples of what they saw as heavy-handed approaches: irrational and unjust trials of men without adequate evidence; trial by media; and generalisations made about Muslims. Other respondents said there was a perception the CVE programme showed the government did not know what it was doing because it had ignored the source of the problem. There was also mention that the government’s involvement in Afghanistan and fabrications told to the Australian people, together with their mishandling of the Iraq crisis and the boat people, had affected levels of trust (SQ 63).

Political rhetoric and its impact on trust: As Table 4 indicated, fifty-eight per cent of respondents said comments made by political leaders affected their trust in the Australian Government. A further thirty-two per cent said political leaders’ comments had somewhat affected their trust in the Australian Government, while eleven per cent said they were not affected at all (SQ 64).

How political leaders affected level of trust in government: The distrust bred by political leaders’ comments highlights that language and trust are inherently linked and can have the power to divide or strengthen communities. Respondents pointed to feelings of being aggrieved with the Howard era of politics leading to negative relations with the Muslim community. Respondents expressed concern about a perceived link between Muslims and terrorism, Muslims and migration issues/refugees, and Muslims and crime. Some respondents believed the Australian Government had singled out the Muslim community (excluding them from the community), and engaged in bigotry in the public arena and also sensationalism (SQ 65).
Several respondents noted incidents such as “ban the burqa” as being extremely divisive. A few respondents noted there was an improvement when Kevin Rudd became Prime Minister in reconciling government and the community on a whole range of issues, not just those concerning Muslims. Respondents referred to comments made by individual politicians that helped them form a view about government. Often, they focused on the negative public comments made by politicians (SQ 65).

R2: The linkage political statements made with Islam and terrorism has changed my level of trust.

R4: Often the great effort and hard work undertaken by the community is lost instantly due to irresponsible comments and words that incite hatred and discrimination directed at the community. This lack of insight and sensitivity has aggravated tensions and aided in loss of trust.

R13: The more bigoted the politician the more concerned I am … Politicians are responsible for the messages they convey to the media. If they were more responsible, perhaps the sensationalist reporting and bigotry would lessen.

4.2.2.6 General Funding Received by Organisations

Fifty-seven per cent of respondents indicated their organisation had received funding from local, State or Federal government, while forty-three per cent said they did not. Fourteen skipped the question (SQ 66).

*Nature and purpose of funding:* Respondents stated funding received from all levels of government focused on infrastructure development; community engagement and youth projects; building bridges; Saturday language school programmes; crime prevention; interfaith and intercultural dialogue; and volunteer equipment (SQ 67).

R2: Volunteer equipment grant, community-strengthening grant, community crime prevention grant.

R3: State Government funding for capacity building within the organisation was indeed our strongest level of endorsement and support.
R4: Community grants for youth engagement and multifaith/multicultural dialogue/engagement.

*Adequateness of funding received:* Responses to SQ 68 showed that eight per cent of respondents did not believe they received adequate funding, while twenty per cent believed they received adequate funding.

*Effect of inadequate funding on organisations’ capacity to respond to community issues:* Respondents to SQ 69 stated a lack of resources impeded their community groups from responding to existing or emerging problems, such as media incidents, and severely affected their ability to effectively address community needs, especially in times of local and global crisis.

They also could not provide the services needed by families. This lack of funding meant social cohesion could not be achieved in the community because they were not resourced enough to adequately engage with youth or the wider community. Respondents stressed their reliance on volunteers and donations. They acknowledged these were not enough to deliver everything the community needed. They also pointed to feelings of frustration and burn out among volunteers, who felt undervalued by the government for their contributions.

Other respondents argued that lack of adequate funding and resources had affected capacity building and prevented them from working effectively with the community and government on joint projects.

R4: It has made it more difficult and frustrating, especially when the core is social cohesion and community harmony.

R5: It has had considerable impact on our ability to respond effectively and to address longstanding issues and we are forced to deal with the backlash and be reactive to crisis it is difficult to have a strategic plan as we are always
dealing with crisis and the organisation does not have the capacity due to no funding to address the issues that affect the community.

R10: It reduced the organisation’s capacity to deliver needed services.

4. 3  **Surveys: External Muslim Community Environment**

4.3.1  **Opportunities**

4.3.1.1  **The Countering Violent Extremism Programme**

*Community consultation:* Many respondents suggested that Muslim communities should review the government consultative mechanisms to ensure the diversity of their communities (including those that are new, emerging and longer established) are consulted about violent extremism (SQ 16).

They believed the government could also consider greater involvement and consultations with youth-based organisations or groups who target young people and understand their specific needs, as well as engaging with and consulting imams and religious leaders to use their diversity of skills (SQ 17).

*Areas of the CVE programme that need improvement:* According to respondents, the government could explore ways to make the programme more effective by developing long-term strategies in partnership with the community, as well as developing better strategies for engaging with the Muslim community (SQ 22).

*Aspects of the CVE programme that have worked well:* Respondents saw positive outcomes from the CVE programme in achieving goals, engaging young people, and developing effective community/government relationships (SQ 23).

*Government needs to work with communities to build, foster and nurture trust:* Suggestions from respondents for building, fostering and nurturing trust included
ensuring outcomes of meetings, forums and consultations held with community leaders and representatives are followed up and community leaders/organisations are informed of progress made (SQ 25).

**Better community engagement strategies:** The government could expand on its links with communities, reach out to new organisations and build relationships that aid effective partnerships (SQ 25).

**CVE programme missing key ingredients to a successful intervention programme:** The government could consider incorporating suggestions made by leaders to improve the government’s intervention and prevention approaches in countering violent extremism (SQ 25).

**Ways the CVE could be more effective:** The government could consider a whole-of-government preventative approach to address the needs of young people, without linking it to the CVE programme. They could fund programmes and initiatives that enhance stronger and more resilient communities (SQ 26).

**Concerns about the way the government is engaging the community in relation to countering extremism:** The Commonwealth Government should consider addressing the issues raised by the respondents (SQ 28) and develop new approaches to engage young people, for example, by using Islamic scholars/imams to assist in imparting authentic Islamic knowledge (SQ 29).

**Community responses to extremism:** The Commonwealth Government could deliver educational programmes aimed at increasing communities’ awareness about counter-terrorism laws. Such programmes could ensure communities are better informed about
the impact of these laws. The government could create safe forums where members of
the community, especially youth, are encouraged to discuss extremism (SQ 30).

Opinions on how these efforts could be strengthened: Respondents suggested a number
of approaches where the government could work with communities, including peak
organisations and imams, to support the work they are already doing. The government
could provide funding for infrastructure, as well as social support programmes for young
people that promote social inclusion and integration. The government could lead by
example in addressing Islamophobia in politics and the media, and showcase good role
models within the Muslim community. The government could explore innovative ways
of engaging with and consulting Australia’s diverse Muslim community and its
organisations and leaders to enhance relationships and foster a more collaborative
approach to addressing the needs of the community. Respondents also suggested the
government could continue to promote and reinforce the message of inclusion and
harmony, and avoid associating Islam and the Muslim community with terrorism
(SQ 31).

Involvement in specific CVE projects: The government could explore ways of working
with the community to support projects that meet the needs of young people minus the
negative connotations that CVE carries (SQ 32).

Was the project successful in achieving its objectives? The government could review the
CVE programme and factors affecting its success. It should review whether the overall
CVE programme objective to steer young people away from violent extremism has been
effective. The government could consider the views expressed by the overwhelming
majority of respondents when developing future programmes that target vulnerable youth.
It should consider targeting emerging needs, such as the susceptibility of converts to extremist ideologies (SQ 35).

Was the CVE programme effective in attracting young Muslims? The government could enhance and build trust by exploring ways that young people can be supported with opportunities and programmes that promote inclusion, belonging and participation in Australian society (SQ 37–39).

4.3.1.2 Community/individual Responses to Local and Global Crisis

Responses to the survey showed the Australian Muslim community is actively involved in responding to issues that may threaten the safety and wellbeing of Australians, by working with and responding to government department officials and engaging with media. To enhance the community’s capacity to address issues of importance, the government could acknowledge the valuable role Muslim leaders play in supporting the government’s work (SQ 40).

How often have you been consulted by State, Territory or Federal government on issues affecting the community? The government could adopt a more inclusive consultative mechanism aimed at engaging Australia’s Muslim community (SQ 41).

4.3.1.3 Media Coverage and its Impact on the Community

How has negative media impacted the community? Media outlets could be more proactive in meeting with community leaders to increase their awareness of the issues and concerns raised by the community (SQ 42).

The impact of language used by government leaders and media can have detrimental effects on reinforcing a ‘them’ and ‘us’ rhetoric and in further alienating and marginalising the community and youth in particular. The government could also
consider the impact of this negative rhetoric on building trust and willingness of community leaders to engage the media (SQ 44).

*Negative media and political rhetoric impact on the community:* Anti-Muslim media coverage and political rhetoric could be instrumental in inciting hatred, fear and divisions in society, which may contribute to violent extremism. The media and the government should consider the serious implications this may have on radicalising vulnerable young people (SQ 44).

*How community leaders responded to negative media coverage:* The Muslim community can further harness their own skills and resilience by identifying, responding and engaging with the media in a timely manner. The community could also produce public relations strategies aimed at improving the image of Islam and Muslim by focusing on positive stories that counter the negative media narrative (SQ 45).

**4.3.1.4 Counter Extremism Narratives**

*Mediums used to convey messages to counter extremism:* The government could further build on the diversity of mediums used to convey positive messages that acknowledge the contribution the Muslim community makes to reinforcing messages of peace and harmony, and supporting the work of the government (SQ 48).
4.3.1.5 Community/government Engagement Post-September 11

In terms of the level of satisfaction for community/government engagement after September 11, the government could consider engaging more widely with Australia’s diverse Muslim community. They could also review their narrative so as not to implicate the Muslim community with terrorism and violent extremism (SQ 54).

4.3.1.6 Political Rhetoric and its Impact on Trust

*Negative media rhetoric impact on trust:* The government could use rhetoric that strengthens social cohesion and unity (SQ 64).
4.3.1.7 Funding Received by Organisations

The government could support organisations’ capacity to address the needs of the community with adequate funding in order to build strong, resilient and socially cohesive communities (SQ 66).

4.3.2 Threats

Community consultation: The lack of government engagement indicates that imams and religious leaders are perceived to be radical or not engaged (SQ 17).

Any strategy developed by the government should not be imposed on the community. It should be community driven, owned and endorsed by the community and its Leaders, especially imams and those working directly with young people, to show the government is actually listening and involving the community in finding solutions (SQ 22).

The government could consider the impact and cost that alienation and marginalisation can have on vulnerable young people at-risk of being influenced by violent ideologies (SQ 29).

Community responses to extremism: A perception that the community is being targeted and the government is not investing in the community it seeks to involve in addressing social issues and violent extremist ideologies (SQ 30).

Opinions on how these efforts could be strengthened: The government should consider the implications of anti-Muslim rhetoric in media and political Leaders on social cohesion and extremism (SQ 31).
Was the project successful in achieving its objectives? Some youth have refused to be part of the CVE programme due to negative connotations associated with it (SQ 35).

Political rhetoric and its impact on trust: The risk associated with language that seeks to divide and promote hatred is counterproductive and could fuel violence and enable vulnerable young people to be influenced by violent ideologies. This could impede progress made in fostering trust and in building community/government relationships to implement the government’s countering violent extremism agenda. Political rhetoric that promotes anti-Muslim sentiments could further compound the difficulties in forming relationships with the community and in developing partnerships (SQ 64).

4.4 Interviews: Internal Government Policy Environment

4.4.1 Strengths

4.4.1.1 The Impact of September 11 on Community Capacity to Deal with the Backlash

Respondents were asked about the impact of September 11 on the community and the community’s capacity to deal with the demands expected of them by the government, media and public. Their responses provided extensive knowledge and anecdotal evidence about the experiences of Muslims and the anti-Muslim hysteria that followed this day (interview question [IQ] 2). This question also provided extensive data about the extent of activities undertaken by organisations and their leaders in countering fear directed at Muslims (Islamophobia) and in focusing activities on interfaith dialogue as a way to increase understanding and challenge misconceptions about Islam and Muslims. The responses revealed a massive surge in interfaith dialogue and engagement across communities, which became the main function of community organisations struggling to deal with the repercussions on the community of the September 11 attacks.
4.4.1.2 The Role of Community Organisations and their Leaders in Response to September 11

Responses to IQ 3 revealed that community and religious leaders invested considerable time and energy working with the government and the community to address the problems encountered by Muslims following the introduction of new anti-terror laws and the increased scrutiny and backlash. In the aftermath of September 11, Muslim organisations became a central contact point for community, government and media enquiries. Many organisations became a hotline or ‘helpline,’ especially as the level of hate increased towards Muslims together with the need for timely responses and counselling. Respondents reported a massive increase in desire to learn about Islam as a faith from within (especially among youth) and outside the Muslim community.

4.4.2 Weaknesses

4.4.2.1 Nature of Services and Voluntary Input provided by Organisations’ Members and Sources of Funding

Data reveals that few organisations received government funding for the delivery of community settlement or youth- and women-specific programmes. Therefore, these organisations depended heavily on the contribution of volunteers to enable them to deliver services. Furthermore, given the complexity and intensity of verbal and/or physical attacks, the lack of funding and provision of resources limited the capacity of organisations to deal effectively with issues affecting the Muslim community following the backlash of September 11 (IQ 1).
4.4.2.2 The Impact of September 11 on Community Capacity to Deal with the Backlash

IQ 2 revealed that organisations and their leaders lacked sufficient resources and skills to deal effectively with the repercussions of September 11. Community leaders expressed great concerns about the impact this had on their ability to focus on long-term projects or planning, and said they were forced to be reactive.

P4: That was all voluntary but we were basically turned into a suicide hotline for some young girls who were suffering abuse while on the streets especially the girls who wore hijab and were visibly Muslim. They weren’t going to call the kid’s helpline when they were dealing with what they perceived as religious issues. They were calling the Muslim community and the only offices in the Muslim community that are well known and actually have people to answer phone calls are groups like the Lebanese Muslim Association so we were actually fielding a lot of calls during this time.

Respondents were asked to describe their experiences regarding the community’s reaction to the news of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York. The reaction expressed by organisation leaders to news of the tragedy was summed up as a “feeling of utter shock and disbelief as they questioned whether Muslims were really behind the tragedy” (P5) as the act of terror directly contradicts the teachings of the Quran and Islam. One leader said the news came as a “nightmare, a shock to the whole community” (P9). Respondents observed this tragedy had affected the Australian Muslim community profoundly. As individuals of Islamic faith, members of the Muslim community and the broader Australian society mourned the loss of life and condemned the actions taken by extremist individuals. Respondents emphasised this community sentiment continues to the present day, as has the solemn commitment of the Australian Muslim community to overcome extremism. Respondents also expressed great scepticism about the September 11 attacks and whether Muslims were really behind it. They alluded to other forces for orchestrating such a tragedy that Islam cannot condone (IQ 2).
Labelling, targeting and Islamophobia/attacks on Muslims and property: Respondents noted there was already a level of distrust directed at Muslims and said this was exacerbated by September 11. Respondents expressed greater feelings of alienation and marginalisation from mainstream Australian society. They felt targeted and were held responsible for all acts of violence and labelled as a national security threat. Australian Muslims felt insecure, unwelcomed and attacked as their religion became associated with terrorism (IQ 2):

P3: A community under attack, under siege and feelings that Muslims did not belong.

P20: I felt like we were under attack and we were always defensive thinking like someone’s going to get us someone’s always going to put us down I think that is always happening it’s always a Muslim’s fault …

P35: Huge … very very big. I should say it was a shock to all of the Muslim community simply because everyone started jumping up and down and accusing Islam accusing the Muslim community and creating an environment of non-tolerance and rejection to the Muslim and so on. Even though, I may add that all of the Muslim community have condemned the attacks on civilians in the USA talking about 9/11, so all of them have condemned those attacks.

P7: An increase in attacks on Muslim women, Islamic centres and mosques and an increase in fear, scrutiny and hate mail.

Community isolated, not supported by the government and ill-equipped to deal with the consequences: Respondents described common feelings of despair and paralysis due to the enormity of the tragedy and the backlash that followed. Respondents pointed out they felt vulnerable and defensive. The notion that Muslims posed a threat because of their violent teachings generated considerable discussions as their feelings about ‘being Australian’ were questioned. The debate about Islamic beliefs and practices being at odds with Australian values and way of life further affected the community’s ability to deal with the negative narrative that followed (IQ 2 and 3):
P5: Well Peter Costello and John Howard and some of the others have made some incredibly anti-Muslim comments. Peter Costello is constantly making comments that were inflaming sentiments amongst Muslims. These comments are very divisive a creating a lot of mistrust.

**Government scrutiny of the Muslim community and failure to support the community:**

Respondents highlighted the “repercussions and implications of September 11 continued to be felt many years down the track as the government started to put more pressure on the Muslim community” (P4). They also pointed out the government failed the Muslim community and failed them as citizens. A perception emerged that Muslims were not treated fairly in the legal system because of their religious identity (IQ 2):

P5: Muslims not treated fairly in the legal system because of religious identity.

**4.4.2.3 The Role of Community Organisations and their Leaders in Response to September 11**

Respondents expressed strong views about the impact that a lack of resources can have when organisations attempt to address issues of importance to the Muslim community. There was overwhelming consensus that a lack of skills and resources can seriously impede the community’s capacity to respond to crisis and planning:

P4: There was a lot of pressure on leaders at the time calling them into action and calling them into condemning the attacks.

While community leaders and volunteers have responded where they can, there are complex and challenging areas that require specific skills and expertise to achieve long-term outcomes. Respondents indicated that being under-resourced affected the ability of organisations to undertake long-term planning. A lack of funding also meant they could not effectively engage the wider community or youth (IQ 4):
P14: Definitely [the lack of resources available to the community at the time was a barrier preventing the community from addressing the issues at the time], if you can’t have the organisations set up and your leaders to lead and respond properly then it is a huge barrier. (IQ 4)

P5: Reactionary, yeah a lot of it was to shut down and basically internalise. And this is natural, it’s a natural human instinct that when you’re in a situation of crisis or emergency that you seek to protect yourself and that’s naturally what happened. What you did see was community groups trying to do was to educate. There was a huge surge towards educating, especially young Muslims, about what is Islam because what people finally came to realise was that these young kids were now going online because they weren’t being fulfilled, so they were going online to be educated about their religious [beliefs] and you’ll see many studies that talk about this why do Muslims in times of crisis go back to their religion. So, what you are seeing is these kids who had struggles seeking knowledge, but seeking it from places that couldn’t be verified or authenticated online and at that point ‘sheikh Google’ as many refer to. (IQ 3)

The impact of counter-terrorism laws on the Muslim community and increased scrutiny:
There was a perception among respondents that Australia’s new anti-terror laws specifically targeted Muslims and led to increased scrutiny of the Muslim community as well as generating heightened fear leading to subsequent backlash (IQ 3). It was argued these new laws and the targeting of Muslims have had a huge impact on the community’s overall trust in the government and law enforcement agencies. Respondents said the Muslim community expressed feelings of exclusion and scrutiny (IQ 2, 3, 9 and 14).

Media/political rhetoric: Respondents stressed that the media onslaught on the community generated considerable work and pressure to respond, as well as causing a considerable drain on resources. Respondents said there was pressure on the Muslim community and leaders to condemn the September 11 attacks and convince the public that the attacks had nothing to do with the Islamic religion. A considerable amount of time was spent dispelling misconceptions held about Islam and Muslims and in promoting interfaith dialogue (IQ 3):
P15: Unfair and unprecedented use of selective language to further alienate the Muslim community by way of media or political statements made in the public sphere; language used created an ‘us versus them’ analogy.

P16: [A] lot of it was media driven and had to respond to things. Basically the general response of ‘we are not terrorists, Islam means peace, we are not like those people that did those awful things’ and it was very defensive.

4.4.2.4 Government/Community Engagement Post-September 11

Community leaders described their encounters with the government post-September 11 and their perceptions of whether government engagement with the community had been effective (IQ 5). While people noted an increase in government engagement with the community, it was generally believed that this did not produce the outcome the community needed. Likewise, respondents noted a visible increase in community engagement with the government post-September 11, especially with the AFP, however, they viewed this engagement as not being as effective as it should have been.

Government/community engagement was viewed by the majority of respondents as being superficial and tokenistic. Some were critical of the fact the Indonesian and Turkish communities had been not engaged at all. There were strong perceptions among all respondents that the outcomes were inadequate, piecemeal and failed to produce the results needed by the community as expressed in meetings and consultations. Respondents also expressed concern that meeting and consultation outcomes were often left unknown. Furthermore, the Muslim Community Reference Group established by the Howard Government in 2005 was not seen by some community leaders as effective in achieving the outcomes intended (IQ 5).

P13: It did. I cannot measure it, but I can see that there is a difference between Australia pre 9/11 [and] Australia post 9/11 and this takes me back to the previous statement where the Australian government has opted to engage the Muslim community through the law enforcement channels and this cannot
last because while a lot of people feel that they are suspected of doing any wrongdoings…

4.4.2.5 Resources and the Impact on Organisations’ Capacity to Effectively Address Community Issues

There was overwhelming consensus between all respondents that a lack of skills and resources has seriously impeded the community’s capacity to respond to crises and existing or emerging problems, such as media incidents or the repercussions of September 11. While community leaders and volunteers respond where they can, there are complex and challenging areas that require specific skills and expertise to achieve long-term outcomes. Volunteers and other workers are not trained to work proactively in countering new problems and many expressed extremely high levels of fatigue and burnout (IQ 4).

Following the events of September 11, there were also strong views expressed on how the community was left to manage a crisis even though they were unskilled to do so and had neither the capacity nor the resources to respond effectively. Several respondents said they could not “respond to crises” well. They also could not provide the services needed by families due to the backlash against the Muslim community, which placed considerable strain on already-stretched resources (IQ 4).

P5: If you had full time people basically working on advocacy, e.g. representing the Muslim community to the Government and meeting with media, you would have a completely different approach because you have channels of communication and you can pick up a phone and speak to someone … I remember back then [it was] so difficult getting a meeting with a minister or anybody and just non-existent and even with the police no liaison groups and very very minor links and that affected things.

Providing adequate resources to community organisations so they can more effectively assist the government’s initiatives in countering terrorism was highlighted as an essential ingredient directly linked to enhancing social cohesion and resilience. The need for crisis
management and interfaith dialogue to counter fears about Islam was seen as being of paramount importance (IQ 4).

**4.4.2.6 Issues Confronting Young People of Islamic Faith and the Most Appropriate Ways to Address Them**

Respondents to (IQ 6) highlighted a number of key issues confronting young people of Islamic faith including: identity crisis; feelings of alienation and lack of belonging in Australian society; religious discrimination; lack of access to and participation in employment opportunities; lack of home-grown imams who can work with youth and understand their needs; lack of services and programmes that address diverse youth needs; and media/government rhetoric and the impact of language on trust. Respondents also said that due to religious leaders’ and many imams’ limited English, many youth were not effectively engaged (IQ 6).

P4: Absolutely because like at your local mosque you go to a Friday sermon and everyone’s preaching to you in Arabic and your understanding of Arabic is say 20% it’s going to be lost. It is all lost in translation and when the focus of local scholars was all about international issues and there’s nothing talking about local issues. You’ would have seen over the last ten years a huge shift in that area. The clerics in the region have realised that they have actually made a mistake. They were preaching to the parents and doing it very well, and talking on international issues and that’s all well and kind, but when you’re doing that constantly you’ve missed out on a whole group who are going to be the next leaders and now they’re seeking education from somewhere else. (IQ 3)

*Crisis of trust in government by youth:* Respondents said there was a crisis of trust in the government among youth. They cited factors that caused deterioration in trust, including criticism of the government’s agenda on terrorism, and a perception that Australia’s anti-terror laws were specifically targeting Muslims, and heightening fears of Islam and Muslims in the broader community. This has had a huge impact on the Muslim community and its trust in government and law enforcement agencies. There was a
perception that government initiatives have lacked sincerity in their approach and caused disenfranchisement of Muslim youth within a multicultural society (IQ 6).

Importantly, the majority of leaders interviewed strongly suggested there was a need for alternative approaches to engaging Muslim youth using ‘home-grown’ imams and religious leaders who had authentic Islamic knowledge, English language proficiency and an understanding of the issues facing young people. In the absence of this, the community has struggled to overcome language barriers that impede the transfer of authentic religious knowledge to youth and their engagement within the Muslim community and the community at large (IQ 6).

4.4.2.7 Political Rhetoric and its Impact on Community Confidence and Trust in Government

Respondents were of the view that the language used by politicians since September 11 severely affected community trust and confidence in the government. Respondents also cited examples of government rhetoric, which was seen as an impediment to real engagement of Muslims. They believed the language used by politicians and government leaders has been a key factor in the way Muslims have been viewed. They also indicated that the war on terror had raised suspicions towards Muslims, which contributed to increased levels of fear and attacks on Australian Muslims. There was a view the government had failed the community. Respondents also expressed strong views that the language used by politicians and government leaders should play a pivotal role in promoting trust (IQ 7):

P4: They are our leaders so when they go and speak they should be speaking on behalf of all Australians not just some Australians and they have to be very careful with the language they use, because they don’t want to stigmatise one segment of the community and at the same time don’t want to make other parts of the community feel fearful.
The respondents emphasised that language that seeks to heighten tension and divide communities during challenging times can affect community confidence and members’ feelings of being included. They highlighted the way that language used by politicians since September 11 has affected community trust and confidence in government, pointing to the destructive effects that negative and inflammatory language has had on the Muslim community and Australia’s socially cohesive and harmonious society. They went further to suggest that language has further alienated communities and contributed to radicalisation (IQ 7).

4.4.2.8 Media Representation of Muslims and its Contribution to Fear, Racism and Extremism

Data revealed that community leaders and representatives of organisations invested a significant amount of time in media and media-related activities (IQ 1 and 8). Overall, respondents believed that the media misrepresented Islam’s image. Furthermore, respondents felt the media strongly affects the way Australians view Islam and Muslims, although not all suggested the media was specifically against Islam (IQ 8).

The media’s coverage and handling of matters concerning Muslims was a recurring theme throughout this study. Respondents highlighted the negative impact of mainstream media in shaping attitudes of fear and hostility towards Australian Muslims. Respondents believed that though anti-Muslim sentiments in the media had always existed, the events of September 11 had further fuelled fear of Islam and Muslims. Respondents also emphasised that media coverage had influenced stereotypes of Muslims and contributed to increased levels of fear and racism (IQ 8).

P15: Yes. I think they do reinforce stereotypes with women and young people particularly of the bearded man who’s coming out of the courtroom and he’s got his big boys and they’re all wearing the garbs and they’ve got the big
beards and they’re all yelling ‘Allahu Akbar’ holding banners and scaring everyone.

P14: Yeah they have perpetuated stereotypes of Muslims amongst non-Muslims. [Such as] Muslims are queue jumpers. I think the most recent was that Muslims are refugees. Even at work, I think most journalists think most refugees are Muslims and I say, no that’s not necessarily the case. Do you have stats to back up that claim? But it’s just a social stereotype that they have.

P20: … the image in your mind is women oppressed … young Muslim male gangster, Muslim man wife beater or law breaker … that’s not Australian values that doesn’t fit in with what we’re doing. If you want to bring Sharia Law you don’t belong... it increases this lack of sense of belonging. It’s saying us and them and as long as you have someone pushing the ‘us and them’, communities will fail.

The impact of negative media on Muslim youth: Respondents also believed that negative media coverage has affected young people and led to feelings of alienation that may contribute to the formation of extremist views (IQ 8).

P4: Yes, look at the narrative, ‘go back to your country’. It is a catchphrase almost for the non-Muslims. There is no recognition that we belong here and if there is no recognition that we are here and belong here and if ‘go back to your country’ and being told that on a regular basis, how am I going to feel like I am actually not connected to this community. I will always sit on [the] outskirts and what occurs in it. I am not interested and there is no interest there and if there isn’t that bridge that I can feel like I can hold onto something in this community, then I am more likely to be able to do something because I don’t care about this community enough to want to maintain its stability …

Other respondents added that language in the media and how it was used, had a powerful impact on Muslim youth, contributing to further alienation and feelings they are being targeted.

P18: Yes. If you, regardless of being Muslim or non-Muslim, if you piss off a young person, like sorry for the language but if you do that to a young person, of course they are going to start getting aggressive and that’s not just the Muslim community …

P19: Well when you’re constantly branding people they are either going to take that branding and do what they want with it and behave in a way that you perceive them or they’re going to retaliate against you.
4.4.2.9 The CVE Programme

Effectiveness of the CVE programme in luring young people from violent extremism: The interviews revealed the majority of respondents were aware of the CVE programme. Respondents said they did not believe the programme was effective in dissuading young people from extremism. They also mentioned that organisations sometimes chose not to apply for CVE programme funding for fear of being stigmatised due to the way government had handled the issue and the language used. Respondents also believed the government had not done enough to consider the factors or causes that drive young people to be influenced by violent ideologies (IQ 9).

P16: … the problem with that from the start is that the government politicised it so much that many Muslim organisations didn’t want to be funded by this programme because it straight away stigmatises being a puppet or stooge for the government’s policies because the government politicised the whole issue … The huge mistake that the government has done they haven’t quantified the issue and they haven’t identified it properly and they haven’t looked at the factors and if you don’t do that properly … how can you remedy something?

The impact of political rhetoric and willingness of the community to engage with the CVE programme: Respondents reiterated serious concern about the impact of language on the community by politicians. “At the start we have a problem with language and we need to address that problem with the language” (P20). Respondents suggested the government needed to be seen as being even handed when addressing violent extremism (IQ 8).

P6: The rhetoric of politicians and government leaders must shift towards an inclusive language that sees the [Muslim] community as part of our Australian community and not apart from it. (IQ 9)

Respondents said the government should not only focus on spending money on combating extremism programmes, but also endeavour to place the programmes into a broader policy of social cohesion. It was also indicated that the government failed to consult the
community during the development of the CVE programme. Respondents stressed that, instead of initiating new programmes such as CVE that do not work, the government would be better placed to work in partnership with the community to focus on meeting the needs of young people who are marginalised (IQ 9).

P25: The government should tap into what the community is already doing and stop trying to start things off from scratch.

Respondents also suggested that the government should adopt approaches that seek to include Muslim communities and acknowledge their contributions as Australian citizens rather than alienate them by attributing or linking Islam with terrorism. Only by addressing these issues can government begin to eliminate the potential for the spread of extremist/violent extremist ideologies among a minority of disaffected youth (IQ 9).

P14: Opening more doors of engagement with diverse community leaders and not being fearful of these community leaders having different/or opposing views to one another.

Government discourse ‘you are either with us or against us’: Respondents referred to the discourse of the government, which was largely driven by the language introduced by former US President George W. Bush. They talked about the damage the discourse “you are either with us or against us” had on the community, suggesting this narrative had pushed the community into a position where they had to “prove yourself to us,” (P16) by explaining themselves and their religion. Despite their goodwill, respondents felt overwhelmed and ill-equipped to handle the crisis and its consequences (IQ 9).

Negative connotations of the name ‘CVE’: Respondents expressed concerns about the negative title given to the CVE programme. The terminology aligns the broader Islamic community with a small element within the community.
**CVE programme failed objectives:** Respondents said the CVE programme had failed to achieve its objective of steering young people away from violent extremism (IQ 9).

P30: I don’t think government programmes have been successful in dissuading young people from extremism, particularly when considering the large amount of money invested in such programmes.

Instead, respondents suggested:

P20: The programme should be funding more community organisations who work on a grass roots level with people that may identify with a distorted extreme view of Islam. Funding should also be allocated to projects which utilises the rich Islamic knowledge to counter extreme views.

P6: It is more effective for the Federal Government to fund a body made up of leaders of the community who will work on a programme in co-operation with the government.

Projects that specifically addressed the CVE narratives online were also found to be ineffective in changing people’s minds. One respondent (P25) argued that narratives needed to be supplemented with work on the ground (IQ 9).

Countering violent extremism requires greater government/community partnership, especially with key stakeholders such as youth and religious leaders who have access and links to youth. To be effective, this strategy must be supported by other government programmes and activities (IQ 9).

P20: [The] government should steer away from using terms such as ‘moderate Islam’ so as to avoid the implication that other forms of Islam are violent.

An overwhelming majority stated that one of the most important issues of concern to the community was to prevent young people from being moved to the periphery. The government should also concentrate on preventing others from developing extremist views and not just deal with those who are already at-risk (IQ 9).
P8: The other really important issue is not to allow our young people to be moved to the periphery you know in the first place. So not just concentrate on those already there … but ensure that, you know, those numbers do not increase.

Greater engagement of youth perceived as radical: Respondents suggested a greater emphasis should be placed on community engagement, particularly with young people, by advising them that they can more actively participate in educational programmes without linking them, by default, to the CVE programme. One respondent summed up her views by saying “it is more effective and productive to invest funds by focusing on removing barriers to youth’s active participation in society than calling it combating terrorism or CVE” (P31). It was suggested:

P6: What is imperative is the need for government to develop more programmes on education; we need our political leaders to be speaking the language of harmony and unity not being divisive in what they say because that is taps on everybody in the community. That’s where I think the government has a huge role to play. (IQ 9)

Respondents also argued for greater engagement with members of the community who were perceived by the government as being radical. One person pointed out:

P25: … being ‘radical’ does not mean that you are a violent person or a bad person. Lots of people have radical ideas and quite often or maybe not often but a number of times and radical ideas have been very positive.

Solutions must be driven and owned by the community: Respondents to IQ 9 also argued for community-driven solutions to issues affecting the community as well as a government prepared to listen to community needs and issues.

P4: The solutions must come from the community and this will give them a real sense of empowerment when a group resolves its own concerns and issues. What you need is the power player to be ready to support that solution.

P9: The community will feel like they are not often listened to or validated especially if the government keeps thinking they have a safe seat and you
don’t need to listen to anyone. The result being that no one is going to trust you.

*Community consultation:* One respondent expressed concerns about the need for extensive consultation with imams and Islamic scholars (IQ 9).

P20: The programme needs to engage spiritual leaders/imams from diverse religious understandings because they reach different markets.

Overall, the majority of interview responses indicated the CVE programme grants did not achieve their objectives. Potential reasons suggested for this included the view that addressing violent extremism required an holistic approach to ensure the root causes were addressed. One response highlighted a lack of research surrounding the issue of violent extremism, which inhibited the effectiveness of government programmes, alluding to the idea the CVE programme may have been implemented without adequate research into the nature of extremism (IQ 9).

P4: They haven’t quantified the issue and they haven’t identified it properly and they haven’t looked at the factors and if you don’t do that properly I am not aware of any research out there that has done that, so if you haven’t done that how can you remedy something.

**4.4.2.10 The Impact of Government Policies on Effectiveness of Engagement**

*The impact of government policy on Muslim’s perception of government:* On the question of whether government policies, including foreign affairs policies, have influenced or affected the effectiveness of community engagement, respondents argued that Australia’s agenda on counter-terrorism had contributed to Muslim’s distrust of government. There was a view that Australia’s counter-terrorism policies had contributed to Muslim feelings of alienation and scrutiny. Respondents also pointed to the need for the government to address the needs of Muslim youth and promote feelings of belonging within Australia’s
culturally and religiously diverse society. They also raised concerns about the impact of Australia’s foreign policy on fostering relationships with the government and community-government engagement (IQ 10).

**Perception that the Australian Government’s counter-terrorism agenda is anti-Muslim:**
Respondents were critical of the government’s agenda on terrorism and perceived that the targeting of Muslims caused distrust in the government. There was a view that Australia’s anti-terror laws have had a huge impact on the Muslim community and its trust in government and law enforcement agencies. This experience left them feeling alienated and discouraged from engaging with the government. Respondents said the Muslim community expressed feelings of exclusion and scrutiny. Furthermore, there was a perception the government was not sincere in addressing the needs of youth and creating an inclusive cohesive society where Muslims feel they belong (IQ 9, 10 and 14).

There was a deeply held view among Australian Muslim leaders that the Australian Government had unfairly targeted the Muslim community and, to win the battle against violent extremism, the government needed to more actively listen to the voices of Muslim leaders. They suggested the need for changes to ‘win the hearts and minds’ of the community’s leaders and its vulnerable youth who are at-risk of being lured into violent extremism (IQ 9 and 14).

**Australia’s foreign policy:** When asked about Australia’s foreign policy, community leaders’ responses highlighted it has had a negative impact on trust and the effectiveness of the government’s engagement with the community. A number of responses raised the significance of Australia’s foreign policy in tarnishing relationships with Muslim communities and youth, which has worked to foster distrust towards government-funded projects, especially the CVE programme (IQ 9 and 14).
This was a particular concern for young people, who have been critical of government engagement with the community. There is a perceived moral and ethical dilemma concerning accepting funding from a government that has made problematic foreign policy decisions (IQ 9, 10 and 14). Respondents stated that Australian foreign policy was not fair in dealing with Muslims on a global level. They perceived the policy as being a ‘double standard’ and not based on neutrality and ethics, rather on national interest and ‘lobbying.’ Respondents also argued Australia’s support for Israel and the Global War on Terrorism has affected the community and contributed to further radicalisation. One respondent reiterated that Australia’s stance on these issues had “turned a lot of people off engaging with the government” (P5) (IQ 9, 10 and 14).

Respondents cited the example of former Australian Prime Minister Howard’s decision to join allies and rush into Iraq and Afghanistan, even though many Australians were against taking part in the war. One respondent suggested Australia had a very biased policy towards Palestine and this naturally made people very untrusting of these politicians (IQ 9, 10 and 14).

P5: A lot of people question why we are getting into these wars that are none of our business. An estimated 800,000 children died as a result of this Australia war leading blockade. How are people going to see this? It’s over a conflict that’s not our business.

P16: Definitely foreign policy has a lot to do with it … The Iraq war was the greatest one of them all, the biggest lie of the weapons of mass destruction, we had 600k Sydney siders go out protest against the Government and Australia commits with foreign troops and then all the political rhetoric stigmatising Muslims and then found out to be all based on a lie. How do you think people will feel? They will feel so cheated and that is how they do feel so foreign policy is a big driving force …

P20: The Australian Government is seen as a government that was being dictated by the US Government with a pretty atrocious foreign policy that focused mainly on Muslims.
4.4.2.11 CVE Programmes and Grant Funding

Framing of radicalisation as a ‘Muslim problem’: A number of responses shared the view that grants administered under the CVE programme targeted Muslim community organisations. This targeting worked to indirectly allude to the unfounded belief the Muslim community is solely responsible for violent extremism. Another perception was the Muslim community has been singled out as extremist, despite the fact that extremism exists across various elements in society (IQ 9).

Issues with language around the CVE programme: Several respondents highlighted concerns with the terminology and semantics attributed to the CVE programme among Muslim community organisations. The language and connotations used for naming CVE programme grants was identified as problematic from the outset because it created hurdles that affected the willingness of organisations to accept such aid. This in turn impeded its effectiveness. Another response reiterated the view that the connotations embedded within the term CVE made sweeping assumptions about organisations – that by obtaining funding they must implicitly support a narrative projected by the government (IQ 9).

P9: The terminology therefore aligns the broader Islamic community with a small problematic element within that society and restricts their ability to choose new terms to describe their journeys and their freedom to alter the public discourse surrounding their own communities.

One respondent noted the contextual framework upon which the CVE programme operates demands a rethink about broadening the definition of extremism. Another respondent noted the programme must provide initiatives on Islamophobia in addition to Islamic extremism (IQ 9).

Nature of funding and grant allocations: There has also been criticism about the nature of the grant objectives in the CVE programme and criticism about whether this funding
has reached the intended population of youth at-risk of violent extremism. Respondents also pointed out that CVE programme projects were continually being funded despite “missing the mark” (P9). The respondents also agreed these grants should target disaffected youth, but funded projects failed to address their underlying needs. Furthermore, several respondents agreed the projects had failed to provide opportunities for youth to ‘interact with the wider community’ (IQ 9).

**Narrow-sighted approach of CVE programme grants:** Concerns were raised about the short-sighted nature of CVE programme grants. One response expressed that funding that spanned only one year limited the ability of organisations to carry out projects with a long-term goal in mind. Another respondent highlighted that, in order to effectively address violent extremism, a long-term policy needed to be in place to address contributory factors (IQ 9).

P4: I think government funding community organisations to run programmes are more effective I think any attempt from the government to run a programme is seen as you’re trying to brainwash me and I’ll never come to the table because it’s you and you’re against me.

One response provided a critical assessment of CVE programme funding and alluded to the fact that outreach at a grassroots level was important to address the underlying seeds that may have contributed to radicalism, such as youth unemployment, alienation and disenfranchised youth. Projects targeted at addressing the needs of youth by providing essential life skills and helping to develop connections between youth and community could better address the underlying causes of radicalism and violence. Another response highlighted that preventative measures are more effective than measures that seek to counter violence (IQ 9).
Factors that affect which organisations receive CVE programme grant funding: The effectiveness of CVE programme grants is also dependent upon the overall capacities of Muslim organisations. One response highlighted a large proportion of organisations that carry out important community work at a grassroots level fail to successfully obtain funding because they do not have the skills or capacity to lodge funding applications or meet reporting requirements. Another respondent indicated grants may be given to groups who are not well known in the community simply because they are more capable of writing a successful application. This suggests organisations that are better skilled in grant application processes would succeed when competing with organisations that may be more suited to address the objectives of CVE programme grants at a grassroots level, but are not well resourced (IQ 9).

Overall effectiveness of CVE programme grants in addressing violent extremism: The vast majority of responses held the view that the CVE programme grants were ineffective in addressing violent extremism. One respondent highlighted the grants’ ineffectiveness in addressing radicalism due to an approach that does not appeal to members of the community susceptible to radicalism (IQ 9):

P2: … to me this is just a waste of time. Because you are going to the wrong door. You know, you want a plumber to talk to a group of engineers. They are two different crowds.

Perceptions of law enforcement strategies: Respondents indicated the approaches of law enforcement agencies were lacking in their ability to positively engage with the community. One respondent felt as though the AFP have yet to positively engage with people susceptible to radicalisation: “they [the AFP] haven’t quite addressed the people on that end of the spectrum” (P20) and instead, resources have been focused on mainstream organisations within the Muslim community (IQ 9).
Potential approaches to enlist the trust and support of religious and community leaders:

Leaders identified a number of approaches that may contribute to building trust and improving community/government partnership on matters that affect the community (IQ 11):

P4: If they [the government] want to build trust, if they want to build proper partnerships … that relationship cannot be tokenistic, it needs to address the community and make the community; let the words that the government say be followed by actions.

P5: The government’s leaders and politicians should not ‘double-speak’ and they should stop pointing the finger.

P16: If there is a problem that happens in Australian society, this is a problem of Australian society—it is not a Muslim problem. Even if a Muslim might have been the perpetrator, this should be seen as a social problem. Then we should all band together to address it. That is not what they are doing.

P36: As long as politicians and media keep toeing that line, there’s going to be mistrust and if the politicians don’t do it but continue to allow the media to do it without enough protection to minorities. There is still not going to be enough trust in order for us to trust them.

Respondents also stressed the government must change the way they engage with the community and pay particular attention to those they are ‘afraid’ to engage with. While government engagement has occurred in some quarters of the community, the respondents noted this has not been great. Some respondents saw the ‘culture of the government’ in how they engage the Muslim community as the problem, adding, “The culture is transparent in all government agencies in how they relate to the Muslim community. That’s why we say Islamophobia is hidden and it’s all pervasive within government structures” (P25) (IQ 11). Another respondent said:

P16: The need for the government to see and acknowledge that disenfranchisement is a major issue, not just for Muslim youth. The impact and cost of disenfranchisement can be significant in creating major social problems, and that the government has to realise it is a serious problem.
Respondents argued the role of our political leaders was pivotal in responding to environments of crisis and uncertainty (IQ 12).

P6: The role of politicians and government leaders in building and sustaining trust is a huge one, if not the most pivotal role in overcoming any extreme or undesired ideas.

Respondents highlighted the need for strong leaders to demonstrate values that reinforce respect and harmony. Inflammatory political rhetoric has contributed to racial hatred and divisions, and fuelled debates in the media that have damaged cohesion within Australia’s culturally and religiously diverse society. Together, these factors have enhanced or reinforced negative attitudes towards Islam and Muslims (IQ 12).

The need for positive statements by government leaders about the importance of respect and understanding in a climate of conflict was identified as being essential. It was argued that government leaders’ responses should be timely and carefully crafted to show the Muslim community that they are an integral part of the wider Australian community. Respondents reiterated the positive effects that government leaders’ and politicians’ rhetoric can play in times of heightened tension in the community and its role in reinforcing calm and reducing the potential for racism and racist violence (IQ 12).

4.5 Interviews: External Muslim Community Environment

4.5.1 Opportunities

4.5.1.1 The Impact of September 11 on the Community Capacity to Deal with Backlash

Muslim community organisations play a significant role in responding to community needs and dealing with the fears that emanate in times of crisis. Respondents thought the
government could acknowledge the important contribution they make to the community and society, and work to further strengthen a relationship built on trust to assist in enhancing long-term partnerships. The government should support the community to build its capacity and confront Islamophobia by modelling behaviour aimed at eliminating fears about Islam and Muslims. The government should also explore ways to support organisations by providing funding to deliver vital services and build capacity and skills required for effectively responding to demands and crisis (IQ 2).

4.5.1.2 The Role of Community Organisations and Leaders in Response to Increased Levels of Scrutiny and Attacks on the Community

Respondents thought the government could explore ways of supporting community leaders and organisations by providing support and capacity to more effectively respond to crises. In addition, the government could better develop its community engagement strategies to effectively respond to the difficulties encountered by organisations due to their limited capacity and the increase in scrutiny and attacks on Muslims (IQ 3).

4.5.1.3 Resources and Impact on Organisations’ Capacity to Effectively Address Community Issues

Given the general belief among respondents that government funding has been insufficient and poorly directed, they suggested the government could provide adequate and ongoing resources and funding to better support the community to deliver vital services that seek to build resilient communities and more successfully engage with youth (IQ 4).
4.5.1.4 Government/Community Engagement Post-September 11

Respondents noted a visible increase in government engagement with the Muslim community, especially with law enforcement agencies such as the AFP. The view that government engagement with the Muslim community to date has been superficial and ineffective, perhaps even damaging, suggests opportunities for improvement. The government could ensure that the issues raised by leaders at meetings and consultations are followed up and Muslim community leaders are notified of outcomes. This would help strengthen relationships and nurture confidence in the government related to its commitment to work with communities and enhance partnerships. It was also suggested that the government’s law enforcement agencies such as the AFP and NSW Police could develop more effective mechanisms to deal with concerns raised by community leaders. They should work to enhance trust by building further on their engagement strategies particularly with youth leaders (IQ 5).

4.5.1.5 Issues Confronting Young Muslims and the Most Appropriate Ways to Address Them

Respondents highlighted a number of key issues confronting young people of Islamic faith that need to be addressed, particularly through improved engagement strategies. The government could support alternative approaches to engaging Muslim youth using home-grown imams trained overseas. They could reach out to youth-based Muslim organisations and support their activities through funding and collaborative partnerships through young imams. The government should also build sincere partnerships with imams and use the skills of overseas trained English speaking religious leaders/imams to reach out more effectively to the growing Australian Muslim youth population. Most overseas-trained imams have established their own organisations, which focus on religious education and enjoy a good relationship with young people (IQ 6).
There is an opportunity for the government to provide a counter narrative by influencing young people and shifting the narrative by providing accurate information about Islam as a faith and way of life. Another theme that came through in the interviews pointed to an opportunity for the government to educate youth about the dangers of referring to misinformation on ‘sheikh Google’ and other violent ideologies found on the internet (IQ 6).

P10: The government needs to shift the narrative, which implicates all Muslims as ‘terrorists’.

4.5.1.6 Political Rhetoric and its Impact on Trust

Political rhetoric and media portrayals were consistently referred to as damaging towards Muslims and Islam. Respondents said inflammatory political rhetoric can contribute to racial hatred and divisions, and can fuel debates in the media that are damaging to cohesion within Australia’s culturally and religiously diverse society. This can further enhance or reinforce negative attitudes towards Islam and Muslims. Respondents suggested the rhetoric of politicians and government leaders should shift towards an inclusive language that does not directly or indirectly single out Muslims or Islam, or portray them in a general negative light. The government could also consider the impact of the negative behaviour of some government leaders and politicians and how this has contributed to radicalising youth. One respondent suggested the government should “focus on promoting a language of harmony and unity, not being divisive in what they say because that is destructive on everybody in the country. That’s where I think the government has a huge role to play” (P31). It was also suggested that government leaders’ responses in times of crises should be timely and carefully crafted to show the Muslim community that they are an integral part of the wider Australian community (IQ 7).
4.5.1.7 Media Representation of Muslims and its Contribution to Fear, Racism and Extremism

The media’s coverage and handling of news reporting concerning Muslims highlights consistency in views about the negative impact of the media in shaping attitudes of fear and hostility towards Australian Muslims. The role of the media and political rhetoric has contributed to fear. Mainstream media should consider the impact of anti-Muslim coverage on fuelling extremism and harmony in our society. The media and the government should also consider the consequences of their rhetoric on social cohesion and security (IQ 8).

4.5.1.8 Effectiveness of the CVE Programme in Luring Young People from Violent Extremism

Respondents were of the view that the Australian Government has unfairly targeted the Muslim community. They suggested that in order to win the battle against violent extremism, the government needs to actively listen to the voices of Muslim community leaders and introduce the necessary changes to win the hearts and minds of the community, and in particular, its vulnerable youth who are at risk of being lured into violent extremism (IQ 9).

There was a perceived opportunity for the Australian Government to consider the introduction of counter narratives, including those of government leaders, which could change the discourse that the West is at war with Islam and Australian values are incompatible with Islamic values. The government should also consider the implications of the negative connotations of the counter-terrorism/counter-violent extremism terminology and associating it directly with Islam and Muslims. In addition, the government and political leaders could focus on rhetoric that acknowledges the Muslim
community and the contribution it is making to the building of the nation as a way to counter negative perceptions of Islam and Muslims. It is also important for the government to address the needs of young people through the provision of services and programmes that enable them to belong as active participants, rather than placing the programme under the negative title of CVE (IQ 9).

4.5.1.9 The Impact of Government Policies on Effective Engagement

Throughout the interviews, there was consistent discussion about the negative effects of Australia’s counter-terrorism policy and foreign policy on the Muslim community’s feelings of belonging and the impact this has had on trust and engagement. Thus, as a way of building this trust, the government should be mindful of using language that seeks to include the Muslim community as an integral part of Australian society. The government should also consider the impact that Australia’s perceived biased foreign policy position towards the Middle East has on youth and how this may be contributing or leading to radicalisation (IQ 10).

4.5.2 Threats

4.5.2.1 The Impact of September 11 on Community Capacity to Deal with Backlash

A lack of skills and resources may impede effective partnerships between the community and the government, and their ability to steer young people away from violent ideologies. Islamophobia is increasing and that the perception the government has not done enough to confront this disturbing trend could result in further loss of trust in government and impede the willingness of the Muslim community to work with government agencies (IQ 2).
4.5.2.2 The Role of Community Organisations and Leaders in Response to Increased Levels of Scrutiny and Attacks on the Community

Failure to address the impact of a lack of resources and the community’s capacity to deal with repercussions following a crisis can heavily affect community organisations’ ability to respond to the concerns of the community and government expectation that the community should do more to address radicalisation (IQ 3).
5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The data from the online questionnaire and interviews generated complex and rich information on the multidimensional issues under examination. To evaluate the success or failure of the Australian Government’s CVE programme, I adopted a SWOT analysis framework to analyse data comprising interviews and surveys, and by partitioning the information into four distinctive and co-dependent contours encompassing:

1. How can the policy’s internal strengths be used so the opportunities identified in Muslim communities can be realised?

2. How can the policy’s internal weaknesses be strengthened so the opportunities identified in Muslim communities can be realised?

3. How can the policy’s strengths be used to moderate the threats (i.e. shortcomings) identified in Muslim communities to achieve a better outcome?

4. How could the policy’s weaknesses be defended to guard against threats (i.e. shortcomings)?

Dissimilar themes have pervaded the previous results chapter, and consequently the basis for establishing the SWOT framework, and has not inevitably formed a neatly compartmentalised analysis – i.e. four divergent and dispersed components – but one where the narrative will also emphasise a coalescing of the SWOT framework’s constituent parts. For consistency, cross-referencing and greater coherency, this chapter will replicate the headings within Chapter 4 (Results).
5.2 Strengths and Opportunities – Engaging Communities Post-September 11

This study has shown, while government engagement with the Muslim community increased since 2001, there is a view by respondents that the government is not sincere in its effort to address the issues confronting the community. Evidence shows there is a perception among respondents that the Muslim community was the target of the new war on terror policy and legislation. Responses highlight that the introduction of new counter-terrorism laws and measures placed the community under increased scrutiny and influenced the effectiveness of the government’s engagement with the community.

Evidence from the study highlights there has been some development in relationship building with Australia’s law enforcement agencies, particularly with the Australian Federal Police, but according to the Muslim perspectives obtained from the data, a number of hurdles remain with respect to the issue of trust concerning the government. Political and media rhetoric has had a negative impact on community trust and, consequently, their willingness to engage with the government.

The study also highlighted the role and contribution made by Muslim leaders and their organisations in response to the 2001 attacks on the United States and in supporting the government and wider community to enhance harmony and social cohesion under extremely difficult conditions, in spite of extremely limited resources. Yet the energy, time and commitment invested by the leaders and their communities appear to be understated and unrecognised. The responses highlight the enormous social benefit brought about following the surge in interfaith dialogue and community engagement generated in response to an environment characterised by fear, insecurity and a rise in Islamophobia.
The community, through its diverse institutions, were galvanising support for the promotion of peace and harmony, and appealing for calm in a difficult environment. The mosques, media, schools and community centres worked together to spread messages of peace and provide counter-narratives to ensure the Muslim community, particularly Muslim youth, were reminded about Islamic beliefs and practices and modelling good behaviour. An unprecedented number of media enquiries and negative rhetoric also affected the community and its ability to deal with the demands placed on the leaders to respond effectively. This demonstrated that the Muslim community is dedicated, resilient and willing to contribute to society despite its limited resources and skills. The government has and continues to depend on the support and guidance of the community and its leaders during challenging times.

The responsibility for the safety and security of this nation lies first with the Australian Government. The government’s main task is to ensure Australia and its people are safe from any harm – local or abroad. The community also shares that responsibility. The findings highlight that the Australian Muslim community through its leaders, imams and scholars have reiterated their commitment to the protection of this nation, which they see as a religious duty required by their Islamic faith. Well before the tragic events of September 11, the community and its leaders were actively involved in promoting counter-extremist messages. On the pulpit, in school assemblies, in the classroom, during Islamic camps, in community forums and educational circles, on radio and at community events, the theme of moderation was reinforced and the supplication for the protection of this nation was heard loud.

Despite the Muslim community’s commitment to keeping Australia safe and countering extremist propaganda, there were views that post-September 11, the government’s
counter-terrorism agenda had unfairly targeted the Muslim community. The findings point to a consensus that Muslims are perceived as posing a national security threat, and government policies and the introduction of numerous and ongoing counter-terrorism laws and measures have led the community to feel it is under scrutiny and surveillance.

Feelings of alienation and marginalisation were further reinforced following the use of divisive rhetoric by government leaders, politicians and mainstream media, further contributing to heightened fears and the subsequent rise in fear of Islam and Muslims in the public sphere. Negative political commentary, such as Islamic values are at odds with the Australian way of life, helped to further engender fear of Muslims and the view that Muslims who cannot conform to the Australian way of life were not welcome in Australia. Such divisive political rhetoric helped reinforce the view that Muslims are not considered Australians and the Muslim way of life poses a threat to Australia’s security.

Respondents pointed to feelings of being excluded and that they and their religion were held to account for all the tragedies and ills of society. They also reported the media had contributed to a culture of fear and fuelled anti-Muslim sentiments by reinforcing misconceptions and stereotypes of a barbaric and uncivilised religion, which further fuelled extremism and exacerbated tensions and hatred towards Muslims. Respondents argued that political and media rhetoric has affected how Islam and Muslims were viewed and these factors had negatively affected the community. There was a strong view that media and political rhetoric had contributed to a rise in extremism and such factors had undermined social cohesion and, ultimately, the communities ‘willingness to work with the government’ on the CVE programme.

As Ash Collingburn (2016) stated in The Strategist, statements that link “the religion of Islam and the terrorism of violent Islamist extremism” can be hurtful and may affect the
Muslim community and engender violent behaviour. Since the attacks of September 11, there has been an increase in attacks directed at Australian Muslims and a rise in Islamophobic incidents. The responses emanating from this study have confirmed the impact of Islamophobia on the Australian Muslim community and their feelings of being insecure and alienated from mainstream society. Collingburn also argued that Islamophobia is undermining our countering-terrorism efforts (Collingburn, 2016).

As argued by the Human Rights and equal Opportunity Commission (2015), there are benefits to be gained from engaging communities. Engaging communities and leaders effectively offers great benefits for the government, the community and society. There are a number of ingredients that are required to build effective long-term partnerships with the Muslim community, and any community for that matter, which yields the results needed to promote harmony and social cohesion.

5.3 Weaknesses and Opportunities – The Countering Violent Extremism Programme

Australia’s culturally and religiously rich diverse society has been identified by the Australian Government as an asset that has contributed to the country’s success as a socially cohesive society (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015a). Social cohesion is about developing positive social relationships aimed at eliminating barriers that prevent individuals from being worthwhile members of society. “A socially cohesive society is one which works towards the wellbeing of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility” (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015b). The Commonwealth government has recognised the importance of this diversity and has worked towards ensuring the wellbeing of all of its citizens. Moreover, the
Commonwealth government has taken into account the planning and delivery of services and programmes in order to facilitate inclusivity for people from all backgrounds, to help create a more multicultural Australian society.

The government uses Australia’s diversity to encourage resilience and to ensure the country is safe from violent ideological elements that may wish to harm our nation. The Muslim community has reinforced its commitment to keep Australia and Australians safe from any attacks. As such, the government should use the strengths identified as a source to fight exclusion and marginalisation, promote trust and make statements that nurture a sense of belonging for Australia’s Muslim community. To diminish the risks of alienation and marginalisation in the community, particularly among young people, the government needs to address the community’s perceptions of being targeted and excluded. In particular, the government should develop consultative mechanisms aimed at providing opportunities for individuals to be involved in decision-making in their communities.

The study’s results regarding community consultation can be delineated within two distinct, yet interrelated, components:

1. Community driven consultation; and

2. An holistic approach to consultation.

5.3.1 Community Driven Consultation

The results appear to present misgivings about the nature of the government’s community consultation. Such concerns appear to be prevalent and to a large extent perceived to have deficiencies in the consultation process, particularly with respect to improved dialogue with imams. Such discernments can be characterised as a signpost of strategic weaknesses in the consultative methodologies:
P20: The programme needs to engage spiritual leaders/imams from diverse religious understandings because they reach different markets.

The underlying concerns point to a greater necessity for the Commonwealth Government to embrace a community driven approach, which may be supported or led by imams. If such concerns are addressed, there is the potential for not only better collaboration with the government, but for ‘demystifying’ Islam for the wider public and mentoring acutely vulnerable Muslim youth.

During the interviews, one respondent declared, “The programme needs to engage spiritual leaders/imams from diverse religious understandings because they reach different markets” (P20). Such sentiments reflect the principal consensus governing the relationship between the CVE programme and imams, and how there appears to be a perception, within the community, that imams and religious leaders are pivotal in addressing issues with disaffected youth, and for the promotion of greater moderation, values of tolerance, respect, and the treatment of all people in a dignified manner.

Moreover, an opportunity, professed by several respondents to this study, was the notion that the government should provide more support by investing in additional imams from abroad. To some extent, such perspicacity, despite the presence of many qualified, articulate, influential and positive role models within Muslim communities, still appears to create a chasm with the archetype or benchmark idealised by many respondents within the community. Such a gap reflects the desire for a broader proliferation of competent, qualified, persuasive and eloquent imams. Investing in more imams from abroad is perceived by many as a meaningful opportunity for the government and the Muslim community to further enrich as well as ameliorate potential concerns of the overall effectiveness and value of the current cohort of imams within Australia. However, it is
important to note that Australia has a powerful tradition of civil government, however, religious institutions have always played an important role in the public life of Australia. Both Roman Catholics and Protestants, for example, have played a fundamental role in developing education, health and welfare services within Australia.

 Appropriately, it is not seen as the business of the Australian Federal and State Governments to be involved in matters of religious doctrine. Consequently, any intervention by the government has the potential to isolate other Muslim groups within Australian diverse Muslim communities (Droogan & Waldek, 2015; Ali, 2012).

 As Droogan & Waldek (2015, p.34) argue, “Religion is a particularly problematic area for government to support counter narratives …that have legitimacy when they are designed to meet and address extremist ideologies founded in an (often misunderstood) religious worldview”. Indeed, the authors argue that “Government neither has the credibility, skills, nor willingness to pronounce on matters of faith, and is ill-equipped to intervene in matters of religion.” While there is substantial support within segments of the Muslim community for the expansion in the recruitment of imams, to an international setting, with the belief that such an approach may enhance the eminence and quality of recruitment outcomes, such endeavours are not without some conceivable risks. To this end, the government’s probity checks have played and continue to play a vital role in the recruitment process for international-based imams.

 The relationship between the government and imams should not be minimalist. It is essential for the government to work more closely with imams. By working together in a more dynamic and robust manner to provide support for imams, the imams can assume greater responsibilities, particularly in encouraging Muslim youth to participate in
socially inclusive programmes in order to diminish the level of marginalisation and sense of banishment they feel from society.

If the opportunity to improve the level of consultation between the government and local imams does not materialise, a small number of individuals, who already see the government as characterising imams as radical devices, may become a more serious risk towards the community, due the increased probability of having their views dismissed. Thus, there is unmistakably a momentous opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the government and local imams for greater consultation and support, which may countenance imams to be part of the solution, rather than being conceived as part of the problem.

Myriad imams possess and embrace pluralistic perspectives, which may be vital in addressing the complexities associated with countering extremism, and reaching out to the multiplicity of vulnerable youth in the Muslim community. According to the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC), there are over 250 qualified imams affiliated with the national body representing diverse language and ethnic backgrounds. Importantly, in 2015, the Secretary of the ANIC indicated there are over 50 Australian-born young Muslim imams who are overseas-trained and fully conversant in English, Arabic, Turkish and other languages. Their popularity and involvement with young Australian Muslims is significant. It is imperative that imams who are home-grown, but overseas trained in Islamic studies, are consulted and effectively engaged to maximise youth involvement.

5.3.2 An Holistic Approach to Consultation

Analysis of the data from the questionnaire shows the level of consultation about the CVE programme, conducted with the Muslim community, exceeded marginally beyond half of
the total number of respondents (fifty-four per cent). This reflects not only how a majority of participants were cognisant of the CVE programme through the process of community consultation, but also reveals how the government is achieving particular successes when reaching out to member of the leading Muslim community organisations. However, it is more notable that forty-six per cent were not consulted about the CVE programme. As the data suggests, there is a distinct opportunity for the government to re-evaluate its consultative mechanism in terms of its efficacy in broadening the level of its consultation within the wider Muslim community. The evidence from the study points to the need for the government to deliberate on a more holistic approach to consultation.

According to Muslim perspectives, the government’s consultative process should be improved to encompass a wider scope on the issues vexing the community. It should also enhance community capacity for this partnership between the government and Muslim community, to better counter violent extremism. Moreover, in terms of community engagement and relationship building with law enforcement agencies, while indisputably critical, evidence from the study shows it alone was not considered as being sufficient in solving complex issues such as violent extremism. As McElroy, emphasises, “law enforcement plays an essential role in keeping us safe, but so too does engagement and partnership with communities” (McElroy, 2011, p. 2)

The study also shows that respondents, despite some dissimilarities in their interpretations towards the nature and prominence of an holistic approach, reach unanimity on the position that an assortment of complex and divergent driving factors are responsible for individuals within the Muslim community being drawn towards violent extremism.

When examining the CVE programme, the study shows a small number of organisations had received funds to manage projects targeting young people susceptible to the influence
of extremist ideologies within the Muslim community. While three respondents indicated that the project in which they were involved was successful in achieving the set objectives, none actually believed the CVE programme has worked. Nonetheless, and despite these implications, perceptions within the community do not foresee funding alone to be a panacea for offsetting violent extremism. This leads to a succeeding and acutely significant concern – Islamophobia – and the presence of an increased sense of marginalisation within the community. The extent of Islamophobia prevalent in the wider community was perceived by a significant number of respondents to be further exacerbating the sense of banishment felt within the Muslim community, and potentially contributing to increased levels of violent extremism.

Evidence from the study also highlighted the convictions within the Muslim community that the level of Islamophobia has reached unprecedented levels since September 11. Respondents emphasised the importance for the government to reach out to Muslim communities and vigorously challenge all forms of discrimination and Islamophobia, and to condemn any associated actions (physical or psychological) in the strongest terms. The unequivocal denunciations, as suggested by respondents, against any perpetrators of Islamophobia may contribute towards improving the level of trust and confidence between the government and Muslim communities. Such actions by governments are viewed as generating greater capacity to form robust partnerships between the government and Muslim communities in confronting the myriad challenges relating to violent extremism.

One of the more controversial and sensitive holistic approaches addressed by respondents in the study concerns the impact of the Australian Government’s foreign policy approach on community engagement and violent extremism. The study showed that respondents
believe that the government requires a more refined, sensitive and, conceivably, more
critical and independent approach to foreign policy. There is a strong sense from the
research data that both major political parties have adopted an ‘automaticity’ to their
foreign policy, where the government’s default position is one in which it instinctively
parallels that of the United States. Given the perception of the United States’ foreign
policy in the Muslim world is seen by many Muslims (and non-Muslims alike) as causing
further instability as well as being a policy inflicting a perpetual dilemma, this lack of
independence by successive Australian Governments is seen to be emulating the same
disconcerting principles and actions.

According to a significant number of respondents, the persistence of a foreign policy that
parallels the United States’ only further galvanises marginalised youth to potentially
pursue violent extremist acts. The opportunity for the government to undertake a more
independent role in its foreign policy endeavours, nonetheless, is not conceived as too
radical a departure from former conceptions. The idea of a more independent foreign
policy where “friends could have disagreements with each other” was conspicuously
designed as part of former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam’s’ political agenda. Similar
approaches to the government’s foreign policy are conceptualised by many members of
the Muslim community as one that could play a significant role in reducing many of the
tensions prevalent between the government and community.

In more recent years, another former Prime Minister of Australia has reinforced many
aspects of Whitlam’s views. The late Malcolm Fraser perceived American leaders as
problematic. He asserted that America bears “much of the blame” for “derailing” the new
international order, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan, and seems “to leave behind
continuing chaos” (Dobell, Edwards & Jennings, 2015).
Since a considerable volume of the discourse on violent extremism refers to “vulnerable individuals,” it is manifest, despite the fact that vulnerability can be characterised in many forms (e.g. a sense of disconnect, lack of belonging, marginalisation, alienation, anger, frustration, identity), that mental health issues can also generate a sense of vulnerability in an individual. While not all individuals feeling susceptible will turn towards violent extremism, a small percentage undoubtedly will.

5.3.2.1 Community Knowledge and Participation in the Government’s CVE Programme

A significant minority of respondents from the interviews and surveys (forty-nine per cent) were unaware of the government’s CVE programme. This immediately appears to reflect a considerable weakness or, at least, a level of disquiet relating to the success of the government’s policy. The CVE programme requires broad support within the Muslim community in order to succeed. The large section of respondents indicating their obliviousness to the programme raises questions about the potential efficacy and long term aims of the programme. If the CVE programme requires broad participation from the Muslim community to be successful, there is clearly greater urgency for the government to address this issue.

Data from the study illustrated that essentially half of the respondents claimed to have no knowledge about the CVE programme. In light of this, there exists significant opportunities for the government to reassess the manner in which the programme is delivered to the Muslim community. Additionally, since the government’s CVE programme has operated for a period of seven years, there is no information available to date from the government’s evaluation of the CVE programme undertaken to determine its success in achieving the desired outcomes of steering young people away from violent
extremism. Evidence from the study suggests further research is needed to evaluate the success of the CVE programme in order to find out what components need strengthening and more resources, or, in the case of broadening knowledge of the CVE programme, a reconceptualisation of how community members may be more cognisant of such issues.

For respondents familiar with the CVE programme, the study results reveal this was more likely if they were affiliated with a community group. This reflects a unidimensional approach, where the government targeted Muslim organisations, but failed to take into consideration the fact that many Muslims are not necessarily a member or participant in a Muslim organisation. This approach makes an implicit assumption that, by targeting Muslim organisations, the CVE programme may be efficacious with its strategy. However, continuing with this approach not only fails to reflect these circumstances, but may perpetrate extensive strain on the government’s and community’s capacity to mitigate violent extremism, due to the significant number of individuals not being integrated or aware of the CVE programme.

A significant proportion of respondents (seventy per cent) from the study emphasised that they had no involvement with the government’s CVE programme, with only a very small number of organisations having any active involvement. The study revealed that only three Muslim organisations obtained government funding specifically addressing the CVE programme; two were based in Melbourne and the other in Sydney. Moreover, respondents intimated the government should consider adopting a more inclusive consultative mechanism, aimed at engaging with Australia’s Muslim community at a broader level and enhancing the capacity of the government’s consultative measures. This should not be limited to instituting a wider and inclusive approach, which is unmistakably required, but by also delivering dependable and consistent feedback to the community.
The study also highlighted respondents’ perceptions that, where government is consulting with communities and its leaders on important issues, the outcome of these consultations were not known to the community. While the study shows there was an increase in community engagement post-September 11, there was a view that this engagement did not yield the results expected. Respondents acknowledged the Howard government took steps to consult the Muslim community in the aftermath of the London Bombings, and the initiative was timely and had the potential to achieve positive results. Respondents outlined concerns about the considerable amount of input and time invested by community leaders, but the outcome from what was perceived to be constructive dialogue was still unknown to many participants, who were active in this consultative process.

When members of the Muslim community enthusiastically participate, in good faith, and undertake considerable time engaging with the government in programmes, it is essential for constructive and enduring feedback to be provided. If the government is of the opinion that it needs to work in partnership with the Muslim community, then unambiguous, candid and ongoing dialogue is required to maintain the level of trust and dedication required in taking up the challenges of countering violent extremism. If such opportunities fail to manifest, the perspective envisaged by many respondents is that considerable risks and a greater sense of alienation already felt by many in the Muslim community will not only fail to dissipate, but may cause the struggle against violent extremism to become even more arduous.

To reflect the underlying opinions and consensus attributed towards the Howard Government’s engagement with the Muslim community, two responses were, to a large extent, very prescient of such sentiments: “Engagement by the government as very limited and very peripheral” and “The engagement was simply a ticking the boxes
exercise for a few officials and the bureaucracy” (P16). Essentially, the study showed that community engagement has not been effective enough. The view held by many respondents relating to dialogue by the government as “superficial” is certainly a concern, and needs to be addressed. Therefore, the government will need to reorientate and refine its strategies of engagement and consultation with the Muslim community. If the government wants to have any real prospects of succeeding in preventing young people from adopting violent extremist ideologies, it is essential for it to actively listen to the Muslim community and candidly embrace Muslims in forming an authentic partnership, which, presently, is not considered by many in the community to be taking place.

5.3.2.2 Involvement in CVE Funded Projects

As indicated above, the study revealed that only two organisations received CVE funding and only five respondents appeared acquainted with the CVE funding initiatives. These outcomes indicate either Muslim organisations applied for funding but failed to meet the criteria or they chose not to apply for funding. Many organisations may have been interested in applying for funding, but may not have had the necessary skills, capacity or knowledge to manage such a complex and sensitive area involving young people and violent extremism. There is also an absence of data available to ascertain the number of young people involved in the programmes conducted and the basis upon which organisations received funding. Further research may help answer some of the questions raised which this study could not address.

Despite this, and irrespective of who received funding under the CVE programme, there is a window of opportunity for the government to review the modus operandi in which apportioned funds are distributed, particularly to ensure organisations in receipt of
funding have a good understanding of the issues of disaffected and estranged Muslim youth.

Respondents intimated that a more effective CVE funded programme must begin with an improved stratagem in the way consultation is delivered, and the need to listen to concerns raised by community leaders. All participants in this study suggested that the need for a robust relationship between the government and the Muslim community is indispensable to ensure community driven solutions to address the needs of Muslim youth.

5.3.2.3 Youth Participation in the CVE Programme

Youth are, arguably, the most pertinent group subject to marginalisation within the Muslim community. With such a strong focus by governments, community leaders, educators and media on Muslim youth’s increased vulnerability towards extremism, one may presume their level of participation in the CVE programme would not only be central for evaluating the accessibility of such an endeavour, but also very insightful.

Evaluation of the research data provided an opportunity to examine how Muslim perspectives conceptualise the relationship between youth participation and the CVE programme, within an overarching SWOT analysis paradigm. The results of this study indicate only three young people participated in the programme. This, indisputably, is a significant weakness identified by this study and one in which the government has significant room to manoeuvre. While the small number of youth participating in the programme is alarming, there are opportunities for the government to conduct enhanced consultation with Muslim community leaders for better targeting and providing increased accessibility to a most vulnerable group within the Muslim community – young people. Muslim community leaders, law enforcement officers, intelligence analysts and government officials have, to a large extent, reached consensus on the view that
vulnerable Muslim youth are an indispensable part in the mêlée with violent extremism and the most susceptible to espouse extremist tendencies. Clearly, there appears to be a significant gap between the alleged urgency and lack of engagement of Muslim youth in the CVE programme.

5.3.2.4 Areas of the CVE Programme that Worked Well but Need Improvement

According to evidence from the study, some aspects of the CVE programme appear to be working well, while others need improvements. One area, which was perceived to be working well, was the level of professionalism and sincerity that public service personnel attached to the delivery of the CVE programme. The study also shows a significant level of support for well-developed programs encompassing spiritual understanding, coupled with a strong sense of maturity and self-awareness. Unmistakeably, a positive perspective by Muslim community leaders towards the professionalism and sincerity of government personnel could only enhance the prospects for building even stronger relationships. It improves the level of trust and understanding between government personnel and community organisations when addressing the needs of the Muslim community, especially youth.

Despite the positive conceptions by many of the voices analysed within the Muslim community, a stronger relationship would be one in which the government embraces the plurality of Muslim voices, particularly those whose opinions identify areas of the CVE programme requiring further improvements. One important improvement in the CVE programme identified in the study centres on the limited timeframes available for successful outcomes. While productive relationships appear to have materialised in the shorter term, there is some anxiety among many Muslim respondents concerning the need for longer-term strategies. These perspectives are cognisant about “no such thing as a
quick fix,” and a complex phenomenon, such as violent extremism, requires one to constantly review, revise and consult with the community, for the short and longer term to achieve the maximum benefit.

5.3.2.5 Is the CVE Programme the most Appropriate Way of Targeting Extremism in the Community?

Undoubtedly, any response to a question that refers to the legitimacy of a programme established by the government tends to be imbued with potential sensitivities. A programme that focuses on a particular community needs to address the perspectives of that community. This is fundamental for a government that wants to improve its relationship with any segment of the community, and a robust and honest relationship is imperative for addressing and attempting to ameliorate issues relating to violent extremism.

The most disconcerting information ascertained from the study data is that not one of the respondents perceived the CVE programme to be the most appropriate way of targeting extremism in their communities. In line with these results, community representatives expressed the same perspective on numerous occasions during meetings and forums held by the Attorney-General’s Department Office in Sydney in 2014 and 2015 to discuss the Syrian crisis and the new counter terrorism measures.

One of the underlying conceptions among respondents is that the Muslim community is being unfairly targeted. The evidence from the study indicates that the CVE programme in its current form is not the most appropriate way of countering violent extremism in the Muslim community. There appears to be a significant undercurrent, where respondents are urging the government to genuinely listen to the grievances emerging from the Muslim community, and to attempt to win the “hearts and minds” of these people. It is
perceived by respondents that only through active and positive engagement with the Muslim community will the government be able to move in the right direction and improve the efficacy and success of the CVE programme. In the process of attempting to win the hearts and minds of the people, as mentioned earlier, governments recognise that countering violent extremism cannot be achieved without the cooperation and involvement of the community.

The CVE programme’s ability to achieve any significant success is largely based on respondents’ views that there are a number of steps that require implementation. Respondents suggested these processes commence by listening assiduously to the Muslim community and taking on board their suggestions. The study also shows, if such strategies are adopted, the CVE programme may be imbued with important additional features. These features may include: teaching community members about counter-terrorism laws; addressing the perceived negative connotations of the CVE programme; instituting a bottom-up approach; supporting and empowering Muslim youth through alternative educational programmes; addressing vulnerable converts to Islam; and evaluate the success of the CVE programme against precise measures and standards set out by the government.

Imparting knowledge to the Muslim community with respect to counter-terrorism laws was identified by respondents in the study as an integral part of enriching the CVE programme. There is a view among respondents that the introduction of programmes that adopt a more inclusive approach may not only improve the community’s deeper understanding of such laws, but may also encourage Muslims to openly discuss extremism and other interrelated matters. One of the suggestions for addressing this particular area of concern was the idea of organising workshops where members of the
community would be able to dialogue openly about violent extremism in a forum without fear. Such an approach may provide the Muslim community with a greater sense of empowerment.

The weaknesses in the current CVE programme could potentially exacerbate the perceived banishment and subjugation of Muslims and increase the likelihood for violent extremism. A lack of understanding of counter-terrorism laws and the decisions and actions undertaken by law enforcement agencies may also cause a number of people who are targeted by such laws to feel further marginalised. While the study shows Muslims will not accept any indiscriminately conducted measures against individuals or groups in the community, a healthier understanding of the counter-terrorism laws may possibly curtail any concerns relating to arbitrarily conducted actions, to expectantly improve the relationship between the community and law enforcement agencies.

According to data from the questionnaire, thirty-seven per cent of respondents were very critical of the CVE programme for its perceived short sightedness, and particularly, for its deficiency in addressing Muslim youth. Respondents were of the view that the CVE programme has a narrow focus where the Federal government seeks to demonstrate to the wider public that it is responding to concerns relating to violent extremism. This strategy has entailed law enforcement agencies adopting heavy-handed measures against the community (i.e. the execution of warrants), which tend to be characterised by the media as a reassuring public safety exercise; however, they only further exacerbate the sense of estrangement within the Muslim community. Moreover, the government’s consultation with the Muslim community through programmes such as the CVE is conceptualised by respondents as a kind of countervailing strategy against an already beleaguered community. There are clearly strong concerns emanating from respondents with respect
to the sincerity of the government’s CVE programme, and particularly the impact this may have on Muslim youth. This sense of displacement and failure to adopt inclusive measures towards Muslim youth, have resonated with many of the participants, and are mirrored in the following response:

R4: Greater grassroots involvement/engagement of youth in wider society. The programme does not reach disaffected youths.

The CVE programme has also caused considerable angst among many respondents concerning the language of the “countering violent extremism” programme. Respondents conceptualised the language of CVE to possess considerable negative connotations. This perspective is an intriguing illustration of what may initially be considered as rather innocuous, but due to the perception by many respondents that government representatives have simply overlooked such concerns, this effectively leads to a greater sense of perplexity and antipathy towards the programme. One respondent expressed irritation concerning the Attorney-General Department’s perceived failure to respond to this kind of specific disquiet when it was raised during consultations with the department.

One respondent alleged,

P9: The CVE Programme makes a statement about the communities and participants that partake in the programme, that by signing on to these programmes they implicitly support extremist narratives.

Nonetheless, Muslim groups do not approve of extremist narratives and ideologies. Respondents were also concerned that their contribution or participation in the programme may be used as evidence or justification for the CVE programme in its current form.

Having a CVE programme implies, while the two sides are addressing similar issues, the government’s priority lies with countering violent extremists (the criminal elements of a
community), while Muslims are concerned with community building. Effectively, respondents contend this particular lexicon from the government does not resonate with the broader Islamic community, but with a very insignificant and yet perilous element, consequently restricting their ability to construct new languages to adjust the public discourse surrounding the wider Muslim community.

One theme in which respondents shared consensus was the issue of a more ‘grassroots’ or ‘bottom-up’ approach to the CVE programme. This theme, again, has a strong link to the argument of partnership and the idea that it only involves a ‘top-down,’ government imposed, one-dimensional modus operandi. Such an approach significantly affects the relationship between the Muslim community and government, as well as the capacity for both parties to challenge the complexities involved in counteracting violent extremism.

All of the respondents reached consensus on the view that the CVE programme can be more effective. However, respondents agreed that the programme had failed to successfully galvanise support from the wider Muslim community due to issues identified earlier. Respondents suggested a bottom-up strategy to address the needs of the community, especially young people, including the improvement of community infrastructure; enhanced collaboration between community members and the local business sector; additional support groups and cooperation between religious leaders, and the development of local programmes that provide direct benefit to the community to address local issues at the grassroots level. These strategies are considered by respondents to be critical components that need to be inculcated into the agenda of countering violent extremism. The empowerment of the community to form an equal partnership, where a multi-faceted approach encapsulating this bottom-up approach rather than a reductive government driven agenda, is considered by respondents to be the underpinning stratagem.
for the CVE programme if it is to have any tangible prospects in overcoming violent extremism.

Related to this are the perceived deficiencies of the CVE programme in addressing the needs of Muslim youth. The study also reveals there is a need for the government to better engage with the young members of the Muslim community and to adopt more inclusive approaches, with programmes that target young people to empower, inspire and provide them with a greater sense of belonging. Respondents sense that large numbers of young Muslims are continuing to struggle and grapple with their own identities. Many respondents sense that, rather than providing encouragement and support to motivate Muslim youth to become more active and responsible members of their communities, youth are being further marginalised by a CVE programme perceived to adopt a paternalistic, ‘we know best’ approach. A better approach is one which open and constructive dialogue transpires, and where the level of trust between different parties could be fashioned in a gradual and measured manner. Furthermore, respondents stressed the need for community-owned solutions to issues affecting young Muslims.

As highlighted above, there are some opportunities that respondents indicated the government may consider if the CVE programme is to achieve better outcomes with Muslim youth and foster better relationships in order to restructure a more resilient community and diminish the level of animosity so often identified between vulnerable Muslim youth, government and law enforcement agencies. If Muslim perspectives are not earnestly embraced and strategies are not reconceptualised, there are fears by many in the community that the CVE programme, at best, would only perpetuate the disenfranchisement currently experienced within the community. At worst, this may lead
to unabated internecine conflict among vulnerable Muslims who feel no sense of hope and consequently fall prey to violent ideologies propaganda.

The study also highlighted the need for government to consider the susceptibility of the very small minority of Muslim youth who turn towards violent extremism and may not necessarily have been born into Muslim families. Many new converts (also known as ‘reverts’ in Islam) are very impressionable when it comes to violent extremism. While there is no clear evidence to suggest the number of converts to Islam are disproportionately engaged or active in violent ideologies or actions more so than other groups, there are some apprehensions among respondents that some converts may be more susceptible to being targeted and indoctrinated by recruiters to violent extremism. Converts are seen as vulnerable, since they were not deeply immersed in the cultural, traditional, historical, social, political and religious experiences of Islam.

On the other hand, many respondents acknowledge that a number of converts, despite their non-Muslim backgrounds, may be intimately informed and very knowledgeable, and in many cases converts are more knowledgeable about Islam than those who are born Muslim. Therefore, when respondents expressed concerns about the predilection of converts towards violent extremism, it is important to consider that such converts (no different from the rest of the Muslim community) represent a heterogeneous group shaped by different experiences and knowledge. While only a small minority of converts may be prone to espousing violent extremist acts, many respondents claim their risk of radicalism is no different to the overall Muslim population. Nevertheless, it was suggested by respondents that the CVE programme should, as a minimum, include converts who may be prone to the influences of extremist ideologies. This provides an opportunity for the community to undertake a stratagem that encompasses workshops and information
sessions in mosques and Islamic centres, with the aim of pervading the consciousness of the community with religious thought and information. Such a strategy may proactively engage the new converts to Islam and potentially reduce the risk of being manipulated by violent heterodox ideologies.

The final element of deficiency identified with this research relates to the unwillingness of Muslim youth to participate in CVE programmes. Evidence from this study indicates a significant number of Muslim youth chose not to participate in the CVE programme. Earlier in this chapter there was discussion related to the perceived negative connotations attached to the CVE programme’s title. These negative connotations are likely the single greatest force motivating Muslim youth against participation. It might be argued that while the programme’s name ‘countering violent extremism’ reflects specific goals, changing the name need not necessarily change these. However, the latter seems urgent because there is a strongly held view by many respondents that it is fuelling anxieties. The title of the programme is perceived to cause those who participate in it to feel they are being judged and labelled.

According to the data, it appears that ‘labelling’ possesses severe consequences on the psychology of youth. While many participants in the research may not be experienced or qualified to undertake formal, or clinical assessments of the psychology of Muslim youth, they have indicated that they want no part in a programme where they perceive themselves to be characterised as extremists. Respondents believed that defenceless Muslim youth could still be targeted in a manner that is more proactive, rather than reactive. Specifically, a supportive multi-faceted and community driven approach should be employed, where the title of CVE is altered and the same goals are pursued in a more subtle, respectful and dignified manner. These approaches, beginning with the
elimination of negative connotations associated with CVE, will, according to Muslim leaders’ perspectives, move a long way towards luring a greater number of Muslim youth away from violent extremist ideologies.

5.3.2.6 Level of Trust in the Australian Government Pre- and Post-September 11

The study reveals how September 11 symbolises, for a significant majority of respondents, a watershed moment. While September 11 has been often designated as ‘the day that changed the world’ for many Muslims, this change is even more profound, affecting them in deleterious ways—social, political and religious.

Evaluation of the pre- and post-September 11 levels of trust is fundamental to this research. It reveals not only a comparative analysis of this watershed moment, but also how, without resilient levels of trust between government and the Muslim community, there could be even more challenging, if not impossible, goals in the process of resisting violent extremism. In the process of trying to recognise the factors undermining levels of trust with the community, the government will be able to make better-informed decisions to reduce any deficiencies and reassert a candid aspiration towards establishing a robust relationship with the Muslim community.

The study has revealed that less than one quarter of the respondents (twenty-three per cent) are distrustful of the Australian Government, followed by nearly a third (twenty-nine per cent) who were indifferent. Most importantly, in the context of the pre- and post-September 11 comparative analyses, the level of trust was forty-seven per cent. While this may represent just below half of all respondents, this figure still represents the largest cohort of all the different types of responses on the question of trust. The respondents echoed similar sentiments when reflecting on the level of trust between the Muslim community and Federal and State governments pre-September 11.
Respondents alluded to the fact that, prior to the tragic event on September 11, Muslims were not scrutinised or targeted compared to the extent they were afterwards. The respondents had a strong conception of their community working very hard towards developing good working relationships with all levels of government. There was a greater sense that the nature of such a positive relationship with the government also facilitated the establishment of improved opportunities for Muslims to achieve greater outcomes in the educational, social, and political milieu. Many Muslims in the community felt a greater sense of inclusion, where Muslim youth could actively participate and succeed in sports, become lawyers, teachers or doctors, and be represented as good role models for younger generations, as well as collectively contribute to society in a positive manner. This sense of inclusion, in a period where the majority of the members of the Muslim community did not feel marginalised by the wider non-Muslim community, was able to strengthen the level of trust with the government, and minimise the vulnerabilities, which are the driving factors for many troubled youth who are attracted to the ideologies of violent extremism. The two following assertions eloquently reflect the sense of trust during the pre-September 11 period:

R5: After 20 years of building bridges between the Australian Government and our community, community members began realising that there is a great opportunity for them to contribute to the building of Australia. Members of our community began to attain success, fuelling younger people to follow in their footsteps. (SQ 55 & 56)

R10: Australia is one of the best countries in the world, by whatever indicators are used. Multiculturalism was working well — and continues to, despite the ranting of some key figures both within and without the government. (SQ 55 & 56)

Respondents were able to distinctly recall an epoch, prior to September 11, in which greater optimism and confidence in the Muslim community was more prevalent. It was argued that it was a period when Islam did not appear to be politicised to the extent it was
afterwards. The respondents’ impression of the time prior to September 11 included an environment where criminal incidents were not portrayed by the media to be concomitant with a person’s religious beliefs.

While respondents, for the main part, acknowledge this period was not without its complications, multiculturalism appeared to be a successful social experiment where Australian Muslims did not feel they were always being identified by their religion and such matters tended to be left to the private realm rather than today’s more pervasive public discourse. Respondents reported a sense of greater public cooperation between the community at all levels of government, including local government, where the approval for building a mosque was rarely subjected to belligerent, xenophobic, ill-informed confrontations from ‘alternative right’ ideologues and other similarly inclined groups and individuals.

The study shows that September 11 was the single most essential source and stimulus to ominously weakening the level of confidence and self-esteem in the Australian Muslim community than any other even in recent history. A significant number of encouraging contributions, whether in the social, political or economic sphere, and the sense of inclusion in the wider Australian community, appeared to be gradually withering away as part of the unintended causes of the so-called ‘war on terror.’ The events following September 11 focussed on Afghanistan and Iraq, and in the process inadvertently provoked a massive backlash against the Muslim community, which subsequently marginalised and even more radicalised a small number of Muslims in the community. Therefore, the perspectives of Muslims in the community reflect the response to September 11, and the accompanying banishment of Muslims, rather than diminishing violent extremism, paradoxically, it exacerbated it.
The results from the study show a steep decline in the level of trust between Muslims and the government from forty-nine per cent to only eighteen per cent in the post-September 11 era. This is a serious concern, particularly if one is of the view that, to have a strong relationship between parties, a high level of trust is required. There is no question that strong trust builds better working relationships and more successful outcomes. In this context, outcomes refer to reducing the level of violent extremism. Therefore, one can speculate from the results of the study that a considerable weakness in the government’s strategy is evident and needs to be modified.

The evidence from this study indicates this shift in the level of mistrust towards government and law enforcement agencies appears to be a result of multidimensional and intricate factors. Nevertheless, a clear opportunity exists to develop the level of trust between these different parties. One of the issues referred to in this chapter concerns the bellicose and insensitive execution of warrants by law enforcement personnel. Accompanying such ostensibly discordant actions is the matter of accountability. Respondents emphasised, that increased levels of police surveillance and targeting of Muslims within the community, demands a greater need for police to be held accountable for their actions. Such actions would only lead, according to many respondents and supported by the findings of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, to ensuring greater “legitimacy, confidence, trust and support from the public” (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2014, p. 33).

In the post-September era, Muslims leaders reported that Muslims feel strongly aggrieved by various incidents at home and abroad. The respondents referred to various incidents from abroad and the domestic sphere, including: the invasion of Iraq based on the pretext of Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction; the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan; and
the extremely partisan support (military and economic) for Israel and, conversely, so little to the Palestinian state. There is also an enduring stereotyping by the media, particularly in the *Daily Telegraph*, which appears to adopt an unremitting, deep-seated narrative reflecting strong prejudices and antipathy towards Muslims. Respondents explained the reasons for such a shift in the levels of trust by members of the Muslim community:

R1: Trust was lost due to the way the government approached the war on terror making Muslims responsible for all the problems of the world. It felt as if the war was directed at Islam. (SQ 57)

R8: The Howard Government offered very poor Leaders to counter the fallout from such an event, coupled with the George Bush US presidency intent on going to war. (SQ 57)

R14: Discrimination against Muslims is encouraged/increased with little done by government to minimise or to illegalise. More laws have been passed to isolate and single young Muslims with harsher penalties for crime. (SQ 57)

One of the aims of a consultation process between the stakeholders (in this case the government, law enforcement agencies and the Muslim community) was to boost the level of trust and improve the working relationship between these parties. The government adopted a consultative process where members of the Australian Federal Police and State Police agencies met with members of the Australian Muslim community. This appeared to be a good opportunity for the government to reconcile a clearly defined weakness in the relationship with Muslim Australians.

Although a consultative process was adopted by the government to boost the levels of trust and improve relationships with the Muslim community, it did not result in the desired outcomes. Unfortunately, when questioned whether the level of trust had improved after consulting with law enforcement agencies, forty-one per cent of respondents indicated there was no improvement at all. When such perceptions are uncovered from the research data, the immediate temptation may be to jump to conclusions and, despite the effort by
law enforcement agencies, many in the Muslim community are not interested in reconciling the level of trust between themselves and the government. Such a hasty judgement, however, may be premature and undoubtedly problematic without attempting to deconstruct its foundations. The attempt to address the reasons behind the perpetuation for the lack of trust between the parties led to the ensuing question and topic.

5.3.2.7 How can Contact Influence the Level of Trust?

When respondents replied to this specific question, one is able to surmise that a considerable amount of conjecture endures. The responses were essentially evenly divided on how trust could be improved. Conceivably, the most common assertions were “in order to build trust, it takes time” and “any consultation must be authentic for trust to prevail.” Part of the dilemma on the question of trust is that a significant proportion of respondents suggest trust is a question of patience – it will occur, but will not take effect immediately. The other more challenging perspective is the conception that law enforcement agencies are consulting with the community to achieve outcomes for their own interests, rather than based on altruistic objectives. Some respondents also expressed trepidations concerning what they perceived to be the belligerent style of law enforcement agencies towards Muslims suspected of violent extremism. This, together with the breakdown of the rule of law, reflect the adversarial process influencing the level of trust for many Muslims. Examples of these expressions are illustrated in the following responses:

R1: Trust continued to diminish and the government lack of sincerity was problematic and further impacted on loss of trust. They were too heavy handed and showed no respect in the way they dealt with the community quick to make generalisations and reinforced fear of Muslims. (SQ 60)

R2: The first raids on the Muslim community were carried out with excessive force; raids in 2012 much more measured. I think the irrational and unjust trial of men without proper evidence is a big factor. Trial by media and
suspicion has definitely made me lose my trust in government agencies. (SQ 60)

5.3.2.8 Concerns about the Way the Government is Engaging the Community in Relation to Countering Extremism

Only one-third of respondents asserted they had no concerns about the way the government was engaging with the community. Therefore, over two-thirds of the Muslim community respondents had adopted a negative conception of the government’s engagement with the community. The relationship between the government and Muslim community is critical when assuming the complex responsibilities and challenges associated with countering violent extremism. The study revealed considerable misgivings with respect to the nature and extent of consultation, and consequently, a window of opportunity remains available for the government to reconsider alternative strategies to further enhance the level of inclusivity, which, according to the majority of participants in this study, appears to be considerably constrained.

5.3.2.9 Was the CVE Programme Effective in Attracting Young Muslims?

As indicated earlier, one of the most critical focal points of the CVE programme should reflect upon how it addresses the anxieties experienced by Muslim youth, and how this emphasis may be one of the principal components in tackling violent extremism. In terms of guiding youth away from violent extremism, the data reveals that only three respondents received any form of funding from the government. Furthermore, the project appeared to target Muslim youth primarily in the prison system.
5.3.2.10 Consultation by State, Territory or Federal Governments on Issues Affecting the Community

Just over one half of respondents indicated they were consulted intermittently on issues concerning the community, while the remaining respondents were consulted either once or not at all (5 and 15 per cent respectively). It is evident from the data that a significant constituent of Muslim community members, who participated in the research, had some form of a relationship at either state/territory or federal government levels. This reflects a strength in the level of consultation, particularly when over half of the respondents confirmed the level of communication was not based on a single interaction. Such consultations could also be characterised as a strength in the CVE programme as they reflect the multiplicity of communication channels between Muslim and government officials, allowing for open lines of communication between the different parties. This, accordingly, enhances the capacity for people to be better informed about different and complex issues encompassing the Muslim community.

Despite this perceived strength, a further deconstruction of the plurality of Muslim perspectives reveals an opportunity for even broader consultative processes to materialise between the state/territory and federal governments and the Muslim community. With just under half of the respondents experiencing one-off or no communication with government officials, there are clearly vast opportunities for governments to engage with the wider Muslim community representatives. The broader the consultative process government is able to institute with the Muslim community, the greater the competence for both government and community leaders to target areas of concern prior to their maturity.
5.3.2.11 Community Leaders’ Awareness of the Federal Government’s Agenda on Countering Terrorism

The data shows just over half of the respondents were aware of the Federal government’s agenda on countering terrorism. Respondents who were familiar with the programme appear to have varying perspectives relating to its nature. This includes similar views, such as the programme is about countering Islamic ideologies or hard-line Islamic groups. At the same time, other perceptions indicated a programme not necessarily focussed on the fringe groups within Muslims society, but the community in general, and similarly, it is considered by some that the government’s agenda was to isolate and marginalise the Muslim community.

Indisputably, those respondents who conceptualise the programme as one that is targeting only a very small minority of Muslims may well be beneficial for the government in terms of how they can consolidate the partnership and effective delivery of the CVE programme. There is, nevertheless, a potential threat towards the efficacy and integrity of the programme by those members of the Muslim community who tend to view the programme along more sceptical contours. Thus, there appears to be an urgent need to develop strategies in order to reconcile such incongruous perspectives. The opportunity lies within the Muslim community (together with support from the government (i.e. funds) to conduct and manage workshops where opportunities to express grievances or other concerns can be articulated within a perceived safe psychological space away from the government’s perceived encumbering ‘eyes and ears’ in a more trustful environment.

5.4 The Impact of Media and Political Rhetoric

In Chapter 4, community leaders provided insights on how they have responded to or engaged with the media in their attempt to counter negative media coverage to stories that
imply or state Muslims are terrorists. (See SQ 46), by presenting positive stories showing that Australian Muslims are an integral part of the Australian community.

As noted in Chapter 3 of *The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights Inquiry into Freedom of Speech in Australia*, the inquiry recognises the impact of public and commercial media in shaping public discourse (2017). The inquiry observes that media representation has the effect of either strengthening or weakening multiculturalism in Australia, and can ultimately undermine social cohesion and inclusion. Indeed, the language used by the media plays a powerful role in shaping the views and perceptions of people within our diverse society and their sense of belonging.

The negative representation of Muslims in the media impacts on how non-Muslims perceive Muslims are well documented in government reports and literature (HREOC; Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales & McCausland, 2003; 2004; Dunn, 2004, 2006; Pickering et al., 2008; Saeed. 2003; Kabir, 2004) and in the UK (Briggs, 2010). As highlighted by a study undertaken by Western Sydney University, *The resilience and ordinariness of Australian Muslims: Attitudes and experiences of Muslims Report*, (2015), 79 per cent of Muslims believe that the Australian media’s portrayal of Muslims is unfair and 83 per cent believe this contributes negatively to how non-Muslims perceive Muslims.

While negative media coverage have been highlighted as a serious issue of concern that has the potential to reinforce prejudices and stereotypes fuelling social unrest, there have also been examples of increased positive media coverage that has also contributed to greater understanding of Australia’s Muslim community and their belonging to Australian society.
In recent years there has been an increase in positive media coverage on television and in newspapers promoting positive examples of Muslims stories on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), as well as positive media coverage. Examples of positive media coverage such as the personal stories by Muslims living in regional Australia (Ferguson, 2015) and hijab-wearing police officers (Wynne, 2016) help to promote better understanding about Australian Muslims and dispel misconceptions about Islam.

5.4.1 Media Impact on Muslim Community Engagement

This section will principally focus on reflections emanating from the study, and attempt to deconstruct the relationship between countering violent extremism, the media and political rhetoric. This segment will also endeavour to continue addressing Muslim perspectives, particularly with respect to concerns relating to the complexities in dealing not only with various forms of media (print, television and radio), but also the contemporary atomistic proliferation of social media. Similarly, the effects of political rhetoric on the Muslim community, (i.e. the language adopted by political leaders), is perceived by a significant number of participants to be equally as obstructive as the media’s impact in countering violent extremism.

Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilisations* (1996), largely dismissed by the wider academic community for its grandiose, simplistic generalisations of whole Muslim (and Chinese) civilisations as the so-called greatest threat to ‘Western civilisation,’ suddenly appeared to be transformed into a new and galvanised overarching neorealist paradigm, governing Islam within the international relations context after September 11. Rather than targeting extremist actions conducted by people across multiple religious and political groups, a new phenomenon emerged, as F. A. Noor describes, where “Muslim identity
and the concerns of Muslims are increasingly being defined in terms of an oppositional dialectic that pits Islam and Muslims against the rest of the world” (Noor, 2007, p. 261). It is within this particular milieu that concerns expressed by respondents in the study are significantly affecting Muslim communities and believed to be driven largely by the media and political rhetoric.

It is important from the outset to establish what respondents characterise as media, and how this has changed not only with respect to the nature of the media, but also in the perceived level of antagonistic and vitriolic commentary against Muslims in the post-September 11 era. In Australia, traditionally, when one referred to the media it typically included television news reports, ranging between half to one hour daily. These were customarily in the evening and presented on one of the major mainstream channels, seven, nine and ten, as well as the multicultural SBS news network and government-owned national ABC channel. In addition, other traditional and longer serving media included radio broadcasting and the daily tabloids. Since September 11, an additional medium has transpired – social media – where people are able to use popular social spaces across the internet (such as Facebook, Twitter and various other social and political forums) to communicate ideas. All of these varying forms of media, according to multiple perspectives, play an important role in the way Muslims are perceived and affect the marginalisation of impressionable youth in the community.

The media remains a powerful tool in shaping the views of the community. The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights Inquiry into Freedom of Speech in Australia (2017) recognises the impact of public and commercial media in shaping public discourse. The inquiry pointed to the damage that inflammatory language and imagery can cause to social cohesion and a sense of belonging. Other researchers (Dunn et al;
2007; Modood, 2005; Poynting and Mason, 2006; Poynting 2002) have also argued that media stereotyping has contributed to marginalisation. Others have also pointed out that the impact of media stereotyping has the potential to impact on feelings of belonging and citizenship of Muslims in Australia (Dunn et al 2007; Mansour, 2005; Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2013; Pe-Pua et al 2010; Collins, 2005, 2007; Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) 2010; DIAC, 2008a).

If the media is not perceived to be supporting positive activities undertaken within the Muslim community, acting as an echo chamber that reveals only negative issues, it may lead to significant misconceptions, misrepresentations, stereotyping and monolithic conceptions of Muslims. The idea that the media possesses the capacity to sway perceptions of the community or any individual or group, in either a negative or a positive light, is not a new phenomenon. In the mid-twentieth century, Malcolm X had implied that “The media’s the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that’s power, because they control the minds of the masses” (as cited in Washington, 2013, p. 115). When examining the views expressed by respondents in this study, one is able to begin to fathom how similar judgments are articulated unremittingly and in a more profound manner post-September 11.

While many respondents asserted issues faced by the Muslim community from the media were, to some extent, prevalent in the past, e.g. negative commentaries from so-called ‘shock-jocks’ on radio or factions within newspapers (which many alluded to be the Murdoch Press), the level of Islamophobia today appears to have reached unprecedented levels. Dr Kevin Dunn reinforced this view when he affirmed, “Islamophobia is growing in Australia” (Morris, 2003, p. 1). The extent of these concerns is not limited to Muslim
perspectives, uncovered from this research, or academics. Such pronouncements are also supported within a law enforcement context where former AFP Commissioner, Mick Keelty, declared “we don’t want to provide them with more reasons to be further marginalised … to the point where they take their own life in order to kill many others” (Larkin, 2006, p. 1). Not only have the negative connotations and depictions of Muslims from traditional media increased in intensity in recent times, it has also taken a new and more pervasive form through social media, where the ability to regulate such narratives appears to be complex and principally implacable. While the question of regulating any form of expression can be a very sensitive and delicate topic to navigate, one of the distinctions with mainstream ‘traditional’ media is the assumed standards, values and codes of conduct to which employees need to consent. While many may argue they do not necessarily agree or support the values and standards set by some elements of mainstream media, it still follows some degree of community expectation.

It is an entirely disparate complication when one examines the use of the internet for communication. Not only is it possible for language within the internet to be more belligerent (such as violent extremists like ISIS recruiting vulnerable people or extreme right-wing groups advocating Islamophobic narratives), the degree of fact checking appears to be inadequate or even non-existent, which leads to a vast amount of prejudiced information concerning Muslims and Islam. Garry Ackerman echoed similar apprehensions when he pointed out, “the media has changed, we now give broadcast licenses to philosophies instead of people. People get confused and think there is no difference between news and entertainment. People who project themselves as journalists on television don’t know the first thing about journalism” (Tyrangiel, 2012 para. 10).
Prior to evaluating in more detail the impact on the Muslim community by the media, a critical footnote must be underscored, with analysis of one specific mainstream news channel to determine if any similarities in the matters raised by respondents exist and whether there have been any transformations. While the analysis that follows is anecdotal, and thus capricious, it echoes the sentiments expressed by a deeply divided community.

On Monday, 19 December, 2016 at 1800 hours, the author of this research decided to observe for a period of approximately 10 minutes (this decision was based primarily on what was anticipated to effectively cover the most significant part of the daily, local and global news stories) one of the mainstream news channels in Sydney, Australia. The date chosen was even more unassuming and based on the fact it was the same day the author commenced writing this segment of the chapter (media impact).

The first four news stories reflected negative portrayals of Muslims or Islam. The first story comprised a ‘former Muslim refugee’ driving a semi-trailer truck and colliding with a crowded marketplace in Germany, in the process killing up to 12 people and injuring many more. This incident was followed by another international news story relating to Muslims, in this case an off-duty Turkish policeman was shown assassinating a Russian diplomat who was giving a speech in an art gallery in Ankara.

The news channel then transferred from international headlines to domestic news. The first domestic account was about a court hearing of two (Muslim) brothers who had allegedly brutalised, and later murdered, a fellow Australian. This was followed by a story of another Muslim man charged by New South Wales Police for allegedly excessive physical harm against a two-year-old child.

Undoubtedly, all of these news stories represent very serious criminal behaviour and the author does not question the basis for showing these incidents as newsworthy or challenge
the chronology in which they were presented (the first four news stories). However, they reveal the significant challenges Muslim communities are experiencing. In particular, the community is attempting to challenge a discourse where Muslims are seemingly portrayed in stereotypically violent and undemocratic fashion; these seemingly perpetual negative news stories only increase the complications for the community when attempting to showcase Muslim Australians’ positive contributions.

In the context of the wider community, an accurate representation is required of a community that is tolerant, respectful and possesses a multitude of professionals, volunteers and outstanding role models engaging in a positive way and contributing successfully towards Australia. However, there is an overwhelming consensus in the data collected that this is not the case. The study shows that the community feels it is continually being demoralised by the impact of the media and the lack of balanced perspectives. The respondents in this study have sensed the manner in which the media has stereotyped Australian Muslims has generated an atmosphere where racism, which tacitly existed in certain pockets within the nation has, in the post-September 11 era, been allowed to permeate and endorsed across a wider spectrum of the Australian community. The sense by respondents that racism and stereotyping of Muslims is progressively spreading is not instinctively unfounded, as Griffith University (2004, p. 1) claims, “the perpetuation of racism relies on stereotyping.”

Clearly, for the most part, news stories from the media primarily focus on stories that tend to be very negative, except in the remaining few minutes, where a ‘feel good’ story about the birth of a new panda or a cat rescued from a treetop by firemen transpires. One can essentially speculate that one of the more obvious reasons for presenting the news in this fashion is that unscrupulous and alarming narratives tend to sell more newspapers or
increase television viewership numbers and the audience for a ‘shock-jock’s’ radio programme. When such dynamics are at play, and even if some members (or non-members) of the Muslim community attempt to counter this negative commentary with positive narratives, many respondents feel it is an uphill battle, where the so-called ‘mud of Islamic terrorism’ sticks. In fact, some analysts have maintained there is a discernible correlation between the media’s representations of Muslims and Islamophobia (Morris, 2003, p. 1). Moreover, the impact from such discriminatory commentaries may take a considerable amount of time to dissipate from the unprecedented levels of the current bigoted characterisations of a whole community.

5.4.2 Individual/Community Leaders and Media Engagement

One of the principal and cyclical themes emerging within the community in this study is the perception of the relationship between the media and Muslims as one that appears to be progressively more perplexing, arduous, and largely, misrepresented. It is through this particular lens that respondents have reflected on their increasing demands for media engagement in a post-September 11 era. One of the more discernible strengths of this engagement with the media was the level of individual responses towards perceived negative media observations.

The data indicates a significant majority (80 per cent) of respondents had individually undertaken actions to respond to the media either to protect the community from negative stereotypes or to challenge inaccurate accounts of the Muslim community. The consequences of this negative media impact on the Muslim community are perceived by respondents to also further marginalise and exclude Muslims from society. When the media is perceived to be incessantly provoking the community, people automatically
adopt a more defensive posture, which many respondents have argued results in further withdrawal from media engagements.

At the same time, while an extensive number of individuals have attempted to respond to what they identify to be an all-encompassing attack by the media towards the Muslim community, there is a resounding feeling of being overwhelmed by these responsibilities. On a daily to weekly basis, it appears the media has pervaded the consciousness of the national and international community with images and stories relating to Muslim extremism, and to counter such a negative and deeply entrenched narrative, individuals within the community are beginning to feel fatigued and intimidated by the precipitous enormity of their responsibilities with the media.

Despite these uncertainties, a number of potential opportunities for leaders (particularly those with media responsibilities) within the Muslim communities may still emerge. One strategy may be that Muslim community leaders arrange a mechanism that allows for the multiplicity of perspectives on the media to be channelled via one centralised and cohesive voice. While it is pertinent to embrace a system or process in which a plurality of Muslims voices are heard, ultimately there needs to be a centralised voice that portrays the unity of Muslims and articulate expression for these harmonised voices to become more prevalent. Nevertheless, despite the concerted attempts to address the adverse media impact upon Muslim communities, respondents have expressed additional concerns relating to the religion of Islam, which is understood in many quarters of the media as part of the problem.

When repeated often enough, consistent negative portrayals of Muslims and their religion eventually become a reality in the consciousness of the wider community. Typecasting and aberrations by the media have also lead to other unforeseen cleavages within the
Muslim community, where some respondents have reiterated how the Muslim community is simply “paying the price” due to the negligence of community leaders. These consternations created from the media, and the sense of inability by community leaders to effectively respond to such serious issues affecting Muslims, have also created animosity and disunity between non-Muslims and Muslims, and within certain Muslim quarters. This raises questions concerning the capacity of Muslim leaders to respond to media concerns and the implications of such outcomes, particularly on the question of unity between different societies and within the Muslim community.

How Community Leaders Responded to the Negative Media Coverage

One of the greatest challenges in responding to media coverage, unravelled through this study, was the intense and penetrating nature of the commentary and vitriol radiating from within the media. Respondents reported feeling overwhelmed in their attempts to counter the media’s perceived strategies to conduct a ubiquitous dissonance campaign against Muslims, which has been perceived to exacerbate divisions and disharmony within the community. Respondents were unequivocally unified in their view that the media had a considerable impact on the social cohesion of the Muslim community. The respondents view social cohesion as a challenging and ongoing process and, as Markus emphasises, social cohesion “is not a destination… [but] we need to work at it.” (Chan, 2016; Markus, 2016, p. 2). The notion that social cohesion is a challenging endeavour only further exacerbated malevolent and intense media commentaries.

The study also shows that respondents are of the opinion they do not possess the capacity to respond, on their own, to this media onslaught, and urgently request the government to work more closely, as a unified coalition, with the media in subverting the significant social and political challenges affecting the Muslim community. Respondents have been
unified in their perspectives when it comes to the media’s detrimental impact on the Muslim community, and two examples can be seen in the following quotes:

R1: The impact on the community by negative media coverage has been significant leading to formations of stereotypical views and increasing level of hatred and attacks on the community. This has inflamed situations and has contributed to heightened fear for one’s safety and feelings of being excluded leaving many to feel that they will never be accepted.

R2: Racist slurs and even physical assaults on community members because they are visibly Muslim. Discrimination is also a huge issue which community members face but don’t have proper access and knowledge of the complaints system; which is also deficient. (SQ 44)

Other than an opportunity for the government to work more closely and attentively with Muslim community leaders, and addressing issues concerning the adverse impact by the media on the Muslim community, an additional proposal emerged from the study. This was the idea that proactive meetings between media outlets and community leaders could further enhance and deliberate on how both parties could improve dialogue and perceptions of each other.

Linked with such suggestions is the adoption of strategies where members of the Muslim community may further enhance their skills and capacity for resilience, by responding and engaging with the media in a more timely fashion. Furthermore, one suggestion was for the community to create public relations strategies aimed at improving Islam’s image and focusing on positive stories from the community. How these particular actions could improve such outcomes was not expressed in detail, perhaps because ‘positive stories’ tend to be largely ignored by the media and do not receive the same attention as negative ones.

Improving these relationships appears to be a legitimate and worthwhile goal; however, such suggestions are very problematic as the media, as discussed earlier in this chapter,
is made up of multifarious voices and mediums with their own agendas. However the media conducts their commentaries about Muslims and Islam, while perceived to be perplexing, unpromising and alienating against many in the community, it must also operate in a space without any perceived influence, i.e. ‘fear or favour’ from Muslims or any other groups.

5.4.3 How Has Negative Media Affected the Community

One of the observed negative components to have surfaced from the media is the nature of the language adopted to narrate stories about Muslims and Islam, and how this may be a critical factor in not only alienating some Muslims but also, paradoxically, supporting a propaganda campaign for recruiting Muslim youth to radical, violent, jihadist groups and ideologies. The nature of the language adopted appears to have caused (and perpetuated) an ‘us versus them’ paradigm, which further alienates and marginalises the community.

As indicated above, the mainstream language of the media, coupled with a more invasive and bellicose narrative from social media, may lead to further disaffection of youth, which, according to the perspectives of all participants highlighted in this study, may only increase the probability of violent radicalisation. One of the remarkable contradictions with the language adopted by mainstream, particularly ‘Western’ media is that, while they may be inadvertently creating division between the Muslim and wider communities with their inflammatory narratives, another component of the (social) media – violent extremist groups – are taking advantage of this sense of alienation. In this way, they have been able to inculcate disaffected youth with their own brand of ‘inclusive’ language to guide them towards violent polemical ideals and belief systems.
The implications of xenophobic, racist, prejudiced and stereotyping language towards Muslims by different sectors of the media, as indicated above, may lead to counterproductive results. Within these many divergent media sources, which are advocating for the legitimate destruction of violent extremism, there is a language that, while alienating Muslims, is also unexpectedly strengthening the very thing they so zealously want defeated. The reversal of such acrimony towards the Muslim community, perceived by respondents to be prevalent in the media, appears to be problematic. Nevertheless, the respondents have suggested particular and incremental measures, highlighted below, which may be a step in the right direction.

One such measure is the implementation of interfaith dialogue to improve understanding and challenge the many misconceptions about Muslims and Islam. On the surface, this may appear to have little or no impact on the media. However, the idea that other major global religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism, share community space and engage in open and respectful dialogue will enhance the relationship between these religious communities. It may also potentially demonstrate to sections of the media how tolerance and treating the so-called ‘other’ in a dignified manner could augment social cohesion and minimise the sense of ostracism experienced within the Muslim community.

Post-September 11, the level of media enquiries with Muslim community leaders reached unprecedented levels. The study shows considerable amounts of time has been invested, by a large cohort of the respondents, in addressing concerns encountered by the community. These concerns primarily included changes to the anti-terrorism laws and subsequent deleterious results from the post-September 11 era upon sections of the Muslim community. This included, but was not limited to, anecdotal comments such as:
“Go back to where you came from, you terrorist,” despite the fact that many were born in Australia; and further hostile acts such as Muslims being spat on or females having their *hijab* (Muslim scarf) pulled from their heads. Several respondents also noted incidents such as ‘ban the burqa’ as another example of a divisive action undertaken by a small section of the wider community having considerable negative impacts, particularly on the social cohesion of the Muslim community.

### 5.4.4 The Role of Community Organisations and Their Leaders’ Responses to September 11

The level of anxiety about Islam and Muslims, as indicted earlier, reached unparalleled levels immediately after September 11. Muslim community leaders and organisations became a central reference point, representing the wider community. Media enquiries became significantly more intense as the backlash against Muslims continued to increase. Together with a notable increase in the desire for people to learn more about the Islamic faith, and its accompanying customs and captivating rituals, there were increased responsibilities for leaders to provide counselling for Muslims in the community, who were subjected to psychological and physical trauma. In other words, many of the respondents witnessed how the role of community organisations and its leaders were precipitously overwhelmed, unqualified and ill-equipped to effectively respond to the multifaceted concerns within and without the Muslim community. These particular experiences and anxieties can be clearly grasped from the following quote gathered from this research:

P9: There was an increase. These classes had always gone on. I can’t say that all of a sudden they appeared after September 11. No there’s always been classes but after September 11. There was resurgence; there were Muslims who were not practising who wanted to know more about Islam so there was resurgence within the Muslim community wanting to know more about their own religion. People were contacting the community constantly asking for
pamphlets, asking for booklets, asking for a copy of the Qur’an, asking for … (IQ 3)

Respondents strongly felt they did not possess the resources or skills to effectively respond to the support sought by members of the Muslim community. Typical examples included the inability to provide sufficient counselling or answers required by a community with heightened concerns, due to the significant backlash experienced either through individuals from the non-Muslim community or the media. Respondents expressed how community initiatives were already stretched across many volunteer and civil society groups, and training for these people was perceived to be inadequate when dealing with the general rise of Islamophobia, and the pervasive threat upon Muslims from certain quarters of the media.

The media impact on members of the Muslim community was perceived to be widespread, unrelenting and inescapable; respondents observed how the media was now beginning to undermine the Muslims’ very identity. Respondents believed the barrage of animosity against Muslims stemming from the media made them feel a great sense of despair and paralysis, making them feel defenceless. There is a comprehensive understanding or consensus identified within the research data: that the word ‘terrorism’ was only endorsed when violence against unarmed civilians was conducted by Muslims, but unheeded when inflicted by others (non-Muslims). As one media commentator observed, “the media aren’t quite as ready to talk about terrorism when it’s a white man involved in acts of political violence (Keane, 2016, p. 1).

The continued scrutiny regarding the perceived violent teachings of Islam, and the capacity of Muslims to integrate into Australian culture or share the same values as other Australians, challenged the very identity of Muslims. Many felt they had to choose
between being either Australian or Muslim, rather than being allowed to possess multiple identities, just as the majority of Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds and other faiths have successfully been able to do throughout the nation’s history.

The respondents sensed, for the most part, the Muslim community has contributed to the nation in very industrious and beneficial means since the first waves of Muslim immigration in the 1960s and 1970s (Roude, 2009). These views were also reinforced in the Voice of Multicultural International Tribune article, emphasising that Muslims have been “the most vibrant, visionary, hardworking, cultured and family-orientated proud Australians” (ul Hassan, 2016 para. 3). Despite these valuable and esteemed contributions, there is a strong sense among respondents that they have to continue to substantiate their Muslim identity and its compatibility with Australian values.

Some of these disconcerting sentiments relating to the impact of the media on Muslim identity are reflected in these comments by respondents:

P9: A reality check for the community: who are we? Who decides who is an Australian? (IQ 2)

P14: Leaders were continually reinforcing shared values and that Australian values are in fact Islamic values. (IQ 2)

P16: [President] Bush’s dictum of us and them which was repeated everywhere and the question that was put on Muslim community is ‘are you us or them. Prove yourselves to us.’ So the message that the leaders had to give to the great community was ‘hey, we are both in this together and we are not the them we are the us as well’ and to the community as well because when the war started it was ‘are they killing Muslims, is it a war on Islam or war on terrorism, so it was a very difficult situation where they were trying to calm the community down to not make them feel like victims but reality was, there was a lot of victim blaming going on. (IQ 2)

These observations demonstrate the extent of alienation felt by the Muslim community.

The sense that the war, rather than targeting violent extremism, was against Islam and, by
extension, Muslims, was a deeply felt concern by respondents. The media, rather than informing the wider population about the clear distinction between violent extremism and Muslims, was perceived to be amalgamating them, and consequently, creating a greater climate of fear and discord, which was the very thing advocated by the violent extremists. One significant consequence arising from media reports about Muslims and Islam, respondents indicated, has not only, even if inadvertently, misrepresented Islam but also increased negative perceptions of Muslims.

One of the most discerning aspects to materialise from the media impact on Muslim communities is the expectation from the media that Muslim leaders repeatedly “condemn” violent extremism. Respondents have expressed concerns about the media’s unrealistic expectations when it comes to the question of Muslims condemning violent extremism. These perceived unrealistic expectations are, according to the respondents, based on several distinctive grounds. The first reason is that, irrespective of Muslim leaders and people in the community condemning all forms of violent extremisms, their voices tend to be overlooked by the media. Therefore, the only narrative to emerge is one in which Muslims are still questioned on why they are not condemning violent actions, despite their efforts and public statements doing so.

The over-riding concern relates to the media’s expectations on the issue of condemnation and many respondents feel the media, unintentionally, has placed different standards on Muslims. In other words, respondents believed individuals or groups from a faith other than Islam were not unremittingly compelled to condemn violent extremist actions from those in their respective communities. The study reveals that respondents tend to be united in their opinion that Muslims are expected to condemn each individual extremist act incessantly and this is still not adequate for the media.
5.4.5 The Media’s Representation of Muslims and its Contribution to Fear, Racism and Extremism

The recurring theme concerning the media was the perception it was the most powerful tool in shaping the general population’s conceptions concerning Muslims and Islam. Respondents pointed out how there appears to be significant growth in the level of fear against Muslims and spread of racist and xenophobic commentary and attacks. While respondents acknowledge these types of attacks are not solely or the main contributor to violent extremism, they do consider these to be among the many driving factors for which the media should take more responsibility. Many respondents shared the belief that, despite concerted efforts by most Muslims towards contributing to an Australian society in a positive way, the media still overstates the actions of a very small minority, subsequently leaving many Muslims with a continued sense of disillusionment and marginalisation.

The narratives undertaken by the media in the post-September 11 era are ostracising Muslim communities even further. Such narratives are not forging an environment where fighting violent extremism is a collective effort. Instead, they are triggering more divisions and a greater sense of despair, as reflected in the following comments:

P34: We have contributed a lot but we have done lots of good things but the Media concentrate on the bad, never concentrate on the good. They never show good stuff about Muslims.

P9: No and to be frank with you, even pre-September 11, our media in Australia is heavily controlled by a particular [group] that have their own agendas and if you look at the history of the media in Australia it’s very obvious and I think most people don’t recognise it or realise that until they’ve travelled and seen the media on an international level it’s now become more obvious with the internet prior to that most people didn’t realise how controlled we were when it came to media unless they lived in another country and saw that media was actually quite open in countries in areas like Europe…Well the Muslim community unfortunately got in under the radar and we haven’t been able to get out and after September 11. (IQ 8)
In the first part of this chapter, where the CVE programme was examined in greater detail, one of the research findings was the impact of the CVE initiatives on Muslim youth. It further examined the importance of providing youth with a greater sense of belonging, educational opportunities and continued appreciation to possess the prospects in reaching their full potential and success with support from their local Muslim and wider community. The importance of Muslim youth and the issues of marginalisation are no less prominent when examined through the context of the media.

Respondents have voiced their deep-seated concerns on how language by the media has not only shaken the confidence and undermined a significant component of the social fabric of the Muslim community, but has also contributed to the formation of extremist views. Respondents have indicated, a very small minority of youth may search for alternative, including violent, ideologies when they begin to lose their sense of belonging, and which are principally conveyed, subliminally or otherwise, when they feel different and not desired, and when pronouncements in the media have negative psychological impacts. A large contingent of respondents echoed parallel sentiments, and the reflection below underpins the core concerns expressed within the surveys and interviews:

P9: Yes, look at the narrative, ‘go back to your country’ is a catchphrase almost for the non-Muslims. There is no recognition that we belong here and if there is no recognition that we are here and belong here and if ‘go back to your country’ and being told that on a regular basis, how am I going to feel like I am actually connected to this community? I will always sit on the outskirts and what occurs in it I am not interested and there is no interest there and if there isn’t that bridge that I can feel like I can hold onto something in this community then I am more likely to be able to do something because I don’t care about this community enough to want to maintain its stability …

(IQ 8)
5.5 Political Rhetoric and the Impact on the Muslim Community

As discussed at length in the previous sections, the significant barriers and complexities relating to the relationship between the media and the impact on the Muslim community are profound. Similar barriers can be uncovered when one examines the responses to questions about the effects of political rhetoric on the Muslim community. While the impact of the media and political rhetoric are evaluated as separate components within this chapter, they should not be deliberated upon in isolation. When respondents express trepidation concerning the impact of negative media on the Muslim community, these negative commentaries do not occur in a vacuum.

Many respondents are of the opinion that, when political leaders embrace inclusive and positive language, the media would, to a large extent, emulate similar sentiments. By contrast, vitriolic language, negative innuendos and the linking of Islam and Muslims to violent extremism only strengthens the resolve for some media pundits to further ramp up the level of Islamophobia. Despite the close resemblances between media and political rhetoric, including the use of divisive language, undermining social cohesion and associating violent extremism with Islam, there is a great sense within the Muslim community that considerable opportunities exist to transform the nature of political rhetoric. Such transformations could strengthen the partnership between the government and Muslim communities.

In order for the government to build a stronger partnership with the Muslim community, it would require significant improvements in the perceived level of trust. One pertinent factor, which may enhance the level of trust and consequently build better relationships, is the manner in which political rhetoric, with respect to Islam and Muslims, is adopted by political leaders at local, State and Federal levels. It is important to indicate from the
outset that political rhetoric is not a value laden term and it can be adopted to inspire people to do positive things in the community such as: volunteering; giving money to charities and assisting the most vulnerable groups in society, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, indigenous Australians and newly arrived migrants.

At the same time, political rhetoric can be used to inspire people to commit heinous acts of violence and support racist causes, while stirring hate and fear in communities or within nation states. Therefore, depending on the very nature of the language, political rhetoric may be used in either a positive or negative manner. The evidence shown in this study reveals how the undercurrent of political rhetoric is adversely affecting the relationship between the government, the wider Australian community and Muslims.

5.5.1 The Impact of Negative Political Rhetoric on the Community

The study has also highlighted how inflammatory political rhetoric may adversely affect Muslim communities by creating more divisions and racial animosity as well as damaging social cohesion in what is otherwise a successful multicultural society. When some political leaders adopt inflammatory rhetoric, one of the implications, as identified by respondents, is the potential for increasing the level of radicalisation, particularly with younger people in the Muslim community.

One particular and peculiar aspect of political rhetoric, seemingly perceived to be dividing the Muslim community, is the commentary associated with the notion of ‘you are either with us or against us.’ Respondents felt this type of political rhetoric symbolised divisive language and forced members of the Muslim community to take sides. Not against ‘violent’ extremism, but against ‘Islamic’ extremism; a position in which respondents feel the close association of ‘Islam’ with extremism only exacerbates a greater level of dissonance rather than making Muslims feeling they are an integral part of the wider
Australian community. Concerns about the nature of political rhetoric in Australia is perceptively outlined in the response below:

P14: Rhetoric is very important. I think they have got to be careful of what they say. The Howard era set the Community back many times … Government can burn a bridge within a Community with one Press Conference with inflammatory language, it’s that simple … (IQ 7)

5.5.2 The Impact of Language Linking Islam with Terrorism and Trust

As indicated earlier, resonating in the rhetoric of some political leaders is the association of Islam and Muslims with terror. This fusion has led to the abating of much trust between the Muslim community and government. Respondents have asserted that Muslims feel responsible or held to account when acts of terror are committed by the actions of a very small minority, whether in Australia or abroad. They sensed that the level of trust between the government and the Muslim community was diminishing because the political rhetoric on the ‘war on terror’ felt more akin to a ‘war on Islam.’

Incendiary language has implicated the government in propagating Islamophobic behaviour in the wider community. A small number of respondents felt that the government had deliberately “exploited the situation” by either remaining silent on some of the issues contiguous with Islamophobia or by adopting subliminal or implicit messages associating Muslims with terror-related concerns.

This study shows the impact of inflammatory political rhetoric on the Muslim community. It was observed by a significant portion of the respondents that levels of trust in the government had been undermined and, consequently, so had opportunities for strengthening partnerships in the momentous challenges of fighting violent extremism. Such apprehensions about the level of trust being undermined because of incendiary political rhetoric is acutely reflected in the following response:
R1: Trust was lost due to the way the government approached the war on terror making Muslims responsible for all the problems of the world. It felt as if the war was directed at Islam. (SQ 57)

One respondent expressed how when serious crimes, terrorism or otherwise, are committed in Australia, they should be considered the collective responsibility of all Australians, not only Muslim Australians. There is a sense that some of the political rhetoric is creating further tension and division among the community because of a language that unambiguously associates Islam with violent extremism and portrays the Muslim community to be deficient in its values and incompatible with the Australian way of life. Furthermore, Muslims commitment and loyalty to Australia is always questioned. One minister’s comments were perceived by a columnist in *The Age* to be “at odds with the goal of security agencies to build trust within communities that are preyed on by extremists.” (“Peter Dutton’s revisionist rhetoric is dangerous,” 2016). This was after the minister had implied a former Australian Prime Minister (Malcolm Fraser) “should not have let people of Lebanese –Muslim background into Australia” (Murphy, 2016, p. 1).

The rhetoric used by Members of Parliament, including the targeting of anti-terrorism laws and terror raids upon the Muslim community and the recurring issue of the choice of clothing by Muslim women, has worked to fuel further distrust of government departments and authorities.

For example, Senator Cory Bernardi and Pauline Hanson, have repeatedly expressed anti Muslim sentiments in both the print (*Sunday Telegraph; Herald Sun*) and electronic media, (MTR Radio station). His views that "Islam is the problem" (Maiden, 2011) and that “extremists wanted fundamentalist Islamic rule implemented in Australia” have generated concerns about the impact of such political rhetoric on marginalisation and social cohesion (Harvey and Lewis 2011). (See also Pauline Hanson’s maiden speech,
stating that “Australia is in danger of being swamped by Muslims” and former Treasurer, Peter Costello’s comments in an article in the *Herald Sun* that “We have a duty to ask the tough questions on Islam and terrorism,” and that “All these attacks are coming from people who subscribe to one religion, which is not Catholic or Protestant or Jewish or Buddhist or Yazidi” (Dunlop, 2015). One respondent pointed out this type of political commentary only led to counterproductive outcomes. If the government’s aim is to reduce the number of people feeling alienated and accordingly attracted to violent ideologies, then this kind of rhetoric is not the way forward. Rather, it further motivates certain individuals towards the wrong path, and continues to diminish the level of trust between the Muslim community and government.

Data from this study show fifty-eight per cent of respondents implied that comments made by political leaders have affected their level of trust in the Australian Government. This data reveals some considerable concern about the issues of trust, particularly when considering that over half of the respondents, where many have a close working relationship with the government, have lost their trust in the government based on negative connotations attached to Muslims made by political leaders.

Of even greater concern is the fact that, despite their close relationship with the government, political rhetoric was responsible for over half of the respondents having their level of trust undermined. This suggests even graver concerns relating to the potential level of trust between the government and wider Muslim community where limited or no working relationships with the government exists. If we are convinced that increased levels of trust may lead to better partnerships, and better partnerships lead to an increased success in fighting violent extremism, then there appears to be an urgent need
for the government to shift the nature of its rhetoric in order to reverse the current levels of distrust prevailing within the Muslim community.

In some quarters, the study also uncovered fears regarding politicians’ failure to adopt any sense of nuance or reflect the tangible complexities comprising violent extremism. There is a perception that political leaders’ language uses simplistic narratives, absolutist settings and reductive interpretations to create an inauthentic and unrealistic picture of violent extremism in which the term ‘radical’ is also misrepresented to be synonymous with terrorism.

As an example, one respondent highlighted that many people in the Muslim community, and outside of the community, possess what are considered to be ‘radical’ ideas, but this does not necessarily equate with violent acts. In fact, many people that support peaceful or clearly pacifist views may be considered to be holding ‘radical’ positions. In other words, the use of extreme language to depict both violent and peaceful people as ‘radical’ is not only inaccurate and facile, but also takes away the focus from ‘violent’ extremism by merging all forms of radicalism.

5.5.3 The Impact of Positive Political Rhetoric on the Community

Despite the various negative consequences that some political rhetoric has had on the Muslim community, a significant number of respondents remain largely optimistic. Unlike the perspectives on the media and its broadly injurious impacts upon the Muslim community, political leaders are seen as representatives of their constituencies with a greater sense of responsibilities. They are perceived as good role models and citizens, with a social and moral duty to protect rather than fracture communities.
When political leaders are seen to adopt language that is not provocative, a number of positive effects seem to take shape within the Muslim community. One positive contribution identified within the study was to reinforce calm and composure in the community. When a serious incident of violent extremism occurs in the community, it is critical for members of that society to remain calm and allow for emergency services to conduct their work in an efficient manner. This allows law enforcement and health personnel to respond to emergencies in an orderly manner; political rhetoric that keeps communities composed can have very positive results.

The other beneficial component of calmness is in relation to minimising the level of animosity and retaliation that may occur following outbursts of violence in the community. When an individual or group of people engage in violent extremist acts causing considerable injuries and deaths, keeping the public calm through reassuring words can minimise the potential for retribution against innocent bystanders and the rest of the Muslim community. The overwhelming majority of Muslims in Australia possess no relationship with the ideology or explicit actions that are causing such travesty. When political leaders adopt this kind of reassuring rhetoric, not only does it restrict the level of public anger towards the Muslim community, it also generates a more appealing setting for engaging young Muslims about disputes concerning violent extremism.

5.5.4 The Impact of Political Rhetoric on Community Engagement

Respondents appear to have reached, in principle, consensus on the ability of the government to more actively engage with the Muslim community when adopting inclusive and respectful language, rather than one of division and disrespect. In fact, political rhetoric is so persuasive it may suggest, rather than primarily focussing on continued spending into programmes such as the CVE as a remedy against violent
extremism, a more fruitful endeavour would be to place the programme within a broader policy of social cohesion. This broader policy would need to address the social, economic and political dynamics affecting the community, and subsequently adopt strategies to support any deficiencies uncovered from these endeavours. Similar inferences have been reached by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, where it emphasises the need to address various social, economic and political factors in order to achieve success in combating violent extremism (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2014, p. 17).

Such endeavours are considered to be more successful through a positive political, rhetorical framework. The opportunities for the government to embrace more considerate and perceptive vernaculars would, according to significant number of respondents, also allow for generally younger Muslims who are currently feeling disconnected and somewhat superfluous to re-engage with the community. According to the respondents, governments of all persuasions should embrace more inclusive language when discussing issues concerning Muslims and any other minority or vulnerable groups in Australian society. More importantly, Muslim perspectives have indicated how the incumbent government has the opportunity to take a more prominent role with respect to demonstrating to the wider Australian community, and other political parties, how the benchmark and standards established by the government of the day can reflect and reinforce the values of respect and tolerance, which underpin the characteristics of a flourishing and valuable multicultural nation, such as Australia.

Respondents have also affirmed that when they have witnessed political rhetoric vigorously defending the actions of the wider Muslim community, and avoiding any potential stigmatisation of Islam and the Muslim community generally, young people
appear to be more inclined towards engaging with the government and its concomitant programmes designed to address violent extremism. The study has also revealed a critical role and opportunity for the government to institute a considerate, constructive and emboldening political rhetoric, and to explore how this may be disseminated. In the post-September 11 era, as indicated earlier, the growth of Islamophobia has become ubiquitous and conspicuous, and is viewed by respondents to be responsible for causing a considerable amount of heightened tension within the Muslim community, and causing many Muslim youth to consider alternative, vehement and virulent paradigms to find a greater sense of belonging.

Respondents’ expressed the view that, despite their concerns, they still see potential opportunities that could significantly overcome any weaknesses in the government’s strategies through the use of positive language relating to Australian Muslims. This strategy, again, is with the adoption of political rhetoric, which unequivocally challenges xenophobic and racist narratives, and challenges all forms of discrimination against the Muslim community. Respondents observed such positive political rhetoric has yet to materialise or at best is in its infancy:

R12: [At this stage the] Government tends to overlook discrimination and harassment experienced by Muslims as a result of September 11, Bali and the London Bombings. (SQ 60)

A number of respondents echoed similar sentiments concerning the government, and particularly, individual leaders’ negative political rhetoric towards Muslims:

R3: Politicians have on many occasions (particularly during Howard’s era) singled out the Muslim community and demoralised them. This makes it more difficult for individuals to feel they are part of the wider community. They become more repulsive and disengaged. My trust in the Federal government was enhanced when Kevin Rudd became Prime Minister as he has made many
positive statements about the Muslim community and was the only politicians to defend the Niqab/Burqa. (SQ 65)

Despite such feelings of trepidation, respondents remain optimistic, as they have witnessed signs of positive rhetoric and the impact it can have on Muslims as well as other marginalised communities. One respondent emphasised the power of inclusive political rhetoric and the impact this had on the psyche of people and developing a greater sense of belonging, while another respondent reinforced these feelings with respect to the positive implications an individual leader may convey to communities. The ability to engage with the government in a legitimate manner, through the espousal of more considerate and dignified rhetoric, appears to have taken shape when:

R5: Rudd came to power in 2007 it was almost an “it is time” period. Time to reconcile Indigenous, refugee and Muslim communities etc. He made that clear and that made for a more positive engagement period. (SQ 65)

5.6 Modelling Good Behaviour and Counter-narratives

This kind of positive rhetoric is encouraging as it reflects some of the optimism many members of the Muslim community continue to be inspired by, as well as an example in which respondents have characterised as modelling good behaviour. When the government is perceived to be confronting Islamophobia and supporting the Muslim community in building its capacity to confront violent extremism, such actions are seen by respondents as the benchmark for leaders in Australia. When political rhetoric is adopted by our leaders that defends minority groups’ rights and their legitimate consternations with robust and candid counter-narratives, these are perceived by such groups as exhibiting virtuous conduct.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, respondents highlighted how imagery and written accounts pervaded the media with explicit negative narratives and subtexts of Muslims
and Islam. These actions, whether deliberate or otherwise, have been perceived by the Muslim community to only further fuel the level of antagonism. One dimension in which political rhetoric may be used to inculcate the wider Australian community relates to the positive contributions made by Muslims towards Australian society and immediately, therefore, not linking Islam with terrorism.

Respondents have intimated how not enough of the positive stories concomitant to Muslim Australians, have reached the consciousness of the wider Australian community. While these respondents feel it is indisputably problematic to counter such narratives through diverse mediums available to the media, they are, nonetheless, still optimistic that inspirational leaders may emerge and be able to counter the negative diatribe with positive stories on how Muslims contributed positively throughout the nation’s history, including building a very prosperous and successful contemporary multicultural nation.

Respondents also sense that adopting such a counter-narrative is objective and factual, considering almost all governments (global and domestic) as well as law enforcement agencies acknowledge that only a very small minority partake in violent extremism. It also confronts narratives suggesting that extreme violence and Islam are in some way mutually dependent on one another.

Finally, the data has indicated the urgency for governments to adopt timely responses during periods of crisis, and to prompt the general population, and the Muslim community, that, irrespective of the faith of any violent extremist, we all belong together and Muslims, who are experiencing most of the contempt in a post-September 11 era, are also an integral part of the Australian community.
The Muslim leaders’ perceptions of politicians’ track record in adopting counter-narratives has not been very favourable. For the most part, they see political leaders only supporting the Muslim community when the so-called ‘damage is already done.’ Such reactive strategies only undermine the relationship between the Muslim community and governments. Despite this, there is a perceived, bi-partisan, yet measured, move towards a more proactive posture by political leaders in their language concerning Islam and Muslims. If it endures, it may, to some extent, counterbalance some rudiments of the negative media inundations and may also elicit some Muslim youth to be inspired and feel a greater sense of belonging to a nation in which many feel sidelined.
6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

One aim of this study was to facilitate improvements in government–community engagement, and to develop better partnerships that prevent the disenfranchisement of young people and eliminate factors that influence violent extremist ideologies. Of particular importance to this study is the exploration of ways in which young people can be prevented from adopting violent extremist ideologies that may influence them to pursue acts of terror. This study also examined the impact of political and media rhetoric on community engagement as well as community trust in the government and their willingness to engage with the government.

Since the September 11 terror attacks in the US, Muslim organisations and their leaders have often been asked by the Commonwealth Government to provide advice and support in complex circumstances. The government maintains that communities are best placed to challenge the influence of violent extremist narratives and through partnership with the government they can prevent ‘home-grown jihadism’ from spreading. Similarly, Muslim community leaders express a strong regard for such partnerships in the fight against terrorism. However, according to the findings presented here, there are very significant issues about the approach the government has taken thus far in engaging with the community, and in particular, the CVE programme is seen by the majority of participants in this research to be seriously flawed.

If the assumption is accurate that communities are best placed to challenge the influence of violent extremist narratives is valid, then it is essential that a review of the government’s approach to community engagement is undertaken to identify the best ways to develop and enhance this partnership. Communities have been called into action by the
government as active partners in the fight against all forms of terror. However, the respondents identified a number of issues that have heightened a sense of fear of the government, which has affected the level of community trust and the ability of community leaders to work in partnership with the government.

The data from this research has helped to illuminate the significant role Muslim organisations and volunteers have played in countering extremism and supporting their communities in a climate of fear, alienation and increased scrutiny. The research has shown there is a profound need for more effective approaches to the success of any counter-extremism strategy.

The results from the study’s interviews and surveys of Muslim community leaders has helped to illuminate the significant role Muslim organisations have played in service provision in diverse areas that are not completely known or understood by the wider community. The results also highlight the substantial role volunteers play and the contributions they have made and continue to make to society. Importantly, the results also show that a majority of Muslim organisations are significantly self-funded, with only a very small number receiving government funding.

The study showed there was an extremely high level of fatigue and ‘burn out’ among community leaders. There were also strong views expressed that the community was left to manage a crisis for which they were not adept, nor had the capacity or the resources to respond to effectively. Leaders expressed strong feelings of frustration, fear and insecurity following the September 11 attacks and stated they considered themselves ill-equipped to deal with the intensity of the repercussions and overall climate of fear that was generated, leaving people in the Muslim community feeling alienated and under scrutiny.
Overall, the results highlighted a number of key issues and apprehensions that have significantly affected respondents’ ability to work in partnership with the government on complex and challenging matters, and more specifically, on countering violent extremism.

The study has also shown that the role of political leaders and their language has a vital in promoting peace, harmony and social cohesion. Inflammatory political rhetoric can contribute to racial hatred and divisions, and can fuel debates in the media that are damaging to cohesion within Australia’s culturally and religiously diverse society. Alternatively, it can reinforce stereotypical and negative attitudes towards Islam and Muslims.

Concerning the impact of media rhetoric and its potential contribution to radicalisation, the results suggested that the media has contributed significantly to reinforcing negative stereotypes towards Australian Muslims. For example, the majority of respondents interviewed indicated that the media had affected the public’s views of Islam and Muslims. There was a view that no other religious community receives the same negative coverage that Islam and Muslims do. Another major finding was that the news media in particular, greatly contributes towards portraying Muslims negatively, and consequently, legitimising the characterisation of Muslims as terrorists or supporters of violent extremist acts and ideologies. Results indicated that the government should be proactive in holding the media accountable for promoting anti-Muslim sentiments, which fuels extremist anti-Muslim views.

Many considered that negative media coverage has a significant impact on young people and alienated many from mainstream society and increased their reluctance to engage as citizens. Respondents observed that the media rarely shares stories that present Muslims
as positive contributors to society. The need to provide more positive stories was identified as being critical to helping young Muslims feel more at home in Australia.

The results of the research presented here may facilitate improvements in government–community engagement, and in developing better partnerships aimed at preventing the disenfranchisement of young people and the elimination of factors that influence violent extremist ideologies. Efficacious engagement of the community is always beneficial to the promotion of social cohesion.

### 6.2 Conclusions and Recommendations for Best Practice

The following conclusions and recommendations seek to provide a framework for more effective approaches that could be implemented by the Commonwealth Government in its effort to engage the Muslim community as partners in the fight against extremism.

#### 6.2.1 Meeting the Needs of Young People

The study findings revealed that the needs of young people have not been met by successive governments. Respondents identified serious gaps in service delivery and programmes that provide support to young people who are vulnerable. They suggested that an absence of consistent and substantial social welfare programmes and services compounded the problems associated with the marginalisation of youth and their sense of belonging.

The Muslim leaders involved in this study highlighted that a crisis of trust in the government is prevalent among youth. The cause of this distrust has been associated with the perception that the government agenda on terrorism specifically targets Muslims. This distrust of the government is furthered by a perception that government initiatives have lacked sincerity in their approach and caused disenfranchisement of Muslim youth. The
community leaders stressed the impact and cost of this disenfranchisement can be significant in terms of the major social problems created. Their suggestions focussed on the need to increase funding aimed at the specific needs of young people including support service provision; counselling and outreach support; infrastructure support and development; and commitment to a renewed a whole-of-government approach (in the form of a strategic plan) that specifically addresses youth issues.

Importantly, the majority of respondents suggested a need for alternative approaches to engaging Muslim youth using ‘home-grown’ imams and religious leaders trained overseas. In the absence of this, the community will struggle to overcome language barriers that impede the transfer of authentic religious knowledge from Arabic to English.

Respondents conveyed the belief that there are major issues affecting young people that have not yet been appropriately considered by the government. Meeting the diverse needs of young people must be made a consistent priority by all levels of government in order for significant change to occur. It is only by addressing these issues that the government will be able to eliminate the potential for the spread of extremist/violent ideologies among the small number of disaffected youth.

### 6.2.1.1 Recommendations

1. The Commonwealth Government is likely to gain better community engagement by reviewing its policy approach. This is likely to ensure programmes are inclusive of all communities, including groups that may be perceived by government as ‘extreme’ or ‘radical.’ The focus of its review should be on programmes that encourage youth to become active participants in society.
2. The Commonwealth Government should work closely with the community, at a grassroots level, to address the gaps in service and programme development, especially for those on the fringes of society, in order to build an inclusive wider community.

3. A genuine commitment from the Commonwealth Government to develop a whole-of-government strategic plan is necessary to address the diverse needs of Muslim youth, and provide greater opportunities and pathways to enhance active participation in society.

4. The Government should provide sustainable long-term funding to support service provision that will enhance community capacity, including counselling and outreach support; infrastructure support and development; and rehabilitation for mental, drug and alcohol-related issues.

5. Government-funded programmes should not be given negative titles such as ‘counter-terrorism,’ ‘combating extremism’ or ‘countering violent extremism.’ Programmes should also operate as part of a cohesive social model and not be limited to the Muslim community. Furthermore, the government should adopt an increased focus on programmes that encourage Muslim youth to become active participants in society.

6. Community-driven whole-of-government approaches should be developed to more effectively deliver services and programmes, and to better integrate families and youth programmes, which may contribute towards prevention of radicalisation that may lead to violent extremism.
7. The Commonwealth Government needs to support the development of organisational capabilities within the Muslim community and support programmes that enhance and address issues of national concern.

8. The Commonwealth Government should harness and further develop the diversity of knowledge and expertise of community leaders, religious leaders and overseas Muslim experts to address issues of mutual concern to the government and communities.

6.2.2 Community Engagement, Trust and Trust Building

Findings from this study revealed that community engagement with the Commonwealth Government was not viewed as being effective. The majority of community leaders believed Australia’s anti-terror laws have a notably undesirable impact on the community and its subsequent trust in the government and law enforcement agencies. Further, the Muslim community perceives there is a lack of genuine care by the government for its citizens, and urged that more be done to support the Muslim community in feeling they are an integral part of Australian society. Government approaches to counter-terrorism policies and subsequent anti-terror laws were perceived by respondents as targeting Muslims and have negatively affected community leaders in terms of their willingness to maintain trust in engaging with the government.

6.2.2.1 Recommendations

1. Political leaders need to engage with the Muslim community outside of election cycles, i.e. on a continual (rather than intermittent) basis, and support the work that is being done by community leaders to address the needs of their diverse communities.
2. New approaches should be developed by the Commonwealth Government that enhance, promote and sustain trust and engagement with community leaders to ensure maximum impact and reach are achieved for members of the community.

3. The Commonwealth Government should immediately recognise, condemn and effectively address the divisive impact of Islamophobia to Australia’s social cohesion and harmony.

4. The Commonwealth Government should provide the Muslim community with sufficient protection against vilification through the provision of timely, positive and unambiguous statements that enhance understanding in a climate of global and domestic conflict.

6.2.3 Political Rhetoric, and the Role of Political Leaders and Impact on Engagement

The government’s language towards Muslims was perceived by respondents as being “negative, negative many times and disgusting at other times.” Respondents emphasised that political rhetoric was often inflammatory and contained ‘bigotry.’ This was seen to be contributing to the community’s lack of confidence in the government.

Respondents felt the Commonwealth Government’s language compounded the problem and pushed young people away because they felt their community was being unfairly targeted. The effect of disconnecting young people is significant. It contributes to social unrest and mobilises public fear and hostility towards Muslims who are perceived as a threat to the Australian way of life and Australia’s liberal, pluralistic and democratic values.
Respondents strongly argued that our political leaders are pivotal in responding to an environment of crisis and uncertainty. Responses highlighted the need for strong Leaders by the government that demonstrates values that reinforce respect and harmony. Inflammatory political rhetoric can contribute to racial hatred and divisions, and fuel debates in the media that are damaging to cohesion within Australia’s culturally and religiously diverse society and further enhance or reinforce stereotypical and negative attitudes towards Islam and Muslims.

Muslim leaders highlighted the need for positive, unambiguous statements by government leaders about the importance of respect and understanding in a climate of conflict. It was argued that government leaders’ responses should be timely and carefully crafted to show the Muslim community they are an integral part of the wider Australian community.

On the issue of promoting trust of the community and religious leaders, some leaders said new approaches were needed to enhance trust between the government and leaders. Respondents cited examples of government rhetoric as an impediment to real engagement of Muslims. The government is not perceived as one that cares about its citizens nor does it make the community feel it is an integral part of Australian society.

6.2.3.1 Recommendations

1. Politicians and government leaders (State and Federal) should be mindful of, and avoid, inflammatory political rhetoric that can contribute towards racial hatred and social divisions, and present debates in the media that are damaging to cohesion within Australia’s culturally and religiously diverse society.
2. Political leaders should be aware of the impact negative political rhetoric in public and political discourses may have on radicalising or exacerbating the radicalisation of Muslim youth.

3. It is imperative that political leaders be well informed about issues affecting their constituents as a lack of genuine involvement with their communities can contribute to a loss of trust and willingness to engage, and further exacerbate the marginalisation of Muslims and young people.

6.2.4 Media Rhetoric and its Impact on Radicalisation

The study showed an overwhelming majority of respondents believed the media’s coverage of Muslims has been unbalanced. Respondents expressed strong sentiments and a voluminous quantity of anecdotal evidence pertaining to media hostilities towards Muslims. The media’s coverage and handling of news reports concerning Muslims highlight the consensus that the media is negatively shaping mainstream society’s attitudes of fear and hostility towards Australian Muslims. Respondents expressed concerns that the media depicted images of war and violence that associated Islam with terrorism and promoted antagonism towards Muslims. The result has been an increase in the level of Islamophobia and heightened fear, insecurity and marginalisation, which has contributed and reinforced an ‘us’ and ‘them’ social dichotomy.

Respondents believe the media has misrepresented the image of Islam and the Muslim community. Although respondents felt that the media strongly affects the way Australians view Islam and Muslims, not all suggested the media is specifically against Islam.
6.2.4.1 Recommendations

1. It is important to create greater opportunities for community–media engagement and dialogue to improve relationships, create better understanding of issues affecting the Muslim community, and elucidate the impact of negative media coverage on social cohesion, inclusion and security.

2. Media organisations should implement strategies to challenge negative stereotyping of Muslims and Islam, and help eliminate fear and prejudice directed at Australian Muslims, by highlighting positive stories that reflect the efforts of community and religious leaders in addressing issues of concern to the wider community.

3. Greater accountability and integrity should be instilled in media organisations in complying with the freedom of speech and freedom of information laws and in presenting news content with greater accuracy, as well as eliminating divisive or vilifying stereotyping.

4. The media should strive for balance in the reporting of religion-related issues and avoid sensationalist, inflammatory and ill-informed coverage that feeds anti-Muslim feelings that are perpetuated by negative stereotypes of Islam and Muslims.

5. The media should avoid the use of religious labelling and unnecessarily introducing religion into a story when reporting on criminal activities.

6. The impact and contribution of negative media reporting on Muslims can feed and fuel violence or harassment and encourage violent behaviour that affects social cohesion. Media organisations should establish clear policies and guidelines to
raise awareness of, and sensitivity to, the potential impact of sensational and inaccurate reporting on religious issues in order to reduce hostility and violence that affects community relationships.

7. It is important that media coverage promotes positive stories that seek to challenge misperceptions held about Islam and Muslims, which may contribute to increased understanding, thus reducing prejudices and building bridges.

6.2.5 Foreign Policy and its Impact on Community Engagement and Radicalisation of Youth

Respondents expressed misgivings about the Australian Government’s foreign policy and the influence of the US and UK on its foreign policy. They believed these international influences have contributed to the government’s ineffectiveness in engaging young Muslim people vulnerable to radicalisation. While this is not the sole cause of violent extremism, the responses indicate Australia’s foreign policy stance contributes to radicalisation.

Participants identified a number of concerns pertaining to Australia’s foreign policy, particularly as it deals with Muslims on a global scale. There was also the perception that the ‘double standard’ phenomena was prevalent and policy was not based on neutrality and ethics, but rather on national interest and ‘lobbying.’ Australia’s partisan support for Israel and the Global War on Terror has affected the Muslim community and contributed to further radicalisation.

Respondents expressed strong views that they had no issues with Australia having strong ties with other nations; but they believed that having ties or allies should not prevent it from being just and fair as a nation.
6.2.5.1 Recommendations

1. The Commonwealth Government should address Australia’s foreign policy, especially as it pertains to the Middle East, and address legitimate grievances held by youth that may lead to radicalisation and negatively impact upon trust and the scope of community engagement.

2. Training should be designed and delivered by qualified religious leaders or experts in Islamic studies and Muslim communities in order to equip and increase understanding and awareness of government and law enforcement agencies, especially those involved in managing grievances held by youth that may lead to radicalisation.

3. Government narrative on terrorism should firmly separate the individual from the Muslim community. That is, there should be a shift in the narrative that implicates all Muslims as ‘terrorists.’

6.2.6 The CVE Programme

The CVE programme was criticised by respondents for being short sighted, not offering sufficient interaction with vulnerable youth, and not building on the strengths of the community. They also indicated that the programme has poor procedures in place for evaluation and accountability between the government and community.

6.2.6.1 Recommendations

1. Political violence should be acknowledged by the government as not just a Muslim issue, but as a universal problem, which is also prevalent among other religious and ethnic groups.
2. The Commonwealth Government should work collaboratively with imams, Islamic scholars and community leaders to identify the best strategies for the CVE programme and provide adequate funding for building sustainable infrastructure to counter negative influences.

3. The name and language of the CVE programme terminology should be changed as the current terminology aligns the broader Islamic community with a small problematic element within that society. Furthermore, this may restrict the ability of people in the Muslim community to adopt new terms to describe their journeys and freedom to alter the public discourse surrounding their community.

4. Government leaders should present informed commentary acknowledging the efforts made by the Muslim community and its leaders in combating Islamic extremism.

5. Further education and training of Australian imams should be undertaken from more advanced and qualified scholars in the US and UK, as well as experts in jurisprudence and minority communities, to assist in developing effective CVE strategies that more successfully engage the community.

6. In attempting to ameliorate the challenges of violent extremism, the Commonwealth Government needs to actively listen to the voices of Muslim leaders and introduce the changes needed to win the ‘hearts and minds’ of the community’s leaders and its youth, who are vulnerable and at risk of being lured into violent extremism.
7. The Commonwealth Government should introduce alternative paradigms to the discourse that the West is ‘at war with Islam’ and that ‘Australian values’ are incompatible with ‘Islamic values.’

8. Honest and transparent dialogue between the government and Australian Muslim communities is needed to promote community-driven and community-owned approaches to problems affecting young people and concerns about the integration of the Muslim community.

9. The Commonwealth Government should continue to build trusting relationships and reach out to community organisations and other key stakeholders by hosting events and forums to exchange ideas and share experiences with the aim of identifying best practice approaches that can be applied in the Australian context. This will assist the government to develop approaches to counter violent extremism that are owned and supported by the community, and thus avoid possible disparagement or other drawbacks currently associated with the CVE programme.

10. The Commonwealth Government’s relationship-building activities should not be focused solely on national security issues, but also reflect consistent collaborative engagement and partnership that supports outcome-driven solutions to community needs.

11. The Commonwealth Government should develop new messaging and promote the counter narrative that the West is not waging a global war against Islam. It can do this by using words and actions that challenge attitudes that fuel violent extremism.
12. The government’s engagement with Muslim communities should be based on collaborative partnerships that recognise Muslims as valued citizens who are respected and included as an integral part of Australian society.

**6.2.7 Gaining the Confidence of Muslim Leaders**

Respondents stressed the need to build trust between Muslim leaders, the government and the media. They believed that recent government narrative in political and public discourse consistently explicates the view that terrorists are extremist individuals separate from the Muslim community.

**6.2.7.1 Recommendations**

1. The government should exhibit renewed commitment, sincerity and collaboration in its approach to resolving issues with the Australian Muslim community.

2. When referring to Muslims, politicians and government leaders should be conscious of language that facilitates and enhances inclusion and belonging, and focus on reducing backlash and anti-Muslim hysteria.

3. The government should help develop long-term, viable and sustainable solutions to community needs by developing more effective partnerships with Muslim communities and providing funding to Muslim institutions for professional development, training, and sufficient staffing for service delivery and family programmes.

**6.2.8 Muslim Leaders’ Recommendations for Government to Engage Muslims as Active Partners in Luring Young People Away from Violent Ideologies**

Muslim leaders identified a number of approaches the government could consider when engaging Muslims as partners to lure young people away from violent extremism.
6.2.8.1 Recommendations

1. All levels of government should work with the Muslim community to support their work with adequate funding, support volunteer efforts, build infrastructure, fund social support programmes for young people, fund employment projects, and promote social inclusion and integration.

2. The Commonwealth Government should consult communities before developing programmes and also characterise their efforts as ‘preventative’ while disassociating these programmes from national security matters.

3. More regular and consistent communication between the government and community groups is needed, and that the government should actively implement and support a more broad-based and inclusive engagement strategy with youth-based organisations.

4. Longer-term Commonwealth Government funding should consolidate and scale-up successful interventions in subsequent years, and also support capacity-building that enhances community resilience, rather than focusing on end-of-the-line CVE strategies.

5. Government leaders should immediately and unequivocally condemn ‘hate-speech’ or inciting of Islamophobia by the media.

6.3 Conclusion

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the aim of this study was to investigate community leaders’ perspectives on the effectiveness of Australia’s CVE strategy/policy and explore the impact of political and media rhetoric on the Muslim community. Using a mixed method approach, this study explored community leaders’ perspectives on
Australia’s CVE programme and how the government engaged the community in the fight against extremism. The study also illustrated better approaches for engaging the Muslim community in a changed security environment that could form more effective approaches for government–community engagement.

One of the most pivotal outcomes from this research was the documentation of several key issues and concerns faced by the Muslim community and religious leaders. To date, these concerns have thwarted the ability of Muslim leaders to work in partnership with the government on complex and challenging matters, including countering violent extremism. This research has flagged several important opportunities for improvement.

This study highlights effective community engagement and good government–community relationships as being integral to the overall responsibilities and work of every government and agency. Issues of concern raised by the Muslim community during community engagement activities (consultations, meetings and forums) should be taken into account and actioned. Importantly, outcomes should be effectively reported to the community in order to develop, maintain and nurture long-term trust in the government, thereby enhancing a productive government–community partnership.

For effective partnership to occur between the government and the Muslim community, this study has shown it is vital for all levels of government to work closely with the community’s leaders and to use their expertise and support, rather than duplicate what is already there. In particular, the Commonwealth Government should consult, collaborate with, support and empower Muslim religious authorities and imams to identify strategies to achieve better outcomes from the CVE programme. Australian Muslims should also strengthen their ties with Islamic scholars in other parts of the world to assist in developing effective strategies and approaches. The study’s findings strongly suggest that
any preventive strategy for young people should be developed in consultation with local community groups, religious leaders and youth.

Another area of particular importance to this study was the exploration of ways in which young people can be prevented from adopting violent extremist ideologies that may influence them to become involved in acts of terror. Respondents agreed that efforts to date have not been effective due to a number of issues that have heightened a sense of fear and distrust in government. This fear has negatively affected the willingness of the Muslim leaders and youth to work in partnership with the government.

Political and media rhetoric were identified as being among the most pernicious of the issues affecting engagement and trust. The evidence from this study has also revealed that, together, political and media rhetoric have contributed to distrust and radicalisation by significantly reinforcing stereotypes of Australian Muslims. The majority of respondents indicated that they believed the media had influenced the public’s views of Islam and Muslims. Many believed this negative media coverage has had an impact on young people and their perception of belonging within mainstream society. The impact of negative language in the media was identified as another major factor contributing to young people’s alienation and desire to engage. Therefore, the government should be proactive in making the media accountable for promoting anti-Muslim sentiments, which have fuelled antagonism towards Muslims.

Likewise, respondents indicated the media rarely introduces stories that present Muslims as being active participants in society. The need to increase coverage of positive stories was identified as being critical in the shift towards a narrative that highlights the contribution Australians Muslims make to society. Another significant but not surprising
revelation was the view among respondents that no other religious community receives the same negative coverage.

The findings also show that negative media coverage continues to exacerbate community tensions and contributes to creating a climate of fear and increased harassment and attacks against Muslim communities. The need for the media to be aware of the potential impact of misinformed reporting on Muslim communities, and its contribution to Islamophobia and radicalisation, is vital.

This study also examined the effectiveness of the Australian Government’s CVE programme, which was formulated in 2010, to address the root causes of violent extremism. Respondents clearly felt the CVE programme’s preventative and early intervention objectives have not been effective. Evidence from this study has highlighted a vital need to better address the root causes driving young people to adopt violent extremist ideologies that may lead to acts of terrorism by filling the gaps in services and addressing the needs of young people.

While respondents argued the objectives of the CVE programme are sound, there is evidence from the data that shows the programme has failed to steer young people away from violent ideologies. Evidence shows a number of factors appear to have affected the community’s confidence in the effectiveness of the programme. Based on the data collected in this study, the number of Muslim organisations who received funding to conduct a CVE project was quite small. A number of factors were cited for respondents’ unwillingness to apply for funding. Concerns included the title of the programme and its negative connotations that link Islam with violence and terrorism. Overall, this has not been conducive to community organisations’ participation in the programme. Participants also suggested the CVE programme should not be placed under the Attorney-General’s
Department, but should be part of the government’s social cohesion agenda, and overseen and administered through another government department such as the Department of Social Services so that it is not associated with the Attorney-General or law enforcement agencies. This may help address some of the concerns raised in this study about associating Islam and Muslims with violent extremism.

As highlighted in Chapter 2, the CVE programme is in its seventh year of operation. Little research has been conducted to examine whether the CVE programme’s objectives have actually been achieved in that time. While individual projects funded under the CVE programme may have achieved their objectives, there is little evidence that shows the young people targeted under the programme were steered away from ideologies that lead to violent extremism. This is a major gap and there is a need for further research to determine the success of the CVE programme and, in particular, the success of its emphasis on prevention and early intervention. The Attorney-General’s Department has stated an assessment/audit of the programme’s effectiveness was undertaken; however, the outcome of the evaluation is unknown or was not made public.

Since the terrorist attacks in the US on September 11, the Australian counter-terrorism agenda has focused on keeping Australia and its citizens safe from the potential of a terrorist attack on its home soil. The role that communities play in supporting the government in its endeavours to keep Australians safe is a key feature of the government’s counter-terrorism agenda. This is confirmed by government publications and literature that stresses the important role of communities.

Countering violent extremism is the latest shift in the government’s strategy to counter-terrorism. The focus on the risks emanating from home-grown terrorism has significantly increased in the political and community debate since the London Bombing of 2005.
Events worldwide, and especially in the Middle East since 2010, have also led to greater emphasis being placed on prevention strategies. The Syrian crisis, which began in 2011, further highlighted the risks associated with Australian foreign fighters who travel overseas to join the conflict in Syria and Iraq.

This study has found, while there has been increased government engagement at State and Federal levels with the Muslim community post-September 11, there is a perception that the outcome of the engagement has been ineffective. Therefore, there is room for improvement in the way the government engages with the Muslim community, so it should enhance this engagement by following up on issues raised by the community.

The study’s answer to the research question about the success of the CVE programme, found that it was ineffective in achieving its overall objective of preventing young people from adopting violent ideologies.

Finally, when addressing the last research question regarding the extent to which political and media rhetoric has impacted on trust, this study found there were factors that contributed to a loss of trust and unwillingness to work with the Commonwealth Government by the Muslim community in countering violent extremism.

6.4 Implications and Recommendations for Further Research and Development of More Effective Approaches for engaging the Community

It has been seven years since the CVE programme was launched to address the threat of home-grown terrorism. The results of this study show more research is required in this area. Further research should be undertaken to determine if the Commonwealth Government’s objectives in establishing the CVE programme have been met, as this study found the programme was ineffective for a number of reasons already outlined; a
revisiting of the CVE programme’s objectives is vital in order to determine better prevention approaches based on Muslim community perspectives.

Given the limitations of the sample population studied, as outlined in chapter three, further research should include a wider sample. It cannot be assumed the results from this study (as outlined in chapter four) are reflective of other Muslim leaders’ perspectives around Australia. What is successful in one state may not be successful in another.

When examining the efficacy of the CVE programme, the study found the programme would benefit from a significant review which should also explore how the findings from this research could be used to improve the effectiveness of the programme as seen by Muslim leaders. Perhaps it is timely for the government to undertake a review of the CVE strategy to ascertain if it is achieving its objective of moving young people away from violent ideologies that influence acts of terrorism.

The data presented here may offer new insights to the Federal and State governments and increased understanding of how to address and/or create the changes that appear to be needed. Further research conducted with Muslim communities in other states and territories may yield insights on the efficacy of the CVE programme. It is hoped the recommendations contained in this study will facilitate the desired changes identified by the Muslim community leaders.
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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

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PhD student

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Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title: Muslim perspectives for developing a Best-Practice Model for Engaging the Muslim Community as a Partner for Combating Extremism in Australia

Assalamu Alaium war wab

Peace greetings,

My name is Nada Roude and I am a doctoral student in the Faculty of Arts at Charles Sturt University. I am conducting a research project entitled "Muslim perspectives for developing a best practice model for engaging the Muslim community as a partner for combating extremism in Australia".

I write to invite you to participate in this research by completing a questionnaire regarding the effectiveness of Australia’s counter-extremist programs in engaging Muslim communities.

The research is based on a study of Muslims in Australia, and will include religious leaders, community leaders (men and women), leaders of organisations and representatives from the community. The project aims to evaluate how effective the Australian Federal Government has been in engaging Muslim communities as partners in developing counter-extremist strategies and in utilising the capacity of the diverse Muslim community to enhance the government’s policies.

Also of importance to the research will be an exploration of the role of the public discourse in contributing to radicalisation, particularly amongst young Muslims. The political and media rhetoric will be analysed, especially as it impacts on capacity building, resources and trust.

An important outcome of this research will be the identification of factors that may affect community engagement in a new environment, where communities are expected to work with the government as partners in countering extremism. The findings from the research will help inform a best-practice model for engaging the Muslim community. Your views and experiences in this area are of the utmost importance to the research given your longstanding involvement in the Australian Muslim community.

The research project involves two parts. Part one of the research involves the completion of a questionnaire which should take about 20-30 minutes. You can choose to complete it online by accessing the following link: www.surveymonkey.com. Alternatively, you can complete the attached questionnaire and return it to me by using the prepaid envelope.
Personal interviews with religious and community leaders will form the second part. If you consent to participating in the second part of the research, you may be contacted to arrange a suitable time and place to be interviewed by me.

Completed questionnaires will be stored in a secure place and archived for a period of 5 years. Participants' right to privacy and confidentiality will be maintained at all times. My Supervisors may have access to the data from the questionnaire, and I may use the data in delivering conference presentations and/or contribute to journal articles. At no time will your identity be revealed or connected to your responses to this questionnaire.

As this research is voluntary you are not obliged to participate in it. You may choose not to answer some questions and you can elect to withdraw at any time should you feel uncomfortable, without any need for justification. However, you will not be able to withdraw the data once the questions are completed.

Charles Sturt University's Ethics in Human Research Committee has approved this project (Protocol Number: 2013/010).

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Committee through the Executive Officer:

Executive Officer
Ethics in Human Research Committee
Academic Secretariat
Charles Sturt University
Private Mail Bag 29
Bathurst NSW 2795
Phone: (02) 6338 4628
Fax: (02) 6338 4194

Any issue you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this research. If you have any further questions concerning this questionnaire or the research project, you may contact me on 0410 536 726, or via email at: mroude@csu.edu.au
Alternatively, you may contact my supervisors.

Wassalamu Alaykum Warahmatullahi Wabaaratahu

Yours sincerely,

Nada Roude
PhD Candidate
Charles Sturt University
Project Title: Muslim perspectives for developing a Best-Practice Model for Engaging the Muslim Community as a Partner for Combating Extremism in Australia.

Investigator: Nada Roude
PhD student

Subject: PhD research on Muslim perspectives for combating extremism in Australia

Contact Details: Mobile: 0410 536 726
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Supervisors: Associate Professor William Emilsen
Associate Professor Charles Sturt University
Contact: 02 9938 8925

Professor James Haire
Rev Professor Charles Sturt University
Contact: 02 6272 6201

Associate Professor Nick O'Brien
Head of School Canberra, Charles Sturt University
Contact: 02 6272 6241

Consent:

i. I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation in the research at any time, and that if I do I will not be subjected to any penalty or discriminatory treatment.

ii. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the research and received satisfactory answers.

iii. I understand that any information or personal details gathered in the course of this research about me are confidential and that neither my name nor any other identifying information will be used or published without my written permission.

Charles Sturt University’s Ethics in Human Research Committee has approved this project (Protocol: 2012/010). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Committee through the Executive Officer:

Executive Officer
Ethics in Human Research Committee
Academic Secretariat
Charles Sturt University
Private Mail Bag 29, Bathurst NSW 2795
Phone: (02) 6338 4628
Fax: (02) 6338 4194

Signed by:

Date:
Muslim perspectives for Developing a Best-Practice Model for Engaging the Muslim Community as a Partner for Combating Extremism in Australia.

1. Do you consent to participating and having your responses to this survey used anonymously in the research?
   - [ ] Yes, I consent.
   - [ ] No, I do not consent.

Demographics Information

2. In what year were you born?
   - Year of Birth

3. What is your gender?
   - [ ] Male
   - [ ] Female

4. What is the highest level of education you reached?
   - [ ] None/no formal schooling
   - [ ] TAFE Diploma
   - [ ] Finished primary school
   - [ ] Undergraduate Degree
   - [ ] Mid secondary school
   - [ ] Honours Degree
   - [ ] Completed High School (HSC)
   - [ ] Masters Degree
   - [ ] TAFE Certificate
   - [ ] PhD/Doctorate

5. In what area of industry is your occupation?
   - [ ] Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
   - [ ] Mining
   - [ ] Manufacturing
   - [ ] Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services
   - [ ] Construction
   - [ ] Wholesale Trade
☐ Retail Trade  ☐ Accommodation and Food Services
☐ Transport, Postal and Warehousing  ☐ Administrative and Support Services
☐ Financial and Insurance Services  ☐ Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services
☐ Professional, Scientific and Technical Services  ☐ Information Media and Telecommunications
☐ Public Administration and Safety  ☐ Education and Training
☐ Health Care and Social Assistance  ☐ Arts and Recreation Services
☐ Other - Please specify

6. What is your postcode?

☐ Yes, ☐ No,

7. Is English your first language?

8. Please specify your first language.

9. Do you speak languages other than English?

☐ Yes ☐ No

10. Please specify the other languages you speak.

11. In your capacity as a leader in your community, what language do you mostly use when communicating with young people?

12. Were you born in Australia?

☐ Yes ☐ No
13. In what country were you born?


14. When did you migrate to Australia?
   - Before 1950
   - 1950 - 1959
   - 1960 - 1969
   - 1970 - 1979
   - 1980 - 1989
   - 1990 - 1999
   - 2000 - 2009
   - 2010 - 2012

15. Which Mosque do you attend for prayers? (Please state name of Mosque or Mussallah). (Note: this question is optional)


Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Program
The aim of this Program is to reduce the risk of home-grown terrorist attacks by working closely with communities through the funding of activities that challenge violent extremism and which assist individuals to disengage from violent extremist influences and beliefs.

16. Have you ever been consulted on your views or experiences in countering extremism in your community?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

17. In what capacity were you consulted?
   - [ ] Individual
   - [ ] Community Leader
   - [ ] Local Imam/religious leader
   - [ ] representative of an organisation

18. Are you aware of the Federal Government’s Countering Extremism Program (CVE)?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

19. How did you learn about the CVE Program?


20. Have you been involved in the CVE Program?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
21. What was/is the nature of your involvement?

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

22. What areas of the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) program do you think need improvement?

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

23. What aspects of the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Program do you think worked well?

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

24. Do you think that the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Program is the most appropriate and effective way of targeting extremism in your community?

☐ Yes ☐ No

25. Please explain your response.

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

26. Do you think there could be any other effective ways?

☐ Yes ☐ No

27. Please provide details on ways you think could be more effective.

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

28. Do you have any issues or concerns about the way the government is engaging with the community in relation to countering extremism?

☐ Yes ☐ No
29. If yes, please list your key concerns.


30. How is your own community engaging with the issue of extremism?


31. In your opinion, how could these efforts be strengthened?


Engaging with Youth

32. Have you, or the organisation you are associated with, received government funds designed to steer young people away from extremism in your community?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

33. If yes, please indicate where the funding came from.


34. What was the funding used?


35. How successful was it in achieving its objectives?

☐ Unsuccessful  ☐ Slightly successful  ☐ Successful  ☐ Highly successful
36. Please provide reasons for your answer.


37. How effective was it in attracting young Muslims?
   □ Unsuccessful  □ Slightly successful  □ Successful  □ Highly successful

38. Please provide reasons for your answer.


39. Can you suggest any ways that such funding could be better targeted?


40. As a community leader, what activities do you undertake in times of local or global crisis?


41. How often have you been / are you consulted by State, Territory or Federal Government on issues affecting the community?
   □ Regularly  □ Every now and then  □ Once only  □ Never

**Media Coverage**

42. In your role as a religious/community leader have you had to respond to negative media coverage?
   □ Yes  □ No

43. How often have you had to respond to negative media coverage?
   □ Regularly  □ Every now and then  □ Once only

44. How has negative media coverage impacted on your community?
45. How have you responded to the negative media coverage?

__________________________________________________________________________

46. How have you engaged with the mainstream media to promote positive messages about Muslims and/or your community in Australian society?

__________________________________________________________________________

47. As a religious / community leader, do you convey messages with the intention of countering extremism in your community?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

48. As religious/community leader how do you convey messages to counter extremism in your community? (Please tick all that apply)

☐ Islamic radio

☐ In the mosque

☐ During Friday prayer

☐ Islamic schools

☐ Islamic study circles

☐ Islamic camps

☐ Community forums/meetings

☐ Youth specific forums

☐ Not applicable

☐ Other – Please specify ______________________________
49. Are you aware of the Federal Government’s agenda on countering terrorism?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

50. What do you think are the aims of the Federal Government’s agenda on countering terrorism?

________________________________________________

The following section seeks your experiences immediately following September 11, 2001

51. Were you in Australia on September 11, 2001?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

52. Did you have any contact with government officials at the State, Territory or Federal level following September 11, 2001?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

53. If yes, please describe the nature of this contact.

________________________________________________

54. In the period after September 11, what was your level of satisfaction regarding the way the Australian government engaged the Muslim community?

☐ Very Dissatisfied  ☐ Dissatisfied  ☐ Indifferent  ☐ Satisfied  ☐ Very Satisfied

Trust in government agencies

55. Before September 11, 2001, what was the level of trust in the Australian government by your community?

☐ Very Distrustful  ☐ Distrustful  ☐ Indifferent  ☐ Trusting  ☐ Very Trusting

56. Please provide reasons for your answer.

________________________________________________

________________________________________________
57. What was the level of trust you personally had in the Australian Government after September 11?

- [ ] Very Trusting
- [ ] Trusting
- [ ] Indifferent
- [ ] Distrustful
- [ ] Very Distrustful

58. Please provide reasons for any change in your level of trust before and after September 11.

__________________________________________

59. Did any contact with government agencies such as the Australian Federal Police and the State Police after September 11 change the level of trust in your community?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

60. Please describe how this contact influenced the level of trust.

__________________________________________

61. Please indicate your level of trust in the following government agencies:

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<th>Considerable Trust</th>
<th>Some Trust</th>
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**State Police**

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**Australian Federal Police**

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**Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO)**

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**Attorney General’s Department**

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**Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)**

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62. Have State or Federal government responses to local or international events affected your level of trust?

[ ] Considerable Trust
[ ] Some Trust
[ ] Little Trust
[ ] No Trust

Yes, a lot
Somewhat
No, not at all

63. Please explain the change in your level of trust.

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

64. Have comments made by political leaders affected your trust in the Australian Government?

[ ] Yes, a lot
[ ] Somewhat
[ ] No, not at all

65. Please explain the change in your level of trust.

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

66. Has your organisation received any funding from any Local, State or Federal Government Agency?

[ ] Yes
[ ] No

67. What was the nature and purpose of this funding?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

68. Do you believe that your organisation has received adequate funding?

[ ] Yes
[ ] No

69. What effect has this lack of or inadequate funding had on your organisation’s capacity to respond to issues affecting your community?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

13
70. Would you be willing and able to participate in an interview with the researcher?

☐ Yes

☐ No

71. Your Name: ____________________________

72. Your telephone number:

Business hours ____________
After hours ____________
Mobile ____________

Thank you very much for completing this survey, your time and opinions will be of great help in this research and are appreciated.
APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT LETTER

Project Title: Muslim perspectives for developing a Best-Practice Model for Engaging the Muslim Community as a Partner for Combating Extremism in Australia.

Investigator: Nada Roude
PhD student
Contact Details: 02 9758 0808
Mobile: 0410 536 726
Email: nroude@csu.edu.au

Consent:

i. I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation in the research at any time, and that if I do I will not be subjected to any penalty or discriminatory treatment.
ii. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the research and received satisfactory answers.
iii. I understand that any information or personal details gathered in the course of this research about me are confidential and that neither my name nor any other identifying information will be used or published without my written permission.
iv. I understand that interviews will be audio taped.

Participants may choose not to answer some questions or stop the interview at any time should they feel too much discomfort. Participants can also withdraw from the research at anytime without any need for justification. Their choice to withdraw will be respected. Charles Sturt University’s Ethics in Human Research Committee has approved this project (Protocol number: 2013/010). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Committee through the Executive Officer:

Executive Officer
Ethics in Human Research Committee
Charles Sturt University
Private Mail Bag 29
Bathurst NSW 2795
Phone: (02) 6338 4628
Fax: (02) 6338 4194

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Thank you for your taking the time to consider participating in this research. If you have any further questions concerning this research you may also contact me on 0410 536 726 or you direct them to: nroude@csu.edu.au

I, ........................................................................................................, confirm that the details of this project and my participation in it have been explained to my satisfaction. I consent to participating in the interview and to having my responses recorded and used anonymously in this research.

Signed: ............................................................................................

Date: .................................................................................................
Project Title: Muslim perspectives for developing a Best-Practice Model for Engaging the Muslim Community as a Partner for Combating Extremism in Australia.

Investigator: Nada Roude  
PhD student  

School of Theology  
Supervisors: Associate Professor William Emilsen  
Charles Sturt University  
Contact: 02 8838 8925

Contact Details: Mobile; 0410 536 726  
Email: nrroude@csu.edu.au

Professor James Haire  
Rev Professor Charles Sturt University  
Contact: 02 6272 6201

Associate Professor Nick O’Brien  
Head of School Canberra, Charles Sturt University  
Contact: 02 6272 6241

Assalamu Alaikum war wab

Peace greetings,

My name is Nada Roude and I am a doctoral student in the Faculty of Arts at the Charles Sturt University. I write to invite you to participate in a research I am undertaking which aims to evaluate how effective the Australian government has been in engaging Muslim communities as partners in developing counter-extremist strategies.

The project that I am researching is called “Muslim perspectives for developing a best-practice model for engaging the Muslim community as a partner for combating extremism in Australia”. The research will be based on a study of Muslims in Australia and will include religious leaders, community leaders (men and women), leaders of youth organisations and representatives from the community.

Investigating why current government approaches have failed or have had limited success in effectively utilizing the diverse community capacity to enhance the government’s policies on countering extremism is vital to informing best practice. The research therefore seeks to develop a best-practice model that facilitates effective partnership between the government and the Australian Muslim community in countering extremism.

Gaining new insights and perspectives from both the Muslim community and government departments involved in the implementation of countering-terrorism will be important for this research. The outcome from the evaluation will help to further illuminate the success or otherwise of engaging communities in countering extremism.

Also of importance to the research will be an exploration of the role of the public discourse in contributing to radicalisation, especially amongst young Muslims. The political and media rhetoric and its impact on Muslim communities will be analyzed, especially as it impacts on capacity building, resources and trust. Identifying factors that may affect community engagement in a new environment where communities are expected to work with the government as partners in countering extremism is an important outcome of this research. The findings from the research will help inform a best-practice model for engaging the Muslim community.

The research involves a one on one interview with religious and community leaders. If you consent to participating in the research you will be interviewed by me. The interview may take around one to two hours and
will focus on your experiences and views relating to countering extremism and best practice approaches for engaging Muslim communities as partners. Attached is the list of questions which will form the focus of the interview. The interview will be conducted in a mutually acceptable location and, with your permission, will be audio recorded. A copy of the transcript of the interview will then be provided to you to ensure the accuracy of our discussion. A copy of the audio will also be made available should you wish to keep a copy for your reference.

Audio recordings from the interview will be stored in a secure place and archived for a period of 5 years. Participants’ right to privacy and confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

Understandably, the questions asked may generate some discomfort as you recount your experiences. However, your views and experiences in this area are of the utmost importance to the research given your longstanding involvement in the Australian Muslim community. As this research is voluntary you are not obliged to participate in it. You may choose not to answer some questions and you can elect to withdraw from the interview at any time. Your choice will be respected and will in no way impact on your relationship with myself or the University.

Charles Sturt University’s Ethics in Human Research Committee has approved this project (Protocol Number: 2013/010). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Committee through the Executive Officer:

Executive Officer
Ethics in Human Research Committee
Academic Secretariat
Charles Sturt University
Private Mail Bag 29
Bathurst NSW 2795
Phone: (02) 6338 4628
Fax: (02) 6338 4194

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Thank you for your taking the time to consider participating in this research. If you have any further questions concerning this research you may contact me or my supervisors.

Yours sincerely,

Nada Roude
Researcher
CSU
Interview Questions

- What are the services provided by your organisation?
  - Welfare/settlement support
  - Counseling
  - Religious advice
  - Education
  - Sport/recreation
  - Youth specific
  - Women specific
  - Other

- Describe the nature and amount of voluntary input invested by members in the organisation?

- In your opinion, what was the impact of September 11 on the Australian Muslim community?

- What was its capacity to deal with the repercussions?

- What was the role of Community and its leadership in its response to increased levels of scrutiny and attacks on the community?

- Is there lack of resources available to your organisation which prevents you from effectively addressing issues affecting the community?

- How has lack of resources impacted on long term planning for the organisation and its capacity to respond to issues affecting the community?

- What was the nature of community/government engagement?

- How was the engagement effective or productive in leading to outcomes?

- What do you feel are the key issues confronting young people of the Islamic faith?

- What do you believe are the most appropriate programs for addressing their specific needs?

- What do you believe needs to change in gaining the confidence of Muslim leadership; youth and religious leaders on matters that impact the community?

- Do you see any problems that the government needs to address or change if it is to succeed in engaging Muslims as active partner?

- In your opinion, have government policies, including foreign affairs policies, influenced or impacted on how effective the engagement is with the community?

- What role do you believe politicians and government leaders have in promoting trust?

- How has the language used by politicians since Sept 11 impacted on community trust and confidence?

- Do you think the media’s coverage of Muslims has been balanced?

- Has the media influenced stereotypes of Muslims? If so, how?
➢ Do you believe the portrayal of Muslims in the media has contributed to an increased level of fear and racism? If so, how?

➢ Do you believe this coverage impacts on young people and leads to extremist views?

➢ Do you think that government programs have been effective in dissuading young people from extremism?

➢ What do you think has worked well?

➢ What has not worked well?

➢ What approaches do you think could be introduced to enlist the trust and support of religious and community leaders?
15 January 2013

Ms Nada Roude
141 Wilton Street
GREENACRE NSW 2190

Dear Ms Roude,

Thank you for the additional information forwarded in response to a request from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

The CSU HREC reviews projects in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council’s National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.

I am pleased to advise that your project entitled “Muslim perspectives for developing a Best-Practice Model for Engaging the Muslim Community as a Partner for Combating Extremism in Australia” meets the requirements of the National Statement; and ethical approval for this research is granted for a twelve-month period from 15 January 2013.

The protocol number issued with respect to this project is 2013/010. Please be sure to quote this number when responding to any request made by the Committee.

Please note the following conditions of approval:

* all Consent Forms and Information Sheets are to be printed on Charles Sturt University letterhead. Students should liaise with their Supervisor to arrange to have these documents printed;
* you must notify the Committee immediately in writing should your research differ in any way from that proposed. Forms are available at: http://www.csu.edu.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0010/170833/chrc_annrep.doc
* you must notify the Committee immediately if any serious and or unexpected adverse events or outcomes occur associated with your research, that might affect the participants and therefore ethical acceptability of the project. An Adverse Incident form is available from the website: as above;
* amendments to the research design must be reviewed and approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee before commencement. Forms are available at the website above;

Version 3

FIA

www.csu.edu.au

CRICOS Provider Numbers for Charles Sturt University are 00003F (NSW), 01597E (MC) and 036939 (ACT). ABN: 82 078 708 591
• if an extension of the approval period is required, a request must be submitted to the Human Research Ethics Committee. Forms are available at the website above;
• you are required to complete a Progress Report form, which can be downloaded as above, by 15 January 2014 if your research has not been completed by that date;
• you are required to submit a final report, the form is available from the website above.

YOU ARE REMINDED THAT AN APPROVAL LETTER FROM THE CSU HREC CONSTITUTES ETHICAL APPROVAL ONLY.

If your research involves the use of radiation, biological materials, chemicals or animals a separate approval is required from the appropriate University Committee.

The Committee wishes you well in your research and please do not hesitate to contact the Executive Officer on telephone (02) 6338 4628 or email ethics@csu.edu.au if you have any enquiries.

Yours sincerely

Julie Hicks
Executive Officer
Human Research Ethics Committee
Direct Telephne: (02) 6338 4628
Email: ethics@csu.edu.au
Cc: Associate Professor William Emison Professor James Haire Associate Professor Nick O'Brien
APPENDIX D: LIST OF ACTS PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER 11

- **Customs Act 1901.** Section 50
- **Defence Act 1903.** Part III Division 1 Calling out and directing utilisation of Defence Force
- **Crimes Act 1914**
- **Banking (Foreign Exchange) Regulations 1946.** Regulations 8(1)(a), 38-39
- **Air Navigation Regulations 1947.** Part 7 Aviation security
- **Defence (Special Undertakings) Act 1952**
- **Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956.** Regulation 4A Importation of objectionable goods
- **Migration Act 1958.** Section 501 Refusal or cancellation of visa on character grounds
- **Crimes (Biological Weapons) Act 1976.** Implements: Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction
- **Crimes (Internationally Protected Persons) Act 1976.** Implements: Convention on the prevention and punishment of crimes against internationally protected persons, including diplomatic agents
- **Crimes (Foreign Incursions and Recruitment) Act 1978**
- **Australian Federal Police Act 1979**
- **Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act 1979.** This act originally contained a definition of terrorism in s. 4, which was removed by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act Amendment Act 1986 (No. 122 of 1986), s. 3. This definition was relied upon by the Classification of Publications Ordinance 1983 (A.C.T.) (No. 59 of 1983), which prohibited the classification of any publication which “promotes, incites or encourages terrorism.” The reference to terrorism was removed by the Classification of Publications (Amendment) Ordinance 1989 (A.C.T.) (No 2 of 1989)
- **Australian Protective Service Act 1987**
- **Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Act 1988**
- **Crimes (Hostages) Act 1989.** Implements: International Convention Against The Taking Of Hostages

• *Criminal Code Act 1995*. Sections 70, 89-89A, Parts II, IIA, VII

• *Intelligence Services Act 2001*

• Charter of the United Nations (Sanctions – Afghanistan) Regulations 2001