

Australian Jihad: Radicalisation and Counter-Terrorism (ARI)

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Theme: ‘Home-grown’ Islamist terrorism has developed in Australia in a comparable pattern to other Western countries. The Australian counter-terrorism strategy is similar to that in the UK, including the recent introduction of community-based preventive initiatives.

Summary: This ARI summarises the findings from an-depth empirical study of all publicly-confirmed cases of Islamist terrorism involving Australians. The domestic situation of Australian Muslims is briefly described, followed by an overview of Islamist terrorism cases to date, including the number and location of cases and the level of threat they have presented, both domestically and internationally. The background characteristics of offenders and details of radicalisation are discussed, followed by an examination of the national counter-terrorism (CT) strategy, with a focus upon counter-radicalisation initiatives. Current CT tactics appear to be appropriate to the nature of the threat; however, it will be important to closely monitor preventive measures in order to avoid a potential backlash similar to that in the UK, and to make sure that they are appropriately targeted.

Analysis: Although Australia has not yet suffered from an Islamist terrorist attack at home, jihadi militants have been active in the country since the 1980s and ‘home-grown’ Islamist terrorism (HGIT) has recently been recognised as a serious and likely persistent threat to national and international security.¹ In order to assess the nature of the threat it is important to have an appreciation of the Australian context, the number and location of Islamist terrorism cases, the level of threat these individuals have presented so far (including links to foreign terrorist organisations), background characteristics of offenders and their pathways of radicalisation, and current CT tactics.

The Australian Context

While Islamist terrorists represent only a tiny minority of the wider Muslim population in any country, the domestic situation of Muslims has the potential to fuel grievances and therefore contribute to an element of pre-disposing risk for some individuals. The Australian Muslim population is diverse, is located mainly in Sydney and Melbourne, and accounts for approximately 2% of the overall population.² Research has shown that they

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¹ Australian Government (2010), *Counter-Terrorism White Paper: Securing Australia, Protecting Our Community*, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra, accessed 29/V/2010, http://www.dpmpc.gov.au/publications/counter_terrorism/index.cfm.

² *Muslims in Australia: A Snap Shot* (undated), Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Canberra, accessed 29/V/2010, http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/multicultural/pdf_doc/Muslims_in_Australia_snapshot.pdf.

are affected by poor social and economic conditions,³ suggesting that there is potential reason for frustration directed against the home-country. More significantly, Australia participated in the invasion of Iraq and maintains combat troops in Afghanistan. It has also been repeatedly named as a legitimate target for attack by bin Laden and others, and more than 100 Australians have died in Islamist terrorist attacks overseas, primarily in Indonesia. It is also relevant that the Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT) is active in Australia, although it has not had the same impact as similar groups in the UK.

Number and Location of Cases

From September 2000 until mid-2011 there have been 16 publicly-confirmed cases (36 individuals) actively participating in, planning or promoting violent jihad at home or abroad. Twenty-seven of these individuals have been convicted in Australia, primarily under terrorism statutes; one person has been convicted of terrorism offences in Kazakhstan; another has been convicted in Kuwait; one person has been charged in Lebanon and one person was killed fighting in Somalia; Willie Brigitte was convicted in France for planning attacks whilst in Australia; another four individuals have not been charged, or had charges dropped, although their involvement in violent jihad has been publicly documented. In addition to these figures there have been a number of unconfirmed cases, as well as 40 Australians who have had their passports revoked or denied for 'reasons relating to terrorism'.⁴

In the 11-year period from 2000 up until 2010 there has been at least one publicly confirmed Islamist terrorism case involving Australian citizens each year, with the exceptions of 2008 and 2010 (and none so far in 2011). This translates into a rate of 1.45 cases, or 3.27 individuals per year (see Table 1 below). In comparison to countries such as the US and the UK, Australia has clearly experienced a lower number of Islamist terrorism cases. However, it is worth noting that Australia has a comparatively small Muslim population and for this reason, the rate of Australian cases relative to Muslim population size is *higher* than for the US and for the UK even, for the period 2001-08.⁵ Although this says more about the potentially misleading nature of statistics (since Australia remains geographically peripheral and is a secondary target for violent Islamists), it is important to comprehend the scale of the problem.

³ Amanda Wise & Jan Ali (2008), *Muslim Australians and Local Government: Grassroots Strategies to Improve Relations between Muslim and Non-Muslim-Australians*, Centre for Research on Social Cohesion, Sydney, accessed 20/IV/2011, <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/multicultural/grassroots/>.

⁴ Australian Government (2010), *Counter-Terrorism White Paper*.

⁵ This author has currently analysed 47 publicly-confirmed Islamist terrorism cases (92 individuals) in the US from 2001 to 2008, and 56 cases (112 individuals) in the UK for the same period. See Sam Mullins (2010), 'A Systematic Analysis of Islamist Terrorism in the USA and UK: 2001-2008', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Wollongong. This data set is currently being updated to include 2009 onwards.

Table 1. Australian Islamist terrorism cases, 2000-10 (numbers in brackets refer to individuals; figures per population are multiplied by 1,000 for presentation purposes)

Population	20.7m
Muslim pop	340,400
Total cases 2000-2010	16 (36)
Cases per year	1.45 (3.27)
Cases per pop *1000	0.0008 (0.0017)
Cases per Muslim pop *1000	0.047 (0.1058)

In terms of geographic distribution within Australia, 10 Islamist terrorism cases so far have involved individuals based in Sydney (two of whom relocated to Perth); four have involved individuals based in Melbourne; and two cases involved individuals from Adelaide. Six cases (16 individuals) have involved a focus on carrying out domestic attacks, although only three of these have presented a credible threat (see below). Thus, more *cases* have involved attempts to go overseas for violent jihad, but more *individuals* have been involved in domestic terrorist activity since these have involved larger groups.

Threat Level so Far

To date, there have been no successful Islamist terrorist attacks within Australia, nor have domestically-focused groups managed to come close to success. The most credible domestic threats occurred in 2003 (Willie Brigitte and Faheem Lodhi), 2005 (the Sydney 'Operation Pendennis' group) and 2009 (the 'Operation Neath' plotters). None of these groups had constructed working explosive devices and they were not ready to launch an assault at the time of their arrests. With the possible exception of the Neath group, who were planning a Mumbai-style attack on Holsworthy army barracks in Sydney, no definite targets had been decided.

There are fewer precise details about the overseas activities of Australian jihadists, although they have involved collaboration with foreign terrorist organisations (FTOs) in terms of training, planning attacks and participating in armed combat. For example, Omar Hadba from Sydney stands accused of having killed civilian and military personnel in Lebanon in 2006 as part of the Islamist militant group Fatah al-Islam.⁶

Links to FTOs among Australian Islamist terrorism cases have been present in 14 of 16 cases (88%). The comparative percentages for cases in the US and the UK are 50% and 43%, respectively, between 2001 and 2008⁷ and although it is surprising that the Australian rate is higher, it is a matter of the low numbers involved. Australians have been linked to the following FTOs: Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), the Taliban, al-Qaeda, Lashkar e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish e-Mohammed (JeM), the Peninsula Lions in Kuwait, Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon, and al-Shabab in Somalia.

⁶ See Mullins (2011), 'Islamist Terrorism and Australia', p. 275

⁷ Mullins (2010), 'A Systematic Analysis of Islamist Terrorism in the USA and UK: 2001-2008', p. 338.

Despite the prevalence of such links, fewer individuals have established contact with FTOs over time, and –similar to other Western countries– the nature of that contact has diminished among domestically-based groups. Earlier cases involved more significant levels of organisational support, including logistic advice and financial backing for conducting attacks. More recent ties to FTOs for domestic groups have either been limited to previous training with no additional support (individuals in the Sydney and Melbourne Pendennis groups), or primarily involved telephone contact and small-scale fundraising for al-Shabab (Operation Neath). There is no evidence that FTOs have actively supported or had knowledge of terrorist plots in Australia since Jack Roche (in 2000) and Willie Brigitte and Faheem Lodhi (in 2003). This lack of organisational support for attacks within Australia helps to explain the limited capacity of domestic groups to date.

Offender Characteristics and Radicalisation

The available data indicates that Australian jihadis are broadly similar to Islamist terrorists from Europe and North America in that they are male, mostly below the age of 30 and are citizens or long-term residents of the country in question.⁸ Although more than half of the sample was born in Australia, most are dual nationals and close to 60% are of Lebanese heritage. Educational attainment is generally quite low, with at least seven individuals having left high school before the age of 18, and only three confirmed as having completed university.⁹

In accordance with their level of education (and comparable to a study of European jihadis by Bakker)¹⁰ most were in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations such as driving taxis or manual labour. Around 70% of the sample was married, most with children, at the time of involvement in terrorist activity; only a handful appear to have had previous unrelated criminal records (for generally minor offences); and although several individuals exhibited psychiatric disorder as a result of incarceration, available information indicates that only one or two people in the sample were suffering from serious mental health issues at the time of offending and none were legally exculpated on these grounds.¹¹

Overall, there is nothing remarkable about the backgrounds of Australian jihadis that distinguishes them from the rest of the population that would be useful for investigative profiling. Nor is there much that marks them out as vastly different from studies of their contemporaries in other Western countries (the Australians have a slightly lower socioeconomic standing, a slightly higher average age –but are still most in their 20s– and a slightly higher marriage rate, but these characteristics are hardly discerning).

The unique feature of Australian jihadis (aside from their geographic base in the Antipodes) is the aforementioned prevalence of Lebanese among them, which is not easily explained. People of Lebanese origin represent about 9% of the Australian Muslim population¹² and are therefore over-represented in Islamist terrorism cases. Moreover, Lebanon has not featured heavily in the ‘global’ jihad and few Lebanese people have been convicted for terrorism offences in other Western countries. At face value it seems

⁸ Mullins (2011), ‘Islamist Terrorism and Australia’, p. 259-262.

⁹ *Ibid*; Louise Porter & Mark Kebell (2010), ‘Radicalization in Australia: Examining Australia’s Convicted Terrorists’, *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 11/VI/2010.

¹⁰ Edwin Bakker (2006), *Jihadi Terrorists in Europe: Their Characteristics and the Circumstances in Which They Joined the Jihad: An Exploratory Study*, Clingendael Institute, The Hague.

¹¹ Mullins (2011), ‘Islamist Terrorism and Australia’, p. 261-262; Porter & Kebell (2010), ‘Radicalization in Australia’, p. 8.

¹² *About Australia: Muslims in Australia* (2009), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 30/V/2010, http://www.dfat.gov.au/facts/muslims_in_australia.html.

as if there is something unique in the experience of the Australian-Lebanese that might help to explain the radicalisation of individuals in the sample. Lingering racial tensions (which flared up in the Cronulla riots south of Sydney in 2005) are potentially relevant in this regard. However, it is important to bear in mind the small sample size, meaning that relative percentages are easily skewed. Moreover the bottom-line, or necessary, conditions for involvement in Islamist terrorism within the West appear to be a mixture of social and ideological exposure.¹³ In other words, it is more productive to examine localised, pro-jihadi subcultures (direct motivators) rather than broad socioeconomic conditions (pre-disposing risk) in trying to explain how and why individuals become involved in terrorism.

Geographically, the distribution of Islamist terrorism cases in Australia over time reflects the initial distribution of influential Islamist militants and ideologues dating back to the 1980s. These factors are likely to have contributed to lasting pro-jihadi subcultures, maintained via a process of social transmission of ideas. Within supportive environments, jihadi entrepreneurs such as Abdul Nacer Benbrika ('spiritual leader' in the Melbourne Pendennis group) have gradually become more extreme in their beliefs and have managed to attract limited numbers of like-minded others.

Retrospectively tracing processes of radicalisation is fraught with hindsight bias –the tendency to interpret information as meaningful and in support of the current hypothesis–. It is also an exercise which is frequently plagued by the lack of information on which to base judgements, especially for less well-known cases. With these limitations in mind, available information suggests that Australian jihadis have radicalised in a similar fashion to 'home-grown' Islamist terrorists in other Western countries.¹⁴ Many do not appear to have been particularly religious prior to becoming involved in radical Islamism (at least five were converts) and they seem to have adopted increasingly militant identities by way of intensifying group-socialisation.¹⁵ Very few in the Australian sample have acted independently of an immediate group or at least a wider, supportive network, and although leaders are not always readily identifiable, there does appear to have been top-down influence in various forms, ranging from informal social influence to organisational direction.¹⁶ Radicalisation thus appears to have taken place by way of more or less informal social interaction and mutual influence within groups.¹⁷ Beyond these social (*process*) motivations, individuals expressed a predictable mixture of religious and political justifications for violent jihad (*ideological* motivations), including outrage at Australian support for military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁸ There is also evidence that individuals accessed online jihadi propaganda, which seems to have contributed to their radicalisation, and that the Internet was also used to distribute jihadi materials and to research potential targets for attack.¹⁹

¹³ Sam Mullins (2010), 'Iraq Versus Lack of Integration: Understanding the Motivations of Contemporary Islamist Terrorists in the West', *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 19/X/2010.

¹⁴ Marc Sageman (2008), *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia; Marc Sageman (2004), *Understanding Terror Networks*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia; Mitchell Silber & Arvin Bhatt (2007), *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*, New York City Police Department, New York.

¹⁵ Porter & Kebbell (2010), 'Radicalization in Australia', p. 9-10.

¹⁶ Mullins (2011), 'Islamist Terrorism and Australia', p. 262-263.

¹⁷ See Clark McCauley & Sophia Moskalenko (2008), 'Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 20, nr. 3, p. 415-433.

¹⁸ Porter & Kebbell (2010), 'Radicalization in Australia', p. 11-12.

¹⁹ Mullins (2011), 'Islamist Terrorism and Australia', p. 269; Porter & Kebbell (2010), 'Radicalization in Australia', p. 13-14.

Australian Counter-Terrorism

Having examined the threat, it is equally important to examine the response. The revised Australian CT strategy was unveiled in a 2010 White Paper which officially acknowledged the threat from home-grown Islamist terrorists for the first time.²⁰ The 2010 White Paper outlines the overarching national strategy for countering terrorism, which is modelled after the UK CONTEST strategy (see Table 2 below). This involves a comprehensive approach to mitigating the terrorist threat by incorporating both international and domestic CT measures.

Table 2. British and Australian CT strategies

UK	Australia	Focus
Pursue	Analysis	Proactive investigation
Protect	Protection	Target hardening
Prepare	Response	Contingency planning
Prevent	Resilience	Community interventions

It is beyond the scope of this ARI to give an in-depth account of every aspect of Australian CT, although it is worth noting that Australian authorities are working to overcome similar barriers to more effective investigation as experienced in other Western countries (relating to interagency information sharing and cooperation).²¹ The focus here will be upon the 'Resilience' strand of CT and related counter-radicalisation initiatives, which are aimed at preventing further radicalisation of Australian residents.

In accordance with general trends, the Australian approach to CT in the post-9/11 era has emphasised prevention and there has been an increasing interest in counter-radicalisation programmes, both for the rehabilitation of convicted terrorism offenders and in a preventive capacity within communities (under the heading of 'Resilience'). To date, little has been publicised about either sort of programme, due to the fact that both are in their infancy and have yet to be systematically evaluated. In particular, there is a dearth of information about rehabilitative 'de-radicalisation' efforts with Australia's convicted Islamist terrorists. The few details released so far indicate that 'specialist staff and psychologists' are engaging with prisoners on a one-to-one basis to discuss and challenge radical beliefs in an effort to supplant them with more moderate tendencies.²² Although it is unclear how structured these interventions are, they clearly build upon existing programmes around the world and are likely to face many of the same challenges.²³

Preventive counter-radicalisation in Australia is an even more recent endeavour and involves at least three overlapping layers. At the highest, and most indirect level, broad government policies aim to 'build social cohesion, harmony and security',²⁴ including efforts to provide socioeconomic opportunities, to reduce inter-communal conflict and to

²⁰ Australian Government (2010), *Counter-Terrorism White Paper*.

²¹ See, for example, Kelly O'Hara & Anthony Bergin (2009), 'Information Sharing in Australia's National Security Community', *Australian Strategic Policy Institute*, November, accessed 26/11/2011, http://www.aspi.org.au/publications/publication_details.aspx?ContentID=232.

²² 'Terrorists to be "De-Radicalised" in NSW Supermax', *ABC News*, 25/11/2010, accessed 27/11/2010, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/02/25/2829559.htm>.

²³ See Sam Mullins (2010), 'Rehabilitation of Islamist terrorists: Lessons from criminology', *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, vol. 3, nr. 3, p. 162-193.

²⁴ Australian Government (2010), *Counter-Terrorism White Paper*, p.67.

explain Australian CT law and foreign policy to 'at-risk' communities.²⁵ The Australian Federal Police (AFP) engages with newly arrived immigrants to explain Australian law and policing and is reported to be increasing community outreach, including taking part in sporting activities for 'at-risk' youth.²⁶ Below the Federal level, State Police are more closely engaged with communities and have expanded these activities as part of their CT remit. This includes arranging community meetings to explain CT laws and who they are aimed at as part of broader efforts aimed at building trust; however, as a senior New South Wales Police officer remarked, 'We have no ability to counter-radicalise anybody, [so] we have to rely on people who have that capacity'.²⁷ The Federal and State levels are thus aimed at reducing elements of pre-disposing risk, enhancing community engagement for the purposes of improved cooperation and identifying 'at-risk' individuals who may be targeted for intervention.

The third and most direct level of preventive counter-radicalisation in Australia is orchestrated by the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Taskforce within the Attorney General's Department but (as in the UK) is to be primarily implemented by community partners. It is the AGD's view that 'Communities are best placed to develop solutions to local problems and for that reason, consultation will be occurring with a wide variety of community groups and stakeholders'.²⁸ In May 2010, AUS\$9.7 million of funding was announced for the CVE to be spent over four years.²⁹ In February 2011 it was announced that AUS\$1.1 million of that funding was being used for the 'Building Community Resilience: Youth Mentoring Grants Program'.³⁰ Over 100 community groups applied for between AUS\$5,000 and AUS\$200,000 for the programme, although only seven groups have been confirmed as being successful.³¹ Details of these seven groups and how they will contribute to counter-radicalisation are so far fairly sparse but on the whole they appear to focus more on developing mentoring skills (including modelling appropriate behaviours and communication skills) and promoting participation in Australian democratic society among youths, rather than focusing explicitly on violent Islamist ideology.³²

The present situation does not permit a detailed evaluation of CVE programmes, given their recent development and lacking information. However, there are important parallels between the Australian 'Resilience' and the UK 'Prevent' approaches which may be informative. The 'Prevent' strategy was implemented on a much larger scale than in Australia, but involved a similar mixture of broad and indirect measures aimed at improving social cohesion, and a policy of financing a wide variety of community groups to

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 63-68; Attorney-General's Department (2010), 'Countering Violent Extremism in Our Community', *Attorney-General's Department*, 11/V/2010, accessed 17/II/2011, http://www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/www/ministers/mccllelland.nsf/Page/MediaReleases_2010_SecondQuarter_11May2010-CounteringViolentExtremisminourCommunity.

²⁶ Sally Neighbour (2010), 'Battle of Ideas to Curb Terror', *The Australian*, 2/XI/2010, accessed 26/II/2011, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/features/battle-of-ideas-to-curb-terror/story-e6frg6z6-1225946335133>.

²⁷ *Ibid*.

²⁸ Attorney General's Department (2010), 'Countering Violent Extremism', *Attorney-General's Department*, 17/II/2010, accessed 26/II/26, 2011, http://www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/agd.nsf/Page/National_securityCountering_Violent_Extremism.

²⁹ Attorney-General's Department (2010), 'Countering Violent Extremism in Our Community'.

³⁰ Attorney General's Department (2011), 'Youth Mentoring Grants to Help Tackle Violent Extremism', *Attorney General's Department*, 22/II/2011, accessed 26/II/2011, http://www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/www/ministers/mccllelland.nsf/Page/MediaReleases_2011_FirstQuarter_22February2011-Youthmentoringgrantstohelpackleviolentextremism.

³¹ *Ibid*; Attorney-General's Department (2010), 'Countering Violent Extremism in Our Community'.

³² See Attorney General's Department (2011), 'Youth Mentoring Grants to Help Tackle Violent Extremism'.

conduct the actual leg-work of counter-radicalisation.³³ This strategy came under a significant amount of criticism for being ineffective but also apparently for providing funds to anti-democratic and extremist groups who were in fact promoting many of the same beliefs that were supposed to countered.³⁴ The fundamental reasons for this occurring were that there was an emphasis on preventing violent *behaviour* without too much concern for related *beliefs*, and there was a lack of clear criteria from central government that might assist local governments and police in choosing who to engage with.³⁵ At the same time, 'Prevent' initiatives are believed to have further singled out Muslims in British society, to have securitised their relationship with the state, and to have *increased* rather than decreased alienation, leading to recent reforms.³⁶

Looking at the Australian 'Resilience' and CVE measures, it is far too early to condemn them, but there are lessons to be learnt. The emphasis on countering *violent* extremism runs the risk of leaving the door open to engaging with inappropriate community partners who may exacerbate the problem. It would thus be sensible for the Australian authorities to reappraise the limits of their aims (although this delves deeper into the Pandora's Box of how exactly a Western secular government should address religious beliefs, which are also combined with distinctly non-Western political perspectives). In any case, it is vital to devise clear criteria for engagement with community partners using democratic values and commitment to Australia and civil rights as a yardstick.³⁷ Equally, there must be criteria for assessing community partnerships over time and for severing relationships in the event that they are deemed inappropriate or counter-productive. On a positive note, the modest scale of CVE in Australia is indicative of a cautious approach. It is also important to note that the aim in Australia is to target all forms of violent extremism (not just radical Islamism), therefore theoretically limiting further potential alienation of Muslims in society.

Conclusion; Home-grown Islamist terrorism has become a fact in Australian society much as it has throughout the West and it is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. The Australian government has developed a comprehensive CT strategy, which is appropriate to the nature of the threat. However, initiatives developed under the 'Resilience' strand of the overall strategy in particular are still very new and face some daunting challenges. Whether or not these efforts are successful is going to be very difficult to assess, even with a great deal more information.

Based on the analysis of the threat (see above), a key factor that will at least partially determine the efficacy of preventative community interventions will be whether they are appropriately targeted. This means that service provision should be geographically and socially targeted to intervene within genuinely 'at-risk' communities, ie, where social and ideological exposure to violent Islamist ideology is occurring. It also means that the right

³³ See Shiraz Maher & Martyn Frampton (2009), *Choosing Our Friends Wisely: Criteria for Engagement with Muslim Groups*, Policy Exchange, London, accessed 12/11/2011, http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/publications/pdfs/Choosing_Our_Friends_Wisely.pdf; Patrick Roberts (2010), 'Preventative Medicine – The UK's Changing Approach to Radicalism', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 29/X/2010.

³⁴ Duncan Gardham (2011), 'Counter-Terrorism Projects Worth £1.2m Face Axe as Part of End to Multiculturalism', *The Telegraph*, 11/11/2011, accessed 12/11/2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/politics/8319780/Counter-terrorism-projects-worth-1.2m-face-axe-as-part-of-end-to-multiculturalism.html>.

³⁵ Maher & Frampton (2009), *Choosing Our Friends Wisely*.

³⁶ *Ibid*; Roberts, (2010), 'Preventative Medicine – The UK's Changing Approach to Radicalism'.

³⁷ See Maher & Frampton (2009), *Choosing Our Friends Wisely*.

individuals must be targeted. Granted, the whole point of prevention is to intervene before a problem develops; however, given that Australian jihadis have generally been in their mid-to-late 20s and married, and did not radicalise until this point in their lives, it is unclear whether targeting youths can inoculate them from future radicalisation. At the very least it seems that some form of intervention for young men in their 20s (presumably overlooked by youth-mentoring schemes) should also be considered.

The future is, of course, uncertain and there is no magic bullet for countering Islamist terrorism in the West. The real challenge for Australia will be to maintain a measured response and to contain the backlash in society should a successful domestic attack take place.

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