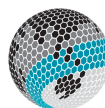


# AUSTRALIAN MUSLIMS' EXPERIENCES OF POLICING AND SURVEILLANCE

REPORT BY  
PROFESSOR SHAHRAM AKBARZADEH  
ALFRED DEAKIN INSTITUTE FOR  
CITIZENSHIP AND GLOBALISATION  
DEAKIN UNIVERSITY



Australian Muslim Women's  
Centre for Human Rights  
*Equality without Exception*



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CITIZENSHIP AND GLOBALISATION



This research project has involved a significant amount of collaboration from a wide range of individuals and organisations and could not have been accomplished without the significant time, effort and contributions of all involved.

We would especially like to recognise the insight and dedication of the many Muslims who agreed to be interviewed and shared their personal stories with us.

This study was conducted pre-Covid (2018 and 2019) and just prior to the Christchurch shooting in New Zealand (March 2019). While every effort was made to capture the diversity of views, this study has limitations in terms of sample size and location.

We extend our deepest gratitude to these individuals who opened their hearts to the project in an effort to ensure that others in the community benefited from their courage to share their stories. We sincerely hope that this publication respectfully reflects their experiences, views and beliefs.

To ensure the confidentiality of the some of the Muslims who participated we have not identified the some who have assisted us. However, we would like to sincerely express our gratitude and regard; without the support of these individuals without which we could not have undertaken this project.

The Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights (AMWCHR) is an organisation of Muslim women working to advance the rights and status of Muslim women in Australia.

We take a non-religious, non-sectarian approach to our work and adopt a social justice lens to Islam when it is used to justify any violation against women. We believe that there is not one view of Islam that represents all Muslims in Australia and further that the diversity of Muslims in Australia is a strength. Since our inception, the AMWCHR has created and contributed to the development of programs, services, advocacy and research initiatives that aim to elevate and amplify Muslim women's voices in Australia.

AMWCHR would like to thank all the young people, parents and professionals for trusting us with their stories and sharing their lived experience through the many consultations and workshops throughout this research study. Their invaluable contribution has been fundamental to the development of this publication.

The Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our organisation is located and where we conduct our work. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. AMWCHR is committed to honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Australian Muslims feel they are under constant surveillance by law enforcement agencies. Most Australian Muslims feel watched. They feel they are over-policed and treated as a suspect community. This has strained community relationships with law enforcement agencies and presented new challenges for community outreach programs by the police.

This study also found that Muslims feel under persistent pressure to do more to combat terrorism. Relentless claims by Australian political leaders that Muslims are not doing enough to condemn acts of terror and work with law enforcement agencies to prevent terrorism has exacerbated the feeling of being singled out as a suspect community.

Such claims have implied community collusion and frustrated Australian Muslim leaders.

The experience of over surveillance and negative public discourse on Muslims in Australia has undermined Muslim confidence as valued citizens.

*Australian Muslims feel watched. They feel they are over-policed and treated as a suspect community.*

# 1. INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY RELATIONS



According to the last Census in 2016, the Australian Muslim population has grown to over 600,000. This places Australian Muslims at 2.6% of the total population. Successive studies have documented an over-representation of Muslims in some areas of concern. These range from prison population to unemployment rates and low-income families. Against the backdrop of terrorist attacks overseas and some terrorist plots in Australia, a new dimension of concern has come to occupy public debate around an assumed connection between Australian Muslims as a community of faith and terrorism. Public debates on terrorism, reporting of terrorist attacks and the range of activities by law enforcement agencies to counter terrorism have embroiled Muslims. At times, Australian Muslims have been held directly responsible for acts of terrorism.

In November 2018, in the wake of a terrorist attack in Melbourne, Prime Minister Scott Morrison asked community leaders among Australian Muslims to do more to help prevent such acts of terror.

The Prime Minister was promptly reminded by many, including the Victorian Police, that community leaders have indeed been proactive in protecting Australians (including Australian Muslims) from such threats<sup>1</sup>. But the damage of guilt by association was already done.

This experience appears recurring in times of crisis. As many respondents in this study noted, years of hard work and building bridges of cross-cultural understanding are often undone overnight by such acts of terror; combined with the knee-jerk reaction of the media and political class to hold Muslim communities responsible.

This recurring experience has left a negative impression on Australian Muslims. Guilt by association and the repeated insinuation that Muslims are somehow involved in terrorist activity or in fueling terrorist ideology has caused distress and unease amongst Australian Muslims.



The Muslim community feel that they are asked to prove themselves constantly and to demonstrate their commitment to Australia repeatedly. They find this exhausting, humiliating and ultimately alienating. This impacts on the way that Australian Muslims relate to organs of power, and more specifically on how they view security and law-enforcement agencies. The Australian Federal Police and state police departments are key players in implementing security measures which puts them at the coalface of any backlash from the Muslim community.

The present study aims to examine Australian Muslims' perspectives and attitudes towards law enforcement agencies. It will also examine the broader implications of this relationship, especially on Muslims' social activism, sense of being respected as full citizens and capacity to advocate for change in areas that affect Muslim lives in Australia. This study paints a complex picture of the diversity in Muslim communities and the array of experiences.

## COUNTER-TERRORISM

The relationship between Australian Muslims and law enforcement agencies has suffered in the context of Australia's response to terrorism. While community leaders report of significant advances in trust-building with the police, Australia's anti-terror laws continue to overshadow those relations. Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, efforts to counter- terrorism and violent extremism have been at the forefront of Australia's national security agenda. Within a tense security environment, the Australian government has broadened its definition of terrorism, enacted an extraordinary number of anti-terror laws, and increased the powers of Australian law enforcement agencies at state, territory and national levels.

In 2003, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) was mandated with special powers to apply for warrants to question and detain terror suspects and non-suspect citizens for up to seven days.<sup>2</sup> Individuals who fail to appear for questioning, or to answer questions can be sentenced to five years' imprisonment. Counter-terrorism expert Professor George Williams notes that Australia's response to 9/11 represents 'a more significant level of legislative output, even than that of nations facing a greater threat from terrorism.'<sup>3</sup>

The proliferation of anti-terror legislation in Australia since 9/11 has been 'exceptional'.<sup>4</sup> Prior to 2001, Australia had no national laws that dealt specifically with terrorism. In 2002, the Australian Parliament introduced a range of offences for terrorism and terrorism related activities. Most of these offences are contained within the *Criminal Code Act 1995*, which defines a 'terrorist act' and provides for the classification of a group as a terrorist organisation. Among the anti-terror laws enacted in the Criminal Code include provisions to criminalise associating with a terrorist organisation; receiving or providing training connected to terror activities; and giving or receiving funds to a terrorist organisation.<sup>5</sup>



# INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY RELATIONS

These anti-terror laws highlight a significant shift from traditional criminal law in Australia, with the latter focusing on the punishment of individuals after the act, and the former focusing on measures to prevent attacks. In 2014, the Australian Parliament enacted the *Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Foreign Fighters) Act* in response to the emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). This Act created and expanded Australia's anti-terror laws.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to other measures, it introduced the power to suspend a person's Australian passport for 14 days, created the offence to enter or remain in a declared area in a foreign country and created the offence of 'advocating terrorism'. The Act also introduced the power to cancel welfare payments for persons involved in terrorism and lowered the legal threshold to allow the arrest of an individual for terrorism offences without a warrant.<sup>7</sup> The Attorney General's department justified the Act's measures based on the domestic threat posed by Australians engaging in, and returning from overseas conflicts, such as in Iraq and Syria.<sup>8</sup> However many organisations, such as the Australian Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, argue that such statements are inadequate to support the limits on human rights imposed by the Act.<sup>9</sup>

Australia's anti-terror laws have sparked significant and ongoing debate due to their encroachment on Australia's democratic values and civil liberties.<sup>10</sup> For example, in 2015, the Australian Law Reform Commission reported that many anti-terrorism laws restrict freedoms of religion, speech, movement and association.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, despite the claim of neutrality, Australia's anti-terror laws are widely seen as targeting the Australian Muslim community.

This has given rise to feelings of insecurity and unease amongst Australian Muslims towards the government and law enforcement agencies. In 2017, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Profiling raised concerns for the Australian Arab and Muslim population, noting that 'public anxiety about terrorism have heightened prejudice towards and discrimination against them'.<sup>12</sup>

The committee also highlighted Australia's discriminatory counter-terrorism measures and police practices, while warning the Australian government about the risk of racial profiling. Australian Muslim community. This has given rise to feelings of insecurity and unease amongst Australian Muslims towards the government and law enforcement agencies. In 2017, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Profiling raised concerns for the Australian Arab and Muslim population, noting that 'public anxiety about terrorism have heightened prejudice towards and discrimination against them'.<sup>13</sup> The committee also highlighted Australia's discriminatory counter-terrorism measures and police practices, while warning the Australian government about the risk of racial profiling.



## OUTREACH

Law enforcement agencies rely on a range of preventative measures to counter terrorism. These range from community outreach and relation-building with Muslim organisations to surveillance and intelligence gathering. The logic of community outreach, institutionalised under the rubric of community liaison relations is to build rapport and trust with the community to address potential risks before they materialise. This approach rests on building trust with communities and a sense that law enforcement and community organisations are working towards a common goal. As will be discussed below, this study found that Muslim leaders value efforts by the police, especially Victoria Police, to engage with the community and build trust.

Sheikh Moustapha Sarakibi, General Manager of the Victorian Board of Imams argued that Victoria Police has made significant efforts to be accessible and take on broad community concerns. This was a representative evaluation.

However, the boundary between community outreach activities and intelligence gathering and surveillance may at times be blurred. While it is not possible to ascertain if this blurring of the lines is intentional, most respondents saw this as a problem. This generates a sense of unease among the community about the way Australian Muslims are being watched. While for those in positions of leadership in the community, this unease is tempered by an acknowledgement of the role and duties of law enforcement agencies to protect the peace, those with no working relationship with the police tend to be more suspicious of police intentions.

Many respondents also noted the difference between the police force as an institution and individual officers at local stations, who may be new to the job and have limited experience in working with diverse ethnic or religious communities.



## METHODOLOGY

This report offers critical insights into a range of perspectives among Australian Muslims towards law enforcement agencies. It examines key issues and challenges surrounding counter-terrorism measures and the policing of Australian Muslims, and the broader impact these have had on Australian Muslims' civic activism, sense of belonging and ease in Australia, and sense of value in Australian society. This study is based on 42 semi-structured interviews in Melbourne and Sydney in 2018 and 2019. Respondents were selected from Australia's ethnically diverse Muslim communities and included individuals in positions of leadership as well as community advocates and youth activists.

The great majority of the respondents chose to remain anonymous and not have their names made public. This was often justified in terms of not wishing to attract undue attention. Some also objected to the use of audio-recording. In such cases, notes were taken during the interview by hand. Only a few respondents felt comfortable with being identified.

Questions regarding the police and law enforcement agencies were framed in broad terms and respondents were asked to identify which agencies they had in mind when they spoke about 'the police'. This resulted in a differentiated picture in relation to state and federal police.

Interviews were conducted before the terrorist attack on Christchurch mosques and the swell of public sympathy with the Muslim community. In subsequent consultation with respondents as part of wrapping up the report in the aftermath of the attack, a number of respondents felt differently about police-community relations and modified their position. This experience points to the fluidity of community views and potential for improving confidence in Australia's law enforcement agencies.

1 SBS (2018) 'Muslim organisations criticise Morrison remarks on Bourke Street', November 15, available at <https://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/korean/en/audiotrack/muslim-organisations-criticise-morrison-remarksbourke-street>

2 Australian Government (2003) 'Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Act 2003', Federal Register of Legislation, available at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2004A01162>

3 Williams, George (2011) 'A Decade of Australian Anti-Terror Laws', Melbourne University Law Review, Vol.

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6 Australian Government (2003) 'Criminal Code Amendment (terrorism) Act: Part 5.3 - Terrorism', Federal Register of Legislation, available at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2004A01125>

7 Parliament of Australia (2014) *Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Foreign Fighters) Bill 2014*, available at [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Bills\\_LEGislation/Bills\\_Search\\_Results/Result?bld=s976](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_LEGislation/Bills_Search_Results/Result?bld=s976)

8 Australian Government (2014) 'Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Foreign Fighters) Act 2014', Federal Register of Legislation, available at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2014A00116>

9 Attorney General (2014) 'Explanatory Memorandum: Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Foreign Fighters) Act 2014', available at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2014B00195/Explanatory%20Memorandum/Text>

10 Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (2014) 'Fourteenth Report of the 44th Parliament: Examination of legislation in accordance with the Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011', pp. 10, available at [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Joint/Human\\_Rights/Scrutiny\\_reports/2014/Fourteenth\\_Report\\_of\\_the\\_44th\\_Parliament](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Human_Rights/Scrutiny_reports/2014/Fourteenth_Report_of_the_44th_Parliament)

11 Davis, Fergal, Nicola McGarity, and George Williams (eds.) (2014) *Surveillance, counter-terrorism and comparative constitutionalism* (London: Routledge).

12 Australian Law Reform Commission (2015) *Traditional Rights and Freedoms – Encroachment by Commonwealth Laws*, July 17, available at [https://www.alrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/pdfs/publications/alrc\\_127\\_interim\\_report.pdf](https://www.alrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/pdfs/publications/alrc_127_interim_report.pdf)

13 Soutphommasane, Tim (2017) 'Statement to UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Geneva, Switzerland', Australian Human Rights Commission, November 27, available at

## 2. THE QUESTION OF SURVEILLANCE



Surveillance and intelligence-gathering are critical aspects of Australia's counter-terrorism strategy. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Australia has significantly strengthened the surveillance powers of its intelligence and police forces. However, research suggests that surveillance programs are specifically targeting the Australian Muslim community.

Disproportionate surveillance of Australian Muslims is a live point of contention. The present study found an almost universal view amongst respondents that Muslims are constantly watched. Most took surveillance as the new reality of life for Muslims in Australia. However, there was no uniform view on the extent of surveillance or whether it is justified. While most recognized that surveillance is an unavoidable measure within Australia's tense security environment, many of the respondents expressed concerns over the amount of scrutiny faced collectively by Australian Muslims. Indeed, many discussed the adverse impact that surveillance has had on Australian Muslims' civil liberties.

Many also noted that surveillance as part of counter-terrorism strategy is overshadowing relations between the police and the community. This often impacts on community policing strategies. Respondents expressed concern that community policing is now morphing into an intelligence gathering strategy, with detrimental effects on community confidence in law enforcement agencies.

This view was especially pronounced amongst African Muslims who felt that their youth were being targeted. The respondents believed that Australian Muslims were subjected to extraordinary levels of surveillance, and most felt this was unfair and unhelpful in building trust with Australia's law enforcement agencies.

## PERCEPTION OF SURVEILLANCE

There appears to be a blurred line between surveillance and community policing. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) and state and territory police forces view community policing as a counter-terrorism measure. This strategy is premised on building relationships and trust with Australian Muslims to identify individuals at risk of radicalisation and to prevent potential terrorist attacks as a result of radicalisation. The success of community policing rests on community trust and support for police counter-terrorism efforts. Research on this topic has demonstrated that community policing strategies among Muslim communities focus strongly on intelligence gathering and surveillance.<sup>14</sup>

This study corroborates the above assessment. Respondents viewed surveillance as a key aspect of police work in relation to Muslim communities. Indeed, the majority of respondents felt that the Australian

*Part of the police's role, as law enforcement agents, is to keep the people, the country, and the community, safe from all threats. So if there are some threats coming from any particular communities, then I would expect the police to have some people under surveillance*  
- **Nail Aykan**

Yet, given that the threat of violent extremism may be a problem at the fringes of the community, many respondents felt that the whole Muslim population was bearing the brunt of surveillance.



# THE QUESTION OF SURVEILLANCE

This study revealed that complaints about over-surveillance were widespread. This complaint reflects the shared experience in Muslim communities of being disproportionately targeted by intelligence and police agencies in comparison to the rest of the community in Australia. Indeed, counter-terrorism expert Victoria Santas claims that repeated incidents of discriminatory police practices in Australia have normalised counter- terrorism strategies 'as being for Muslims and ethnic minorities.'<sup>15</sup> In line with this, many respondents argued that Muslims feel collectively subjected to high levels of scrutiny by law enforcement agencies. Ghaith Krayem, a leading figure in Australia and former President of the Islamic Council of Victoria, noted:

*I think there is a general view in the community that we are under constant surveillance or over surveilled. The laws which are written generically, there is a view in the community, that while they may be written generically, they are applied disproportionately to our community than other communities. Just going through airports, it's a lived fact*  
- **Ghaith Krayem**

This view was echoed by many others, including a community activist in Sydney who argued that security is not the only concern for enforcing surveillance on Muslims:

*Is the same attention given to certain other communities and other criminal activity, as it is to ours? I don't think so. I think the attention that our community is given is way and above, over and beyond, what it would otherwise warrant if there wasn't a political element to this.*

Considering the political element, many respondents discussed how counter-terrorism efforts and surveillance have become politicised. As will be explored in the following chapter, most respondents see politics as interfering in police work, with

many expressing concerns over politicians using the police as a vehicle for their political agenda. This perception has given rise to feelings of scepticism, even distrust, within the Muslim community towards the police; undermining police efforts to engage with Muslim communities.

Moreover, this study found that many Muslims are disillusioned with the way politicians and the media sensationalise terrorist attacks and imply that there is a link between Islam and terrorism. This sensationalism was seen as fear mongering, often by politicians to advance 'their own agenda.' As a Ghaith Krayem argued:

*We still have these [anti-terror] operations, which the community now feels, are designed to sensationalise what's going on...the media is there, literally minutes after something occurs. And then you have this blanket coverage of things that would not normally be covered in any other major criminal investigations*  
- **Ghaith Krayem**

A similar assessment was shared by Zia Ahmed, Editor-in-Chief of Australasian Muslim Times (est 2014):

*There are always raids in Sydney, very widely publicized, they raided many houses and arrested a few people. And I think only one person was convicted. But in the media, there was a huge thing about it all. I think that there is a perception that politicians use this in the media for their own political purposes, to create fear in society, and they use police to do this*  
- **Zia Ahmed**

The issue of sensationalism and exaggeration of the threat of terrorism was a concern for many respondents, even if surveillance and anti-terror raids are essential aspects of police work.

For example, Nail Aykan of the Islamic Council of Victoria emphasised the importance of professionalism. He pointed to potential repercussions of turning anti-terror raids into media events:



# THE QUESTION OF SURVEILLANCE

*Keep it outside of the media, because the media is the problem, not the police*  
- Nail Aykan

Most respondents raised concern about surveillance and the way police raids and anti-terror initiatives are presented for public consumption.

The overwhelming feeling was that Australian public opinion of Muslims was skewered by sensationalism. A community activist in Sydney argued that political and social discourse blamed Muslims collectively for the actions of a minority, with potential to cultivate a hostile environment towards Australian Muslims.

He explored the challenges faced by Australian Muslims to undo the damage caused by political and media sensationalism:

*We are a small community that has opinions that matter to us, but in the broader sense, we are one small tiny voice ..., compared to political voices and the media that are amplified much more than ours. So in the bigger sense, ninety-nine percent of the Australian community will hear the Prime Minister or negative things, and even if all the Muslims shout, no one hears, or you reach maybe 5 percent of the population. So, it matters from setting the record straight, but if that record is only heard by a small number of people, then it also doesn't matter. It's like, they say, if the tree falls in the forest and nobody hears about it, did it happen? Yes, it happened, but nobody heard about it.*

## IMPACT ON AUSTRALIAN MUSLIMS

Many respondents expressed apprehension regarding the impact of surveillance and anti-terror laws on Australian Muslims' civil liberties. This feeling reflects the public debate on the adverse implications of anti-terror laws on the freedom of speech. The offence of 'advocating terrorism', contained in 80.2C of the *Criminal Code*, applies to a person who a) advocates or commits a terrorist offence, or b) is 'reckless' as to whether another person will engage in terrorism. In 2014, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights held a legislative review and found that 'the offence would require only that a person is 'reckless' as to whether their words will cause another person to engage in terrorism (rather than the person 'intends' that this be the case). The committee was concerned that the offence could therefore apply in respect of a general statement of support for unlawful behaviour (such as a campaign of civil disobedience or acts of political protest) with no particular audience in mind'. This concern weighs on the mind of Muslim activists and commentators. Dr Jan Ali of the Western Sydney University argued:

*I think, myself as an academic, for example, the surveillance is an issue because there are certain things that you want to say but you can't say because you can be easily misconstrued or misinterpreted or become a target of the authorities and their misguided sentiments rendering you the 'other' and the whole process can actually put you into trouble*  
- Jan Ali



# THE QUESTION OF SURVEILLANCE

Some respondents discussed their attitudes towards law enforcement agencies, particularly in regards to community policing strategies. Critics have expressed that the success of this strategy is often undermined by the police's focus on surveillance and intelligence gathering, rather than on genuine efforts to include Muslims in creating counter-terrorism strategies and policies.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the image of Muslims as suspects is cultivated and reinforced in the absence of a two-way process of engagement between the police and Muslim communities. This raises important questions about trust and confidence in law-enforcement agencies, undermining the effectiveness of police work.

Ghaith Krayem expressed that for some Muslims, the focus on surveillance and intelligence gathering had led to the erosion of trust in community policing strategies:

*I've got no doubt that the police are having to work a lot harder now to get information that they would need. Because the number of people in the community who are as open and willing to share, I suspect, is a lot less now than what it was ten years ago. Because if all it takes is a little book with someone's handwriting in it to get me arrested and put into jail for a couple of weeks, without contact with anyone, well the communities going to say, 'well hang on a minute, I'm not going to take that risk anymore of putting some innocent person in that situation'. So, I think the police and the policymakers have to have a rethink about their long-term strategy*  
- **Ghaith Krayem**

Some respondents expressed feelings of vulnerability in relation to law enforcements agencies' surveillance and intrusion. One respondent expressed that the Muslim community 'should not have had Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) forced down our throats.'

The other side of this has been the role that is expected of Islamic organisations to play in countering violent extremism.

This referred to the range of government-sponsored schemes on counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation that peak Islamic bodies were encouraged to run. The emphasis on Islamic organisations' role in countering violent extremism was seen as a one-dimensional approach to community which sent the wrong signal. Such expectations serve to emphasize the connection between Australian Muslims and violent extremism.

Some respondents questioned the amount of resources poured into countering violent extremism through surveilling and policing, and offered alternative approaches. They stressed the benefit of investing funding away from surveillance, and into education, employment, capacity building and social cohesion programs. Moreover, the majority of respondents stressed the importance of engaging with the community as a key factor to counter violent extremism. For example, an anonymous community activist argued:

*I think that a lot of government resources, or some government resources, are wasted going through the process of surveilling low-risk or no-risk organizations. I think that through engagement with Muslim communities that are doing the right thing, through established organisations that are respected by mainstream Muslims, I think by partnering with these organisations, they can help filter out, okay well, where are the groups and pockets within the community that are genuinely problematic and need to be surveilled in the interests of community safety.*



## CONCLUSION

The respondents reported feeling alienated as a result of focused surveillance on Australian Muslims. The over-surveillance of Muslims makes them feel untrusted and viewed as potential terror suspects. This is felt most acutely amongst Muslim youth who have had no other experience with law-enforcement agencies. Many respondents acknowledged that intelligence gathering is an integral aspect of law-enforcement. However, they objected to the way intelligence-gathering has targeted the whole Muslim population in Australia and the public image this has created: depicting Muslims as a suspect community. Respondents noted that dealing with extremism and violence was a community concern and Muslim leaders were very willing to work with relevant authorities to address threats to the community. But the exaggerated attention on Australian Muslims has eroded trust and confidence. Related to this erosion of confidence was the view that law-enforcement agencies have allowed their work to become a tool of politics and media sensationalism. The politicisation of policing was raised as a key detriment to community work with law-enforcement agencies.

**14** Cherney, Adrian and Kristina Murphy (2016) *'Being a suspect community' in a post 9/11 world – The impact of the war on terror on Muslim communities in Australia*, Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 480 – 496.

**15** Victoria Santas (2014) *Traces of Terror: Counter-Terrorism Law, Policing, and Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press): pp. 6

**16** Australian Government (2017) *'Criminal Code Amendment (terrorism) Act: Subdivision C—Urging violence and advocating terrorism or genocide'*, Federal Register of Legislation, available at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00235>

**17** Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (2014) *'Fourteenth Report of the 44th Parliament: Examination of legislation in accordance with the Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011'*, pp. 10, available at [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Joint/Human\\_Rights/Scrutiny\\_reports/2014/Fourteenth\\_Report\\_of\\_the\\_44th\\_Parliament](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Human_Rights/Scrutiny_reports/2014/Fourteenth_Report_of_the_44th_Parliament)

**18** Cherney, Adrian and Kristina Murphy (2016) *'Being a suspect community' in a post 9/11 world – The impact of the war on terror on Muslim communities in Australia*, Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 480 – 496.



# 3. THE QUESTION OF TRUST



Law enforcement agencies' engagement with Australian Muslims involve both 'hard' and 'soft' strategies. Hard approaches include surveillance and intelligence gathering and 'soft' approaches include the development of sustained dialogue and community outreach.<sup>19</sup> Community policing strategies aim to involve Australian Muslims as stakeholders in the battle to counter terrorism. This approach has the potential to address the 'us vs them' dichotomy by cultivating partnerships of trust between Australia's police forces and Muslim communities. The notion of trust is crucial to this arrangement. As Basia Spalek points out, the success or failure of community policing strategies is dependent 'upon the extent to which trusting relationships are built between police officers and communities'.<sup>20</sup>

To cultivate and sustain trust, community policing must 'facilitate two-way communication' between police and the Muslim community and ensure that the police engage, and are responsive to, Muslim concerns.

These inclusive strategies facilitate trust and a significant role for Australian Muslims to play for public safety, including the threat of violent extremism. This project found levels of trust to fluctuate between state and federal police. While Victoria Police was noted by many respondents for investing in relationship building and facilitating dialogue with Muslim community organisations, the overall sentiment was one of disappointment or disillusionment – disappointment with law-enforcement for its role in stigmatising the whole Muslim population and disillusionment for the politicisation of police work which has turned Muslims into a scapegoat for political gains. This experience has led to the erosion of trust towards law-enforcement agencies.

## ANTI-MUSLIM SENTIMENTS

It is noteworthy that most respondents did not view law enforcement agencies as having an anti-Muslim bias. Most respondents in leadership roles acknowledged efforts by the police to foster understanding and cultivate trust with their community. They were categorical that the police did not pursue an anti-Muslim agenda. Victoria Police was generally noted for investing in outreach initiatives and engaging Islamic community organisations in dialogue and discussion. Islamic leaders were unanimous on how this institutional approach has facilitated a positive working relationship for the common goal of community safety. For example, Sheikh Moustapha spoke approvingly of comments by the Victoria Police Commissioner in the aftermath of the Melbourne Bourke Street attack in November 2018. In a televised interview, Victoria Police Commissioner Graham Ashton thanked Islamic leaders for working with law enforcement agencies for community safety - contradicting<sup>22</sup> suggestions by Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

Despite this vote of confidence, there are many anecdotes of unfair treatment by the police. These range from special attention at airport security checks, to over-surveillance and ostensibly random checks which seem to apply to those with Muslim appearance. Such experiences give the impression that the police are deliberately targeting Muslims. Added to this, is the fact that many new recruits to the police force are unlikely to be aware of cultural and religious sensitivities and inadvertently cause offence.



# THE QUESTION OF TRUST

Law enforcement agencies are large organisations and could include members with diverging attitudes. As a leading community leader who wished to remain anonymous argued:

*What I hear from police officers from minority backgrounds, be it people of color, people of religious backgrounds, not necessarily Muslims, is that the internal culture is not solid. That there is racism within. There is still very much a white privilege culture and I think that needs to be worked on. Because you can't help the wider community, if you yourself don't embody that culture. What we try and tell law enforcement is that we want you to create a peaceful society and respectful society outwardly. But how can that happen when that's not your true values internally?*

As explored in the previous chapter, the focus on 'hard' strategies, such as surveillance and intelligence gathering, tend to adversely affect trust in the police. Anti-terror tactics employed by the police against Muslims have contributed to the erosion of confidence in the police. Among these include 'stop and search' powers against Muslims, informal questioning of Muslims, and raids and searches of Muslims' houses. Anti-terror police raids remain a source of contention, with many respondents expressing that the way such raids are conducted is offensive and upsetting to Australian Muslims. In that respect, Dr Jan Ali asked:

*... the level of force they use or apply often seems to be excessive and one wonders why that is? Is it to undermine Islam and Muslims? Is it to threaten the Muslim community? Why is that the case?*  
**- Jan Ali**

Another respondent raised similar concerns. He urged the police to be 'completely unmindful' of Muslim women when conducting anti-terror raids. He argued that:

*if you're going to raid someone's home at 3 o'clock in the morning and you know that there are females in there, you need to understand the context of that, and what the likely reaction is going to be from people in that household*  
**- Ghaith Krayem**

He urged the police to be more culturally sensitive in their work to avoid exacerbating the situation and creating tension between the police and Australian Muslims.

## THE POLITICISATION OF POLICE

There is unanimous concern with the perceived mixing of politics and police work. In a 2007 study, Basia Spalek and Alia Imtoul argued that in Australia, police engagement with the Muslim community 'is problematic, as it is often led by the imperatives of government.' Similar concerns were raised by respondents in this study. Many respondents noted the Australian Government uses the police and terrorist threats for political gains, to the detriment of effective policing. As one respondent who wished to remain anonymous pointed out:

*When you're just looking at the relationship between the community and the police, that's not the full equation. Because the police work in a certain context and framework and that's a political one... I think policing has become politicized. I think the way in which policing is directed is something which I wouldn't trust any longer...and so, the distrust comes from what push and what direction is driven from the top-down that drives policing activity. I think that's where the distrust is.*

Similarly, another respondent stated:

# THE QUESTION OF TRUST

*I think with the federal police, or general police, I don't think they function in isolation from political influence. For me, the reason why there is distrust between the Muslims and the police, is because to us, the police is not an independent functioning body. But rather, a puppet or a branch of the federal government. And whatever rhetoric, or whatever racist policy the federal government has, it then trickles down to the police. So, if we had politicians who were more inclusive of Australian Muslims I think the trust between the police and Muslims would be much stronger. Because we wouldn't just see them as targeting Muslims. But at this point, government policy affects law enforcement and legal matters whether we like it or not.*

It is not surprising that politically charged statements by politicians and the media could stigmatise Australian Muslims. For example, blaming Muslim leaders for 'not doing enough' to counter extremism undermines the work of Muslims already engaged with community efforts to counter extremism. In reference to the November 2018 Bourke Street terror attack in Melbourne, one respondent discussed the 'politics of fear and division and hate' instilled by politicians and the media. He then spoke of the subsequent frustration felt by Muslim communities and their leaders towards the authorities.

This can be particularly damaging to the capacity of the police to maintain a working relationship with community organisations. As Adrian Cherney and Jason Hartley point out, 'given police are the most immediate and visible representatives of the state, they are the ones that must deal with the fall out and level of distrust that results from such politically motivated actions.'<sup>24</sup> Building on this, Michele Grossman and Hussein Tahiri claim that politically charged statements surrounding terrorist attacks not only lead to distrust towards authorities, but risk undermining community policing strategies altogether by 'driving less resilient members of Muslim communities further down the path of reactive radicalization'.<sup>25</sup>

As noted, effective community policing facilitates two-way engagement between the police and Muslim community and requires that the police are responsive to Muslim concerns and recommendations. Contrary to these objectives, many respondents discussed how political interference has impeded the ability of the police to engage effectively with Muslim communities within the context of counter-terrorism. As one community leader claimed:

*When sharing your concerns to the multi-cultural liaison officers, whilst almost all want to be able to help, on many occasions they are limited by their rank. Most of the important and/or critical decisions are made from higher authority... and on occasions certain commands are influenced by the politics of the government. I don't believe that most law enforcement officers believe the fear mongering out there in today's society, however due to the politicisation of Muslim-related matters they are limited in their capacities - Nail Aykan*

## CONCLUSION

As will be explored in the following chapter, many respondents expressed concerns about how their opinions as Muslims may be interpreted against the backdrop of counter-terrorism. This has resulted in scepticism towards Australia's political and security establishments. While the erosion of confidence in the police is tempered by well-established links between Islamic organisations and the police, especially evident in Victoria, the political environment is widely judged as hostile towards Australian Muslims.

Trust in law-enforcement agencies has suffered in the broader context of the political discourse on Islam and terrorism. Suggestions by political leaders about Muslim's 'special responsibility' to counter terrorism are seen in the community as sending negative signals to the rest of Australians about Muslim's culpability. Against this background of public innuendo, the police are seen as part of the state machinery to vilify Muslims. Most respondents criticised the politicisation of the police and called for a more professional and community-based approach to policing. Muslim community leaders reiterated that community safety is in everyone's interest and they would favour maintaining respectful and professional relations with law-enforcement agencies in future when combating terrorism and anti-social behaviour. But this cannot happen if the community is vilified because there is a perception that they are harbouring terrorists.

However, achieving mutually respectful relationships between law-enforcement agencies and Muslim community organisations is further complicated by experiences of racism or simply lack of knowledge in police ranks about community sensibilities. There was little suggestion that law-enforcement agencies pursued an anti-Muslim agenda. But everyday encounters with the police, especially involving Muslim youth, gave Muslims an impression of deep suspicion held towards them by the police. And distrust and suspicion works both ways.

19 Spalek, Basia, and Alia Imtoual (2007) 'Muslim communities and counter-terror responses: "Hard" approaches to community engagement in the UK and Australia', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 185 – 202: p. 189

20 Spalek, Basia (2010) 'Community policing, trust, and Muslim communities in relation to "New Terrorism"', *Politics & Policy*, Vol. 38, No. 4, pp. 789 – 815: p. 791

21 Skogan, Wesley G., and Susan M. Hartnett (1997) *Community Policing Chicago Style*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press): p. 5

22 The Age:  
<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/timeline-of-fear-how-terror-became-a-state-electionissue-20181120-p50h8s.html>

23 Spalek, Basia, and Alia Imtoual (2007) 'Muslim communities and counter-terror responses', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 185 – 202: p. 185

24 Cherney, Adrian, and Jason Hartley (2017) 'Community engagement to tackle terrorism and violent extremism: challenges, tensions and pitfalls', *Policing and society*, Vol. 27, No. 7, pp. 750-763: p. 753

25 Grossman, Michele, and Hussein Tahiri (2015) 'Community perceptions of radicalisation and violent extremism: an Australian perspective', *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 14-24: p. 18

## 4. VALUED AS A CITIZEN

It is widely documented that the spike in anti-Muslim discourse following 9/11 has led to feelings of isolation within the Australian Muslim community. In this report, respondents were asked about their sense of belonging and how they viewed the position of Muslims in Australia. Do Muslims feel as valued citizens? Do Muslim opinions matter? In this study citizenship was treated in a broad sense of being, and feeling, part of the community - not necessarily as holding an Australian passport. This question proved contentious for many. While some had no hesitation in affirming that their opinions mattered, many offered qualifications and expounded on limits to Muslims' capacity to be heard. Some respondents felt that Australian Muslims were treated as 'second class citizens'; Muslims have to work significantly harder than non-Muslims for their voices to be heard. This points to cracks in the confidence of Australian Muslims towards the Australian political system.

Significantly, perspectives varied between the older and younger generations of Australian Muslims. Respondents from the older Muslim generation were able to draw on the experience of their country of origin, and pointed to the range of freedom and opportunities in Australia, asserting that they were better-off in Australia. On the other hand, Australia's Muslim youth had no other point of reference outside Australia and felt disproportionately targeted by anti-terror policing.

Many claimed that in Australia, freedom of speech is a 'theory' rather than a 'reality' for Australian Muslims. This impacts Muslims' ability to meaningfully express their opinions. Moreover, the majority of respondents in positions of leadership felt that, when it comes to counter-terrorism strategies, their opinions, concerns and recommendations were not taken seriously by authorities. Most of the respondents gave anecdotal accounts regarding their experiences with the Australian Federal Government and police to support these claims.

## FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION AND OPINION

Freedom of expression was a significant point for many respondents who felt valued as Muslims in the Australian society, and that their opinions mattered. Many discussed this in relation to voting in elections, which they claimed was their 'strongest power' in validating their opinions. The discussion about being valued was often framed in terms of a comparison between Australia and Muslim experiences in countries of origin. Zia Ahmed, the Editor-in-Chief of the Australasian Muslim Times claimed:

*I've been living in this country for about 47 years. And I can tell you one thing, I won't be able to live as happily in any other country other than Australia. I wouldn't last even a few months in one of the Middle Eastern countries. So for me, Australia as a Muslim, is one of the best societies to live and practice as Muslims - **Zia Ahmed***

Similarly, the Melbourne-based President of Australian Afghan Initiative, Ali Yaghobi claimed:

*... people like me who came from countries where there is a lot of trouble, and there are a lot of issues there, when we compare our circumstances in Australia, which is our home, to those countries, I think we are so privileged here...for example, the freedom we have here, the respect we have here, regardless of your ethnicity, your nationality, where you come from, your religion, your gender. Obviously, there are issues, it's not ideal, it's not perfect, but I think compared to other countries, even developed countries, I think we are so great here - **Ali Yaghobi***



# VALUED AS A CITIZEN

In contrast to these perspectives, many respondents felt that Australian Muslims were treated as 'second class citizens' who had to work significantly harder than non-Muslims for their voices to be heard. Many respondents viewed this as particularly relevant to the younger members of the Muslim community. For example, Aden Ibrahim, the President of the Somali Cultural Association, who has also served on Victoria Police community advisory boards claimed:

*Things were quite straightforward until 9/11. After 9/11 there was a game change. In many ways, people felt there was a collective punishment. It was a feeling from the young people. It was a feeling that once you are seen as a Muslim you are seen as all the same [as terrorists]. That feeling was seen from the media, from some of the politicians and some of the authorities. Many young men, or many Muslims, believed that 'you're only judged on your content of your character' wasn't there...once your name is Mohammad you're a bad guy. So, that feeling was there. More or less boys could get away with it. But girls couldn't get away with it because of their hijab*

**- Aden Ibrahim**

Nail Aykan of the Islamic Council of Victoria echoed similar concerns about the way Muslim youth felt excluded and marginalized:

*We have what I call a post-9/11 generation. We must realize that half the Muslim population is under the age of 25. It's a very young population. If we have a population of 600,000 Muslims in this country, 300,000 Muslims in the country were born or raised within a post-9/11 era. They did not experience the same spirit, the welcoming spirit that I did. So, I'm toughened because I know what Australia really is and that this is a [passing] phase. But half the Muslim population who don't know any better, will think that this is how it is. Eighteen years since 9/11, and we've got half of the Muslim population who feel that they don't belong, who feel they are not loved, not wanted*

**- Nail Aykan**

Far from feeling valued as Muslims, many of the respondents discussed how anti-Islamic sentiment in Australian society had restricted their ability to express themselves.

They attributed widespread suspicions of Muslims to the misrepresentation of Islam in the media and political games. One respondent claimed:

*'I don't think this society is ready to hear how I truly feel about my traditions because they have their own beliefs about it'.*

Indeed, respondents spoke of how in order to feel valued in Australia and to assert your opinions, one must ascribe to 'white' Australia's values and norms. For example, one respondent stated:

*'I mean to be honest, I'm not an old white man with money who can make the loudest splash, if you know what I mean. I think my voice is heard, but to be honest, I think for my voice to be heard I have to work three times harder than somebody else'.*

Similar perspectives have been widely reported. In 2015, a study revealed that less than 15 percent of Australian Muslims felt that Islam is compatible with 'Australian norms and society'.<sup>26</sup> Elaborating on this perspective, the Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations (FAIR) observes that 'in Australia we have many young Muslims, born in Australia but living between two worlds. At home, they are the obedient Muslim, who speak Arabic to his parents and outside, he is another person altogether, doesn't speak about his religion or his culture, dresses and acts like his mates and shortens his name or Anglicises it altogether'.<sup>27</sup> In line with this, a Muslim writer and intellectual, Jamal Haider, stated:

*Another thing is, women wearing hijab are quite harassed in public. I mean my wife and daughters do not wear it, but if somebody wants to, why not? This is supposed to be a free democratic country. So, because of that image there are few things that Muslims cannot do freely...I have heard many people say that it is better not to have Mohammad in their name. So, Muslims are trying not to be identified as Muslims, and this is because of that negative image that is being created*

**- Jamal Haider**

Significantly, some of the respondents claimed that freedoms of religious expression and opinion in Australia are more of a ‘theory’ rather than a ‘reality’ for Australian Muslims. To highlight this, one of the respondents who wished to remain anonymous gave an anecdotal account in reference to a 2017 Q&A debate on ABC TV. The debate was held between Muslim youth leader Yassmin Abdel-Magied and Tasmanian Senator Jackie Lambie, in which Sharia Law and women’s rights were discussed. The debate saw Ms Abdel-Magied assert that ‘Islam to me is the most feminist religion’, in which senator Lambie responded ‘we have one law in this country and it is the Australian law’<sup>28</sup>. The respondent claimed that as a result, ‘she [Yassmin] was not just shut down by the panel, she was crucified by the entire Australian community for weeks on end. To the point she had to pack her bag and leave this country’. The respondent then postulated the broader narrative revealed by this event about Australian Muslims’ freedom of speech:

*That taught the Muslim community a lesson: stay in your box and keep quiet and don't ever think you can tell us what your religion is or what it represents, or the freedoms that it gives you. Because we don't think it is, we don't think it's free and we don't think it's liberating. They have the authority to speak on Islam, its non-Muslims that have the authority to speak on Islam and not us. So theoretically yeah, 'it's the land of the free'. You can say what you want to say. But realistically no, you have to do it in a very smart way. Maybe the way Yasmeen did it, the Australian public weren't ready for that kind of fierceness and confidence that she had. That she spoke on behalf of the majority of Muslim women, we do feel this religion is liberating and free. But we can't say that.*

## THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY AND CONSULTATION

It was significant that many respondents in positions of leadership in the Muslim community felt that their opinions did not matter in the context of counter-terrorism. Indeed, as explored in the previous chapter, meaningful community policing rests on community engagement and building mutual trust. But many respondents expressed frustration over the lack of meaningful consultation with the Australian Federal Government and police regarding anti-terror laws and strategies. One anonymous respondent claimed that government consultation with the Muslim community was merely a ‘tick and flick’ exercise and that despite ‘giving feedback a thousand times to police about things which are a concern to us, we have a decade of activity where nothing has changed’. Another respondent with a long history of engaging with law enforcement agencies, which included running cultural awareness sessions, echoed this frustration. The anonymous respondent pointed to the need for more effective consultation in relation to anti-terror raids:

*Since 9/11 we've had many raids, multiple, multiple raids. I think AFP has reached out to the Muslim community and asked about 'how can we do raids better? Raids have to happen. And they've had consultations with the Muslim communities and Imams and our state government has done the same...have they got it right all the time? No. We keep going back to the drawing board. ... Let's go back to the drawing board.*

The feeling of not being heard among Australian Muslims is elevated at times of crisis, exactly when community cohesion is most needed. Ghaith Krayem, former President of the Islamic Council of Victoria, pointed to the way the Abbott Government pushed through its national counter-terrorism strategy in 2014. In the wake of its launch, Prime Minister Tony Abbott called upon migrants and the Islamic community to embrace ‘Team Australia’ in the fight against terrorism. These comments were widely seen as divisive.

# VALUED AS A CITIZEN

Furthermore, the government gave short deadlines for consultation with the Muslim community regarding the proposed anti-terror laws, leading to some Muslim leaders boycotting a Melbourne meeting with the Prime Minister. In response, the Prime Minister labelled the boycott as 'petty' and 'foolish'.<sup>30</sup> Ghaith Krayem offered an alternative perspective:

*We went to his [Abbott's] office and said, 'this is unacceptable, we're not going to meet with any of you until we're satisfied that you actually genuinely want consultation. Because our view now is that you don't actually want consultation, you just want us to turn up so you can say you've consulted and you can tick a box. Well that's not consultation. Consultation means I have a genuine opportunity to influence what you're doing. We don't have this system of consultation. So, we refused [to meet Abbott]...if it's not a genuine consultation we're not interested... they have to stop just using us as a rubber stamp. They don't care about what we say. If they actually cared about what we said, they would have engaged us six months before launching the anti-terror strategy... we're in a worse position today than what we were after 9/11, clearly speaking. Clearly something hasn't worked. So, they keep dumping the problem on us, they keep saying, 'you need to do more about this'. Well then listen to what we have to say. They actually don't have any interest in what we have to say*  
- **Ghaith Krayem**

Taking a more optimistic perspective, one community activist discussed the 2014 and 2018 Muslim boycotts of government meetings as a sign that Muslims are asserting a larger voice inside Australia:

*Muslims are becoming more and more confident. This is the second-time Muslims have boycotted the Prime Minister. And now, whenever Muslims feel they are under the hammer, under the blame for example, when one criminal act is blamed on the community, Muslims have matured to the level where they respond. From that point of view, we can definitely say that if the police are unfairly targeting us or politicizing something, I don't think Muslims would have any hesitation to engage, answer and speak up.*

## CONCLUSION

It is clear from the range of interviews that Australian Muslims feel neglected and misunderstood at best, or actively maligned and misrepresented by the media and the political class at worst. Even those with a history of engagement with law enforcement agencies expressed frustration about not being heard, a common experience in relation to the Australian Federal Police and the Federal Government. However, if there is frustration at the Muslim leadership level, the Muslim youth at a grass-roots level feel like 'second class citizens'. Anecdotal evidence collected through this research points to an alarming sense of alienation among Muslim youth who do not feel valued as useful members of the Australian society. Many of the interviewees expressed concern about the way Muslim youth felt pushed away by mainstream society and pointed to the key role of political leaders and the media in restoring confidence in the community.





# 5. CONCLUSION

Australian Muslims feel they have been unjustly targeted for counter-terror surveillance and tarnished with a broad-brush. Many respondents noted that the whole Muslim community is bearing the brunt of perceived 'guilt by association' with terrorism. While the respondents held differing views on the extent that an anti-Muslim and anti-Islam agenda may be influencing Australia's law enforcement agencies, they all expressed concern about the Muslim community experience with law enforcement agencies; an experience which they saw as alienating. This study found that there is acute concern in the community about Muslim youth who have little experience beyond the post-9/11 era, an era marked by security concerns with terrorism and heightened inter-community tension. A sense of being constantly watched and heightened surveillance following acts of terror, or terror alerts, were noted as undermining the confidence Muslim youth in the impartiality of law enforcement agencies and in the commitment of the political system to treat Muslims without prejudice. Some articulated this experience more bluntly and complained of being seen as potential terrorists.

Respondents in Melbourne referred to statements regarding African gangs, expressed by some federal political leaders, as extremely damaging to community relations - making Muslim youth of African background suspicious and afraid of the police. Anecdotal evidence pointed to cases which would have normally been referred to local police but families were apprehensive about involving law enforcement agencies for fear of greater harm to family members. Such break-down of trust and confidence in the impartiality of the police is a source of concern for community leaders.

The experience of being watched with suspicion and distrust is a drain on community trust in law enforcement agencies. While Melbourne-based respondents acknowledged Victoria Police as taking steps to build mutual trust, the overall sense was one of apprehension and palpable unease when dealing with the police.

Respondents expressed concern about a mix of latent Islamophobia and racism in the police rank and files, such as in officers who directly deal with Australian Muslims at times of crisis. This wide-spread concern pointed to the need for more work on cultural and religious awareness, involving law enforcement officers. A number of respondents with experience of consulting with law enforcement agencies pointed to the need for more 'Islamic awareness' programs for new police recruits.

For many respondents, the securitisation of Australian Muslims as somehow linked with acts of terror has had an alienating effect. Some feared that they could be seen as 'whitewashing' terrorism if they discussed Muslim grievances. As a result, they either feel reluctant to speak publicly on issues of concern to Australian Muslims or brace themselves for the backlash if they do.

This experience has an alienating effect, which at best makes Australian Muslims feel as though their opinions do not matter or, at worst, that they are a suspect community.

This study also found deep concerns about the politicisation of law enforcement. Many respondents feared that the police were used as a tool by political leaders who wished to scapegoat Australian Muslims and played politics by exploiting community fears. This concern made a significant dent in community confidence, exacerbated by the belief that law enforcement agencies had little control over this process.

The politicisation factor is qualitatively different to any racism and anti-Muslim sentiments within the police force. While the latter falls within the purview of institutional leaders to address, the former is largely beyond their control. The politicisation of law enforcement is carried out at the top, at the national political level. As noted by some respondents, the police can run cultural awareness sessions to better inform fresh

recruits, but the positive impact of that approach is undermined if political leaders continue to use the police to target Australian Muslims as a threat to national security. Addressing community scepticism about law enforcement and restoring community confidence requires a holistic approach.

**26** Dunn, Kevin M., Rosalie Atie, Virginia Mapedzahama, Mehmet Ozalp, and Adem F. Aydogan (2015) *'The resilience and ordinariness of Australian Muslims: Attitudes and experiences of Muslims report'*.

**27** FAIR (2013) *'Challenges facing Australian Muslims'*, available at <http://fair.org.au/community/challengesfacing-australian-muslims/>

**28** ABC News (2017) *'Q&A: Jacqui Lambie and Yassmin Abdel-Magied exchange barbs over sharia law'*, February 14, available at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-02-13/jacqui-lambie-and-yassmin-abdel-magied-in-fiery-qanda-debate/8267212>

**29** Owens, Jared (2014) *'Don't migrate unless you want to join our team': Abbott meets Islamic community'*, The Australian, August 18, available at <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/dont-migrate-unlessyou-want-to-join-our-team-abbott-meets-islamic-community/news-story/d4046a301a9b65267801ae160331b404>

**30** Chan, Gabrielle (2014) *'Tony Abbott calls some Muslim groups 'petty' and 'foolish' for meetings boycott'*, The Guardian, August 21, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/21/tony-abbott-says-muslim-groups-are-petty-and-foolish-forboycotting-counter-terrorism-meetings>

