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Can you use community policing for counter terrorism? Evidence from NSW, Australia

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A contested question in the international policing literature is whether it is possible to undertake effective anti-terrorism community policing. The NSW Police Force's Counter Radicalisation Strategy involved a community engagement initiative that used community liaison officers, mostly working with Sydney Muslim communities. This study reviews the success of this initiative, drawing on data from a survey of Sydney Muslims. The community engagement initiative was found to have direct contact with the community, it was public, and it involved aspects of partnership and relations of depth. For these reasons, the initiative was within the community policing paradigm. There was strong community awareness of the programme, and a majority saw it as successful. There remained pockets of community suspicion and critique, which require attention. The respondents recommended an enhancement of the community policing aspects: more (and wider) contact, visibility and partnership. The findings affirm the utility of community policing for counter-terror work.

Keywords: community policing; counterterrorism; counter-radicalisation; NSW Police; Australian Muslims

Introduction

The study reported here analysed the effects of the NSW Police Anti Terrorist/Counter Radicalisation Strategy in regard to Sydney Muslim communities. There is an underlying philosophical consensus that policing which is community-oriented is most successful (Sarre, 1996; Skogan, 2006; Skogan & Hartnett, 1997). The premise is that policing with consent, and through communities, has greater reach and depth. Police are at an advantage when they procure superior intelligence sources from within an urban community and develop trusting relationships with different segments of the community (Innes, 2006). There are many ways to measure the success of crime prevention strategies. Some obvious indicators include the rates of occurrence of such crime. Other indicators can measure community confidence. Successful policing relies heavily upon community support. The need for community trust, confidence and participation is especially important for police work that has a primary ambition to prevent crime.

Jones and Libicki (2008) explain that since 1968, many (43%) radicalised groups have ceased to be active because they engaged with the political process, or because local police and intelligence agencies arrested and/or killed key members (40%). Military force is rarely the prime reason for the end of radicalised groups. Community

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policing is seen as a superior mode of practice to those strategies that position the police and community as antagonists, or which see police as regulators and punishers of the public (Perliger, Hasisi, & Pedahzur, 2009). This means that the building of trust, confidence and cooperation between the Community Engagement Unit of the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command (NSWPS) and local Muslim communities was critical. Therefore, a key measure of the success of the NSW Police Anti Terrorist /Counter Radicalisation Strategy was the extent to which trust, confidence and cooperation had been engendered. This project had three broad aims: first, to gather Muslim community views and experiences of the community engagement initiative. This was in a context of Islamophobia (a dread or fear of Islam and its adherents), and of some mistrust and alienation between Australian Muslims and government; second, to gauge the perceived likelihood of the success of the community engagement initiative; and third, to describe and theorise the findings in relation to shifts in contemporary policing strategies and the official state response to racial/ethnic and religious marginalisation. Our findings also contribute to global debates and literature about anti-terrorist initiatives and policing.

Literature review – community policing and counterterrorism

In Western democracies like Australia, there has developed a strong philosophy that successful policing depends upon community consent (Casey, 2010). There has also been a professionalising of policing, alongside a conviction that there should be some independence of police forces from politics, or at least a sense that police should operate through the rule of law (Deflem, 2006; Thomas, 2000). Police should not be an arm of whatever political party has attained government (Emsley, 2003). This is critical for the accomplishment of cooperation from different stakeholders. There is broad acknowledgement that from the very beginning of modern policing in 1829, the community policing philosophy was a foundation which legitimised various forms of policing practice (Reiner, 2000). Community policing builds community trust and confidence in policing, enhances consent and reduces fear of crime.

The roles of police in western nations have expanded to become more proactive, with primary interventions. Policing has moved from just responding to crime to having to perform a much broader role of defending a democratic citizenry. Murray (2005, p. 347) characterises community policing as a proactive rather than reactive approach to crime. These primary interventions are intended to help prevent crime, to confront some of the social determinants (youth programmes), or to set contexts that mitigate against crime (using urban design, or regulating mobility and densities). Policing initiatives which have prefixes like 'anti' and 'counter' similarly presuppose a primary intervention – to take action that will negate the occurrence of this form of crime. However, the very terminology of the 'anti-terrorism' and 'counter-radicalisation' may be awkwardly aligned with a community policing approach and requires some careful delineation of the varied foci of counter-terrorism community policing, as we explain below.

David Bayley (1986) explains that community policing is something that everyone talks about but no one quite knows what it means. This view is reinforced by Klockars (1988) who argues that community policing characteristics are rather difficult to pin down. An important factor in critically examining community policing is the fact that it is a philosophy and/or theory that has arisen from policing practice and not practice that arises from theory. There have been numerous attempts to define and evaluate community policing (Bayley, 1994). Primary interventions against radicalisation, or against a

crime, require the following: direct contact with the public (not just criminals or suspects), public consultations and partnerships (Sarre, 1996). These three criteria could also be said to be short-hand definitions of community policing (direct contact, consultation, partnerships). Community policing can only ever offer a partial solution to many of the contemporary issues faced by policing institutions (Morgan & Newburn, 1997). There is mixed evidence on whether community policing actually reduces crime (Weisburd, 2010). The latter being a standpoint reinforced by Peter Neyroud (2001) who explains that community policing cannot reduce crime on its own as it is principally a means by which the public can be persuaded to lend legitimacy to policing powers. However, that may not pertain to every form of crime.

A core political issue with community policing revolves around the selection of which segments of the public are to be contacted and consulted (de Guzman, 2002; Skogan, 2003). This is a major issue for community policing with Muslim Australians. The latter have expressed their deep dissatisfaction with the spokespeople that government agencies and media select for their consultation and partnering. In a recent analysis of community perceptions of radicalisation threats and policing in Australia, Tahiri and Grossman (2012) found that Australian Muslims were especially annoyed at who the media selects as spokespeople for the 'Muslim Community', with their penchant for sheiks who can provide scandalising comments which reinforce stereotypes. There were similar concerns that the selection of partners by government agencies tended towards conservative groups, usually older males who were born overseas.

Since the mid-1990s in Australia, community policing as a public philosophy of practice has waned somewhat. One explanatory context has been the rise of political debate about crime in a neo-liberal era. In what are called 'law and order debates' or 'law and order auctions', the importance of police surveillance and response has been elevated (Findlay, 2000). There is a 'zero tolerance' emphasis upon harsher punishments for criminals, and less interest in dealing with the social determinants of crime (Kennedy, 2008). This has not been a propitious circumstance for the further development of community policing. There have also been strong paramilitary-like policing responses to terror threats (Murray, 2005), as well as new laws that have made it illegal to discuss and plan radical political action. It has long been illegal to physically attack property or people. There are now additional anti-terror laws against fundraising for certain organisations, and laws about activities that cannot be spoken about. However, the effectiveness of community policing is unchallenged, and so, in response to the concerns about home-grown terrorism that emerged particularly after the London bombings, police forces across Australia have developed community focused initiatives as part of their counterterror efforts. In NSW, this was the community engagement programme of the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command. Whilst community policing in Australia may have waned, community policing for anti-terrorism has waxed (although admittedly alongside 'traditional' and even paramilitary policing responses).

Another impediment to community policing with minority groups is perceptions of over-policing of those groups, or their unfair treatment (Chan, 1997; Cunneen, 1992; Eterno & Silverman, 2012; Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW, 1994). If a minority group feels that it is over-policed, or is a target of policing action, then this could diminish trust in the policing effort. This lack of trust will undermine consent, making cooperation more difficult. Tyler and colleagues demonstrated an empirical link between public perceptions of procedural justice in the way police operate (treating people equally, with respect, listening, evidence based, etc.), and the extent of community trust and cooperation with police (2011). They also revealed that this positive association

pertained to counter-terrorism policing in the UK and USA (Tyler, Schulhofer, & Huq, 2010). In Australia, Cherney and Murphy (2013) have found a link between counter-terror cooperation from Australian Muslims and perceptions of law legitimacy, more so than police procedural justice. In other words, confidence in the broad political and legal system predicted cooperation on counter-terrorism, more so than perceptions of the justness of police procedures. However, they did find that Australian Muslims' perceptions of police procedural justice were strong predictors of support for policing in general.

Police action or statements that are discriminatory or vilifying will also undermine consent. Data from the Challenging Racism Project in Australia show that minority groups report higher rates of experience of racism in policing than the average. For example, 24 percent of Aboriginal Australians in NSW and Queensland stated that they had experienced racism in their dealings with police, whereas among non-Aboriginals, the rate was only six percent (Dunn, Gandhi, Burnley, & Forrest, 2003, p. 177). There is a perception among some Muslim and the Middle Eastern Australians that they are targets of police attention as a 'suspect community' (Australia Human Rights Commission, 2012; Collins, Noble, & Poynting, 2000; Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission, 2007; Islamic Council of New South Wales, 2004; Kennedy, 2000; Poynting, Noble, & Tabar, 1999). Unpublished data from recent surveys with Sydney Muslims (during 2011–2012) revealed that the rates of such experience are very high, with 43 percent reporting racism in their dealings with police. The well-considered and sensitive endeavours of community liaison officers from the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command can easily be undermined by thoughtless comments and actions from general duties officers or other agencies (Federal Police, Customs and other border Control Officers, Security Guards, etc.). This echoes the concerns emerging from the findings of Cherney and Murphy (2013) that police legitimacy for counter-terrorism also relies on community perceptions of procedural justice among the political and legal system more broadly, including political leaders.

In the context of the global war on terror, stereotypes about Muslims, and the perception that Muslims are over-policed, do present real challenges to successful community engagement. Chakraborti (2007) and Stout (2010) have argued that overcoming these obstacles also requires a strong sense that police are also protectors of the safety and property of minority groups. This was also a theme of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's (HREOC) report from their dialogue with Australian Muslim communities and NSW Police (Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission, 2007, pp. 43–47). Police need to adopt a 'winning hearts and minds approach' to engaging Australian Muslim communities (Cherney & Murphy, 2013).

Bayley and Weisburd (2011) worried that police involvement in counterterror work can be a threat to the legitimacy of local police, undermining the aspirations of community policing. Involvement in covert intelligence gathering and the perception of an intolerance of cultural diversity and political differences could see police perceived as politically partisan and anti-democratic. But police need the help of the public, of all communities. In everyday life people watch over each other's properties, they monitor behaviour in their streets, they contact the police when they feel a law has been broken or when community safety is threatened. The same is true of counter-terrorism policing. Murray (2005, p. 348) claimed that:

> it has been frequently pointed out that police alone cannot successfully achieve crime control and that the support of the community is critical – the same principles clearly apply to the prevention of terrorist acts. (and prevention should surely be the emphasis)

Police cannot be everywhere, and they certainly are not able to know about every person who is at risk of extremism.

In the light of the above literature, in this study we concur with Jones and Libicki (2008), that instead of a 'war on terror' policing approach a much better and more comprehensive model for counterterrorism is the 'criminal justice model' which treats terrorism as a violent criminal behaviour and its prevention as in the best interest of all citizens whose cooperation in this endeavour is pivotal. A criminal justice model does not exclude but in fact includes the community in the fight against terrorism, as will become apparent in the following sections. For anti-radicalisation policing to have a 'community' inflection, it needs to involve a direct contact between communities and police and it needs to be genuinely consultative and a partnership. In this way, the policing can be a primary intervention, underpinning the success of this paradigm of policing. Certainly, this level partnership and proactive intervention is critical to building legitimacy and consent to police. These ambitions are complicated by over-policing and stereotyping. The literature also suggest that making decisions about who to consult in a community can be a political minefield, and engagement with leaders of splinter groups can undermine legitimacy from those nearer the centre of political opinion, or those with little interest in politics.

The NSW Police Force anti terrorist/counter radicalisation community engagement strategy

The NSW Police Force's community engagement model is aimed at gaining community help to identify youth who are at risk of radicalisation and discourage them. Counterterrorism overtly sets out to try and prevent a crime (a terror event) from happening. Tahiri and Grossman (2012) found that there was consensus support (across Muslim, non-Muslim, Government and community stakeholders) for primary action (early intervention, partnerships, strengthening local community structures). This depends heavily upon community help. Indeed, members of the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command in NSW stressed that they relied upon the Muslim communities' to help prevent people from becoming extreme or radicalised.

The Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command produced documents and presentations to demonstrate that they were interested in only a small proportion of people within communities (Figure 1). These were people who in some way supported or were actively involved in acts that constituted terrorism according to Australian laws. The police stated to communities in symposia, workshops and in flyers that they were not concerned about community activists and that people in a democracy must be able to engage in advocacy, protest and dissent. They also stressed that they were not concerned about those people who take their faith very seriously, or who are very strict about their religion.

The community engagement model being run by the NSW Police includes many of the traditional aspects of community policing reviewed earlier: high visibility police presence by liaison officers within the Muslim community (at the mosques and centres and community events); consultations (symposia – including two of which were hosted by the University of Western Sydney); and the seeking of partnerships. The liaison officers distributed a booklet to help expand community knowledge about 'Understanding Terrorism Laws', and this was translated into other languages, including Arabic. The Command also distributed a two page explanation of their community engagement model (also translated into Arabic).
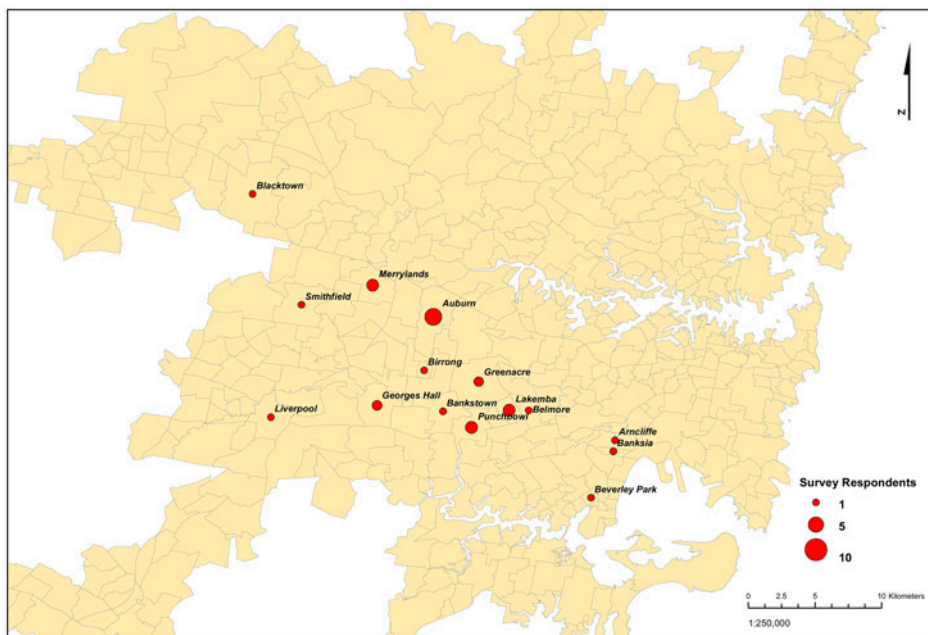
Figure 1.   Area of residence, Sydney Muslim respondents, 2011.

There are many measures of success in counter-terrorism policing, some of which are clearly observable such as the lack of a terror incident. There are also the interactions that prevent a planned incident, such as at the Holsworthy Army Barracks in NSW. But as outlined earlier, a less overt measure includes the successful engagement of people at risk of radicalisation. The NSW Police Force Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command can tell the tale of how police arranged and encouraged successful counselling for young men at risk of radicalisation. Positive outcomes of such intervention included the prevention of an offence and future desistance from terrorist activity through de-radicalisation. A community engagement model can facilitate partnerships that impede the process of radicalisation, even where involvement with terror advocates has already been established.

Other measures of success of community engagement would include the extent to which there has been a building of trust and cooperation. The NSW Police Force have made it clear in their community briefings that they expect arrests, trials and sentencing for terrorism related offences. There is a need for that awareness to be widely appreciated, and for community leaders and the police to be prepared for how that is handled, in terms of public relations, media, etc. There is a need to generate sufficient levels of trust and transparency so that further community engagement is not jeopardised by arrests and trials.

Surveying Sydney Muslims

In 2011, a UWS survey collected data on Sydney Muslims' awareness of the NSW Police's community engagement initiative around counter-radicalisation and gathered information on the extent of community awareness of legislative changes. The interview

survey asked respondents to indicate the exposure they had had to the Community Engagement Unit, and with other branches of the NSW Police. Respondents were prompted on the degree to which they can differentiate between their experiences and perceptions of different Federal and State Agencies. Broader measures of community engagement success, such as community trust of NSW Police, cooperation and perceptions (hostility, ambivalence, confidence, etc.), were also tested.

The survey was carried out by a Research Assistant, with the assistance of the NSW Police Liaison Officers and Muslim community representatives. An initial list of potential respondents was put together by the Liaison Officers. The list consisted of members of the Muslim community that the NSW Police Liaison Officers had relationships with as part of their role. This included Muslim community representatives who had attended symposia held by the NSW Police Counter-Radicalisation Community Engagement Unit. The Research Assistant was introduced to many of these representatives at community meetings organised by the Unit which were held at the University of Western Sydney. The Research Assistant was also put in contact with Muslim community representatives through Community Liaison Officers from Local Area Commands.

Muslim community representatives, who provided access to their networks, were in the most part religious leaders (sheikhs and imams) and staff or managers within Muslim community organisations. The community organisations ranged from those broadly catering to a Muslim community, to those more specifically targeted at women or youth. After the Liaison Officers' contacts were exhausted, and by the end of the survey distribution, a total of 33 surveys were returned.

Three-quarters of the survey respondents were between 31 and 50 years of age ($n = 25$, 75.8%). About two-thirds of the respondents were male (69.7%) and almost one-third female (27.3%). The sample also contained some younger respondents (15% aged 30 years or under) and another one-third were aged over 40 years. Respondents resided mostly in the Auburn, Merrylands, Lakemba and Punchbowl areas of Sydney. Figure 1 uses proportional circles to represent the number of respondents located in a given area and demonstrates the spread of respondents on a map of the region. Just over half the respondents (54.5%) indicated that English was not their first language. Of these respondents, two-thirds (66.7%) said that Arabic was their first language, with one respondent each who said that Turkish, Persian/Farsi or Hazaraji (Dari) was their first language. Slightly more than half the respondents considered themselves to be very religious (54.5%), whilst just under half said that they were moderately religious (42.5%). When asked about the importance of religion in their daily lives, most respondents said that it was very important (84.8%), with only one respondent saying that it was not important at all. This indicates relatively strong levels of religiosity among this sample. Whilst the completed sample size was modest, the mix and diversity of respondents was strong. Muslims comprise 2.2% of the Australian population, and 4.7% of the Sydney population. In a handful of local government areas in Sydney, there is a residential focus of Muslims, reaching above 10% in parts of south-western Sydney and to 25.5% in the central western area of Auburn (Dunn & Piracha, 2014). Australian Muslims are very diverse, with an array of major birthplaces, although the largest birthplace group are those born in Australia.

Awareness of the counter-radicalisation community engagement initiative

Survey respondents were asked whether they were aware of the NSW Police Counter-Radicalisation Community Engagement initiative. Two-thirds (66.7%) of the respondents

knew of the initiative. Roughly, the same proportion knew that there were Community Contact Officers working within their community. Slightly fewer (60.6%) respondents knew what the roles of the Community Contact Officers were. One concerning aspect of these data is that one-third of the Muslim community respondents did not know much about the Community Engagement initiative, nor the roles of the Community Liaison Officers attached to the Community Engagement Unit of the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command (NSWPS). Nonetheless, this level of community awareness (two-thirds) was quite good, but visibility was not comprehensive.

Most of those who knew of the initiative said that they had learnt about it through direct contact with NSW Police (91%), and most of those police were Community Liaison Officers from the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command. The respondents' comments provide a strong sense of the direct contact between officers and the community.

> I interacted with the team (*named officer*) in 2008 in an event organised by the local community associations.
>
> Through direct community engagement with NSW Police (Counter Terrorism Unit) and other community networking.
>
> Face to face contact and discussion with one of the officers from the unit.
>
> I personally knew two of the members and the whole team has engaged in activities I have arranged on these occasions. We have also conducted workshops together.

One of the remarkable aspects of the open responses was that five specific officers, from the Community Engagement initiative, were mentioned by name in these responses. Some respondents had clearly come to know Unit members personally. Some had originally been approached by the Unit or encountered members from the Unit at community events. Others had long-standing working relationships with members of the Unit. What is clear is that one of the defining criteria of community policing is observable within this counterterrorism initiative: direct contact between police and the community.

The UWS survey on the NSW Police Counter-Radicalisation Community Engagement Initiative also asked respondents whether they felt suitably well informed to take action or to seek information if they became aware of a terrorism threat or of someone at risk of radicalisation. We left the definition of 'radicalisation' to the interpretation and perception of the respondents. Most respondents were confident of knowing what to do if they were aware that a crime had taken place. Slightly fewer (75.8%) were sure about who to contact if they knew someone who was at risk of radicalisation. Nonetheless, it is affirming that so many felt confident of whom to inform should they have such fears, especially given this assuredness was in regard to the somewhat nebulously defined 'fear of radicalisation' (Tahiri & Grossman, 2012). The majority (57.6%) were not aware of counselling services appropriate for those at risk of radicalisation. This lack of knowledge is most likely a reflection of the low prevalence of those who are at risk of radicalisation (see also Tahiri & Grossman, 2012), rather than an indicator of a blanket lack of awareness. In other words, among Sydney Muslims in 2011 radicalisation was not an ordinary or 'normal' topic of consideration.

Muslim community views on the nature of the community engagement by police

Respondents from the Muslim community were asked about the frequency and location of the contact with the liaison officers from the Community Engagement Unit of the

Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command (Table 1). The sphere where such contact occurred for most respondents, and most frequently, was at community events. Two-thirds had had such contact at a community event and for one-third that contact was reported as a regular occurrence. Mosques and Islamic or cultural centres had been other key sites for such contact (Table 1). Respondents were prompted to suggest other mechanisms/spheres of contact, and to indicate the frequency of that contact. Six (18.2%) referred to one-on-one contact, which they said was infrequent (Table 1). A core criterion of community policing is observable in this counter-radicalisation policing initiative: direct contact at community centres and events and through one-on-one interactions.

Respondents were asked to judge whether the contact they had had with the community liaison officers from the Counter Terrorism Unit had been confrontational in nature. Almost half of the respondents did not respond to this question (remembering that one-third had not had contact with these officers). However, almost all of the rest stated that the contacts had tended to be 'mostly non-confrontational'. This would constitute almost 90 percent of those who had such contacts. This indicates that encounters between liaison officers from the Counter Terrorism Unit and the community had been overwhelmingly cooperative.

Measuring the depth of community engagement: Cooperation and trust

One of the indicators of a successful community policing approach to counter-radicalisation would be a willingness among the community to cooperate with Community Contact Officers. Survey respondents were asked how willing they would be to cooperate with Community Contact Officers, and the response options were 'a lot', 'quite a bit', 'not much' and 'not at all'. Over half of the respondents (58%) selected the strongest level of commitment to cooperation. Of the remaining respondents, most selected the 'quite a bit' option to reflect their willingness to cooperate (25%). These are quite robust indicators of community confidence in this branch of the NSW Police Force. Respondents were asked how much trust they have in the NSW Community Contact Officers. The question used the same response options as the cooperation question, and the most frequently selected option (42%) was 'a lot'. The next most selected response was 'quite a bit' (30%). Together these should be affirming data for the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command. This suggests that some of the key intentions

Table 1. Contact with the community liaison officers from the Counter Terrorism Unit, Sydney Muslim respondents, 2011.

	Regularly (*n*)	Now and then (*n*)	Once only (*n*)	Total (%)	No response (*n*)	Not prompted (*n*)
Community event	8	13	1	66.7	11	
Centre	2	12	1	45.5	18	
Mosque	1	7	3	33.3	22	
One-on-one	1	5	0	18.2	0	27
Other	3	5	2	30.3	0	23

Note: Question wording was: 'Have you had contact with Community Contact Officers? If so where, and has the contact been regular, every now and then, or once only?'
Source: UWS survey on the NSW Police Counter-Radicalisation Community Engagement Initiative, *March–August*, 2011 (*n*:33).

and objectives of the NSW Police Counter-Radicalisation community engagement had been achieved. This had been achieved despite a context of Islamophobia, and Australian Muslims' concerns about hyper-scrutiny from commentators and government agencies. The ambient concerns of over-policing and targeting had not prevented trust between community liaison officers from the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command and the members of the Sydney Muslim communities consulted through the survey. However, 15 percent of respondents did say that they had 'not much' trust in the Liaison officers. This indicates that there remains work to be done in building trust among some sections (perhaps as many as a third) within the Muslim communities and police community liaison officers, and with NSW Police more broadly.

Community evaluation of the community engagement

There is no better evaluation of community confidence than to consult community members. The survey interviews with Sydney Muslims included questions on whether the initiative was considered successful, whether it would continue to be successful, and whether it was an appropriate means to address radicalisation within the respondent's community. Two-thirds of the respondents stated that the NSW Police counter-radicalisation community engagement initiative had been successful (67%), and the same proportion thought that it would continue to be successful into the future (67%). However, one-quarter of the respondents did not answer these two questions and so their views on the effectiveness of the initiative are unknown, but they clearly were not able to say it had been a success. There are of course many reasons why the community may find fault with a particular policing initiative and strategy. A substantial degree of fault finding and an inability to comment are to be expected. Some respondents may have taken this to be a question on the appropriateness of the entire counterterrorism campaign, rather than just the community engagement aspects. Thirty percent did not see the initiative as appropriate and effective, and a further 30 percent offered no comment. Nonetheless, 39 percent of respondents saw the initiative as the most appropriate and effective means to deal with radicalisation in their own communities. In summary, two-thirds saw the initiative as successful, and sustainably so, and but only 40 percent thought that it the most appropriate and effective mechanism.

Community recommendations on the initiatives and for improved relations

The survey prompted respondents for specific details on why they thought the initiative was successful or not. One-quarter of the actual responses commented on how the initiative was working well. Another quarter did not respond to this question. A couple of respondents suggested that revisions of the initiative were required. More common suggestions were for the broadening of the scope of the engagement and the need for more promotion of the initiative. One respondent admitted: 'I have never even heard of it'. Most of the critical comments were based from concerns that the levels of consultation and visibility needed to be expanded. One respondent pointed to a concern that the engagement tended to be with more religiously conservative members and leaders of the Muslim communities. 'We don't agree to have the radicals as a representative of the Muslim community. This will give a bad image to our youth'. This concern about representation echoes a community concern detected by Tahiri and Grossman (2012) in their analysis of community views on the risk of radicalisation in Australia.

Most of the respondent feedback were explanations for why they saw the initiative as successful. Key themes included the strong levels of communication, awareness raising and the visibility of Muslim police as well as 'Muslim-friendly' officers.

> So far we have had an effective two way communication, and they have been involved almost in all our community activities and events. Our community individuals are becoming more confident to deal with police.

> I think/believe with increased awareness of Islam and Muslims the NSW Police Force can better appreciate and help 'crime' delineating from religion. Also hopeful I am towards Australian Muslim community and their level of awareness about their own faith – this will succeed towards a more informed society and it's cohesiveness – on both ends.

> As long as there are Muslim police working in this field, the initiative will be successful.

The respondents helpfully made suggestions for improvement, including the appointment of more Muslim police officers. The number and proportion of Muslims in the NSW force strength is unknown, but three of the seven Community Contact Officers from the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command have been Muslims. Other suggestions included expanded levels of consultation, community engagement and officer visibility among the community.

> If they promote, so that people know them.

> Show their appearance in community. They will continue to get close to the public, people from different backgrounds. Helps a lot.

> Only if there is more involvement of the community.

In general, the community comments had a theme of 'on the right track', 'doing well, but do more of it'. The comments were constructive in nature, and they suggest that the respondents felt that this policing initiative was heading in the right direction.

Respondents were asked which areas of the initiative needed improvement. One-third of the comments related to the need for enhanced engagement between Police and the Muslim communities.

> More consultation sessions and keep the community informed and updated.

> As I said, I feel NSW Police need to conduct joint activities with Muslim Community Organisations.

> More face-to-face initiative – police talking to people.

> Transparency – objectives/agendas. More involvement in the planning. More communication.

> Be more responsive to suggestion made by the Muslim community.

And, in a further reflection of the findings in the previous section, there was an emphasis on the need for more information provision and marketing of the initiative. The respondents called for more 'Promotion, awareness' and 'Promotion and advertisement'. A handful of respondents suggested that the numbers of staff in the police engagement team needed to be increased. And there was a similar level of comment about the need for more thorough training of unit members.

Training for CCU and community workers to understand roles and responsibilities to deliver better services to our unique community. Expanding a bilingual team; level of understanding re[garding] community needs; welfare training.

More education courses for the police and community. More workshops, more involvement in community.

Integration and dialogue between police and community.

Other suggestions revolved around issues that were found by Tahiri and Grossman (2012), such as the concern at who among the Muslim communities were being consulted and engaged by the Police. There was a concern that it was the religiously conservative and/or controversial leaders that were being consulted and that this would send misleading impressions about who were considered to be Australia's Muslim leaders and role models. The first two comments below are examples where respondents asserted the importance of religious groups and leaders, whilst the latter comments advocated other spheres of life and contact points for engagement.

Muslim leaders/representatives/community not consulted about expectations of team.

Increased community engagement with local Imams, sheikhs and community leaders and grass-root representatives.

A lot of centres and mosques – more visits and events involving normal people not just leader, especially youth.

Not aware of it. It's still limited. Try to communicate to people directly through youth clubs. Promote through media – magazines, websites.

Need to be much more active between community and police at a local level. The name is problematic. There needs to be management and awareness on both sides. Target young people.

Clearly, these concerns about representation, and who speaks for the Muslim communities, are issues that Police engagement units need to contemplate more thoroughly. The difficulty is that a counter-radicalisation initiative has an overt interest with engaging the more 'radical' and polemic leaders, yet this raises concerns among other parts of the community, especially those with a more ordinary or mainstream level and type of politics.

Concluding comments

There has been international debate as to whether community policing can work in the sphere of counterterrorism. Sceptics point to the militaristic rhetoric of counterterrorism policing, the thickness of boundaries between the police and the policed and an innate lack of trust and shared endeavour (de Guzman, 2002). This scepticism has a heavy presupposition that the communities with whom police might seek to build relations are supportive of terror and terrorism. This relates back to the problems associated with terms like terrorism and radicalisation, but also to how the extent of the problem is characterised. There has also been a retreat from the commitment to community policing in Australia, is not elsewhere, as it is a mode which is seen as soft, and as lacking 'political capital' in law and order auctions.

The building of relations of trust between the Muslim communities in Sydney and police liaison officers has been an urgent focus of the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command of the NSW Police Force since 2009. Building trust between

communities and police is no easy task in the context of widespread anti-Muslim prejudice (Islamophobia), high levels of experience of racism by Australian Muslims, perceptions of over-policing and procedural injustice among some sections of Muslim communities, as well as a perception that governments have been hostile to and unfairly critical of Muslims. The responses from members of the Sydney Muslim communities indicate high levels of trust of the NSW Police and especially the officers from the Community Engagement Unit of the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command. Given these contexts, this level of relationship building has been impressive.

Community policing needs to have direct contact between police and community, and it needs to be public and visible and to be characterised by partnership and genuine consultation. If it lacks the above, if the engagement is disingenuous, it will fail to develop relations of depth, trust and cooperation. The Sydney survey respondents reported high levels of direct contact with the Community Contact Officers of the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command. The respondents saw this contact, and the community engagement initiative, as a relationship building exercise and collaboration. They overwhelmingly characterised these contacts as non-confrontational. The contact occurred at community events at mosques and cultural centres, and community members thought that the officers had a mid to high visibility in these spheres. The activities of the Community Contact Officers of the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command met some of the key defining criteria of community policing: direct contact and the development of partnerships. However, whilst the survey found majority support for the success of community awareness for the programme, this finding is tempered by the small sample size, but the results are nonetheless noteworthy given the very difficult context of working with Muslim agencies that feel very pressurised by the radicalisation threat to their communities.

The Muslim respondents recommended deeper levels of consultation on what constitutes the problem. For example, this would involve the development of a stronger consensus or 'working definition' of terms like radical, extremist and terrorist, and having stronger levels of transparency around objectives and agenda. The community respondents also advocated more direct engagement, visibility and contact. In general, the respondents from the Sydney Muslim communities were asserting the need for more of the community policing paradigm. Our findings affirm the assertions of Murray (2005) that there is a role for community policing in counterterror and anti-radicalisation work.

Respondents from the Sydney Muslim communities also argued for more police training, to enable a greater level of sensitivity towards minorities, and they also argued for more recruitment of Muslim police officers. There was also a significant minority of respondents who did not have trust in the community engagement undertaken by the Counter Terror unit. These sections of the communities should be a priority for future engagement. There was also some concern at the narrowness of the consultation that occurred, and about police choices of who they consult with, and thus anoint as leaders. Respondents argued for a deepening and widening of the consultations (to youth, to non-conservatives, etc.). Finally, a test of the depth of such community engagement, and a future direction of our research, is the extent to which the relations are resilient to signature events, arrests and media sensations.

Notes on contributors

Kevin Mark Dunn has worked in the field of cross-cultural relations for over two decades. He is globally recognised for his work on anti-racism, and he steers the leading national research project

on racism and anti-racism in Australia – The Challenging Racism Project. In this field, he has published over 15 refereed journals articles and delivered over 40 conference papers. He and his team have provided numerous briefings to government agencies at all levels, including for the Australian Government's preparations for the World Conference Against Racism. Most recently, he has briefed the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council, the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Department of Immigration, on the direction and content of the National Anti-Racism Strategy (currently being developed).

Dunn also has long-standing research relations with Muslim communities in Australia, especially those within Sydney and to lesser extent in Melbourne. Dunn has provided advice to the IWWCV on the data gathering instruments that were originally used for their most recently released study and has edited reports produced by the IWWCV, as well as other groups such as the Islamic Council of New South Wales (ICNSW). Dunn has presented key-notes and other addresses at the workshops and report launches of these groups (including Affinity). Most recently, Dunn delivered the Inaugural Public Lecture for IRSA (29 April 2011). Dunn has also served in an advisory capacity for the inquiries and reports undertaken by anti-racism agencies on the experiences of Muslim Australians, such as the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's Ismaع Project (2004).

Dunn's experience in the use of surveys for the analysis of community relations, and on attitudes to diversity, is unrivalled in Australia.

Rosalie Atie received a BA (Hons) from the University of Western Sydney in 2007. Since then, she has been employed as a researcher at the University, working for the Social Justice Social Change Research Centre from 2008 to 2010. Since 2011, she has been working on the Challenging Racism Project within the School of Social Sciences and Psychology and on other associated projects. These include a partnership project with NSW Police on the effects of NSW Police community engagement counter-radicalisation model; a collaborative project with Deakin University into ethnic discrimination in the private rental housing market; and a multi-university ARC Discovery project on cyber-racism and community resilience.

Michael Kennedy is the International Programme Coordinator at UWS College and Senior lecturer in the UWS School of Social Sciences. In 2005, he completed his PhD titled 'Progressing Towards Conservatism: A Gramscian Challenge to the Conceptualisation of Class, Agency, Corruption and Reform in "Progressive" Analyses of Policing'. Prior to becoming an academic, Michael was a Detective in the NSW Police. He had some 20 years experience in the investigation of Organised and Major Crime, specialising in working within the Arabic speaking community. He also has strong connections with the Prefecture of Police in Paris and the Police Service in the Islamic Republic of Maldives. Michael's research is focused on professional ethics, policing practice and policing education. He has given evidence before several parliamentary inquiries and steered the School of Social Sciences team that after three years of review has in 2010 implemented a completely new Policing programme in collaboration with NSW Police. In 2010, Michael was appointed to the New South Wales Police Academic Board.

Jan A. Ali is a Sociologist of Religion (Islam). He is a Senior Lecturer in Islam and Modernity in the School of Humanities and Communication Arts and simultaneously holds a title as the Community and Research Analyst in the Religion and Society Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney. His main sociological focus is on the study of existential Islam. In recent years, Jan has been invited by a number of non-government organisations and government agencies in various Australian capital cities and overseas to deliver Public Lectures on Islamic Revivalism, Shar'iah, Terrorism and various other important topics on Islam. Jan has published numerous peer-reviewed articles in international journals and book chapters. He also published a book entitled Islamic Revivalism Encounters the Modern World: A Study of the Tablīgh Jamā'at (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 2012). Currently, Jan is researching the Importance of Shari'ah in Australia using data based on questionnaire survey and collaborating with Professor Kevin Dunn, Professor Peter Hopkins and Professor Adam Possamai researching Muslims on Campus: University Life for Muslim Students in Australia.

John O'Reilly joined the NSW Police Force in 1981. In he was promoted to role of Commander, Operations Group, Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics, which includes the Community Contact

Unit. The CCU acts as a conduit for reciprocal information flows between the Special Tactics and Counter Terrorism Command and communities at risk of radicalisation, or likely to be impacted by NSW Police Force use of new terrorism powers, or communities who may be the victims of terrorism or politically motivated violence. Officers from the Unit actively engage with communities to promote positive working relationships, community partnerships and increased understanding of NSW Police Force counterterrorism response arrangements.

Detective Superintendent O'Reilly is regularly involved in NCTC-related meetings, operations and working groups and is the NSW Police Force representative of the National Spatial and Information Management (NSIM) Working Group. He liaises regularly with senior members of the Attorney General's Department, Australian Federal Police and other Government Departments in the National Security Arena.

Detective Superintendent John O'Reilly holds a Graduate Diploma in Criminology from Sydney University.

Lindsay Rogerson has over 33 years policing experience with the New South Wales Police Force. The majority of that time has been in Criminal Investigation. In the last decade, He has held the positions of Duty Officer and Crime Manager at Campsie Police Station, Since 2009 he has been the Commander of the Community Contact Unit, which is part of the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command. The unit's role is to engage with communities at risk of radicalisation and those that might be victims of terrorism. The unit has adopted a personal approach by building rapport with the communities to achieve resilient relationships, which allows for open dialogue and robust conversations on contemporary issues that impact on communities of NSW.

Lindsay is currently studying for a Bachelor of Social Science at the University of Western Sydney and in July 2013 was awarded the Donald Mackay Winston Churchill Fellowship to research community engagement policy and methods effective in countering violent extremism in the USA.

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