

**Home Affairs Portfolio  
Department of Home Affairs  
Additional Estimates Hearing – February 2024**

**KEY BRIEF**

**Topic: Physical Security Measures for Australian High Office Holders**

**Responsible Deputy:** Nathan Smyth, Deputy Secretary, National Security and Resilience

**Key Points**

- The Department is responsible for implementing and maintaining physical security measures at the residences of Australian High Office Holders and ‘at risk’ parliamentarians.
- The Department facilitates the implementation of physical security measures at Electorate and Ministerial offices of Australian High Office Holders, as well as parliamentarians deemed ‘at risk’.
- This function transferred to Home Affairs from the Attorney-General’s Department on 3 August 2023; and from 29 September 2023 has operated as part of the Department’s National Security Division.
- The following are defined as Australian High Office Holders:
  - The Governor-General of Australia
  - The Prime Minister of Australia and Government Ministers
  - Presiding Officers (President of the Senate and Speaker of the House)
  - Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition.
- A parliamentarian deemed ‘at risk’ is determined by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) based on an assessment of risk and threat.
- To ensure that threats and risks can be identified and mitigated, the Department conducts physical security assessments of the offices and residences of Australian High Office, and ‘at risk’ parliamentarians.
  - These assessments are undertaken in consultation with the AFP, state and territory law enforcement agencies and ASIO.
- The assessments may make recommendations on options to mitigate security risks or vulnerabilities, such as alarm systems, CCTV cameras, duress devices, locks and lighting.
- The Department has been conducting Physical Security Risk Assessments for the current Albanese Government Ministry, announced on 21 May 2022, following the Federal Election.
  - Over 70 assessments have been completed, including all members of the National Security Committee of Cabinet. Assessments include, where relevant, primary and secondary residences, as well as Electorate and Ministerial offices.

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- These assessments are regularly updated as part of the Department's rolling program of assessments or where there is:
  - a change in the domestic security environment
  - a specific threat advised by ASIO or the AFP or
  - a change in the security risk profile of a High Officer Holder or parliamentarian, including a change of ministerial portfolio and geopolitical considerations.
- The Department also supports the design, implementation and maintenance of physical security controls at Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices, and selected foreign Diplomatic sites, across Australia.
- For security reasons, it is not appropriate to comment on details of specific security measures the department or any other agency have provided.

### Protective Security Board

- The Protective Security Board (PSB) met for the first time on 18 October 2023. The PSB gives direct focus to strategic protective security issues and challenges as an agency-head level oversight function.
- The PSB is chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Home Affairs.
  - *Questions relating to the Protective Security Board or the Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF) should be directed to Hamish Hansford, Cyber and Infrastructure Security Group.*

### Review of protective security arrangements for Australian High Office Holders

- Noting the potential impact on the safety of public office holders relating to recent domestic and international events, such as the Voice to Parliament referendum and the Hamas-Israel conflict, the PSB agreed that Home Affairs and the Australian Federal Police undertake a review of current protective security arrangements for Australian High Office Holders and parliamentarians.
- The review will be undertaken within existing resourcing and will report preliminary findings to the Protective Security Board in late March and be finalised by mid-year.
- The scope of the review will include the personal and physical protective security of parliamentarians and Australian High Office holders, which includes their offices, staff, residences places of work and events and activities related to their work. Additionally part of the review will look more broadly at publication of pattern of life data.

### ***If asked: What action has the Department taken in response to disruptive and destructive protests related to the Hamas-Israel conflict?***

- The Department continues to monitor AFP and ASIO assessments related to the Hamas-Israel conflict, specifically in relation to Australian High Office Holders and foreign diplomatic interests in Australia.
- The Department has provided advice and technical expertise to the Department of Finance to enhance security and safety capabilities at Electorate and Ministerial offices of those parliamentarians affected by protest activity.
- The Department has participated in briefings (led by the Department of Finance) for parliamentarians and their staff regarding security and safety.

- The Department continues to work with AFP and members of the foreign diplomatic community in relation to physical security measures at diplomatic sites.
- For security reasons, it is not appropriate to comment on details of specific nations, sites or security measures the Department or any other agency have provided.

**If asked: What security supports has the department provided to Senator Lidia Thorpe?**

- The Department has provided security support to Senator Thorpe.
- For security reasons, it is not appropriate to comment on details of specific security measures the department or any other agency have provided.
- The AFP is responsible for the investigation and assessment of any security incidents relating to a Member of Parliament.

**If asked: Does Home Affairs utilise Chinese-made CCTV cameras or security infrastructure?**

- The Department does not install CCTV cameras made by Chinese manufacturers Dahua and Hikvision.
- The Department works with partner agencies and service providers to ensure a considered and risk-based approach is taken in relation to supply chain risks for all security infrastructure, including CCTV.
- Any questions about cameras at electorate offices can be directed to the Department of Finance.

**Additional Information**

Issue	This issue is a matter for:
Threat assessments or incident reporting associated with protests related to the Israel/Gaza conflict	AFP
Close Personal Protection (bodyguarding) for Australian High Office Holders	AFP
Threat profiles of Australian High Office Holders	AFP and ASIO
Security assets at electorate offices	Department of Finance
Protective Security Board	CISG, Hamish Hansford
Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF)	CISG, Hamish Hansford

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**KEY BRIEF**

**Topic: ISIL-linked Australians in detention or internally displaced persons camps in Syria**

**Responsible Deputy:** Nathan Smyth, Deputy Secretary, National Security and Resilience

**Questions about operations (even if in response to public commentary)**

- It would not be appropriate to go into the details of operational activity in a public hearing, both to protect the privacy of individuals, and to preserve the safety and security of officials involved.

**Questions about *Save the Children Australia v Minister for Home Affairs & Anor***

- On 3 November 2023, The Federal Court delivered its judgement in *Save the Children v Minister for Home Affairs & Anor* finding the Commonwealth does not have control over the Australian women and children detained in northeast Syria. Therefore, a writ of *habeas corpus* should not be issued. The Court ordered that each party bear their own costs, given the novel and difficult legal issues raised.
- On 1 December 2023, Save the Children Australia filed a notice of appeal with the Federal Court. The matter has not yet been listed for a directions or final hearing.

**If asked: How many Australians are being held in Syria?**

- Of the approximately 60 Australian men and women known to still be offshore, it is difficult to confirm how many are in detention facilities and IDP camps.

**If asked: Are you concerned about the women and children that remain in Syria?**

- The Australian Government is concerned about the remaining Australian-linked women and children located in IDP camps in northeast Syria.
  - I acknowledge the very real humanitarian and welfare issues affecting those in the IDP camps.
  - Australian agencies keep the situation in the camps under constant review.
  - Australia is partnering with humanitarian agencies who have the mandate and expertise to deliver assistance to affected populations, including Australians.

**If asked: Why is the Australian Government able to extract people from Israel but not from Syrian IDP camps?**

- The situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is highly challenging and rapidly changing.
- Departures are challenging due to the volatile security situation and airports may pause operations due to heightened security concerns.
- The Australian Government's ability to provide consular assistance to those in Syrian IDP camps is severely limited, due to the extremely dangerous security situation and because we do not have an embassy or consulate in Syria.

**If asked: Reported death of Yusuf Zahab / proof of life video.**

- This is a matter for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

**If pressed on Yusuf Zahab:**

- The Australian Government is providing consular assistance to the family of an Australian man currently detained in Syria
  - Due to privacy obligations, we cannot provide further comment.
- Our ability to provide consular assistance to Australians in Syria is extremely limited due to the security situation
  - Australia does not have an embassy or consulate in Syria.

**Questions about the reintegration and resettlement of the four women and their 13 children repatriated in October 2022**

- The families repatriated in October 2022 are being supported by a full range of state and Commonwealth services to assist them to reintegrate into the community and are progressing well, particularly the children.
- I am unable to comment further on the circumstances of individuals due to privacy considerations.

**Questions about recent arrests and/or criminal investigations**

- I am aware a NSW woman was charged under Section 119.2(1) of the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth) on 5 January 2023 for previously entering and remaining in parts of Syria that were under the control of the Islamic State terrorist organisation.
- This charge does not relate to a current or impending threat to the community.
- Further questions on this matter should be directed to the Australian Federal Police.

**If asked: Will any of the men or women in Syria be impacted by the new *Australian Citizenship Amendment (Citizenship Repudiation) Act 2023*?**

- The *Australian Citizenship Amendment (Citizenship Repudiation) Act 2023* enables the Minister to make an application to a court to consider ceasing a dual citizen's Australian citizenship as part of sentencing, where the person has been convicted of one or more serious offences, including terrorism.

**If asked: Aren't there people amongst those Australians in Syria, who pose a threat to Australia's safety?**

- The Australian Government has a range of measures that can be considered to manage Australians who pose a terrorism risk, including Temporary Exclusion Orders (TEOs), return permits with certain pre- and post-entry conditions imposed, control orders, disengagement programs and criminal charges.

**If asked: Have any Australians of counter-terrorism interest offshore had a Temporary Exclusion Order placed on them?**

- A Temporary Exclusion Order (TEO) can only be made if certain criteria are met and it does not permanently exclude an Australian citizen from returning to Australia. It gives authorities time to manage any security threat associated with the individual and to set in place arrangements for their return.
- A TEO can be made by the Minister for Home Affairs to prevent an individual from entering Australia for a specified period.
- A TEO may be in force for up to two years, unless it is revoked by the Minister for Home Affairs, or the Minister issues a return permit.
- A return permit may include conditions on the timing and manner of an individual's return to Australia, and notification of certain activities once in Australia.
- Returning to Australia while subject to a TEO, or failing to comply with conditions imposed under a return permit, is a criminal offence punishable by up to two years' imprisonment.

***If pressed:***

- Nine (9) TEOs have been issued since 30 July 2019.
- One (1) is currently in force.
- One (1) has been issued this financial year (2023-24).
- Two (2) have expired.
- One (1) has been revoked by the Minister.
- Five (5) are taken to be revoked as a Return Permit was issued.

**Consultation**

- Legal Group, Department of Home Affairs
- Counter-Terrorism Branch, Crisis Preparedness and Management Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Counter-Terrorism Policy and Engagement Section, Attorney-General's Department
- Border, Law Enforcement and Violent Extremism Section, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

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KEY BRIEF

**Topic: Social Cohesion Taskforce on the Israel/Hamas Conflict**

**Responsible Deputy:** Nathan Smyth, Deputy Secretary, National Security and Resilience

**How did the Department respond to the Israel/Hamas conflict?**

- In response to this event, the Department of Home Affairs (the Department) established a dedicated taskforce to coordinate the Portfolio's response to social cohesion issues arising from the conflict.
  - Established on 12 October 2023, currently consists of 5.5 FTE.
- Since the outbreak of the conflict, the Department has supported **9** Ministerial roundtable meetings with affected communities, including both in-person and on-line meetings.
  - *If asked:* there have been **2** roundtable meetings with members of the Jewish community, and **7** meetings with members of Palestinian, Muslim, Arabic and other affected communities.
- On 11 October 2023, the NCM was activated and a meeting held to ensure that Commonwealth agencies, state and territory governments are all working together to address the effects of the conflict on Australians.
  - The NCM has met **7** times—11, 16, 19 October and 3, 15, 29 November—chaired by the Department's Deputy Secretary National Security and Resilience, Nathan Smyth.
  - For further information on NCM, refer to Counter Terrorism Coordination Centre (CTCC) Back Pocket Brief CTCC-06.
- Between 9 October 2023 and 31 December 2023, the CLO Network undertook more than 600 engagements with affected community stakeholders.
- On 18 October 2023, the Minister for Home Affairs, convened an ad-hoc virtual call of the Five Country Ministerial (FCM) to discuss the impacts of the Hamas-Israel conflict in impacting domestic social cohesion settings across the Five countries. A follow up call, led by the Secretary of Home Affairs was subsequently held on 8 November 2023.

On 30 October 2023, the Minister for Home Affairs and relevant Departmental representatives met with the Israeli ambassador to discuss Australia's response to the conflict. On 24 November 2023, I met the Ambassador again with my colleague (Angus Kirkwood).

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**What funding has the Department given to impacted communities?**

- On 19 October 2023, the Minister for Home Affairs announced initiatives across government to address the social cohesion impacts of the Hamas-Israel conflict.
- The initiatives and their current status are outlined as follows:

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Update (at 2 Feb)</b>	<b>Lead</b>
<b>Measure: Supporting Australian Communities Affected by the Hamas/Israel Conflict</b>			
Support to Australian Palestinian, Muslim and other communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part A national projects (including SBS, AAP and AHRC)</li> <li>• Part B – grants for suitable projects</li> <li>• Part C – grassroots programs</li> </ul>	\$25 million (\$23m approved, \$2m outstanding)	Minister Giles has approved \$23 million in grants and relevant organisations have been notified via the Community Grants Hub. The Department is working with these organisations to develop frameworks and implementation plans. \$2m is yet to be approved.	Home Affairs
24/7 online crisis response capability (Protecting Australians Online)*	\$2.6 million	The Department is currently progressing Regulation amendments to ensure this funding can be lawfully distributed.	Home Affairs (CVE)
Expand domestic monitoring and referral (Protecting Australians Online)*	\$3.5 million	The Department is currently progressing Regulation amendments to ensure this funding can be lawfully distributed. Dept working closely with eSafety.	Home Affairs (CVE)
Social cohesion community projects	\$6 million	Department is working with Government to ensure this funding is appropriately distributed.	Home Affairs
Support eSafety Commissioner (Protecting Australians Online)*	\$6.7 million	eSafety Commissioner is undergoing recruitment and project planning. Refer to eSafety for further details.	eSafety Commissioner

Improving Community Safety (Executive Council of Australian Jewry)	\$25 million	s. 47D Refer to Attorney-General's Department for further details	Attorney-General's Department
Mental Health and Community Wellbeing to Primary Health Network (PHN) and Program of Assistance for Survivors of torture and Trauma to provide mental health services, education programs and outreach.	\$3 million	The Minister for Health and Aged Care granted policy approval on 18 December 2023. Funding offers will be made in February 2024. Refer to the Department of Health for further details.	Department of Health
Wellbeing in Jewish and Islamic schools	\$6 million	Funding released to state and territory agencies on 7 November 2023. Refer to the Department of Education for further details.	Department of Education
<b>Measure: Securing Faith-Based Places Grant Program</b>			
To expand the Securing Faith-Based Places program	\$10 million	s. 47D Refer to Attorney-General's Department for further details.	Attorney-General's Department
<b>Total funding</b>	<b>\$87.8 million</b>		

\*The *Protecting Australians Online* measure totals \$12.8 million over four years.

**If asked: Is this funding being distributed fairly - why is the Government focusing on some groups over others:**

- Funding and actions are being targeted to areas of greatest need and where it can be utilised to best effect to address immediate needs as well as longer-term impacts of the conflict on communities and Australia's social cohesion.
- Strengthening social cohesion extends to addressing threats to community cohesion such as racism, hate speech, violence, polarisation and social exclusion.
- The ramifications of the conflict on broader social cohesion are expected to be long lasting and need to be addressed.

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**Why has there been a delay in releasing this funding?**

- The Department has been working to ensure these measures are informed by community concerns and address immediate needs, as well as the longer-term impacts being felt across communities in Australia.
- As with all government grant processes, the Department of Home Affairs must ensure accountability and follow legislative requirements, along with specific processes and guidelines to ensure that grants are implemented in accordance with those requirements and we have been working with the Community Grants Hub on the design and delivery of Commonwealth Grant Programs.

**If asked: Why is the Department of Home Affairs funding fact checking and interfering in freedom of speech?**

- The Department of Home Affairs is providing funding for AAP FactCheck to deliver independent and accredited fact-checking services to social media platforms and media organisations to minimise the impact of misinformation on Australia’s social cohesion.
- The department will not, and cannot, seek to influence the editorial decisions of AAP FactCheck.
- The Department will not have a role in the fact checking process and will not be referring content to AAP for checking.

**Why was the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) identified for this grant?**

- SBS provides both multilingual and English fact-checked, balanced and impartial news on issues circulating in communities, which means that SBS is uniquely placed to build resilience to misinformation across communities.
- The Department will not, and cannot, seek to influence the editorial decisions of SBS.

**What are you doing to combat antisemitism?**

- \$2m of the agreed funding is going to the Australian Human Rights Commission, \$1m to AAP and \$2m to SBS to address the rise in antisemitism and spread of mis and disinformation circulating across the Australian communities.
- In addition we have facilitated the following:
  - Distributed \$25 million to Jewish communities through the Executive Council of Australian Jewry,
  - Delivered \$6 million to states and territories for mental health and wellbeing support to students in schools with significant cohorts of Jewish-identifying students, and
  - Provided \$3 million for targeted mental health and community wellbeing support services to address psychological harm and community distress.

The Government continues to consider the further needs of affected communities.

**What are you doing to combat Islamophobia?**

- Both islamophobia Register and islamophobia Australia are receiving \$1m each to expand their existing services and develop new programs and resources to support victims of Islamophobic.
- These organisations have a wealth of experience delivering national campaigns focused on the anti-racism and islamophobia and have existing relationships with affected communities.
- A further \$25m is being distributed to support to Australian Palestinian, Muslim and other communities (refer to table above).

**What is Social Cohesion?**

- The Department has a central coordination and national leadership role in supporting and strengthening Australia’s social cohesion, including protecting our national security. Strengthening social cohesion extends to protecting Australians from threats to social cohesion such as racism, hate speech, violence, polarisation and social exclusion.
- The Taskforce is focused on providing a whole-of-government social cohesion response to mitigate domestic impacts stemming from the conflict on Australian Jewish, Palestinian, and Middle Eastern and Muslim communities.
- The Department is engaging closely with Commonwealth, state and territory governments as well as community leaders and organisations to understand community sentiment and progress measures to foster greater social cohesion, understanding and inclusion.
- Community tension has generated incidents of violence between protesters, vandalism, increases in reporting of Anti-Semitic and Islamophobic behaviour, hate speech, safety concerns in public spaces, and racist and threatening behaviour online.
  - Five Eyes partners, France, Sweden and other democracies globally report similar escalating social cohesion tensions.

If asked about:	Refer to:	Brief at:
Visa issues (including numbers and processes)	Michael Willard	IG-17- Key Issues IGBPB-29 back pocket
Social cohesion	Nathan Smyth	NSR-08
Community engagement	Michael Willard	SB23-001333 - key issues IGBPB - 64 - back pocket
Grants	Michael Willard	IG-18 - key issues IGBPB-64 - back pocket

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CTCC	Nathan Smyth	CTCC-06 – back pocket
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**Consultation**

- Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs Division
- Counter Terrorism Coordination Centre
- Finance Division

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