



Australian Federation  
of Islamic Councils



AFIC National  
Sharia Board

# **THE INQUIRY INTO EXTREMIST MOVEMENTS AND RADICALISM IN AUSTRALIA**

**DUE 12 FEBURARY 2021**

**SUBMISSION BY THE AUSTRALIA FEDERATION OF  
ISLAMIC COUNCILS AND AFIC's NATIONAL SHARIA BOARD**

**11 February 2021**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The members at the AFIC thank the Minister for Home Affairs and the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS) for instituting the inquiry into extremist movements and radicalism in Australia.

The AFIC acknowledges that the focus of this inquiry is to understand and develop mitigating strategies to deterring radicalised speech and behaviour that could lead to violence. Research has established a strong link between radicalisation and acts of violence.

## **INTRODUCTION**

It is obvious to all Australians that extremism and radicalisation have become a major issue in our community and have resulted in irreversible damage and unnecessary destruction. In the state of New South Wales there was the shocking Lindt Café Siege at Martin Place and in October of 2015 there was the tragic murder of ‘a police civilian finance worker.’<sup>1</sup>

The AFIC is determined to better our communities and promote peace. Islam is religion that is founded on the principles of harmonious, peaceful and respectful coexistence where different languages, cultures and ethnicities are celebrated.

We acknowledge that hate speech has a great influence on birthing radicalism and in some more extreme instances violent extremist behaviour.

Muslims have become the target and the victims of extremism. An event that unveiled this

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<sup>1</sup> J Kidd, Sydney siege anniversary: What we know about Martin Place's Lindt cafe attack, ABC News, 15 December 2015; ABC News, Parramatta shooting: Civilian police employee and unidentified gunman die in shooting outside NSW Police Parramatta HQ, 4 October 2015

tragic truth is the horrific Christchurch Massacre that occurred in March of 2019. On a day of prayer innocent women, children and men were ruthlessly murdered and numerous friends and families were left to mourn the loss of their loved ones.

AFIC will continue to support initiatives that promote peaceful dialogue and deter hate speech. In an effort to eliminate extremism it is pivotal to target all groups and not focus on a minority. We have witnessed too many tragic events where vulnerable women and children were targeted purely on the basis of their faith or race.

Racist slurs and bigotry may at first appear to be ‘normal’ but are the root cause of breeding extremist behaviour. A healthy society needs to make sure that racist slurs and bigotry are never allowed to become normal.

## **SUBMISSIONS**

The Australian Government defines Radicalisation as a form of behaviour and/or process of thought that is *significantly* different from how the majority of a person’s society and community observe social and political issues. It has been noted that:

Only small numbers of people radicalise and they can be from a diverse range of ethnic, national, political and religious groups.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, extremist is classified as a person or group of people who justify the use of hatred, fear, terror and violence to “achieve ideological, political or social change.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Living Safe Together, *What is radicalisation?*, Government of Australia.

<sup>3</sup> Living Safe Together, Preventing violent extremism and radicalisation in Australia, Government of Australia, 2015.

Research has helped establish that radicalisation can develop into violent extremism if left unrestrained. The Australian Government must adjust its laws to ensure that they cover Right-Wing-Extremism, not just Muslim radicals.

It is unfortunate that radicalisation and extremism have become linked to Muslims and other marginalised groups. However, the reality is that any person from any culture or faith can be radicalised into violent extremism. This has become even more prominent with the rise in the white supremacist movement, that has globalised.

In addition, there has been a rise in transnational normalisation of the extreme rightwing Indian ideology of Hindutva and their affiliated organisations such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS).

Hindutva, or ‘Hinduness,’ is a benign, catch-all term for Hindu culture that encompasses its history, language, civilization and religion. But its origins and deployment are rooted in a nationalist, and often violent, vision of Indian culture. The ideologue who coined the term in 1923, V.D. Savarkar, emphasized indigeneity as the bloodline of a nation. In his speeches and writings, Savarkar made clear that he saw Nazi Germany’s treatment of Jews as a model for dealing with India’s Muslims. (please refer to the highlighted section on page 9 of the Appendix).

These Hindutva organisations are known to have strong ideological and operational

alignments with islamophobic and right-wing white supremacist movements. For instance, Norwegian mass killer Anders Behring Breivik, hails these extreme ring wing Indian organisations as key allies in a global struggle to bring down democratic regimes across the world. Breivik's manifesto also applauds extreme right wing Hindutva organisations who "often riot and attack Muslims when things get out of control"(please click [here](#), a copy is at Appendix "B").

It is widely recognised that Anders Breivik also inspired the New Zealand Mosque Shooter Brenton Tarrant(please click [here](#), a copy is at Appendix "C"). In addition, the CIA World Factbook 2018-2019 recognises extreme right wing Hindutva organisations like the VHP to be religious militant organisations (please click [here](#), a copy is at Appendix "D").

Within progressive democracies, these extreme right wing Hindutva organisations leverage the space allowed by multiculturalism, position themselves as voluntary, non-profit, social and cultural organizations that aim to organize the Hindu community and publicly maintain a veneer of moderation. Under the veneer of moderation, they are known to promote hate speech, islamophobia, interfere in elections and infiltrate institutions of the host countries. (please refer to page 27 of Appendix "A").

These organisations have also been known to collect funds in progressive democracies, ostentatiously for charity and misuse such funds to instigate islamophobia, violence against religious and ethnic minorities and propagate extreme right wing Hindutva ideology in Gujarat and other parts of India. (please refer to page 29 of Appendix "A").

Within Australia, extreme right-wing Hindutva organisations like VHP Australia and their affiliated organisations are known to spread hate speech and islamophobia.

In addition, organisations like EKAL VIDYALAYA FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED (EKFA) also collect funds ostentatiously for supporting overseas educational institutions called Ekal Schools or Ekal Vidyalayas in remote and tribal villages of India. These Ekal Vidyalayas are known to misuse the donations for creating disharmony amongst religious groups and creating extreme right wing civilian militias. (please refer to page 53 of Appendix "A").

At the 2008 VHP conference, Swami Vigyanand, coordinator of the VHP's international operations, embarked on a virulent hate speech directed primarily at Muslims during his talk. His speech consisted of making assertions that Hindus 'live and practice democracy' while Muslims are a threat to democracy around the world. Swami Vigyanand also stated that Hindus practice 'reason and rationalism' and are egalitarian unlike Muslims or Christians who have hierarchical belief systems and 'blindly believe in the Pope or the Caliph' (please refer to page 100 of Appendix "A").

More recently, a number of webinars, were organised by the Hindu Council of Australia between Thursday 18 and Friday 19 January 2021, where speakers used hate speech against Islam and Muslims. This has raised great concern amongst members of the Australian Muslim Community and the Australian Indian Diaspora. (please refer to Appendix "E").

Since its inception in Australia in 1998, the VHP has expanded its operations by infiltrating government educational institutions. Within New South Wales, VHP continues to be authorised and funded by the New South Wales Department of Education ‘to provide Special Religious Education in Public Schools’ (please refer to page 111 of Appendix “A”), despite being recognised as a religious militant organisation in CIA World Factbook 2018-2019. (please refer to Appendix “D”).

The VHP also provides special religious education in Victoria, South Australia and Queensland. The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) report shows that the VHP has received in excess of \$100,000 funding from taxpayer money in 2020 alone (please refer to page 112 of Appendix “A”).

Further, EKFA – ACNC report shows that it received \$252,285.00 in donations in 2020 alone. Of the funds received \$234,000.00 (please refer to page 115 of Appendix “A”) were used to support Ekal Schools or Ekal Vidyalayas in remote and tribal villages of India (please refer to page 115 of Appendix “A”). These Ekal Vidyalayas are known to misuse the donations for creating disharmony amongst religious groups and creating extreme right wing civilian militias. (please refer to page 114 of Appendix “A”).

Members of the Australian Muslim Community and Australian Indian Organisations have raised significant reservations about the increasing normalisation of these extreme right-wing Hindutva organisations within Australia and the significant threat they pose to the multicultural ethos and internal security of Australia. (please refer to page 53 of Appendix “A”).

In an attempt to counteract this growth of white-supremacist extremism and extreme right-wing Hindutva organisations within Australia, the AFIC makes the following submissions:

1. Anti-discrimination laws must criminalise hate speech and harassment.
2. Threats of hate crimes must be prosecuted with the same seriousness as threats from Islamic extremists.
3. Preventative programs that deal with Islamic Radicalism must be extended to cover Right-Wing-Extremism and White-Supremacist-Extremism.
4. There needs to be greater scrutiny of the activities of extreme right-wing Hindutva organisations within Australia and the threat they pose to Australia's internal security.

In essence, we believe that our security and control laws must be upheld evenly across all sections of society and threats must be assessed using the same standards in order to create a safer Australia for All Australians.

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