Submission No 188

#### **COMMUNITY SAFETY IN REGIONAL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES**

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 2 June 2024

# Partially Confidential

#### To the Presiding Officer of the Parliamentary Inquiry on Youth Crime in NSW

Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety

Parliament of New South Wales

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Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia

# Submission by to the Parliamentary Inquiry on Youth Crime in NSW Abstract

This submission raises three considerations about managing Youth Crime in NSW.

Firstly – Classroom teachers in New South Wales have daily face-to-face contact with youth involved in crime. Based on my experience, I believe that classroom teachers have a reasonable understanding of the crimes students are engaged in. However, teachers do not generally communicate this information to other government agencies.

Secondly, I believe there is a lack of information sharing between school teachers and crime management authorities due to structural impediments in NSW schools and deficiencies in the reporting frameworks Teachers are expected to follow.

Thirdly, I will demonstrate that the NSW Department of Education uses legitimate complaints of alleged misconduct from teachers about Youth Crime or factors leading to it to discipline and/or remove teachers who speak up about crime.

This submission is from the personal perspective of a classroom teacher. It relies heavily on opinion and evidence, which I gained as a rural classroom teacher.

#### **Background**

I am a 44-year-old male and a qualified high school teacher. In 2024, I moved from Regional NSW to work as a high school teacher at a Private School in the Australian Capital Territory.

I am also a student at the National Security College at the Australian National University, where I am studying for a Graduate Certificate in National Security Policy.

Before moving to the ACT, I spent 15 years teaching in low-income rural communities around NSW,

During my teaching career, I have experienced students openly disclosing the crimes they were involved in. These include:

- · Arson of houses.
- Arson of automobiles.
- Motor vehicle theft.
- Break and enter.
- Possession of illegal weapons.
- Manufacture and sale of methamphetamines.
- Drug dealing.
- Physical assault (serious).
- Armed robbery.
- Animal abuse animals being doused in fuel in school Ag Plots and set on fire, animals buried up to their neck and decapitated by students' feet.
- And much more.

All crimes were reported to the NSW Department of Education and NSW Police.

I have found that many of the crimes I reported in schools were not addressed or reported by School Principals. Many years ago, as a teacher, I came to the view that unless I bypassed the reporting procedures of the NSW Department of Education, the information I was receiving would not be reported to the NSW Police unless I disobeyed school reporting procedures and made reports directly to the NSW Police myself.

If the opportunity should present itself, I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss and explore my experience and the challenges of working within the Department of Education's policies and procedures to address crime. I would be pleased to share further evidence with the Legislative Assembly Inquiry into Community Safety in Regional and Rural Communities.

#### **Consideration 1:**

Classroom teachers in NSW have daily face-to-face contact with youth involved in crime; however, the information they obtain is not generally passed on to crime management agencies.

While working with the NSW Department of Education, I found that the staff responsible for reporting Youth Crime failed to take a proactive approach or actively address issues associated with Youth Crime or Youth Radicalization. This will be shown in Attachments 1 and 2.

On numerous occasions, students have provided me with information regarding specific criminal activities they were allegedly engaged in.

The standard reporting procedure on occasions where students make disclosures of such nature is to discuss the concern with the School Principal, who determines if the complaint should be escalated. Most times that I have raised concerns in a High School environment, I received advice that the information wasn't a clear admission of guilt. At times, other factors would be introduced where, on a legal basis, the Principal informed me they were not required to act.

Yet, when I bypass school reporting procedures, the information I have provided NSW Police, (determined by schools to be not worthy of reporting) has been openly celebrated by NSW Police in media releases as facilitating 'Joint Department of Education – NSW Police investigations' to reduce Youth Crime.

In my experience, allegations of student involvement in crime are regularly dismissed. The School Principals failed to accept teacher reports, and I believe the information was not forwarded to the NSW Police.

To validate this claim, I have picked the most extreme example I have available that predates the inquiry. Please see Attachment 1:

Attachment 1 is a redacted copy of a submission to the National Security Hotline – May 2017

To whom it may concern:

I write regarding a student I have taught in a teaching capacity at XXXXXXXXXX High School in 2015 and 2016.

The students' name is XXXXXXXX. He is a student that identifies as both an XXXXXXXX and XXXXXXXX ancestry. He would be aged XXXXXXXX, solid build, with XXXXXXXX skin and XXXXXXXXX hair.

When I first taught XXXXXXXX in 2015 he was in Year 9 and appeared a troubled student. During that year he had an unusual fixation on ISIS material he found on Facebook and Youtube. During lessons, he would regularly try to show me images and videos on these sites. I would not watch the clips and I understand from what his friends were saying, the images contained clips of beheadings and murder.

In these situations, I maintained my professional responsibility. I would try to confiscate XXXXXXXX mobile phone, usually without success, and closed discussions on this topic. I also spoke with the Principal of XXXXXXXX High School about XXXXXXXX comments. I made reports about the videos he was watching online, and if I recall correctly, reported my concerns to the NSW Police - independent of the school.

I also spent some time researching how to contact the relevant committee within the Australian Attorney General's office who looks after national security and wrote to them about the way the issues in schools were governed. I was very concerned that governance of schools failed to provide a way for teachers to report concerns about students. I also questioned how many of my teaching colleagues would know how to report students of concern. I raised the point that teachers were the front line in dealing with this age group and had insufficient training. Subsequently, school reporting systems were introduced to deal with these matters.

By early 2016 XXXXXXXX had a XXXXXXXX and the issues around ISIS material had subsided.

It was not until mid-2016 that I realised there were still issues with XXXXXXXX. I recall on one occasion XXXXXXXX attended a class I was teaching and asked me for guidance. He disclosed to me he was conducting armed home invasions, he was stealing cars which he 'burnt out' and was heavily involved in drugs. He asked for help to change his life from the poor state it was. At that point, he was clearly at a crossroads. As in all these situations, I recognised that I am not trained to deal with the issues he was explaining. I listened to his concerns and referred him to the school counsellor.

At that time, he again tried to show me images of cars which he had burnt out and provided dates of the incidents and names of friends also involved – all of which I immediately reported to the NSW Police. I also understand NSW Police used this information to arrest his friends and disrupt the activities of a criminal gang in XXXXXXXX - from my understanding.

My last contact with XXXXXXXX was later in 2016 when his father drove him to XXXXXXXX High School with the intent to fight another student who was leaving the school grounds. XXXXXXXX was carrying a knife, which I believe, from what I witnessed, he intended to use to kill a fellow student. Fortunately for the victim, a group of XXXXXXXX youths came to the rescue of the victim and overpowered XXXXXXXX. XXXXXXXXX father pulled him away from the youths. Again, in this case, I was able to contact the NSW Police to advise them of the fight taking place.

It has also been alleged through friends of XXXXXXXX that he has burned down the residence of a fellow student – also reported to the NSW Police

Why I am contacting the National Security Hotline is fourfold.

The first is that XXXXXXXX no longer attends school and the school reporting process no longer applies to his case – from my understanding this is the appropriate reporting hotline.

The second concern is related to the report I made about XXXXXXXX and his interest in ISIS in 2015. I am concerned the school Principal may not have reported the concerns when the new system was introduced in 2016 – given the time of the system introduction and the time of the initial reports.

Thirdly it has only come to my attention over the past 12 months that I am the only teacher at XXXXXXXX High School that XXXXXXXX was disclosing this information. I would like to ensure this information is recorded appropriately and I don't have faith in the School Reporting System as it is.

But most of all I believe XXXXXXXX has been radicalised through ISIS propaganda. I don't believe he has any religious interest, but he has a clear interest in causing as much damage as he possibly can.

I feel his experimentation with carrying knives to school fights, burning houses and cars, break and entering are only precursors to a greater action. I believe XXXXXXXX has been planning something greater since he was 15 years of age. In fact, I vaguely remember his as a 15-year-old talking about wanting to slit the throat of police officers.

I feel his behaviour and actions are of concern, and I would ask the National Security Team to review this individual's internet history and monitor his actions as he reaches an age that presents a greater threat to society.

I believe XXXXXXXX is an experienced criminal who follows the behaviours of others to attract attention. I believe XXXXXXXX will eventually be responsible for the death of others in society – the question I have is if his ISIS fixation will lead him to carry out an act of terror.

I am happy to discuss this matter in further detail. Feel free to contact me outside school hours on XXXXXXXX

#### The email is tended to demonstrate:

- Classroom Teachers are exposed to the most aggrieved reports of youth crime.
- Within a school context, reports to a school Principal about a student openly sharing videos of beheadings, a desire to commit serious criminal action on society and other matters were not taken seriously within the NSW Department of Education reporting structure.
- As a classroom teacher, without clear reporting procedures to report
  matters of National Security, I notified the Attorney General (Minister of
  National Security during that period—a position now the responsibility of
  the Prime Minister) of NSW Public schools' failure to have policies for
  reporting matters of National Security.
- In this example, to ensure authorities received information, I was forced to breach school reporting policies and act outside the school system's framework.

## Attachment 2 – Essay on Lack of School Policy Surrounding Youth Radicalisation

(Attached at the end of Submission)

This essay is intended as a demonstration of the continuing lack of preparedness to deal with issues of youth crime; I wrote a university paper outlining the lack of policies or attempts to deal with the escalating trend of youth Radicalisation within the NSW Department of Education for a Policy Analysis subject at the National Security College. I believe this report will highlight structural issues which the committee is investigating.

On completion, this paper was shared with The Hon. Steph Cooke, MP NSW Nationals (shared on the basis I was a former party member and concerned citizen). It was also provided to Executive Director Benjamin Ballard NSW Department of Education, Regional, Rural & Remote Education Policy after a casual meeting at the Bush Summit conference in 2023.

The purpose of providing this paper to the submission is to highlight despite the fact America, a similar liberal democracy as Australia, is besieged with youth right-wing violence, little attention has been given to the issue (or that of rural crime) by the NSW Department of Education.

More specifically, 7-9 years after the rise of youth extremism, and the same year the Director General of the Australian Security Intelligence

Organisation (ASIO) reported youth Right-Wing radicalization was a problem, the NSW Department of Education had failed to address issues associated with extreme youth crime most likely to occur in Rural Areas.

#### **Consideration 2:**

Information is not passed from school teachers to the crime management authorities due to structural impediments in NSW Schools and deficiencies surrounding the reporting framework.

The dynamics of all schools are different. Each school is a collective of individuals implementing policies and procedures as they see fit, implemented in a way that varies as much as the context of the people involved in the environment. However, despite the variations of schools, one consistency remains in all schools. Within the day-to-day context of school, the primary focus of management is to maintain relationships within the school context and between the school and the community.

Problematically, reporting students involved in crime directly conflicts with the primary instinct of managing relationships.

In addition to reporting being a naturally conflicting situation, the level of training of teachers and staff involved with students is limited.

I have witnessed numerous staff facing personal difficulties trying to rationalise what constitutes a disclosure of criminal activity. They don't know what to report and how.

I have also witnessed staff struggle to recognise what information they must disclose. Often, staff are left ill-equipped to make decisions or apply personal bias, which prevents key information from being reported to the Police.

Teachers are also not trained on what constitutes what information about crime that must be reported.

In my experience, the net effect is that staff will discuss students' comments about crimes they have been told by students and seek peer support on how to deal with information. However, staff rarely know what information should be reported or not, and staff rarely report issues.

#### Consideration 3:

I will show that the NSW Department of Education uses teachers' legitimate concerns about youth crime to discipline or remove those who speak up about crime.

It is my experience that the NSW Department of Education weaponize legitimate concerns.

In Attachment 3, I raised concerns about a School Principal who has asked me to teach students to make bombs, incendiary devices, methamphetamines and a range of other activities.

The complaints were raised with the NSW Department of Education as per my Mandatory Reporting requirements. I believed that matter was for The Department of Education to investigate, I was passing on statements which were made to me – whatever context they were made (as per mandatory reporting expectations).

My experience is that the Department of Education laid blame on myself for raising the complainant for raising the concerns and I was forced from my position as a classroom teacher.

It should be noted this matter has lead to an underpayment of award wages which have as today been unsuccessful claimed from The Department of Education.

It should also be noted has attempted to seek confidentiality over this matter and sort an out of court settlement.

I have remained of the view the grievances I experienced should be brought to the attention of the NSW Parliament rather than for my financial gain and confidential has not been entertained.

I am of the person view Teachers should not be subjected to the treatment I experienced simply for reporting issues associated with Youth Rural Crime.

Extract from reply received on 20 January 2020 to concerns raised under my requirements as a mandatory Reporter relating to factors influencing youth crime in December 2020

**Attachment 3** 

#### Conclusion

I ask the committee in their role of reviewing how 'government departments' can help address rural crime, that the very responsibilities of those engaged in NSW Regional Youth is scrutinized.

I don't believe the current method of handling the teacher's concerns by The Department of Education is sufficient.

I also don't believe classroom teachers should be deprived of wages in the order of hundreds of thousands of dollars for performing their duty, which is an acceptable state of affairs.

I have retained thousands and thousands of documents on these issues and happy to provide sufficient documents to support any claims and am willing to discuss this matter further

(Attachment 2) – 2022 Assignment highlight challenges in Regional Youth Crime Management.



Schools need to learn lessons from the Christchurch Mosque attack

NSPO8007 – National Security Concepts and Methods

Assignment 2

Student

8<sup>th</sup> May 2022

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### **Assignment 2**

NSPO8007 – National Security Concepts and Methods

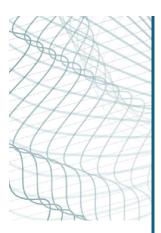
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ANU Crawford School of Public Policy National Security College

Word count 3015

## Analytical Essay

Schools need to learn lessons from the Christchurch Mosque attack



#### **Task**

#### Summary:

Select one of the following questions and answer it with a 3000 word analytical essay. All answers should be analytical essays with Introductions that provide succinct summaries of the paper, arguments that build on the conceptual elements of the course and which have supporting empirical evidence, and which consider and address counterarguments, and conclusions that not only summarise the paper but spell out its policy implications and perhaps also touch on follow up areas of research. References provided in the body of the paper count toward the word limit but a reference list at the end will not.

- 2. Many have argued that if we cannot learn from history we will be doomed to repeat past mistakes. What does study of the past teach us about contemporary National Security challenges? Identify a current security challenge and specify what a potentially relevant historical episode does(n't) tell us about how to address it.



# Schools need to learn lessons from the Christchurch Mosque attack

#### Introduction

Arguably it is foreseen that a teenage 'lone wolf' violent extremist committing a significant act of terror on Australian soil in the near future is not only plausible but likely. 'Lone-wolf' attacks by violent teenager extremists already hold precedence within Australia: In September 2014, Australia experienced the Endeavour Hills stabbing by 18-year-old Numan Haider (Davey 2016). In October 2015, 15-year-old Farhad Khalil shot a Police employee in Parramatta (Ralston *et al.* 2015), and in April 2017 a pair of 15 and 16-year-olds boys were involved in a stabbing attack in Queanbeyan (ABC 2017). Of concern for Australia is the number of youths involved in those incidents under the age of 18 has escalated (ABC 2016; AFP 2016; ABC 2017; Aust. Ass Press 2018; McGoan 2020).

Since the early 2000's the threat was al-Qaeda recruiting Australians to 'spread terror.' In the 2010s it became Sunni-Islamist which adopted al-Qaeda methods, yielding increasing rates of recruitment including youth (Angus 2016). In response, The Office of Attorney General, introduced a landmark national framework aimed at addressing the issue of radicalized youth, the 2015 'Living Safe Together' initiative (Attorney General 2015). This initiative aimed to identify and support school-aged youth at risk of radicalization. The primary focus of the strategy was utilizing existing networks to engage with communities, supporting them to find solutions to challenges arising from multiculturism.

It will be argued within this paper that with the recent rise of right-wing ideologies as outlined in Campion (2022), there is an urgent need within the National Security environment to learn from the Christchurch Mosque shootings. We need to apply lessons learned in New Zealand to Australian strategies like the 'Living Safe Together initiatives so that our security responses may remain relevant into the future. Specifically, this paper aims to identify how processes to identify radicalized youth can remain effective in the face of a changing terrorist environment; and, secondly, if reporting systems designed to protect Australians from a potential violent extremist attack will continue in the face of new challenges.

This paper will argue that terrorism is never static, and as such security policies introduced in schools need to constantly evolve. Indeed, terrorists adjust their tactics to achieve their goals based on past attacks.

#### **Youth Radicalisation in Context**

The prevalence and threat of increasing numbers of young people radicalized and engaging in violent extremism<sup>1</sup> is recognized internationally. The FBI in 2016 reported in 'Preventing Violent extremism in Schools:'

Youth are embracing many forms of violent extremism; those perpetrated by terrorist organizations or other domestic violent extremist movements, to those maintaining biases towards others due to their race, religion, or sexual orientation. Youth aged 13 – 18 are actively engaged in extremist activities including online communication with known extremists, traveling to conflict zones, conducting recruitment activities, or supporting plotting against U.S. targets. (FBI 2016)

Australians became familiar with al-Qaeda terrorism methods including the use of lone-wolf attackers from around 2001. However, it was not until the 2010s that Australians became increasingly aware of the Islamic State having recruited Australian youth as young as 13 thirteen (Burke 2021). More recently, Australians are observing a rise of individuals who hold right-wing ideology (Campion 2020; Walters *et al.* 2021).

In contrast, Angus (2016) argues violent extremism occurs when "a person or a group decides that fear, terror and violence are justified to achieve ideological, political or social change, and acts accordingly."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> It is important to define the difference between radicalisation and violent extremism. The Australian Government's 2015 Living Safe Together defines radicalisation as:

<sup>&</sup>quot;Radicalisation happens when a person's thinking and behaviour become significantly different from how most members of the society and community view social issues and participate politically.

Violent extremism is an extension of radicalisation. Violent extremism is the physical expression of a radicalized person to achieve their goal.

In fact, the magnitude of the problem of youth-radicalisation in Australia isn't known publicly (Campbell 2022). The scope of the problem was only recently outlined by Australian Security and Intelligence Office Director General, Mick Burgess, in his "2022 Annual Threat Assessment.' Within his address he detailed:

- 1) "The most likely terrorist attack scenario over the next 12 months continues to be a lone-actor attack."
- 2) "The number of minors being radicalized is getting higher and the age of minors being radicalized is getting lower."
- 3) "Online radicalisation is nothing new, but COVID-19 sent it into overdrive.

  Isolated individuals spent more time online, exposed to extremist messaging, misinformation, and conspiracy theories."
- 4) "And in some cases, it accelerated extremists' progression on the radicalisation pathway towards violence." (Burgess 2022)

Burgess (2022) also reported the rise in youth radicalisation forced the portion of ASIO staff dealing with youth "to rise from a historical level of two or three percent of the caseload to fifteen percent more recently." Notably, current cases are reported as 'becoming more intense in their extremism.'

Open-source studies on the topic demonstrates the majority of the arrests are related to Sunni Islamists, such as the 15-year-old Farhad Khalil, the Islamic State-inspired terrorist who shot to death a NSW Police Force employee in 2015 (ABC 2016; Lowe 2020). However, this may not represent the complete picture as current legislation impedes transparency<sup>2</sup>. Open-source researchers do not have access to a complete picture of violent youth extremists (Campbell 2022). Their motivation and actions, or evidence of the scale of radicalisation.

"Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987, s. 15A; Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, ss. 104 and 105; Young Offenders Act 1997, s. 65. stipulate media are allowed to stay and report. But media must not identify children named or otherwise involved. The Court may also close proceedings. Rarely does the Court allow the identification of children aged 16 or over."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> It is difficult to gauge the exact nature of the threat Australia faces. Publicly ascertaining the extent to which radicalisation and violent extremism incidents involving Australian youth is difficult. Cases like Farhad Khalil's are not the norm in that the identities, and occasionally the crimes of teenage violent extremist perpetrators are protected by various State legislation. For example, in NSW, Pearson 2014 reports

If we look closely at the aspect of right-wing extremism, penetration of the NSW National Party 'Young Nationals' by the far-right neo-Nazi group The Lad Society, led by Tom Sewell (McGowan 2018), raised serious concerns about the scale of the problem. Particularly given Sewell was in contact with the Brenton Harrison Tarrant, the Christchurch Mosque shooter (McGowan 2020), who was also Australia's first right-wing mass shooting terrorist. It is not known publicly how far the reach of that or other groups spreads.

For the purpose of this paper, we will presume the risk of attack is equal between that of a religious-inspired extremist and a politically motivated extremist.

#### Australia's initial response to radicalized youth.

In 2015 to address the emerging issue of radicalized youth, the Attorney-General released the 'Living Safe Together' initiative (Attorney-General 2015). The intention was for the community to work together to supplement law enforcement, security, and intelligence agents' efforts to identify radicalized individuals before they become extremists (Acil 2019). Practitioners such as religious leaders, teachers, doctors, police, and others who regularly engage or interact with youth were asked to identify behaviours of concern or report individuals they perceive as being radicalized (Barracosa *et al.* 2022). The focus was prevention.

Within schools, the response from educators as to how they engaged with the 'Living Safe Together' initiative depended on which State or education system they were a part of (Berin 2016). In the Australian education system, Primary and Secondary Education is predominately the responsibility of the State and Territory<sup>3</sup>, and Australia-wide agreements regarding Primary and Secondary education are not the norm.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>33</sup> 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Each State or Territory is responsible for legislation which governs student curriculum and managing the accreditation of the school system. There is no single education provider or single education curriculum within Australia, despite attempt to make such. Education services are offered by a mix of State funded education providers for public schools, and Commonwealth funding for Individual private schools, and 'a singular' or 'regionally based' religious school(s) operating independently from each other.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> When national education initiatives take place, they do so though forums such as the Council of Australian Governments. Such joint meetings of heads of State result in the development of 'foundation documents' such as the Melbourne Declaration (MECHA 2008) that will go onto provide the framework for what States will legislate for their various education providers to implement.

To support the efforts of the Attorney-General, each State or Territory established relevant legislation to facilitate the goals of the 'Living Safe Together' initiative (Angus 2016; WA DET 2015). The responsibility then became that of each school (or school cluster) within the State to develop its own policies to address radicalisation. The key point is that within the Australian context, no 'one size fits all' model was adopted in schools.

#### How Schools responded to the 2015 youth radicalisation

As no 'one size fits all model' was adopted in 2015. let us consider the NSW Department of Education's response. NSWDET introduced 'School Communities Working Together Management Guidelines.' (Van de Zandt 2021, NSWDET 2018) This policy focused on teachers learning to:

- recognizing early warning signs of radicalisation, (predominately ISIS based threats), and
- ii) explaining reporting processes if a school community member who has noticed signs, or holds concerns of radicalised youth.

In practice, the policy focused on Islamic State threats current in 2015 (Van de Zandt 2021). The policy required concerned School community members NOT to investigate reports or concerns of radicalisation other than to notify the School Principal. Concerned school community members were also informed they must also NOT contact the National Security Hotline about the matters identified.

Within the NSWDET, all notifications were to be made to the Principal who will report the matter to a DET Incident Reporting and Support Hotline – a division of the Health and Safety Directorate, staffed dedicated department seconded police officer responsible for assessing concerns, and where relevant, notifying their security counterparts.

#### **Issues arising**

Open-source documents drew criticism of the implementation of the 'Living Safe Together' program. It was claimed the program was religiously focused, targeted towards stopping the radicalisation of Islamic youth at the expense of others. Concerns raised by the Muslim community appeared as reoccurring reports within the Australian media (Lowe 2022, Gartrell

et al 2015). In fact, Gartrell (2015) identified funding of Government community grants was solely given to Islamic groups.

Notably, in the New Zealand Royal Commission into the Christchurch Mosque shooting, New Zealand Muslims reported a similar experience and believed the focus of law enforcement, security and intelligence agencies was addressing Islamic extremists with little attention placed on other risks (Young 2020).

This is a critical aspect of this paper. In 2015, in Australia, just as in New Zealand, arguably the ISIS threats overshadowed planning of radicalisation responses being introduced to schools. That is, education bureaucrats – both public and private, here, and abroad were motivated to prevent religious-based terror cases which were happening at the time. They were narrowly focused on stopping potential attacks by Islamic State extremists.

The problem being presented here is that because no 'one size fits all model' was adopted within the education sector in 2015, individual school efforts to deal with radicalisation were developed without sufficient consideration of right-wing attacks, as had been reported by Anon (2012) in the 2011 Norwegian attacks.

Such focus on Islamic-related terrorisms meant little consideration was given to developing a security package that had a wide spectrum focus suitable for to manage long-term security threats. Particularly attacks such as politically motivated extremists utilizing high technology weapons.

It is worth considering during the decade of the 2010s, 56% of Islamic State terrorist attacks were carried out by lone-wolf extremists who utilized low-tech weaponry (Winter 2021). Winter (2021) further detailed that their weaponry involved little more than a kitchen knife acquired at a discount shop, as in the case of the London Bridge attacks.

When the right-wing attacks took place in Christchurch, the terrorist utilized drone technology to investigate the mosque days before the attack He researched the event schedule of the mosque. Purchased high-powered weaponry and ammunition, wrote a manifesto and live-streamed his attack (ABC 2019, Young 2020).

The problem for Australia is that many of the policies that exist within schools are aimed at addressing low tech terrorism-based attacks by Islamic extremists (Van de Zandt, 2021; Burgin 2016). Many aspects of the security issues considered and introduced in 2015 have changed and therefore school policies are outdated and need to adapt to the changing security environment.

Some education officials may argue existing policies can be applied universally, to identify political extremists, just as they can to the religious extremists, however, it must be considered the rollout by the schools saw efforts to tackle radicalisation were based in metropolitan regions where the majority of Mosques are located (Gartrell 2015).

Country areas witnessed minimal formal training in 2015. When considering right-wing extremists, there also remains the issue that country students have greater access to high-tech weapons through their proximity to agricultural businesses (for example, ammonium fertilizers and diesel, guns, and commercially available mammalicides like Quickphos<sup>TM</sup>). In addition, analysis of government representation for rural areas demonstrated rural residents tend to lean political right. Notably, there is limited data to qualify an assertion that regional proximity influences right wing radicalisation, however, it is worth highlighting the Christchurch terrorist grew up and lived in a non-metropolitan area. This is an area of research.

Additional issues also persists in the NSW educational context. In the context of brevity, these are listed below:

- 1) 7 years have passed since teachers undertook mandatory online training to identify and report radicalisation. (No retraining has taken place)
- 2) School have experience changes in staffing (executive, teachers, support staff).
- 3) Workplace demands during the Covid-19 pandemic required teachers to focus on different aspects of their role normal teaching. Routines were interrupted and forgotten.
- 4) Australian teachers have received no training related to of the right-wing radicalization.
- 5) No formal research conducted to assess the competency of the staff with regards to perception, attitudes or capacity to manage radialisation.
- 6) No drills take place to simulate and train staff.

7) There is no procedure in place to ensure if a staff member was to register a concern with a School Principal, if that concern had indeed been lodged.

#### **Nationally**

It must be considered the case study of NSW schools is not representative of all Australia schools. It simple represents one school system in one state. Significant flexibility was afforded to Australian Schools to introduce their own policies in 2015. All require review. Furthermore, given the sheer number of independent, religious school, and home school programs that exist within Australia, questions remain as to the quality of the initial policies introduced in 2015. Was every policy comprehensive? Was sufficient oversight provided to every school or school system? Did every policy consider future risks of radicalisation? Are records audited?

#### What lessons NSW Schools can learn from the Christchurch attack

Drawing from the NZ Royal Commission which presented its 792 page report to the New Zealand Government on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020, 44 broad recommendations<sup>5</sup> were made to prevent future attacks (Young 2020). Many of the recommendations have relevance to the Australian education context.

The main focus of New Zealand, just as in Australia, is that they continue to remain committed to a model of a community work together to identify radicalized individuals. Identification of radicalized individuals is not solely the responsibility of law enforcement, security and intelligence.

This paper has argued the need for the review of existing policies within schools to ensure security efforts continue to meet the needs of society. There is a further case for all reviews to look closely and consider recommendations that can be transpired from the Christchurch Mosque attacks. More work ned to be done in this area.

#### **Future research**

For Australia to ensure the schools are prepared to address a changing environment of radicalisation, we must ensure school educators have the capacity to learn from past events and ensure they revise who they report and comprehend security threats.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The list of full recommendations can be accessed via https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/the-report/executive-summary-2/summary-of-recommendations/

To achieve this goal security personnel and schools need to share more information. Cooperation between Australia's Security Organization's and educators via an academics collecting, analysing and reporting declassified information publicly for Primary and Secondary educators will no doubt assist educators in their responsibility to provide a safe school environment (Education Standards Authority 2015) and therefore strength of internal policies around radicalization.

Topics needing improved communication:

- 1) Case studies of how radicalized teenagers were identified.
- 2) What staff need to look for as security threats change
- 3) Case studies on methods utilized to address radicalized individuals and their comparative success rates. The basic principles of what is being done, what percentage or radicalized students are reformed.

Academic research needs to take place to qualify and quantify:

- 4) Staff perception toward the broader threat posed by radicalization.
- 5) Identification of youth radicalisation methods, and how to identify who is potentially at risk of evolving form of radicalisation and signs educators should be aware.
- 6) Monitoring and analysis of how often staff report concerns, and factors deterring staff from reporting concerns or why critical information is withheld.
- 7) Analysis of the various training programs which exist to ensure content is relevant to current security challenges
- 8) Analysis of if staff understand reporting students and their community obligations?
- 9) Auditing of existing school-based policies and procedures to deal with radicalisation.

#### **Conclusion**

Terrorism is forever evolving, and security efforts such as those introduced in schools need to constantly evolve to meet the challenges our country faces. Given it is foreseen that a teenage 'lone wolf' violent extremist committing a significant act of terror on Australian soil in the near future is not only plausible but likely, the key recommendation of this paper is that considerably more effort needs to be made within the context of schools to address radicalisation. The concentration of resources towards Islamic Extremists needs review to ensure schools are adequately equipped to fulfill their community expectations in helping to identify a wide range of radicalised youth. To achieve this goal reforms within the education sector are needed.

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