



AVERT International
Research Symposium
Democracy, Dissent and
Countering Violent Extremism

26 – 28 September 2023
Melbourne, Australia

www.avert.net.au

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Welcome

Welcome to the 2023 AVERT International Research Symposium, held at Deakin University Downtown Campus in Melbourne, Australia. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we gather, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations, and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future.

This year's symposium theme is *Democracy, Dissent and Countering Violent Extremism*. The counterterrorism and countering violent extremism frameworks of many democracies were established in the immediate post-9/11 context and evolved to address threats from both foreign terrorist organisations and their home-grown manifestations. Today, democracies around the world are facing additional challenges such as increasing polarisation, declining trust in institutions and governments, and growing adherence to anti-government conspiracies. This has contributed to the growth of more diverse and complex violent extremism organisations and networks. It has also resulted in the emergence of a wide array of anti-democratic political and social movements, as well as individuals who are mobilised by a complex range of anti-government and sometimes anti-democratic sentiments and ideas.

These recent shifts in the violent extremist landscape mean that existing preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) programs and frameworks are being challenged to consider whether and how they should address these new and more volatile dynamics. Yet the roots and potential solutions to these anti-democratic manifestations arguably go well beyond P/CVE paradigms. So, what role, if any, do P/CVE policies and programs play in this environment?

How can we better understand how and why these anti-democratic social movements emerge and take shape? How do we deal with dissenting social movements in democratic societies that advocate for violence, engage in intentional violent protest or whose actions undermine social cohesion and core democratic principles and processes? Where should we draw the line between legitimate democratic dissent, on the one hand, and extremism on the other, in democratic societies where individuals expect to be able to exercise their right to protest and contest both the state and each other? What are the implications of these issues for P/CVE practitioners and policymakers?

The 2023 AVERT International Research Symposium will engage with the latest research and practice perspectives on this theme. In keeping with AVERT's mission as a research network of scholars and practitioners focused on generating new knowledge and understanding of terrorism and violent extremism, we bring together Australian and international academics, practitioners and policymakers at the forefront of the field to present and invite critical dialogue on their recent thinking, evidence and insights on these issues. As part of this year's program, we are delighted to welcome two keynote presentations, from Professor Donatella della Porta (Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy) and Professor Joel Busher (Coventry University, UK).

The 2023 AVERT International Research Symposium is convened by the AVERT (Addressing Violent Extremism and Radicalisation to Terrorism) Research Network (www.avert.net.au), with generous sponsorship funding from the Australian Government's Department of Home Affairs.

Our warmest thanks to all our symposium speakers and participants for joining us, whether locally, from interstate or from overseas, over the next three days of dynamic intellectual and practical inquiry and dialogue on the symposium's key themes and questions.

Professor Michele Grossman AM and Lydia Khalil
Co-Convenors, AVERT Research Network

2023 AVERT International Research Symposium Organising Committee (alphabetical order): Dr Nell Bennett, Emma Degnian, Mark Duckworth PSM, Dr Benjamin Freeman, Professor Michele Grossman AM, Lydia Khalil, Associate Professor Mario Peucker, Shannon Turnbull, Dr Helen Young.

Symposium Venue

Deakin Downtown

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Directions

1. Enter Tower 2, Collins Square via the Collins Street entrance underneath the yellow geometric Sculpture.
2. Make your way across the lobby floor towards the escalators on the right-hand side.
3. Ascend the escalators and turn left, following signage to the elevators.
4. Select Level 12 on the touch screen and wait to be allocated an elevator letter and then make your way to the corresponding elevator door.
5. Upon arrival to Level 12, turn right and proceed through the glass sliding doors where you will find our reception desk.
6. If you require further assistance in accessing Level 12, please consult the Information Desk in the lobby of Tower 2.

Transport

Deakin Downtown is accessible via public transport. Southern Cross train station is 350m from Collins Square and has coach services to/from Melbourne Airport. Collins Square is also directly opposite tram stop D15: Batmans Hill Drive / Collins Square.

Symposium Program Tuesday 26 September

Note: Listed times are for Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST) in Melbourne (GMT+10).

Arrival and Registration

08:30 – 09:00

Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country

09:00 – 09:15

Symposium Opening Remarks

09:15 – 09:30

Department of Home Affairs

Session 1: Mainstreaming Extremism

09:30 – 10:50

Lawful Extremism

J.M. Berger

Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism, Middlebury Institute of International Studies

Greg Johnson's Dissident Right Metapolitics and Australian Far-Right Extremists

Dr Alex Burns

Monash University

Mainstreaming Radicals: A Perspective from Pakistan

Dr Khuram Iqbal

Macquarie University

Morning Tea

10:50 – 11:20

Session 2: Extremism, Populism and Hate

11:20 – 12:10

De-escalating Hate: Sikh Separatism, Hindu Nationalism, and the Shadow of Communal Violence Among Australia's Indian Communities

Dr Malcolm Haddon

Multicultural NSW

Delineating the Limits of Legitimacy: Hateful Extremism, Populism, and Far-right Supremacism in Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia and the United States

Professor Greg Barton

Deakin University

Session 3: Reimagining Society Through Extremist Narratives

12:10 – 13:00

Needs, Narratives, Networks: Understanding Militant Wellness

Dr Vivian Gerrand
Deakin University

Understanding Extremism Through Political Fictions

Dr Helen Young and Associate Professor Geoff Boucher
Deakin University

Lunch

13:00 – 14:00

Session 4: Keynote (Pre-recorded)

14:00 – 15:00

When Does Dissent Cross the Line into Violence? Exploring No-Vax Narratives and Anti-Government Extremism

Interview with Professor Donatella della Porta, *Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy*
Dr Vivian Gerrand and Dr Matteo Vergani
Deakin University

Session 5: Boundary-riding: Anti-government Movements and Extremist Ideologies 1

15:00 – 15:50

Understanding the Potential Threat from Sovereign Citizens in Australia: Extremism? Violent Extremism? Or Both?

Associate Professor Josh Roose
Deakin University

Anti-Government Extremism in Australia: Understanding the Australian Freedom Movement as a Complex Anti-Government Social Movement

Lydia Khalil
Deakin University

Afternoon Tea

15:50 – 16:20

Session 6: Boundary-riding: Anti-government Movements and Extremist Ideologies 2

16:20 – 17:10

Exploring Patterns of Online Anti-Government Threat Narratives among Non-Violent Extremists in the UK: The Cases of CAGE UK, Patriotic Alternative and Extinction Rebellion

Dr Elisa Orofino, Dr William Allchorn, and Ms Julia Jones
Anglia Ruskin University, UK

Participation in Anti-authority Protest and Links with Grievances, Conspiracy Theories and Radicalisation

Anthony Morgan, Dr Timothy Cubitt, and Isabella Voce
Australian Institute of Criminology

Session 7: Understanding Contemporary Extremist Actors

17:10 – 18:00

The Changing Violent Extremist Cohort: Who Are They, What Do They Believe, and How Do They Act on Their Beliefs?

Dr Melanie Mitchell and Shannon Atkins

Queensland Corrective Services

The Whole is Greater than the Sum of its Parts: Risk and Protective Profiles for Vulnerability to Radicalisation

Dr Caitlin Clemmow

University College London, UK

Closing Remarks

18:00 – 18:05

Networking Reception

18:05 – 19:00

Wednesday 27 September

Arrival

08:30 – 09:00

Housekeeping

09:00 – 09:05

Session 8: Keynote

09:05 – 10:05

How relevant is P/CVE in Today's Changing Threat Landscape?

Professor Joel Busher

Coventry University, UK

Session 9: Countering Extremist Harms to Democracies

10:05 – 10:55

A Massively Parallel Strategy for Combating Violent Extremism and Related Threats to Democracy

Dr Guy Burgess and Dr Heidi Burgess

Beyond Intractability, Colorado, USA

Maintaining a Healthy Democracy: Results from an Experiment in Countering Extremist Disinformation in the Pandemic

Associate Professor David Malet

American University, Washington DC, USA

Morning Tea

10:55 – 11:25

Session 10: Democracy, Activism and Violent Extremism (Panel)

11:25 – 12:45

Democratic Activism, Repression, and Violent Extremism: Empirical Inter-relationships in Australia

Professor Winnifred Louis and Charlie Pittaway

University of Queensland

Social and Temporal Predictors of Pro- and Anti-democratic Attitudes and Support for Political Violence

Charlie Pittaway and Professor Winnifred Louis

University of Queensland

A Network Analysis of Conventional and Radical Behaviours Within Groups

Dr Susilo Wibisono, Mengyao (Linda) Li, and Professor Winnifred Louis

University of Queensland

Criminalization of Climate Change Protest

Dr Robyn Gulliver, Dr Robin Banks, Professor Kelly Fielding, and Professor Winnifred Louis

University of Tasmania, University of Queensland, and Greenpeace Australia

Session 11: Defining the Line: The Spread of Disinformation, Misinformation and Violent Extremist Content

12:45 – 13:35

The Spread of Misinformation and Conspiracy Theories: Lessons from COVID-19

Dr Rachel Sharples and Professor Kevin Dunn
Western Sydney University

Exploring the Legal Red Line Against Spreading Violent Extremist Content in Australia: What It Means for Individuals, Traditional Media and Film?

Rita Jabri Markwell
Birchgrove Legal

Lunch

13:35 – 14:35

Session 12: Policy Challenges for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism

14:35 – 15:55

The New Hybrid Threat Landscape as a Challenge to Current P/CVE Policies in Scandinavia

Professor Sissel Haugdal Jore
University of Stavanger, Norway

Indonesia's National Action Plan on Countering Violent Extremism (RAN PE): The Case of Local Government Implementation

Libasut Taqwa
Wahid Foundation, Indonesia

The Importance of Trust in Government Policies for Preventing Violent Extremism

Dr Christine Horn and Mark Duckworth
Deakin University

Break

15:55 – 16:05

Session 13: Extremism and Democratic Erosion

16:05 – 17:25

Democracy Pakistani Style: Violence and Extremism in Political Narratives in Pakistan

Kashif Hussain and Emeritus Professor Howard Brasted
University of New England, Armidale

Democratic Erosion: A Result or Part of the Problem?

Dr Ibolya Losoncz
Australian National University

Radical Right-wing Terrorism and the Erosion of Democratic Institutions: Exploring the Radical Motivation Behind the January 8, 2023 Brazilian Riots

Dr Enio Viterbo Martins
University of Coimbra, Portugal

Closing Remarks

17:25 – 17:30

Thursday 28 September

Arrival

08:30 – 09:00

Housekeeping

09:00 – 09:05

Session 14: Gendering Extremism

09:05 – 10:25

Connecting Hate Groups: The Role of Traditionalist Gender Narratives

Dr Victoria Tait-Signal, Dr Erika Peter, and Dr Dominique Laferrière
Defence Research and Development Canada

The Role of Misinformation and Perceived Male Victimhood in Shaping Anti-Government Online Behaviour Among Adult Men

Dr Matteo Vergani and Haily Tran
Deakin University

‘Don’t Say Gay’: An Examination of Anti-LGBTQ+ Rhetoric by ISIS and the Far Right

Assistant Professor Jared Dmello, Professor Mia Bloom, and Dr Sophia Moskalenko
Sam Houston State University and Georgia State University, USA

Morning Tea

10:25 – 10:55

Session 15: Digital Threats to Democracy

10:55 – 11:50

Digital Threats to Democracy and the NSW Government: Translating CVE Theory into Policy Action

Pia van de Zandt and Lydia Khalil
Premier’s Department NSW and Deakin University

Online Challenges for Election Integrity: Case Studies from the 2023 NSW Election

Purpose

Closing Remarks

11:50 – 12:00

Lunch

12:00 – 13:00

Presentation Abstracts

Tuesday 26 September

Session 1: Mainstreaming Extremism

Lawful Extremism

J.M. Berger

Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism, Middlebury Institute of International Studies

Academics often define extremism as a set of beliefs that fall outside the norms of the society in which they are situated, but entire societies have at times been organized around recognizably extremist beliefs. This paper will examine the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Scott v. Sandford* (1857), more commonly known as the Dred Scott Decision. Widely considered the worst Supreme Court decision of all time, the opinion written by Justice Roger Taney decreed that Black people, whether enslaved or free, could never become citizens of the United States and that they had no rights under the Constitution. This paper will analyze the decision to show how it implements and institutionalizes many commonly recognized tropes of extremist ideology. The paper will conclude with a discussion of the urgent need for empirical frameworks that enable and empower the study of lawful extremism, including the complications that lawful extremism and extremist capture of democratic states present for societal efforts to counter extremism.

Greg Johnson's Dissident Right Metapolitics and Australian Far-Right Extremists

Dr Alex Burns

Monash University

How do Australian far-right extremists leverage their ideological capital to form links and achieve greater reputational / social status with trans-national extremist networks? This paper critically examines how the white nationalist metapolitical thinker Greg Johnson has used his website Counter-Currents to attempt to rehabilitate the ideological reputation of Australian far-right extremists, including Australia's Blair Cottrell. I situate Johnson's strategy as an attempt to broaden his (de-platformed) website's appeal to far-right and identitarian thinkers globally, and to provide a more favourable ideological positioning when compared to academic research and mainstream media representations. I contrast Johnson's discussions with Cottrell about the late libertarian thinker Thomas Szasz with the white nationalist leader Thomas Sewell; the National Vanguard website editor Bradford Hanson, and Neokrat website editor Colin Liddell, an Alt-Right thinker who is deeply critical of Johnson, Cottrell, and Sewell. The paper's case study will highlight how contestation, legitimization, and attempted delegitimation strategies evolve rapidly in far-right and identitarian extremist networks. Implications for intelligence analysts, law enforcement, and social cohesion policymakers will be summarised.

Mainstreaming Radicals: A Perspective from Pakistan

Honorary Associate Professor Khuram Iqbal

Macquarie University

Democratic processes worldwide face mounting challenges due to the increasing infiltration of radical organizations. With a "Hybrid Regime", Pakistan has also witnessed various officially designated terrorist organizations trying to subvert a fragile democratic process by morphing into political entities. Prominent among these cases is Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, a UN-designated terrorist organization known for strong ideological and operational links with Al-Qaeda. The proposed paper aims to explore whether existing preventing and countering violent extremism frameworks such as the UN-led Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) and the states-led De-radicalization, Disengagement and Reintegration of Violent Extremists (DDRVE) adequately explain the transition of terrorist organizations into the political arena. It is argued, based on the case study of LeT, that the lack of organizational consensus, failure to reach an ideological consensus over renouncing violence and endorsing democracy, and uncondusive domestic and international political environments are the strongest predictors of difficulty in achieving successful transformation outside a formal DDR program.

Session 2: Extremism, Populism and Hate

De-escalating Hate: Sikh Separatism, Hindu Nationalism, and the Shadow of Communal Violence Among Australia's Indian Communities

Dr Malcolm Haddon

Multicultural NSW

The democratic rights and freedoms available to migrant and refugee communities in Australia, and other Western democracies, can provide opportunities for dissent in relation to foreign states or regimes that might not otherwise be available in their countries of origin. Newfound freedoms can give voice to the collective trauma of violence and persecution and open a new space for activism, protest and peacebuilding. The expression of dissent can also be a cause of conflict within migrant communities when competing loyalties to the home country come into play, and conflict is always fertile ground for extremism. This paper examines the recent escalation of communal tensions among Australia's Indian communities relating to the activities of a resurgent Sikh separatist Khalistan movement and an emboldened far-right Hindu nationalist movement. It reflects a practitioner's perspective on strategies to de-escalate local tensions during a three-year series of incidents involving violence and intimidation, protests and clashes, threats and accusations in which the shadow of communal violence and extremism in India has come to threaten community harmony and community safety and the good reputation of an otherwise model migrant community in Australia. It attempts to describe a problem that is not easily categorised by current policy frameworks and challenges any neat demarcation between domestic and foreign policy.

Delineating the limits of legitimacy: hateful extremism, populism, and far-right supremacism in Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia and the United States

Professor Greg Barton

Deakin University

When far-right supremacism tips into full-blown fascism, openly rejecting electoral democracy and advocating violent measures in the name of militant nationalism, it is readily identifiable and the case for rejecting it as illegitimate becomes clearcut. By this point, however, in a worst-case scenario, the rise of fascism can be difficult to arrest. But even when there is no immediate danger of supremacist politicking crossing into actual fascism and toppling democracy, far-right supremacism can nevertheless threaten the quality of democracy, erode trust and degrade social cohesion. At what point does this begin to occur, and when does political activism and speech become dangerously illegitimate, even if not unambiguously illegal? Drawing on examples from contemporary Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia, and the United States of America this paper sets out the case for drawing the line at hateful extremism, when dehumanising hate speech and supremacist narratives are regularly and deliberately employed to demonise and diminish the other in a calculated fashion. This has long been a dark presence in western democracies where the unvanquished ghosts of slavery and colonial racism continue to terrorise. It is not limited, however, to white supremacism. Toxic ultra-nationalism and hateful extremism represent threats to open societies everywhere, especially when amplified and justified by the forces of populism, religious identity politics, and hateful culture-war moral panics demonising minorities. The narratives and metaphors of Christianity and Islam alike can be distorted and weaponised in the construction of hateful extremism, and mass sentiment cynically manipulated and exploited in a perniciously destructive fashion.

Session 3: Reimagining Society Through Extremist Narratives

Needs, Narratives, Networks: Understanding Militant Wellness

Dr Vivian Gerrand

Deakin University

Wellness communities, long-time proponents of alternative health practices, have been shaped by conspiracy thinking prior to COVID-19. However, the pandemic and infodemic have intensified this trend. Protests against public health regulations designed to contain the pandemic have revealed a growing phenomenon. Right-wing extremist movements based on conspiracy theories are intersecting with

elements of Western wellness communities by drawing on a longer history of enmeshment between discourses of moral and spiritual virtue, white supremacy, ideological purity, and essentialist understandings of gender and bodily health. Built around a shared propensity to conspiracism (particularly belief in conspiracies around public health measures), distrust in institutions and government, pseudoscience, rejection of the biomedical model, and Darwinian notions of survival of the fittest, these novel formations represent an increasingly urgent yet understudied phenomenon within scholarship on extremist movements. Adherents to conspiracy and extreme wellness movements are readily dismissed as unstable. Yet the motivations driving their trajectories of radicalisation are both highly complex and context-dependent, requiring detailed and critically empathetic analysis of the narratives, networks and nuances that inform their pathways into militant radicalisation. This presentation considers the experiences of allied and alternative health practitioners in Victoria, Australia, of living through more than 200 days of lockdown and the ways in which the Victorian government's response to the pandemic impacted them and their communities. Through in-depth interviews with wellness adherents undertaken for an Australian pilot study on different forms of extremism that emerged in response to the COVID-19 crisis, this presentation considers the nature of these novel intersections and whether and how they might serve as a 'gateway' to more sinister forms of radical right extremism but also what we can learn from their experiences to enhance democracy and public health.

Understanding Extremism Through Political Fictions

Dr Helen Young and Associate Professor Geoff Boucher

Deakin University

From the neo-Nazism of William L. Pierce, Colin Jordan and Harold A. Covington to the accelerationism of James Mason and identitarianism of the French New Right, books are a significant method for dissemination of far-right ideas and positions. The Turner Diaries, Siege and The Camp of the Saints, for instance, are all recognized as having contributed to incitement to extremist violence (Berger 2016; Boucher and Young 2023; Michael 2009; Ravndal 2021; Johnson and Feldman 2023). Under the guise of being 'just' fiction, literature can represent violence, vilification and advocacy for extremist political positions, while circulating freely in online spaces by virtue of digital publishing. Fictions construct seemingly-truthful but nonetheless highly ideological social scenarios that project violent political programs, and these circulate widely in far-right reading lists. A vast raft of novels imagining social collapse and a second American Civil War, for example, circulates online right now. Such material, including authors with known ties to violent groups, circulates widely in the public sphere and can be boosted by commercial sale algorithms (Boucher and Young 2023), effectively serving as political propaganda and demonstrating the capacity of the far-Right to operate in mainstream contexts. This paper argues that the study of such fictions potentially increases understanding of the blurred line between dissent and violent extremism that characterises the contemporary CVE landscape, and which results in significant challenges for police, security services and practitioners. The imaginative scenarios in recent fiction enable detailed analysis of ideological positions, political programs and, critically, the place of violence within them, considering both individual texts and patterns across works by multiple authors. The paper draws on ongoing research by the authors, including a current project funded by the Global Network on Extremism and Technology.

Session 4: Keynote (Pre-recorded)

When Does Dissent Cross the Line into Violence? Exploring No-Vax Narratives and Anti-Government Extremism

Dr Vivian Gerrand and Dr Matteo Vergani

Deakin University

In this conversation, Professor Donatella della Porta will reflect on recent social movements across European contexts that have opposed governments and have been influenced by a mix of conspiracy theories and partial truths. Loss of trust in institutions seems to drive alternative health/no-vax communities to conspiracy-based/anti-political and, in some cases, far-right worldviews. Professor della Porta will consider the role of institutions and governments in restoring and rebuilding trust with these cohorts and provide alternatives to popular conspiracy-based narratives. Considering the term 'anti-government extremism', how do we ensure it doesn't jeopardize the fundamental rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly? Finally, we ask when does legitimate dissent cross the line into

violence? What are the risks and what kinds of violence might emerge, and what might we do to both prepare for and respond to such risks?

Session 5: Boundary-riding: Anti-government Movements and Extremist Ideologies 1

Understanding the potential threat from Sovereign Citizens in Australia: Extremism?

Violent Extremism? Or Both?

Associate Professor Josh Roose

Deakin University

Whilst sovereign citizen movements in various forms have existed in Australia for well over half a century, the Covid-19 pandemic has played a critical role in accelerating the growth of these movements and the evolution of their ideologies in local contexts. First noticeable amongst anti-lockdown freedom protesters for their use of the Red Ensign, Australian sovereign citizens have been highly active in propagating their message – and pseudo-law – over social media, refusing to follow lawful direction, slowing court processes and most recently, disrupting the business of local councils. Of most concern, however, has been the melding of sovereign citizen ideologies with conspiratorial and far-right anti-government movements with strong violent potential. This paper explores why these groups, and the use of pseudo-law has not only emerged but grown in the past few years. It seeks to unpack the appeal of the notion of the ‘sovereign’ and the relationship between individual power (or a lack thereof), trust, and the state. It then considers questions about how sovereign citizens position themselves externally to the state and demonstrate violent potential, yet also use available legal (and pseudo-legal) mechanisms to pursue their aims. The paper concludes by examining the extent of the threat posed by sovereign citizens, particularly in regional Australia.

Anti-Government Extremism in Australia: Understanding the Australian Freedom Movement as a Complex Anti-Government Social Movement

Lydia Khalil

Deakin University

This presentation draws on data and analysis from a recent research publication that explores the emergence and consolidation of various actors and sympathisers into the Australian freedom movement, a diverse, hybrid anti-government movement that emerged during the public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic but has since evolved into a broader complex movement with paradoxical democratic and anti-democratic qualities. Through a qualitative longitudinal analysis of data from the online posts of a prominent branch of the anti-lockdown freedom movement, we identify the movement’s core narratives, motivations, and forms of action, revealing how this social movement developed into a complex movement that combines and conflates anti-institutional, anti-elite sentiments, and anti-government attitudes and beliefs through conspiratorial narratives. Drawing upon interrelated strands of social movement theory and the broader body of research on conspiracy theories, this presentation offers a conceptual framework to understand the movement’s emergence, consolidation, and development. This study furthers our understanding of how conspiracies and disinformation can be utilised and fed into anti-government extremism during times of crisis and emergency.

Session 6: Boundary-riding: Anti-government Movements and Extremist Ideologies 2

Exploring Patterns of Online Anti-Government Threat Narratives among Non-Violent Extremists in the UK: The Cases of CAGE UK, Patriotic Alternative and Extinction Rebellion

Dr Elisa Orofino, Dr William Allchorn, and Julia Jones

Anglia Ruskin University, UK

Online extremism has become one of the most pressing threats in the UK. Several violent episodes occurred over the last decade - mostly perpetrated by online self-radicalised individuals. These individuals usually start their path towards violent extremism by accessing material posted by non-violent extremist groups – or what we conceptualise as vocal extremists - who legally disseminate hateful ideas in the online space. This study responds to a call by academics and practitioners for more research on the metastatisation of vocal extremism during the COVID-19 pandemic and after, looking at the time period of 2019-21. Using key cases of hateful extremism in the UK (i.e. Patriotic Alternative, CAGE UK and Extinction Rebellion), this study is the first to examine threat and anti-government narratives across different non-violent but extreme ideologies to identify common recruitment strategies, ideological appeals and mobilisation effects in the current, (post)pandemic period. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, the researchers have analysed relevant online data from two social media platforms: Facebook and Twitter. In addition to this a bespoke dataset of offline mobilisations has been created to map how these online anti-government appeals have manifested in offline activity.

Participation in Anti-authority Protest and Links with Grievances, Conspiracy Theories and Radicalisation

Anthony Morgan, Dr Timothy Cubitt, and Isabella Voce

Australian Institute of Criminology

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic coincided with an increase in anti-authority protest by individuals driven by a range of ideologies. Some of these protests have posed a genuine threat to community safety and resulted in violent clashes with law enforcement. This research aimed to better understand the motives and characteristics of people who engaged in anti-authority protests. Using data from a large survey of more than 13,000 online Australians and follow-up interviews with protesters, we examined the role of grievances and the presence of risk and protective factors for cognitive and behavioural radicalisation among individuals who participated in an anti-authority protest since early 2020. Anti-authority protesters were motivated by strong personal grievances based on perceived negative experiences and deterioration of their personal circumstances. They were deeply distrustful of institutions, especially politicians and government, and more likely to hold conspiratorial views. They exhibited more risk factors and fewer protective factors for cognitive and behavioural radicalisation than other people. They were also more like to justify violence in support of their cause and willing to engage in violent or unlawful behaviour. The results have important implications for responding to individuals and groups motivated to protest by grievances, inflamed by conspiratorial ideologies and sovereign citizen beliefs, who may be willing to use violence to support their cause.

Session 7: Understanding Contemporary Extremist Actors

The Changing Violent Extremist Cohort: Who are They, What do They Believe, and How do They Act on Their Beliefs?

Dr Melanie Mitchell and Shannon Atkins

Queensland Corrective Services

As the definition of extremism is influenced by new movements and belief systems, the nature of referrals for violent extremism (VE) risk assessment is also anticipated to be dynamic and changeable. Little quantitative research has been conducted to understand the nature of the extremist cohort in the current political environment. We argue that such data is needed to enhance the validity of VE policy development and service provision. This study examined cases referred for VE risk assessment and

explored the motivation for adopting an extremist belief, the function for maintaining the belief, and extremist-related action across ideologies. Terrorists were differentiated from violent extremists. The 'terrorist' group were those who had been charged with terrorism. Violent extremists had a violent extremist ideology but their actions, while violent and driven by ideology, did not result in a terrorism charge. Seventy-eight cases of persons referred for a VE risk assessment were reviewed from 2021 to 2023. After file analysis, the cases were grouped into terrorist (17% of referrals), violent extremist (29%), conspiracy (19%), grievance (9%), and new religious movement (26%). Comparative analysis revealed differences between these groups in relation to criminal history, mental health issues, and age at adopting extremist belief. Embracing an extremist belief system played a different role for each group: for the terrorist group, the belief provided purpose in life; for violent extremists, an extremist ideology validated previously held views (often racist or sexist); and for the conspiracy group, it provided a means to make sense of their place in the world. In this sample, over half (52%) engaged in ideologically-driven violence. The function of violence also differed across groups; ranging from a means to engender political change to a way to protect oneself. It is not asserted that all beliefs discussed meet criteria for VE and the ethical implications of incorrectly labelling someone as a violent extremist are discussed. Rather, this research highlights that the concept of extremist beliefs is broad and enhancing understanding of this variability and the function of beliefs may assist frontline workers in identification of VE, risk analysis, and disengagement strategies.

The Whole is Greater than the Sum of its Parts: Risk and Protective Profiles for Vulnerability to Radicalisation

Dr Caitlin Clemmow

University College London, UK

As the threat landscape continues to evolve, many suggest that P/CVE needs to adapt to newly emerging extremes. In the UK, current practices' remit often involves managing risks beyond what may typically be considered violent extremism; for instance, non-violent extremists, individuals threatening mass shootings, Incels, anti-government extremists, and individuals with no clear ideology. However, we argue that a shared susceptibility underlies many who demonstrate different ideologies, and even different concerning behaviours. Therefore, developing a robust, empirical understanding of 'susceptibility to radicalisation' can help identify the causes of many of the threats managed by P/CVE. Hence this study examines how behavioural indicators co-occur as 'susceptibility profiles' across different domains relevant to risk assessment, and how these profiles impact upon susceptibility to radicalisation. Our results suggest that radicalisation risk emerges fundamentally from the interaction between individual level susceptibilities, and exposure to extremism. Whilst the 'type' of extremism may be different, observable patterns of risk factors suggest an overarching susceptibility to radicalisation. Therefore, we suggest that P/CVE organise around these susceptibility profiles to address the root causes of concerning behaviour, rather than attempting to adapt practice as and when different types of threats emerge.

Wednesday 27 September

Session 8: Keynote

How relevant is P/CVE in today's changing threat landscape?

Professor Joel Busher

Coventry University, UK

For over a decade, preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) has been at the heart of counter-terrorism policy and practice. Today, however, a combination of the evolving threat landscape and persistent questions about the efficacy of P/CVE programmes are throwing up difficult questions for this influential policy agenda. What does it mean for P/CVE practice when the notional 'community' from which threats are most likely to come are not a minority but a majority? What role, if any, should P/CVE play in responding to forms of protest that deploy violence but clearly stop short of terrorist thresholds? What, if anything, can P/CVE do when members of the political elites themselves embrace the ideological or tactical positions of 'extremists'? In this talk, I address two issues that I believe are fundamental as we pick our way through these questions. The first concerns which forms of non-state

actor political violence we should be most worried about and why. The second concerns moving beyond questions about what works and how in P/CVE, to digging deeper into what we are actually trying to achieve through P/CVE work.

Session 9: Countering Extremist Harms to Democracies

A Massively Parallel Strategy for Combating Violent Extremism and Related Threats to Democracy

Dr Guy Burgess and Dr Heidi Burgess

Beyond Intractability, Colorado, USA

This presentation draws on Beyond Intractability's 30+ year inquiry, involving contributions from hundreds of scholars and practitioners, into the challenges posed by the highly intractable conflicts over moral, distributional, status, and identity issues that underlie all societies, and strategies for meeting those challenges. We highlight things that people in a wide array of conflict-related roles could do to limit the immediate threats posed by violent extremism, as well as the underlying tensions that give rise to that extremism. We focus on why a "massively parallel" array of independent efforts, all focused on helping democracies live up to their ideals, offers the most promising strategy for dealing with the problem's scale and complexity, including the need for projects which encourage grassroots citizens to move away from simple (and destructive) us-versus-them narratives and toward more complex and nuanced ways of looking at our most pressing problems and disputes. We also review conflict-resolution, peacebuilding, and democracy building roles – for instance, "lookouts" (people who warn of the increasing risk of political breakdown, authoritarianism, and large-scale violence), "complexifiers" (people who help us understand and know how to effectively deal with the daunting scale and complexity of today's problems from social, psychological, political, legal, and economic standpoints), and "defenders" (people who help us defend ourselves against "bad-faith actors" who deliberately attack democratic norms and institutions). Our goal is to provide an overview of the many people who are now working together toward the common goal of strengthening democracy and reducing the threats posed by violent extremism. We finish by highlighting specific steps that could be taken to support and expand these efforts.

Maintaining a Healthy Democracy: Results from an Experiment in Countering Extremist Disinformation in the Pandemic

Associate Professor David Malet

American University, Washington DC, USA

How do we measure the effectiveness of initiatives to prevent violent extremism? This study tested the impact of a video treatment on individuals' attitudes about political authority, appropriateness of violence, and trusted media sources. 512 respondents were surveyed before and after viewing a video titled 'The Boogaloo Ballard of Henry Graves,' a short, animated film portraying a fictional character who becomes radicalised through online disinformation. The character subsequently joins the extremist Boogaloo movement, which was engaged in armed protests in the US against COVID-19 public safety restrictions. The results indicate that preventing violent extremism (PVE) should prioritise inoculation strategies, and that video treatments can be effective.

Session 10: Democracy, Activism and Violent Extremism (Panel)

Democratic Activism, Repression, and Violent Extremism: Empirical Inter-relationships in Australia

Professor Winnifred Louis and Charlie Pittaway

University of Queensland

This panel addresses the inter-relationships between democratic political activism, state repression, and violent extremism in three empirical presentations examining the Australian context. Pittaway and colleagues analyse a representative survey of Queenslanders and analyse sociological and

psychological predictors of: their support for democracy in Australia; their support for army and strong man rule; their support for political violence by protesters; and their support for violence by police against protesters. Wibisono and colleagues present network analyses of past conventional and radical actions and support for diverse causes, examining behaviours within individuals within groups to compare a multi-level networked analysis of democratic action and extremism with a traditional focus on item analyses of individuals' radical intentions. Banks and colleagues present recent research in the climate context led by Robyn Gulliver that examines radical or 'direct' action and criminalisation of protest. This research is consistent with a dynamic of mutual radicalisation, but also shows internal contestation by state actors (among the judiciary, police, and policy-makers in different states) seeking to protect or erode democratic rights in Australia. Finally, Louis will close with a discussant analysis that draws together the three talks and identifies gaps and opportunities for future research.

Social and Temporal Predictors of Pro- and Anti-democratic Attitudes and Support for Political Violence

Charlie Pittaway and Professor Winnifred Louis

University of Queensland

The present study investigates the antecedents of democratic attitudes, support for autocracy, and support for political violence using item- and person-centred analyses with a representative adult sample (N = 966). Consistent with past research, multiple regression analyses reveal that older age and progressive political views are associated with pro-democratic attitudes such as higher perceived importance of democracy, and stronger belief that free elections are an essential characteristic of democracy. In addition, we find that future orientation (being more influenced by outcomes in the future) is uniquely associated with pro-democratic attitudes above and beyond the influence of other characteristics. In contrast, younger age, conservative political views, and higher present orientation are associated with more support for a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections, and stronger belief that the army should take over when the government is incompetent. In considering political violence: younger age and higher present orientation are associated with higher support for terrorism, violence by protesters, and violence by police against protesters. Independently, conservative political ideology is associated with more support for terrorism and police violence, but not protester violence. Lower education, male gender, and lower subjective wealth were also linked to anti-democratic attitudes and support for political violence, although less consistently. Latent profile analysis will be used to complement and qualify these results, identifying subgroups within the data for individuals who are typically invisible to traditional analytical approaches. Results will be discussed in relation to developing targeted outreach for interventions to strengthen support for democracy in Australia.

A Network Analysis of Conventional and Radical Behaviours Within Groups

Dr Susilo Wibisono, Mengyao (Linda) Li, and Professor Winnifred Louis

University of Queensland

The present paper will present empirical data from a representative sample of Queensland adults in 2022 that examines self-reported political activity across a range of causes and behaviours engaged in for their preferred causes. We present two analyses: network visualisations for the behaviours and for the causes endorsed, examining how they are inter-related; and multi-level modelling of perceived success and radical intentions at the group and individual level in relation to node attributes such as centrality, and discuss the implications, opportunities, and limitations of this approach in contributing to the social science of political action and extremism.

Criminalization of Climate Change Protest

Dr Robyn Gulliver, Dr Robin Banks, Professor Kelly Fielding, and Professor Winnifred Louis

University of Tasmania, University of Queensland, and Greenpeace Australia

A central tenet of democracy is that individuals have the right to have a voice in shaping the policies and decisions that govern their lives. Social protest is one essential way that people do this: by gathering to express collective demands and concerns, protesters ensure that government representatives know what issues are important to their constituents. Protests related to climate change and other environmental issues have seen a significant global increase in the last five years as people react to the

unfolding ecological crises. However, despite the important role that protest plays in democracy, the right to protest is not always protected. This article examines the strategies used by a democratic state to suppress dissent by criminalizing social protest activities. We compile and tabulate new legislation in Australia affecting protest rights from 2010 to 2020. Using data collected from the Facebook pages of 728 environmental groups and climate-related arrests reported in media articles, we then examine connections between climate change protest and protest criminalization in Australia between 2010 and 2020. Australian governments are shown to have criminalized climate protest via large-scale arrests by introducing laws curtailing protest freedoms and expanding police and corporate discretionary power in the application of those laws. State, corporate, and media actors are shown to engage in the rhetorical criminalization of climate protest, portraying protesters as threats to economic and political interests and to national security. The temporal sequence of protester law-breaking and direct action in relation to criminalization will be examined, and distinct intergroup, intragroup, and individual antecedents will be discussed.

Session 11: Defining the Line: The Spread of Disinformation, Misinformation and Violent Extremist Content

The Spread of Misinformation and Conspiracy Theories: Lessons from COVID-19

Dr Rachel Sharples and Professor Kevin Dunn

Western Sydney University

Conspiracy theories are by no means new, they have a long history. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the risks and dangers associated with beliefs in conspiracy theories and misinformation intensified. Furthermore, while conspiracy theories are often attributed to marginal or fringe populations, the pandemic context saw the spread of such ideas more widely and with greater impacts. The latter includes fuelling major public disorders, political violence, and/or widespread rejection of public health orders or advice, as well as other serious threats to social health and harmony. This paper presents the findings from the first substantive empirical study of the prevalence, depth and reach of misinformation in the Australian context. Based on a national survey of the Australian population (n:5276), the study provides evidence on the social factors for vulnerability to misinformation, particularly through an intersectional lens. The study found strong associations between belief in misinformation and trust in public institutions, willingness to support violent extremism, belief in traditional gender norms and willingness to risk public health and order. This suggests that misinformation holds the prospect of both broadening exposure to extremism, as well as degrading social cohesion.

Exploring the Legal Red Line Against Spreading Violent Extremist Content in Australia: What it Means for Individuals, Traditional Media and Film

Rita Jabri Markwell

Birchgrove Legal

In democratic societies, the line between legitimate democratic dissent and violent extremism is often clear on paper regarding the law. In Australia, the definition of a terrorist act includes an exception for advocacy, protest, dissent, or industrial action that does not endanger life or public health and safety. However, the government is considering new criminal offences, such as sharing violent extremist material and expanding social media regulation to counter misinformation and disinformation, on top of existing Online Safety Act protections. These proposed laws have implications for freedom of expression. To provide additional context, I will explore two case studies from traditional media and film, which are protected by public interest exceptions but have amplified violent extremist ideology and group identities. I will examine grey areas in the law that need further research as parts of it expand, drawing from responses from the Australian Communication and Media Authority and examining the Australian Broadcasting and Classifications law.

Session 12: Policy Challenges for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism

The New Hybrid Threat Landscape as a Challenge to Current P/CVE Policies in Scandinavia

Professor Sissel Haugdal Jore

University of Stavanger, Norway

Multiple threat assessments describe the future terrorism landscape as more diverse, more fragmented characterized by a hybridization of extremist ideology empowered by advances in emerging technologies. Additionally, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has marked a new geopolitical era which has accelerated the attention to how hostile states use propaganda, deception, or information campaigns to exploit existing tensions in other countries. Norwegian Security Police have for example attributed text messages encouraging acts of terrorism to revenge the burning of the Koran in Norway to Russian activist groups. The current Scandinavian welfare state approach to preventing radicalization is based on the idea of avoiding exclusion and marginalization. The aim of this paper is to discuss whether such P/CVE models will be robust enough to meet the new hybrid threat landscape. The empirical data is collected from research on the Scandinavian P/CVE model and official reports describing the new geopolitical era. This paper outlines three current and future trends that will most likely affect radicalization and have implications for how radicalization might be prevented: (1) the New World Order (2) technology, and (3) social contract. The conclusion is that the new threat environment could challenge the Scandinavian P/CVE policy in four different ways; (1) radicalization might not be limited to youth and marginalized groups (2) it can become more difficult to distinguish between legitimate democratic criticism, extremism and radicalization (3) new actors might have to be included in P/CVE prevention (4) corroding trust in institutions dedicated to preventing radicalization might lead to a repositioning of the approach. If not applied carefully, such programs can lead to a decreased trust in government institutions which is an essential value in social democratic societies and a crucial factor in current approaches to preventing radicalization.

Indonesia's National Action Plan on Countering Violent Extremism (RAN PE): The Case of Local Government Implementation

Libasut Taqwa

Wahid Foundation, Indonesia

This article investigates the local implementation of Indonesia's national action plan on countering violent extremism (RAN PE). In almost three years of implementation, national action plans tend to be only effective at the national level, and only a few local governments followed the implementation mandates. Through literature and policy document-based research, this study examines local government documents as the basis for implementing action plans in the regions. The results showed that the involvement of multi-stakeholders has technically accelerated the formulation of documents and the implementation of RAN PE at the local level. However, due to the different spectrum of multi-stakeholder involvement, there is a tendency for local governments to ignore democratic values such as gender mainstreaming, civil society involvement, and human rights in their policy design and development which can reduce the effectiveness of preventing extremism in areas prone to extremism. This study suggests that the central government institutions need to improve inter-agency coordination to ensure that the mandate for implementing RAN PE in the regions involves multi-stakeholders, especially civil society organizations. In addition, coordination between local government agencies needs to be technically trained to enrich knowledge capacity on prevention and control of extremism in accordance with democratization values.

The Importance of Trust in Government Policies for Preventing Violent Extremism

Dr Christine Horn and Mark Duckworth PSM

Deakin University

Trust is a key part of a well-functioning democratic, socially cohesive and resilient society. The decline of trust in democratic institutions has concerned public and private sector leaders in recent years. We define trust as a social construct based on emotion, experience and evidence. It requires a reciprocal

relationship between parties and includes characteristics such as predictability and reliability; confident expectation of future action and being vulnerable, for which trust provides a ‘protective cocoon’, as Anthony Giddens puts it. Trust is also an explicitly stated component of government policies for community resilience and preventing and countering violent extremism. This paper outlines key findings from the CRIS “Trust Flows” project, which examines the trust relationship between government and community organisations. Because trust requires a reciprocal relationship, the project examines not just whether communities trust governments, but whether governments trust communities, and how, in cases where trust gaps exist, they can be addressed. The project draws on interviews with government workers and staff working for community organisations and an extensive literature review. We focus on the following questions: How is trust defined in the context of government-community relationships? Do communities and government workers understand trust in the same way? Do they agree on how it can be nurtured or stimulated? Our research is also aimed at providing practical suggestions on how trust relationships between government and citizens can be improved. For this purpose, we propose a ‘trust checklist’ that can be used to identify important elements for building trust.

Session 13: Extremism and Democratic Erosion

Democracy Pakistani Style: Violence and Extremism in Political Narratives in Pakistan

Kashif Hussain and Emeritus Professor Howard Brasted

University of New England, Armidale

A significant question mark has been placed over Pakistan as a democracy by numerous scholars. Since its turbulent foundation in 1947, Pakistan has experienced violence as an endemic feature of its everyday life, with polarising political fissures in society progressively manifesting over the core issues of ethnicity, national identity, and the role of Islam in the state. Religiously motivated violence, which has been there from the start, has widened as Pakistan has repeatedly failed to Islamise to anyone’s satisfaction. It has also struggled to construct a national identity that could unify the nation and neutralise the challenge of separatist movements. What has followed is that over time the voices of religious, ethnic, regional and sectarian discontent have tended to become more strident and more extremist. Using violence and enticing the state to respond violently itself, not only militant Sunni groups like the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) or Tehrik Lab Baik Pakistan (TLP), but also mainstream parties like the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and recently the Pakistan Tehrik Insaf (PTI) have mobilized populist followings to establish their own extremist versions of democracy and the rule of law. With democratic avenues for social change strangled in the parliamentary system that has operated under Pakistan’s three constitutions, politics has tended to be taken to the streets as the only form of political expression capable of attaining any degree of political leverage. This paper analyses the use of violence in the political domain, using the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and the Tehrik Insaf (PTI) as case studies at very different periods in Pakistan’s history. It examines the political narratives of these two parties on their entry into politics and the violence these began to engender at both the provincial and national levels. The paper concludes with an analysis of both the role of extremist narratives in the political marketplace of Pakistan and observations about the way democracy per se currently operates.

Democratic Erosion: A Result or Part of the Problem?

Dr Ibolya Losoncz

Australian National University

Around the world anti-democratic and anti-government social movements are on the rise. To explain the increased influence of the radical far right in Australia I explore the extent to which far right values inhabit Australian democracy. Using open source data, I will demonstrate how two of the key elements of far right ideologies—nationalism and authoritarianism—were already constructed into Australia’s historically situated social structures and culture. Their existing presence provided an opportunity for the far right to leverage these sentiments in the mainstream and connect to them the third key element—populist strategies. By drawing on existing concealed values and rearticulating them in a way that aligns with 21st century concerns, this strategy has resulted in the now growing influence of the radical far right in the mainstream. The radical far-right movement is not just a threat to social cohesion. Populist radical far-right politicians can become a bridge between extremist far-right groups and the centre-right

mainstream, as in the case of Trump in the US. Stoking extremist beliefs, such as the need for hostile action against an out-group to protect the survival of the in-group, can easily converge with lived practices, such as the indefinite detention of asylum seekers to protect the Australian community. I argue for a more complex understanding of the relationship between the radical far right and democracies. While it is acknowledged that the rising far right is a threat to trust, institutions and social cohesion, the extent to which the erosion of these elements is not just an outcome but also a contributing factor to the rise of the far right is not being considered. We need to ask to what extent the current state of democracy is part of the problem.

Radical Right-wing Terrorism and the Erosion of Democratic Institutions: Exploring the Radical Motivation Behind the January 8, 2023 Brazilian Riots

Dr Enio Viterbo Martins

Coimbra University, Portugal

This paper examines the phenomenon of radical right-wing legal mobilization in Brazil and its impact on democracy, focusing on the violent riot that took place in Brasília on January 8, 2023. Through a comprehensive analysis of this case study, the research aims to address how the radical right-wing's motivation to implement such movements while simultaneously applying pressure on the authorities, particularly the Supreme Court, leads to a backsliding effect on democracy. Drawing on theoretical frameworks of Lawfare and Militant Democracy, this study utilizes empirical analysis, including qualitative data derived from protesters' testimonies on INQ 4921 and INQ 4922, to investigate the narrative strategies implemented by the radical right against democratic principles in Brazil and to understand the motivation of the protesters/terrorists. We review the testimonies given by the protesters when they were arrested and contrast these narratives with the discourse given by their families, lawyers, and other protesters who were not arrested. The analysis reveals that the violent riot in Brasília serves as a case study, shedding light on the tactics employed by conservative forces to undermine democracy. By exploiting these narratives, we can understand how far, and which discourse the democratic institutions can have without falling into the scenario of generating the protesters/terrorists that they want to suppress. The research contributes to socio-legal studies by providing new theoretical insights for the necessary/appropriate response of governmental institutions in relation to radical protesters. We believe that there is an urgent need to strengthen legal frameworks to counteract the radical right's narrative and actions, but this also passes through a deep understanding of the motivation of the terrorists, and to what point it is possible to concede to radical narratives present in the political-party scenario.

Thursday 28 September

Session 14: Gendering Extremism

Connecting Hate Groups at Home and Abroad: The Role of Traditionalist Gender Narratives

Dr Victoria Tait-Signal, Dr Erika Peter, and Dr Dominique Laferrière

Defence Research and Development Canada

Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremist (IMVE) groups have presented an enduring threat to the democratic governance of society. While this is true of sub-state actors in fragile states, it is also true of industrialized democracies, like Canada. In Canada, IMVE groups have displayed contempt for democratic processes, conducted illegal protests, spread disinformation, and in some instances, resorted to violence. Specifically, IMVE groups are anti-democratic because they undermine existing democratic institutions and processes within Canada and have allied with other extremist members and sympathetic governments abroad (Butt and Byman, 2023). The Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) divides IMVE activity into four subgroups: xenophobic, gender-driven, anti-authority and personal grievance-driven. In this presentation, we examine the seemingly disparate groups brought together by the 2020 CSIS definition on violent extremists by highlighting the role that gender narratives play in connecting persons across complex and contradictory ideological groupings, including: Neo-Nazi and KKK organizations, and incels. While these groups differ in their structure and ambition, each has sought to operationalize traditionalist gender narratives to garner support and new adherents. These violent ideologies share a conservative gender narrative that places men at the apex of socio-economic

and political activity, while relegating women back to the private sphere. This shared narrative contributes to linkages between IMVE groups within North America, and across states with socially conservative regimes that maintain a tenuous relationship with democratic governance, including Russia and Belarus. We conclude with a discussion on avenues for CVE, focusing on the importance of research on gender-informed counter-messaging campaigns.

The Role of Misinformation and Perceived Male Victimhood in Shaping Anti-Government Online Behaviour Among Adult Men

Dr Matteo Vergani and Haily Tran

Deakin University

This proposed research paper aims to quantitatively study the relationships between exposure to unreliable news sources, perceived male victimhood and anti-government attitudes among adult men. Our study has important methodological innovations. Firstly, we use a newly released annotated dataset of news sources by Newsguard to measure the reliability of news sources accessed by our survey respondents. The Australian dataset, which has been recently released, offers important opportunities to study misinformation using a naturalistic approach in surveys. Secondly, we measure anti-government attitudes by using proxies of online behaviour; that is, we ask respondents how likely they would be to access realistic anti-government videos on YouTube. Thirdly, we use a newly validated scale of Perceived Male Victimhood that was developed by the research team. This measure captures a key grievance shared by men who express anti-government attitudes and behaviours online, and it underpins support for a range of single-issue and far-right extremist groups. Our presentation will discuss the methodological opportunities offered by these new measurement methods, as well as the research findings, which will explore the impact of misinformation on the proliferation of anti-government sentiments and online activities among adult men. Ultimately, our study aims to shed light on the gender-based, psychological, and socio-cultural factors influencing anti-government behaviours among men. This understanding could inform more effective policy interventions and strategies to counter misinformation and address the adverse effects of perceived male victimhood.

‘Don’t Say Gay’: An Examination of Anti-LGBTQ+ Rhetoric by ISIS and the Far Right

Assistant Professor Jared Dmello, Professor Mia Bloom, and Dr Sophia Moskalenko

Sam Houston State University and Georgia State University

The LGBTQ+ population has been increasingly politicized globally, with human rights weaponized by ideological factions for political leverage. The politicization of queerness creates a gap in which an already marginalized population becomes further susceptible for victimization. Research has found that the LGBTQ+ population is nine times more likely to become the victim of a violent hate crime than heterosexual and cisgender counterparts. From a criminal justice perspective, we know from prosecutions and indictments that in the U.S. context, these types of cases are often tried as ‘hate crimes’ instead of ‘domestic terrorism’ for reasons including politics and the complexity of achieving convictions through prosecution. This paper interrogates if the same is true in the international context. Anti-LGBTQ+ narratives, which undermine institutions of democracy and governance globally, are employed by a wide variety of extremist groups from the Jihadi Salafi groups to the far right to QAnon and Incels, Involuntary celibates. Using these movements as case studies, this presentation highlights the coalescence of ideologically polar extremist organizations around anti-queer sentiments. We provide a preliminary assessment of anti-LGBTQ+ narratives that crosscut multiple extremist groups who share few other common features. Though these entities should have different motivations and targeting preferences, both ideological movements, in addition to others, unite around anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric, making the queer community even more susceptible to victimization. Specific recommendations for CVE are also discussed.

Session 15: Digital Threats to Democracy

Digital Threats to Democracy & the NSW Government: Translating CVE Theory into Policy

Action

Pia van de Zandt and Lydia Khalil

Premier's Department NSW and Deakin University

In Australia and overseas, there is growing concern about the impact of digital technology on democracy. Online social environments are replacing the town square, and governments are looking to balance public safety with a free and inclusive internet that reflects contemporary democratic processes and values. Amidst federal inquiries investigating foreign interference in social media and extremist movements and radicalism in Australia, in 2022 the NSW Premier's Department partnered with the Lowy Institute to convene a one-day dialogue event to better understand digital threats to democracy and consider practical responses for sub-national governments. This presentation for the AVERT network will discuss the findings of the dialogue, which brought together international thought leaders, senior Federal and NSW government executives, academics, tech NGOs, subject matter experts and representatives from impacted communities. The dialogue aimed to provide participants with a deeper understanding of these complex and intersecting policy issues and to scope practical initiatives in response. The presenters will also highlight the programs and initiatives that emerged from the dialogue. Specifically, the NSW Premier's Department has used the dialogue's key findings to shape new projects specifically designed to challenge the myriad of digital threats to NSW democratic institutions and structures. From bespoke deliberative democracy training for public servants, to community campaigns to counter misinformation in the NSW election and commissioning an Australia-first dashboard of online hate, this presentation will highlight the unique capacity of jurisdictions to translate CVE theory into government action.

Online Challenges for Election Integrity: Case Studies from the 2023 NSW Election

Elena Yi-Ching Ho and Luke Bacon

Purpose

Purpose, a global social-impact consultancy, was commissioned to monitor online threats, such as misinformation and hate speech, relevant to election integrity and social cohesion during the 2023 NSW Election. This presentation session provides two case studies from our forthcoming report. We will also facilitate a discussion for attendees on the practical implications of our findings for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). Our case studies provide accounts of increasing and multi-dimensional organising of online and offline action around baseless claims of election corruption. Our first presentation looks at how these claims spread across different online platforms and are amplified by media and influencers, outpacing official responses. Our second case describes how one particular organisation is having success with a tactic of 'election monitoring', mobilising followers to surveil and badger election workers, using fear mongering and violent rhetoric. While these developments in Australia have not reached the scale or severity of election conspiracy-related attacks on institutions in the US or Brazil, for example, the NSW Election provides a comparison of how these narratives and tactics are being taken up in a different cultural and state context.

Presenter Profiles

A – F



Dr William Allchorn
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William Allchorn is an Adjunct Associate Professor at Richmond American University in London and Visiting Senior Research Fellow at The Policing Institute Eastern Region, Anglia Ruskin University.



Shannon Atkins
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Shannon Atkins is a registered psychologist with over 20 years' experience corrective services. She has a background in the provision of forensic intervention and assessment services for clients in both government and private practice settings across multiple jurisdictions, including New South Wales and Victoria. She is the Manager of Specialised Clinical Services, a statewide clinical team delivering assessment and intervention for the highest risk offenders across prison and community corrections.



Luke Bacon

Purpose

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Luke has been leading research projects into online threats at Purpose for the past 2 years, focusing our work on how these insights can lead to effective action. Previously Luke completed a Masters by Research studying how a diverse legal team collaboratively gather and synthesise information to deliver outcomes, was Design and

Technology Lead at the Australasian Centre for Corporate Responsibility, and built open source civic technologies with the OpenAustralia Foundation.



Dr Robin Banks
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Robin Banks (PhD University of Tasmania, 2023) is a human rights and discrimination lawyer with experience in legal practice and community management. Between 2010 and 2017, Robin was Tasmania's Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, responsible for the administration of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (Tas). She is the chair of the Melbourne Social Equity Institute, a member of ADLEG and of the Social Change

Lab and works closely with A Fairer World to co-design and deliver diversity and inclusion training. Robin's recent PhD is on discrimination law reform and the psychology of prejudice.



Professor Greg Barton
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Professor Greg Barton is one of Australia's leading scholars of Islam, Muslim society, terrorism and countering violent extremism with thirty years of experience researching Islam and social movements in Indonesia and broader Southeast Asia. He is Research Professor in Global Islamic Politics in the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation (ADI), where, since August 2015, he has led research on Islam and civil society, democratisation, and countering violent extremism. From 2007 to 2015 he was the Herb Feith Professor at Monash University where he led research on radicalisation in the Global Terrorism Research Centre (GTReC). He taught at the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu from 2006 to 2007, and at Deakin University from 1992 to 2006. He is a Senior Fellow with the UAE-based Hedayah Center in Abu Dhabi working on CVE. Professor Barton has near-native fluency in Indonesian/Malay.



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J.M. Berger is a Senior Research Fellow at CTEC and a PhD candidate at the Swansea University School of Law, researching extremism, including theory, ideology and propaganda. Berger is the author of three non-fiction books: *Extremism* (MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, 2018), *ISIS: The State of Terror* (with Dr. Jessica Stern, 2015), and *Jihad Joe: Americans Who Go to War in the Name of Islam* (2011). His debut novel *Optimal* (2020) is "an absorbing story that skewers reliance on social media" (Kirkus Reviews). In addition to his academic work, Berger consults for technology companies and government agencies on issues related to homegrown terrorism, online extremism, foreign fighters, disinformation, and advanced techniques for social media analysis. Berger is also a research fellow with the VOX-Pol Network of Excellence, a former non-resident fellow with The Brookings Institution, and a former member of the Independent Advisory Committee of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism. He has testified as an expert on terrorism and extremism before the U.S. House and Senate and has written for *The Atlantic*.



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J.M. Mia Bloom is the International Security Fellow at the New America and a professor at Georgia State University. Bloom conducts research in Europe, the Middle East and South Asia and speaks eight languages. She is the author of six books and over 80 articles on violent extremism including *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (Columbia 2005), *Living Together After Ethnic Killing* (Routledge 2007) *Bombshell: Women and Terror* (UPenn 2011) and *Small Arms: Children and Terror* (Cornell 2019) and *Pastels and Pedophiles: Inside the Mind of QAnon* with Sophia Moskalenko (Stanford 2021). Her next book, *Veiled Threats: Women and Jihad* will be published by Cornell University Press in 2024. Bloom is a former term member of the Council on Foreign Relations and has held appointments at Cornell, Harvard, Princeton, and McGill Universities. She serves on the Counter-Radicalization boards of the Anti-Defamation League, the UN Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate (UNCTED), serves on several working groups for the Global Internet Forum for Counter Terrorism (GIFCT) and Women Without Borders. Bloom has her PhD in political science from Columbia University, Masters in Arab Studies from Georgetown University and

Bachelors in Russian, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies from McGill, and her Pre-Doctorate from Harvard’s Center for International Studies and a Post-Doctorate from Princeton.



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Heidi and Guy Burgess have been partners personally and professionally since the early 1970s. Together with several colleagues, they established the Conflict Information Consortium at the University of Colorado (which they have co-directed since its inception in the late 1980s). While having now “retired” from the University, they continue to run the Consortium as a free-standing entity. Working at the intersection of research, theory, and practice, their substantive focus has long been on large-scale, intractable conflicts; their procedural interests have focused on using information technology as a tool to share conflict and peacebuilding-related insights as widely as possible. These efforts led them to create, with contributions from hundreds of colleagues, the continually expanding Beyond Intractability Knowledge Base system. In 2016, they began focusing particularly on the hyper-polarized political conflicts that were threatening the viability of democratic systems in the United States and so many other countries. They started a new project called the Constructive Conflict Initiative as “a call for a dramatically expanded, long-term effort to improve society’s ability to constructively address the full scale and complexity of the challenges posed by destructive conflict.” In 2021, this Initiative

developed into a collaboration with the Conflict Resolution Quarterly to convene an online discussion (and accompanying Substack newsletter) focused on reducing hyper-polarization and strengthening liberal democracy both in the U.S. and abroad. The Burgesses have written extensively on all aspects of intractable conflict. As part of their commitment to making information freely available, they have mostly published these materials on Beyond Intractability rather than through pricey conventional publishing channels.



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Dr Alex Burns is a Teaching Associate with Monash University’s School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts. He has 15 years of experience as a research administrator at 5 Australian universities. His 2020 PhD dissertation *The Development of Strategic Culture in Terrorist Organisations* was used as background research for the Netflix series *How to Become a Cult Leader* (Aum Shinrikyo episode). He has published in *Contemporary Security Policy*, *Futures*, *Media International Australia*,

the *Telecommunications Journal of Australia*, *Journal of Futures Studies*, *M/C Journal*, *21C Magazine*, and the former *Disinformation* website. He co-authored the Smart Internet Technology CRC report *Smart Internet 2010* (2005) which influenced Australia’s National Broadband Network policy. He is a member of the International Studies Association, the Australian International Political Economy Network, and the Howard Bloom Institute.



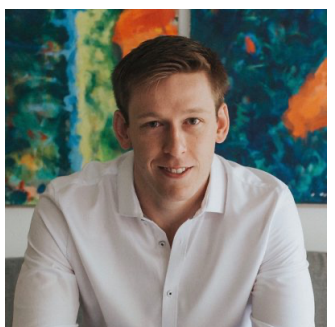
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Joel Busher is Professor of Political Sociology at the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University. His research examines the escalation and restraint of political violence, mobilisation against minoritised groups, and the enactment and impacts of security policies. His work is published in leading journals in these areas, and he is the author of four books, including the forthcoming Routledge Handbook on Radicalisation and Countering Radicalisation. His book *The Making of Anti-Muslim Protest* (Routledge) was awarded the British Sociological Association's Philip Abrams Memorial Prize. He is also joint editor of the volume *Researching the Far Right: Theory, Method and Practice* (Routledge) and is currently the principal investigator on a project that examines pathways towards and away from violence during periods of heightened activity by organised anti-minority groups, funded by the Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST). He has previously conducted CREST-funded research projects exploring processes of restraint within militant groups. He has also undertaken research on the conceptualisation of radical groups and their intersections with one another and with the so-called 'mainstream'. Professor Busher frequently presents to and advises senior policymakers in the UK and internationally on how they respond to, interpret and implement counterterrorism and counter-extremism policy.



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Dr Caitlin Clemmow manages the Jill Dando Institute Research Lab within University College London's Department of Security and Crime Science. Her research focusses on risk assessment and management of grievance-fuelled violence offenders such as terrorists, mass murderers, and the pathologically fixated. She currently leads research projects on the topic funded by the Home Office's Department of Homeland Security, the Youth Endowment Fund, and the Ministry of Defence. She has worked on research funded by the Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST), Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI), and the European Union, among others, and works with practitioner teams across the UK's Prevent delivery (Vulnerability Support Hubs), the UK's Fixated Threat Assessment Centre, and Counterterrorism Police.



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Mark Duckworth PSM is a Senior Research Fellow at the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation at Deakin University working in the Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies (CRIS). Before taking up this appointment in 2019 he had more than 30 years' experience in the Victorian and New South Wales public sectors. He held many senior executive roles including as Executive Director of Governance, Security and Intergovernmental Relations, and as Chief Resilience Officer in the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet. In the 2007 Australia Day Honours he was awarded the Public Service Medal for his work in "the development of the national counter-terrorism and policy arrangements". He was member of the Australia and New Zealand Counter Terrorism Committee for thirteen years, and the inaugural co-chair of the ANZCTC Countering Violent Extremism sub-committee.



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Professor Kevin Dunn is Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Professor in Human Geography and Urban Studies at Western Sydney University. His research has highlighted the culturally and spatially uneven distribution of citizenship in Australia. He is co-author of *Cyber Racism and Community Resilience* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2017) with Andrew Jakubowicz and others, over thirty chapters in books and over seventy articles. His most recent articles are on racism in the sharing economy, Islamophobia and extremism. They are published in: *Behavioural Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* (2020); *Australian Journal of Social Issues* (2020); *New Media and Society* (2019), and *Geoforum* (2019). He leads the national Challenging Racism Project based from Western, delivering impactful research that has underpinned national racism strategies, as well as award winning interventions.

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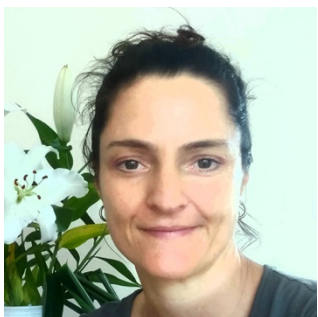
project on secularism, radicalization and the governance of religion, both led by European University Institute in Florence.



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Dr Malcolm Haddon is Associate Director, Community Resilience, at Multicultural NSW. Dr Haddon has worked in Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) policy and program development at both state and national levels in Australia for nearly 15 years. Through the flagship COMPACT program, he pioneered a whole-of-society resilience approach to CVE that has been showcased as good practice in a range international

CVE reports and forums, including the Global Counterterrorism Forum, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, Global Center for Cooperative Security and the United Nations. Dr Haddon has a research background in the anthropology of religion. He is an Adjunct Fellow at the School of Social Sciences, Western Sydney University and a member of the AVERT Research Network.



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Lydia Khalil is a Senior Research Fellow at the Alfred Deakin Institute and serves as Co-convenor of the Addressing Violent Extremism and Radicalisation to Terrorism (AVERT) Network. She is also a Senior Research Fellow at the Lowy Institute. As part of her work with the Lowy Institute, Lydia manages the Transnational Challenges Program and Digital Threats to Democracy Project. In her capacity at Deakin University, in addition to her research focus, she also serves as liaison to the Research and Evaluation Working Group (REWG) of CVESC and

as Coordinator of the AVERT (Addressing Violent Extremism and Radicalisation to Terrorism) Research Network. Lydia has a broad range of policy, research and private sector experience, and has a professional background in international relations and national security - focusing on counterterrorism, countering violent extremism and strategic intelligence analysis. Lydia has held previous appointments as an international affairs fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute and Macquarie University.

Lydia has extensive national security and law enforcement experience, most recently as a senior policy advisor to the Boston Police Department, working on countering violent extremism, intelligence and counterterrorism, and community policing strategies. While serving as a senior policy advisor at the Boston Police Department she was responsible for the Department's first ever CVE strategy and worked as a core interagency member of one of three pilot locations in the United States chosen by the Obama Whitehouse to develop an approach to enhance efforts at preventing violent extremism. She has also worked as a senior counterterrorism and intelligence analyst for the New York Police Department. Lydia also served as a political advisor for the US Department of Defense in Iraq. Lydia is a member of the Victorian Government Countering Violent Extremism Expert Advisory Committee and served as a member of the Victorian Terrorism and Community Protection Act (TCPA) Review Expert Advisory Group, among other government advisory appointments. She is a research member of the Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies (CRIS) where she leads the Crisis Points Project on the intersection of disasters, extremism and disinformation. She is also a member of the US based Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Working Group and the United Nations Security Council's Global Research Network (GRN). Lydia also serves as an editorial board member of the academic journal Studies in Conflict and Terrorism. She holds a BA in International Relations from Boston College and a Masters in International Security from Georgetown University.



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Dr Dominique Laferrière has a PhD in criminology and is a Defence Scientist at Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis. In recent years, her research has focused on how individuals come to endorse anti-social or otherwise harmful ideas and eventually act on them. In addition to studying the dissemination of violent extremism and disinformation online, Dominique has examined the threat posed by radicalization and violent extremism on national security.



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Winnifred R. Louis (PhD McGill University, 2001) is a Professor in Psychology at The University of Queensland. Her research examines how identity and norms influence social decision-making, and she has studied this broad topic in contexts from political violence to health to environmental choices. She is also a longstanding activist for many causes, with a particular focus on peace, democracy and human rights, and a sustainable environment.



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David Malet is an Associate Professor in the School of Public Affairs at American University in Washington. Previously he served as Director of the Security Policy Studies Program at the George Washington University. He also taught at the University of Melbourne, and at Colorado State University, where he was Director of the Center for the Study of Homeland Security. From 2000-2003 he served as Research Assistant for national security issues to US Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle. Professor Malet has been researching foreign fighters since 2005 and is the author of *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts* (Oxford University Press, 2013) and co-editor of *Transnational Actors in War and Peace: Militants, Activists, and Corporations in World Politics* (Georgetown University Press, 2017). He regularly consults on foreign terrorist fighter policy challenges for governmental and civil society organizations and media. His other research includes military use of biotechnologies and use of counter-narratives in radicalization.



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Rita is a solicitor at Birchgrove Legal. Joining the firm in 2021, Rita brings rich experience in public policy and legal advocacy work gained from her professional experience to date. She has had a varied and storied career, giving her a broad set of skills which she uses to add extensive value to all her engagements. After her legal education (gained at Adelaide's Flinders University), Rita worked as Advisor to multiple political leaders, including Chris Evans (Senator for Western Australia and Shadow Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) and Jenny Macklin (Australian Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs). She then worked in consultancy in the public sector, including in First Nations organising and advocacy, program funding and via the publication of position papers. One of the highlights of Rita's work while in the parliamentary system was the National Apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples. Fulfilling a lifelong passion for education and teaching Rita worked for several years as a schoolteacher, also developing curricula during this phase of her professional life. Most recently she brought her legal and advocacy skills together as Advisor to Australian Muslim Advocacy Network (AMAN), defining the organisation's overall strategy and being extensively involved in research, submissions, media releases and legal correspondence on behalf of the organisation. Rita prides herself on her ability to develop innovative strategies that cut through complex policy problems and on creating long lasting relationships that create value for all stakeholders.



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Dr Enio Martins is a researcher at the Institute for Legal Research at the University of Coimbra, Portugal. Dr Martins completed his PhD in History at the University of Lisbon. He is a member of the São Paulo Law Academy (Academia Paulista de Direito), and previously completed postgraduate studies in Brazilian military history at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.



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Melanie Mitchell is a psychologist who has worked in forensic settings for 20 years in Australia and the UK. She has worked in a forensic mental health service, drug and alcohol services, courts, Fixated Threat Assessment Centre and private practice. Mel completed a PhD in threat assessment after noticing a marked increase in these areas from 2010. She has been a member of the community of practice for violent extremism risk assessment since 2018 for the Department of Home Affairs. Mel currently works in Specialised Clinical Services in Queensland Corrective Services specialising in grievance fuelled violence, violent extremism and fixated threats.



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Anthony Morgan is the Research Manager for the Australian Institute of Criminology's Serious and Organised crime, Cybercrime and Radicalisation Research Program. Committed to promoting evidence-based policy, Anthony has spent nearly two decades working closely with law enforcement and policy makers to conduct rigorous, applied and policy relevant empirical criminological research. He developed the Serious and Organised Crime Research Laboratory to be a leading centre

in Australian applied organised crime research with partnerships with law enforcement and world-leading academics, a national and international footprint, and several Australian-first studies. Prior to this, he developed the AIC's program of research into criminal justice responses to domestic and family violence. Anthony has published extensively on a diverse range of topics including organised crime, outlaw motorcycle gangs, cybercrime, intimate partner violence, policing and crime prevention.

O – Z



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Charlie Pittaway is a PhD Candidate (Social Psychology) at The University of Queensland supervised by Professors Winnifred Louis and Kelly Fielding. Charlie began their PhD in 2022 and is investigating the relationships between future-oriented thinking and climate change attitudes and actions. They have a particular interest in understanding the social context of living during the 'climate crisis,' and the impacts this may

have on values, behaviour, and hope for the future. They are also interested in the relationship between temporal orientation and social attitudes more broadly. They are currently collaborating with Professor Winnifred Louis and the Social Change Lab on a range of research projects revolving around attitudes towards peace, human rights, and democracy.



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Dr Josh Roose is an Associate Professor focussing on politics, law, religion and violent extremism at the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation at Deakin University. His research focuses on the role of masculinities, economies, social trajectories and ideologies in shaping the attraction to and patterns of participation in violent extremism. He places particular emphasis on exploring societal level responses and solutions including the strengthening of citizenship, anti-discrimination legislation and key institutions. Josh has, with colleagues, received Australian Research Council Discovery project funding to explore the Australian far right (2021-2024) and anti-women online actors (2022-2025). He has previously completed projects for the Victorian Government Department of Justice and Community Safety on masculinities and recruitment to violent extremism and Victoria Police on alternative narratives and provides expert insights for local, state and federal governments and national and international media. He is a member of the editorial board of the journal *Perspectives on Terrorism* and member of the AVERT Steering Committee.



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Libasut Taqwa pursued his bachelor's degree from the Faculty of Sharia Law, the State Islamic University of Sunan Ampel Surabaya on Politics and Islamic Law. After completing a postgraduate program in Political Studies and Middle East International Relations at the University of Indonesia's School of Strategic and Global Studies, he joined the Wahid Foundation in 2017 and has been actively working in the fields of research and policy advocacy to promote Peaceful Islam and counter-narratives against violent extremism. During his experience, Libasut Taqwa was also involved in the Wahid Foundation's yearly report on Freedom of Religion and Belief and regularly engaged with a number of CSOs to promote the revision of the Indonesian Penal Code, especially in the context of the blasphemy law and religious articles, and also discriminatory laws based on religion and belief in Indonesia. In 2021, he joined the MA program in political science at the Indonesian International Islamic University (IIU).



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Haily Tran is a researcher currently completing her PhD at Deakin University. Her research areas include violent extremism and hate prevention. She is currently undertaking a PhD in masculinities and the far-right with a focus on social psychological theories.



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Dr Matteo Vergani is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Deakin University, and Senior Research Fellow at the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation. Matteo's research focuses on the "ecosystem of hate", which includes discrimination, micro-aggressions, hate speech, hate crime and politically motivated violence. It looks at the factors that cause and accelerate hate, as well as the factors that contribute to prevent and mitigate hate, such as social cohesion and inclusion of diverse communities in multicultural societies. Matteo has completed numerous impact evaluations of P/CVE projects in Australia and South East Asia.



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Susilo Wibisono (PhD University of Queensland, 2022) is a post-doctoral research fellow in the Social Change Lab. He is working with Professor Winnifred Louis on democracy and gridlock, as well as leading a project on religious identities and environmental action in Indonesia.



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Pia is the Director of the Connected Communities team in NSW's Premier's Department. In addition to coordinating NSW's program to counter violent extremism, Pia and her team deliver policy advice and programs to improve social cohesion and inclusion across NSW. Pia works closely with community leaders, Commonwealth partners and Local Government. Pia has held varied strategy policy, research and service delivery roles in Commonwealth and NSW governments and in the NGO sector to reduce violence against women and children, improve Aboriginal outcomes and prevent homelessness.

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Lydia Khalil
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Dr Nell Bennett
 AVERT Coordinator



Dr Benjamin Freeman
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Haily Tran
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