Under the Radar: How might Australia enhance its policies to prevent ‘lone wolf’ and ‘fixated person’ violent attacks?

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From 1999, she worked in a number of executive staff officer positions, including as staff officer to Commissioner Keelty, and the Law Enforcement Liaison officer to the Federal Minister for Justice on a number of occasions between 2002 and 2010. In 2004, she took up a role in Counter Terrorism, where she was involved in the response to the second Bali bombing and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. She was also involved in the planning and execution of a number of Australia-New Zealand counter-terrorism exercises.

In 2006, Commander Buggy was appointed to the role of Manager Ministerial, providing high-level support to the senior executive and office of the Federal Minister for Justice. In late 2008, she moved back to ACT Policing and was given responsibility for reshaping the crime prevention portfolio, where she was awarded a Commissioner’s Commendation for Conspicuous Conduct.
In 2010, Commander Buggy moved back to Protection, which later included the role of Coordinator for Protection Security Operations. Commander Buggy holds a Graduate Certificate in Applied Management and, in 2009, attended the UK National Policing Improvement Agency as a visiting fellow. In 2015, she attended the Defence and Strategic Studies Course at the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, Australian Defence College, qualifying for a Master of Arts (Strategic Studies) from Deakin University. She is currently the Manager at Parliament House.

Abstract

This paper addresses the detection, intervention and prevention of so-called ‘lone wolf’ and ‘fixated person’ violent attacks in Australia. It argues that while the threat of terrorism may vary over time, the increase in lone wolf terrorism over the past decade requires a more focused approach to the identification and monitoring of individuals who are moving along the pathway from radical ideology to radical violence.

The paper proposes that a specialised unit, the National Fixated Threat Assessment Centre, be established to assess the threat posed by such persons, regardless of whether they fall into the category of lone wolf, fixated persons or other, grievance-fuelled violent actors. It also proposes community-friendly options of e-referral and a new hotline in an effort to identify persons on a radicalisation pathway. With research confirming that the majority of such individuals suffer from mental illness or mental instability, the paper concludes that these initiatives should reduce the risk by providing an opportunity to intervene before violent activity occurs.
Under the Radar: How might Australia enhance its policies to prevent ‘lone wolf’ and ‘fixated person’ violent attacks?

An epidemic of anorexia, insomnia and acute bodily discomfort swept this nation [US] late in 1963. One-half of its victims could not eat or sleep. If the illness from which they were suffering had been diagnosed as influenza, infectious mononucleosis or an unnamed virus, the relevance of the syndrome to an audience of conscientious physicians would be obvious.

You might wonder why this syndrome of epidemiologic proportion had not found its way into the medical literature. When I add to this symptom complex the finding that more than two-thirds of those affected were also nervous, tense, and depressed, you may shift conceptually from physical pathology to psychopathology.

When I tell you that this epidemic lasted about one week and began on the afternoon of November 22, 1963, you may be tempted to abandon the model of either pathology or psychopathology and, recalling that it followed immediately the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, see it instead as a wide-spread but normal reaction to a terrible political event. 1

Introduction

This paper focuses on the detection, intervention and prevention of so-called ‘lone wolf’ and ‘fixated person’ violent attacks in Australia. 2 It draws on earlier work by the author addressing whether there is a threat-assessment gap in Australia’s national security framework. 3 The intention is to provide a policy solution that is effective, efficient and complements existing frameworks and initiatives, including reducing the budget impact in Australia’s tight fiscal environment.

The end goal is for intervention and risk mitigation in preventing violent attacks against all members of the community through the collaboration of police, intelligence agencies and mental health clinicians. It aims to propose policy options that are enduring and contribute to the Australian Government’s priority of countering violent extremism and preventing terrorist attacks.

By way of background, the terrorist threat in Australia was raised to ‘high’ in September 2014. 4 This was brought about by the emergence of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) and the increase of home-grown terrorism. 5 ISIS has demonstrated sophisticated use of the Internet, employing it to propagate its radical message and recruit foreign fighters from across the globe to join it in furthering its goals, particularly in the Middle East. 6

ISIS also uses the Internet to groom and exploit vulnerable young persons — those that are isolated and socially inept; those that sympathise with the plight of others in the Middle East; and persons suffering from mental health issues — all in an effort to encourage and incite lone wolf attacks in Western countries. Al Qaeda had previously shown no allegiance to ISIS but has now also called on ‘Muslim youth in the west’ to conduct lone wolf attacks in Western countries; it has also stated that Al Qaeda would ‘work with’ ISIS in support of the establishment of a caliphate. 7

The political and security situation in the Middle East continues to decline, which exacerbates the global terrorist threat. Australia remains under threat, with the Director-General of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) saying in late 2015 that there are more than 400 counter-terrorism investigations under way, and that these numbers are expected to grow. 8 He further stated that in the first ten months of 2015, agencies had disrupted a large number of terrorist plots, which totalled some two-thirds of all plots disrupted since 9/11. 9

Australia has responded competently to the threat. However, three attacks have eventuated: in September 2014, 18-year-old Abdul Haider attacked two police officers in Melbourne, resulting in significant injuries to the officers and his own death; in December 2014, Man Haron Monis seized hostages at the Lindt café in Martin Place, Sydney, which resulted in the death of two hostages and his own death; and, in October 2015, 15-year-old Farhad Khalil Mohammad Jabar...
murdered Curtis Cheng, a NSW Police Service civilian employee in Parramatta, Sydney, which also resulted in his death.10

At the coronial inquiry into the Lindt café siege, experts were unable to agree on whether Monis was an ISIS-inspired lone wolf terrorist or if he was a mentally-unwell man seeking attention.11 Haider had been in contact with other young Australians prior to his attack. It is alleged that Jabar, who was alone when he shot and killed Cheng, was assisted in planning the attack and acquiring the firearm by 18-year-old Raban Alou and 22-year-old Talal Alameddine.12

The earlier work explored the typologies of Haider and Monis. Open-source reporting has reaffirmed these typologies in Jabar, with indicators of behavioural changes, broadcasting and location familiarity (Parramatta police station is near his school and the mosque he attended).13 Regardless of their motivation, all three perpetrators demonstrate that the threat in Australia is real and enduring, and that persons who commit violent acts alone are being inspired and incited to conduct these acts by radical groups online.14

This paper will continue the research and argument from the earlier work, including analysis of the role of language and the Internet as both a tool for radicalisation and an opportunity for security agencies to identify persons of concern and assess the threat posed by these persons. It will propose that a specialised unit, the National Fixated Threat Assessment Centre (NFTAC), be established to assess the threat posed by persons, regardless of whether they fall into a category of lone wolf, fixated person or other, grievance-fuelled violent actors.

The policy addresses a current gap in Australia's national security arrangements, and seeks to assist all communities within Australia. While the threat of terrorism may vary over time, the threat from mentally-ill loners to Australian holders of high office, as well as the general community, is unlikely to change. It is, therefore, a priority for long-term policy change, particularly when it will also benefit current counter-terrorism investigations.15

The intention is to increase the possibility of risk mitigation either through community referral, mental health intervention or police action. It also proposes other policy options that could assist in the functioning of the NFTAC. It is designed to enhance current counter-terrorism and protective security arrangements, and not redesign existing structures that are functioning effectively. The policy is deliberately enduring in that it provides enhanced security for multiple scenarios, as well as demonstrating a responsibility to those that require mental health intervention.

It will argue that the increase in lone wolf terrorism over the past decade requires a more focused approach to the identification and monitoring of individuals who are moving along the pathway from radical ideology to radical violence. These persons are not all motivated by Islamic extremism; some have other ideological drivers, such as anti-Islamic sentiments or right-wing beliefs; some are acting on personal grievances, while others are fixated.

The typologies of persons who resort to violence as a means to attract attention or notoriety, or further a cause or act on a personal grievance, were found in the earlier work to be consistent among the groups, with research confirming that the majority were suffering from the effects of mental illness or mental instability. The policy proposals advocated in this paper provide an opportunity to reduce the risk posed by these persons by intervening before violent activity occurs.

Part 1 - Fixated persons and lone wolves; only the ideology differs

A research study by Joel Capellan on lone wolf terrorism and deranged shooters in the US between 1970 and 2014 distinguished the two groups into ideological and non-ideological actors.16 He concurred that there is little difference in the personal characteristics of the two but that the exception is in how they ‘prepare, execute and conclude their attacks’.17 Capellan noted that ideological actors were less likely to be ‘prompted’ by an event or crisis relating to the theory of ‘unfreezing’.18 Their planning was also of a higher level than non-ideological actors and they were more likely to disclose their plans to a third party.
This contributes to the theory that lone wolf terrorists (ideologists) are more predictable than fixated persons (non-ideological/personal grievance) and, if this is the case, there may be an opportunity to prevent lone wolf terrorist attacks. Capellan also noted that 70 per cent were not formally linked to extremist organisations but were self-radicalised through Internet fora and media, including books and music. Capellan concluded from his analysis that:

[M]ass murderers, deranged shooters, lone wolves and active shooters ... [are all part of a] larger phenomenon of lone-actor grievance-fuelled-violence ... [and that] ideological active shooter events are on the rise [and] represent a serious threat to national security.

Research by James Biesterfold and J. Reid Meloy, conducted on assassins of high-profile persons, has confirmed that assassins 'who target a public figure to advance a political or religious agenda are terrorists, whether attached to an organized group with a command and control hierarchy, an autonomous cell, or acting alone'.

In the last decade, there have been a number of high-profile public figures targeted by small cell or lone wolf terrorists, such as the thwarted attacks in Toronto, including a plot to behead the Canadian Prime Minister in June 2006; the attack on the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa in 2014; and the murder of Theo Van Gogh in Amsterdam (by a small group that was also considering attacking other high-profile politicians).

However, there is little distinction between lone wolf terrorists and fixated persons, as demonstrated through the Monis siege at the Lindt café in Sydney and subsequent evidence provided at the coronial inquiry, where terrorism experts could not agree whether he was a terrorist or a person fixated on notoriety and bringing attention to himself. Regardless of the label, the typologies are similar, which increases the possibility of identifying, assessing and responding to both cohorts through a NFTAC.

The NFTAC would be designed to specifically address lone wolves and fixated persons. Hence, it needs to ensure that those working within it understand the radicalisation process, the areas of vulnerability within that process, and the opportunity that emerging software provides in detecting such persons. It is also important to identify how the Internet is able to influence these persons.

**Part 2 - The Internet as a tool to move from radical ideology to radical violent action**

Research conducted by Mark Hamm and Ramon Spaaij into lone wolf terrorist attacks that occurred pre- and post-9/11, aiming to identify changes in the radicalisation process, found commonalities indicating that lone wolf terrorism 'begins with personal and political grievances which become the basis for an affinity with an extremist group, followed by an enabler, broadcasting of intent and triggering event', as illustrated at Figure 1.
However, the research also noted a significant shift in how terrorists were radicalising post-9/11, with an increased reliance on the Internet. Of note is the percentage of lone wolves that demonstrate these signatures since 9/11, as highlighted at Table 1.

Table 1: Evidence of how terrorists have radicalised post-9/11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>pre-9/11</th>
<th>post-9/11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loci of radicalisation</td>
<td>Belonged to an extremist group but left group before attack.</td>
<td>Informal online social networks, workplace and mass media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motives</td>
<td>80% - acting on a blend of personal and political grievance</td>
<td>80% - acting on a blend of personal and political grievance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affinity with extremist groups</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>42% - primarily online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enablers</td>
<td>57% - directly by others</td>
<td>67% - nearly all indirect enablers, online, figure heads and literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcasting intent</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>76% - broadcasted intent often more than once through verbal and written threats, statements, letters, manifestos or videotaped proclamations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triggering event</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The influence of the Internet post-9/11 is evident at Table 1 in the ‘loci of radicalisation’, ‘affinity with extremist groups’, ‘enablers’ and ‘broadcasting intent’ sub-headings—and is a clear distinction to lone wolves pre-9/11. Hamm and Spaaij concluded that lone wolves post-9/11 are becoming increasingly independent and that ‘radicalisation is caused by an affinity with online sympathisers’.29

This possibly explains why the three successful attacks in Australia were not prevented, as a result of less physical group affinity, reduced reporting of broadcasting, and lower levels of triggering events. However, the research dispels any suggestion that lone wolves do not communicate with others and are therefore unable to be prevented, with Haam and Spaaij concluding that:

Virtually all lone wolves demonstrate affinity with some person, community or group, be it online or in the real world. This is a significant finding because it contests the policy assumption that lone wolf terrorists do not communicate or interact with others. They clearly do.30

Rik Collsaet cites three characteristics that affirm the work of Haam and Spaaij, contending that:

• ‘[Lone wolves] surf upon an enabling environment characterised by a widely-shared sense of (real or perceived) exclusion, inequity and humiliation, as a result of wide-scale economic and social dislocation that creates winners and losers.
• The decision to become an activist always takes place at the intersection of a personal history and that enabling environment ... [which might range from] a tragic experience, such as the death of a family member, to mundane incidents [such] as the authorities’ refusal to fund a local youth club.
• The violent option is always the action of a few within the larger group or community whose fate is at stake and whose plight they invoke to try and justify their acts’.31

The current use of the Internet by extremist groups to groom and radicalise individuals, including motivating them to move from radical opinion to radical violence, has increased. So insidious is the Internet in the radicalisation and recruitment of young Australians that the Director-General ASIO, Duncan Lewis, recently compared the grooming of young persons online as being akin to the grooming by paedophiles, saying that ‘the youngest ones we have are down around 14 years of age ... [and] they are being groomed with a technique that is not dissimilar to child molestation’.32

Lewis further asserted that ‘the passage to radicalisation, astonishingly, can happen quite quickly’.33 The age of those who are coming to the attention of security agencies is decreasing, with a 12 year old currently linked to investigations related to the Parramatta incident in October 2015.34 This development reflects the findings of the earlier work by the author which identified that the next generation of youth, those between 8 and 12 years of age, may already be on the path of radicalisation.35

ISIS has been successful in producing high-quality propaganda videos—and the media perpetuates this through reporting their violent acts and providing links to their videos through mainstream news sites. Al Qaeda has resurfaced on the Internet, similarly calling for lone wolf attacks on Western targets and perpetuating violence as a means of communicating its cause.36 However, lone wolf terrorism is not isolated to Islamic extremism and some lone actors are motivated solely by personal grievance fuelled through radical dialogue to support their actions, such as school shootings and right-wing/racist attacks in the US and Scandinavia.

The use of language and speech on the Internet

Self-radicalisation through the Internet has increased significantly since the event of Web 2.0, which provides communication platforms with a global audience of like-minded people. It is difficult to understand how this medium is able to move individuals along the radicalisation path. However, it may be contributed, in part, to the use of speech or language. Susan Benech, for
example, conducted research into ‘dangerous speech’ primarily related to genocide cases.\textsuperscript{37} She defined five characteristics associated with dangerous speech, namely:

1. The presence of a speaker with a high degree of influence over the audience;
2. The audience has grievances and fears that the speaker can cultivate;
3. A speech act that is clearly understood as a call to violence;
4. There is a social or historical context that is propitious for violence; and
5. There is a means of dissemination that is influential in itself, for example because it is the sole or primary source of news for the relevant audience.\textsuperscript{38}

Jesse MacLean extended Benech’s research by analysing the characteristics against two successful lone wolf attacks, being the attack in Norway by Anders Breivik in 2011 when he killed 69 people and wounded another 60; and multiple nail-bomb attacks in London by David Copeland over a matter of days in 1999 that killed three people and wounded another 146.\textsuperscript{39}

MacLean was seeking to assess if Benech’s theory of ‘dangerous speech’ could contribute to individuals moving from radical opinion to radical violence. She found that both perpetrators had ‘consumed’ dangerous speech and, in the case of Breivik, that he was active on the Internet in online discussions.\textsuperscript{40} MacLean states that ‘for each case, the presence of at least four out of the five guidelines were taken as evidence for the applicability of dangerous speech toward analysing and understanding lone wolf terrorism’.\textsuperscript{41}

Benech’s fifth characteristic may appear unlikely in today’s global world, with the abundance of media and information available. However, both Breivik and Copeland only sought information and news that they were interested in and that fed their ideology and grievances. The research by MacLean is further confirmed by Spaaij, who describes their use of the Internet as the ‘self-study of both perpetrators’.\textsuperscript{42}

This may be applicable to many persons who are initially interested in a viewpoint and then progress along the pathway of radicalisation to the extent that they only seek like-minded information and discussion. Therefore, the Internet as a source of self-radicalisation is also viable as a tool to dissuade radical thinking by providing alternate views and understanding through these preferred areas of interest.

It should also be recognised that speech and language is equally important in the reporting on terrorism attacks by media and government. Minority groups which have similar background to Benech’s five characteristics may feel marginalised through unbalanced reporting. For example, the Muslim community has been subjected to commentary connecting its members to terrorism since 9/11. Therefore, many Australian Muslim youths born around 2001 have constantly heard language that labels and marginalises them, which may have adversely impacted on their opinions and self-identity.

**Extremist material on the Internet**

Australia’s young people are at risk of radicalisation, and the Internet provides a platform that offers radical views and supports violence. The evaluation of speech and the characteristics of the recipients of that speech go toward explaining how this medium is so effective and why it may be the only ‘voice’ heard. Several recent studies in France and the UK have examined the amount of Islamic extremist material online and the ease with which it can be accessed. The *Jihad Trending* study by Ghaffar Hussain and Erin Maree Saltman, for example, provides evidence that it is the younger cohort that is accessing Internet-based material, particularly 20-30 year olds, and that it includes social media, chat rooms and the ‘Dark Web’.\textsuperscript{43}

Notwithstanding the findings of the *Jihad Trending* study, there arguably has now been a shift in the age demographic of those accessing extremist material to persons under 20 years of age.
Moreover, the statistical analysis of web-based searches by Hussain and Saltman found that curious searchers will also access counter-narrative and counter-terrorism sources, with only a few links to extremist sites, albeit the searches conducted did not include ISIS. The earlier work by the author explored the role of the media in propagating extremist material and aiding the exposure of attacks undertaken. The media also contributes to the language used for attacks, such as references to ‘terrorism’ for Muslim offenders versus ‘deranged gunman’ for other offenders, which was demonstrated in the reporting of the Norway attack by Anders Breivik. It was initially reported as an act of terrorism but then changed to ‘lone gunman or attacker’, presumably on the basis that it was not-Islamic based and the perpetrator was white. The term ‘CNN effect’ has been coined to describe the influence of the media when reporting on non-Western conflicts. Therefore, the media, and particularly online reporting, may be exposing this violence and possibly appealing to a small but dangerous audience.

The research in *Jihad Trending* demonstrated that those who do become involved in online chat rooms, and have significant virtual contact, go to great lengths to seek out like-minded persons. This indicates a proclivity towards either the ideology, a new community for inclusion, or support for radical or violent tendencies. The ‘auto complete’ function on typical Internet search engines had more concerning results, redirecting searchers to pro-Islamist and extremist material, including beheading videos.

The research also found that social media sites provide pathways to extremist material, thus curious young people are actually directed to the sites that can groom and radicalise their opinion. *Jihad Trending* argued that censorship is not the solution in Australia’s liberal democratic society because of our freedom of speech. However, the ability to provide a counter-narrative, so that these results are also found during searches, including accurate interpretations of religious texts, would provide a counter-balancing platform of information.

Harnessing the Muslim community globally to ensure that accurate information on Islam is available on the Internet, and providing guidance and contributing to this counter-narrative, would greatly assist in providing an alternate option for those on the path to radicalisation. However, as asserted by Nick Cohen in the foreword to *Jihad Trending*:

> Unfortunately, for the authorities, while the web may be a secret-policeman’s dream, it isn’t a playground for censors. Start closing down sites and not only will you deny our spies access to useful intelligence, but you will run into the technological limits of state power. Extremists use blogs, instant messaging, video sharing sites, Twitter and Facebook. Democratic states may try to tell their owners what content they should host, but it is a doomed enterprise.

**Recommendation 1:**

> Law enforcement agencies should undertake more effective social media surveillance, and use forensic psychiatrists/psychologists to assess the language and contribute to threat assessments on persons of interest/concern.
Part 3 - The role of mental health

The earlier work by the author argued that the vulnerability of persons with impaired mental health and social isolation is a factor for radicalisation and advancement from radical violent opinion to radical violent action. The presence of impaired mental health has been a strong indicator in all cohorts of lone actor/grievance-fuelled violence.

The Australian Government’s *Fourth National Mental Health Plan 2009-2014* included the statistics that one-in-five Australians will suffer from mental health issues and that 64 per cent of those suffering from one of the five most common mental illnesses will have onset by 21 years of age. It explains that prevalence rates vary across a lifespan but are highest in the early adult years and that earlier surveys found that 14 per cent of children (4-17 years) have a mental illness.

This aligns with the Australian Institute of Criminology’s reporting that the highest offender rate in Australia is the 15- to 19-year-old cohort. Combine these statistics with social isolation, bullying and potential crises involving ethnicity and isolation, and it provides an explanation as to why so many young Australian people are being radicalised.

In regard to crises concerning ethnicity, it is potentially compounded when it is noted that many of the Muslim youth in Australia and abroad have heard a constant dialogue during their formative years of Muslims as terrorists since 9/11. Ahmed Kilani, a community leader who works with young Muslims in Sydney, said after the Cheng murder that:

> Jabar lived his whole life in a media and political environment where Islam is associated with terrorism and negativity.... If young people feel disenfranchised from society, regardless of their race or religion, they can become susceptible to extreme ideas.50

Sheikh Wesam Charkawi, who works with disaffected Australian Muslim youth, reaffirmed this when he asserted that:

> They [youth] say that we are not part of the Australian society. We are not part of the Australian community, that we are terrorists, that we are extremists, that our religion is one that is of destruction and loss of life and so on and so forth.51

Groups like ISIS are preying on these vulnerabilities and grooming young Australians, resulting in the emergence of teenage lone wolf terrorists.

Statistics from the *Fourth National Mental Health Plan* are particularly relevant given that a finding from the US on school attackers/shooters, albeit dated 2004, was the lack of sufficient numbers of school counsellors and mental health practitioners for vulnerable youths on a path of radicalisation to violent action. In that study, Katherine Newman and her colleagues claimed that 80 per cent of school shooters were suicidal and that ‘we need to move away from a law enforcement model and toward devoting greater resources to counselling, mental health services, social workers, and development of social skills’.53

US research, while focusing on school shooters, is applicable to Australian youth, social pressures, mental health issues and radicalisation. In a tight fiscal environment, it is difficult to assess the economic impact of increasing school mental health facilities without prior research to assess how effective they would be. However, other alternate programs that might be available also tend to cease during periods of budgetary restraint as resources are diverted to higher priorities.

**Referral option for young persons at risk of radicalisation**

The police often implement and fund diversion programs for youth at risk, in the absence of other programs being available. The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Police, for example, provide funding to the Canberra Police and Community Youth Club to provide programs for youth at risk, and contract the services of SupportLink as the referral agency for these young
people, as well as their families. This model of cooperative diversion programs and referrals provides a confidential pathway to divert troubled young people into programs that may be of assistance.

The benefit of using a provider such as SupportLink is that it is an 'electronic referral system that allows police officers to make referrals to social support providers in an easy and efficient manner ... in under 60 seconds, saving time and resources while adding value to their core activities'. SupportLink conducts triage and follows up on referrals utilising multiple program providers to meet the requirements and the circumstances of the referral. The ACT Policing Annual Report for 2013-14 indicated that some 6000 people were referred to SupportLink during the reporting period. Queensland and Northern Territory Police also utilise SupportLink.

Initiatives such as the Canberra Police and Community Youth Club program are performance measured and provide an opportunity for police to be involved to break down barriers between youth and police. Other program providers, when registered with SupportLink, provide law enforcement agencies with some re assurance that the provider is legitimate and has appropriate staff. An organisation that can monitor providers may eliminate the current concerns of persons working in the youth liaison space, such as in Bankstown, where attempts were being made to radicalise young people at a youth centre.

An online referral system similar to SupportLink could be considered for the use of police and educators (in existing states), providing an early intervention pathway with relevant programs aimed at countering extremism and creating social opportunities and skills. It could also facilitate referral to a NFTAC should the behaviours be concerning enough to warrant further exploration by police and qualified forensic psychiatrists.

Electronic referrals could be made available with short question/answer on behaviours and indicators. Assurance that these referrals would be assessed by experienced psychological practitioners and police, and that risk mitigation is the priority, is potentially a preferred forum to concerned friends and family. The costs of a service such as SupportLink is unavailable in the public domain. However, if a specialised unit were to be created within the Australian Federal Police (AFP), the current role of SupportLink to the ACT Police could viably be expanded to the national arm of the organisation.

Consultation for such a tool could be explored through the Australia-New Zealand Police Advisory Agency as to the current benefits and performance experienced in the ACT, Queensland and Northern Territory. Such a referral system would also be in line with current countering violent extremism initiatives and discussion.

**Recommendation 2:**

The current SupportLink program utilised by the ACT Police should be expanded to enable referral from all state and territory police to divert persons at risk of violent extremism or related behavioural concerns.
A referral point for third-party notifications

In October 2011, the Australian Government introduced the website ‘Living Safe Together – Building community resilience to violent extremism’ as part of a suite of initiatives aimed at countering violent extremism.62 While the site provides for reporting of online extremism and has documents on radicalisation, it does not provide a comprehensive referral point for third-party notifications. The site provides details of the National Security Hotline, however contacting the hotline may be viewed by some as an act of last resort by third parties, as the ‘national security’ prefix implies a law enforcement response rather than intervention.63

A new hotline, hosted by the same team, could be created for the referral of persons for whom there is concern for early intervention. The Attorney-General’s Department, which hosts the National Security Hotline, would need to be consulted, and staff trained on the behaviours and information to be obtained from callers.

If the hotline could be managed by current staff, the costs would likely be relatively minor. However, the quantity of calls received would need to be monitored to assess if current staffing levels are sufficient. Hotline attendants could utilise the e-referral process or, if considered urgent, contact the NFTAC directly. The imperative would be to provide a suitably-named service that encourages reporting and disassociates high-level security response from an intervention.

Recommendation 3:

A new hotline should be created with a focus on attracting reporting by young people, educators, religious leaders, friends and family members who may need assistance after recognising behavioural changes in a person but who are hesitant to engage law enforcement or report to the National Security Hotline.

Part 4 – Existing models and frameworks

The earlier work by the author explored and explained the role of impaired mental health in all cohorts of lone-actor/grievance-fuelled violence, although it is only in the last decade that mental health intervention and the assistance of mental health experts has been considered an appropriate investigative aid when considering the threat. Thomas Muller, a criminal psychologist who assisted in the investigation of Franz Fuchs’ bombing campaign, commented that ‘we do not search for offenders, we look for offender behaviours’.64

The Council of Australian Governments’ recently-released ‘Australia’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy’ does not mention the role of mental health and specialised practitioners until page 9—under the heading of ‘Diversion – Stopping people from becoming terrorists’—and does not expand on psychological analysis in the assessment process.65 However, the use of identifying behaviours has been incorporated in the work of police and mental health expert teams in the UK and Queensland, which this paper will now examine, together with a proposal for a similar NFTAC hosted by the AFP.

The earlier work argued that the use of the Internet as a radicalisation tool provides for both a global reach and law enforcement opportunity. The significant presence of impaired mental health across all cohorts, and the accompanying similar typologies and behaviours, suggests that a NFTAC comprising of specialists including police, counter-terrorism investigators and clinical psychologists could effectively mitigate the risk from fixated persons and lone wolf terrorists.
The benefits would be threefold, namely:

- A preventative strategy against lone wolf terrorists (all ideologies);
- A preventative strategy against fixated persons, including enhancing the protective security arrangements for Australian holders of high office; and
- Mental health intervention and monitoring for those that require it.

The unit would draw from the experience of the current UK Fixated Threat Assessment Centre and the Queensland Fixated Threat Assessment Centre. The latter focuses on threats in the state of Queensland and accepts Queensland-based referrals from the AFP. The intention would be for the NFTAC to have a wider remit to enable those on the periphery of counter-terrorism investigations to be continuously assessed and monitored regarding the threat they potentially pose.

**Fixated Research Group**

The UK and Queensland models were founded on the premise that the ‘role of psychiatry is central to confronting the issue of threat from fixated individuals’, as well as research conducted by the Fixated Research Group, which is a UK Home Office initiative comprising forensic psychiatrists and psychologists from the UK, Australia and the US with expertise in the field of stalking. Some of the key findings of studies by the Fixated Research Group have been that:

- The main risks to elected politicians in Western countries come not from terrorist or criminal groups but from fixated loners.
- The majority of fixated loners are mentally ill.
- The risks posed by an individual depend on their underlying motivation and symptomatology.
- Different sorts of risk are associated with different risk factors (and motivations).
- Those fixated on a personal cause or quest for justice are of particular concern.
- Other than violence (which is rare), risks which need to be assessed comprise:
  - Persistence: the risk that the intrusive behaviours will continue, unless there is some form of intervention;
  - Escalation: the risk that the behaviours will become more intrusive or dangerous; and
  - Disruption: the risk that the behaviours will disrupt a person’s ability to go about their normal lives and duties, or disrupt public events.
- Attention to inappropriate communications and approaches to public figures is a way of identifying seriously ill people who have fallen through the care net.
- Treatment of the underlying mental illness would both benefit the individual concerned and reduce any threat they might constitute.

**The UK Fixated Threat Assessment Centre**

The UK Fixated Threat Assessment Centre (UKFTAC), based in London, was jointly created in October 2006 by the British Home Office, Department of Health, and Metropolitan Police to assess and manage the risk to politicians, members of the British Royal family and other public figures from obsessive (fixated) individuals. It incorporates 'best practices found in other public figure threat assessment units of Europe', as well as the US. Its formal role is:
The assessment and management of risks posed to prominent individuals, the places they work in, and the prominent organizations and events in which they are involved, by isolated loners pursuing idiosyncratic quests or grievances to an irrational degree.69

The UKFTAC is made up of staff from the Metropolitan Police and the UK National Health Service, with psychiatric staff working full-time alongside police officers. It comprises:

- Nine police officers;
- Four full-time forensic nurses;
- Three consultant forensic psychiatrists; and
- One consultant psychologist providing on-site supervision.70

The Centre operates by receiving referrals of the most worrying communications made to public figures in the UK. Of note, 81 per cent of the first 100 threateners reported to the Centre had previously been treated by psychiatric services, and 57 per cent had previously undergone compulsory admission to hospital; moreover, of those that had previously been treated, 60 per cent remained ‘notionally under care’.71

This highlights that even though a person may be under the care of a mental health provider, the provider may not be aware of their behaviour, unless voluntarily informed by the person or a third party. It also reinforces that a person notionally under care may still be a concern unless independently assessed against indicators or behaviours.

In determining the threat posed by such individuals, the UKFTAC undertakes a process described as:

[T]he making of quick decisions in response to limited information in an operational, dynamic, real-time setting. It takes risk as a unitary concept and does not produce any form of nuanced judgement. Its purpose is to triage individuals into categories of high, medium and low concern in order to determine the level of immediate response.72

In the methodology used by the Centre, high-concern cases require an urgent response; medium cases require a prompt response; while low concern cases do not require an immediate response, although the individuals are recorded and monitored to identify any escalation in behaviour. The threat assessment process is depicted at Figure 2.
The risk assessment approach used is that of the ‘Stalking Risk Profile’ (guidelines for the assessment and management of stalkers), a ‘manualised, structured professional judgement tool, which incorporates both international research findings and the clinical expertise accumulated by the Fixated Research Group’. The behaviours in question include the approaches or communications that have been made as well as any history of violence, motivation and other behaviours that are indicators of risk.

The importance of communication was explained earlier this paper, as was the opportunity provided by persons who may be inspired, sympathised or groomed by extremist groups in their use of the Internet and social media to communicate. It is this communication that can assist in the threat assessment by units similar to the UKFTAC.

Two future challenges identified by the Centre are the role of social media and lone actors. When the Centre was created in 2006, the main form of written communication was still letters. However, this has since changed, particularly in relation to those under 40 who primarily utilise electronic communications, such as email, which:

... is a source of warning behaviours that has yet to be tapped. Work in this area is likely to move from being reactive, in terms of responding to cases brought to its attention by others, to proactive, in searching of the Internet through developing protocols and strategies for looking for evidence of threat in cyberspace.
As noted by David James et al, the UKFTAC also recognises the overlap between fixated persons and lone wolf terrorists (lone actors), the majority of whom involve Islamic and right-wing extremism. However, ‘there is also the question of whether the threat assessment approaches developed for isolated loners have relevance in the consideration of lone actors, a subject that needs further research’.75

In the earlier work, the nexus of typologies between fixated persons and lone wolves was analysed and the case of Man Haron Monis was considered, including his past behaviour, violent activity, attention-seeking behaviour, communications and Facebook postings.76 The work identified a gap in the Australian national security framework for the referral and assessment of persons like Monis. Indeed, if Australia had a NFTAC that considered these persons, including those known to counter-terrorism teams and intelligence agencies, the threat assessment process may have identified that Monis was of high concern and required an urgent response.

Figure 1 illustrated the radicalisation process. The behaviours of a person on the radicalisation pathway may bring them to the attention of third parties, mental health or law enforcement agencies. Moreover, communications made during this process may be available either through writing, verbally or by a third party, and could provide some evidence of behaviours and motivations for assessment by a NFTAC.

However, it is the ‘interest in extremism’, ‘enabler’ and ‘broadcasting’ that would provide impetus to consider all behaviours, including previous history, to assess the person and monitor his or her behaviour for a triggering event that would require immediate action. Individuals could be monitored along this pathway with either an intervention conducted or, if the person was not cooperative and there was little to facilitate emergency police or mental health action/orders, then surveillance, both physical and virtual, could be conducted. Assessment could then continue until the appropriate time for intervention, facilitated by authorities, especially if it were to prevent the commission of an attack.

Queensland Fixated Threat Assessment Centre – the Australian experience

The Queensland Fixated Threat Assessment Centre (QFTAC) was established in July 2013 as a joint initiative between the Queensland Police Service and Queensland Mental Health Service.77 Michele Pathé assisted in its development and was also involved in the development of the UKFTAC. The unit is staffed by officers from the Security Operations Unit of the Queensland Police Service and the Community Forensic Outreach Service of the Queensland Mental Health Service, including a clinical nurse consultant, forensic psychologist and a senior forensic psychologist.78 QFTAC’s purpose statement is:

[T]o facilitate care for individuals with a serious mental illness and in doing so minimise the harm they potentially pose. There is a substantial body of evidence to indicate that many people who fixate on public figures have a major mental disorder and a small proportion will go on to approach and attack behaviours. Despite their fixation on a public official or some related cause, their victims are more often family members, other innocent citizens or the fixated person themselves.79

This reinforces the view that disordered communications and approaches to public figures are a means of identifying these concerning individuals—and intervening before their behaviours escalate. Furthermore, it has been found that many people who become pathologically fixated on public figures have fallen through the mental health care net. Some of these individuals are not currently known to mental health services, while others have disengaged from treatment.80 In carrying out its role, the QFTAC:

[R]eceives referrals from staff in Ministerial and Electoral offices, the Queensland Police Service (especially dignitary protection), the Australian Federal Police, other law enforcement agencies both interstate and overseas, the judiciary, some embassies and mental health services. Ministerial and electoral office staff use evidence-based checklists to ‘filter out’ cases of low concern.81
QFTAC has noted that in its first year of operation, it received 145 referrals for evaluation and that 64 per cent (93 cases) were either in the high (19) or moderate (74) concern category. The unit reported that of the cases referred, 70 per cent had an existing psychiatric diagnosis, and 54 per cent of all cases analysed had a 'severe mental disorder or major affective disorder'.

The unit further reported that:

The primary mode of contact precipitating referral to QFTAC included written correspondence (43%), concerning or inappropriate phone calls (27%), in person presentations to public office-holders or prominent individuals (22%, with two of these in possession of weapons). The vast majority of cases referred [...] were fixated on a cause or grievance, but they focused their attentions on one or more public office-holders because the politician(s) represented a potential source of help or harm to their cause.

In January 2015, QFTAC was reportedly monitoring at least ten persons who were similar to Man Monis—with Michele Pathé asserting that the Monis incident was a good example of how fixated people could be mistaken for lone wolves. This demonstrated again the similarities between the typologies but also that professional clinicians can recognise the behaviours, providing opportunity for intervention. Monis was not a person who had become a concern to the safety of Australian holders of high office so would not have been referred for assessment.

It is, therefore, essential that the expertise of these units is used across both protection and counter-terrorism operations. Moreover, while it may be assumed that the persons mentioned as being monitored by the QFTAC were residing in Queensland, they may well have travelled to other Australian jurisdictions, highlighting the need for potential monitoring and intervention both within and across the various Australian jurisdictions.

An Australian NFTAC could also be effectively utilised in assessing the threat against federal members of Parliament. This remit currently sits with the AFP, in consultation with ASIO. The NFTAC's required breadth of responsibility and staffing could not be established within existing AFP resources. However, if additional resources could be provided to the AFP, it may be appropriate to include NFTAC functions within its wider counter-terrorism remit, given the role of the AFP in counter-terrorism operations and its existing relationships with other national security agencies, particularly ASIO, the Attorney-General's Department, and state and territory police.

An alignment of the team along those lines, with both protection and counter-terrorism functions, would enable the provision of threat assessments, monitoring and risk mitigation to persons of concern on the periphery of counter-terrorism investigations. It would also enable ASIO and the AFP’s Joint Counter Terrorism Teams to continue investigations into known groups and threats, and refer other persons of concern, or persons who come to the attention of security agencies but are not linked to organised radical groups, to NFTAC for assessment.

Conversely, the NFTAC could conduct the threat assessments and, if warranted, advise the Joint Counter Terrorism Teams or appropriate state or territory local police of the requirement for urgent action and the prioritisation of resources to respond. In the case of Australian holders of high office, this work is currently conducted in the protective security environment, which this paper will now examine.

**Australian protective security as risk mitigation**

Australian government public figures and holders of high office are provided protection by federal, state and territory law enforcement agencies, with the AFP having primary responsibility for the protection of Federal members of Parliament and Australian holders of high office. Increased funding was provided to the AFP in the 2014-15 Federal budget to enhance national protective security arrangements in response to the increased threat brought about by ISIS, and Australians travelling to Syria and Iraq to fight or further their cause through terrorist acts on their return to Australia. The arrangements include the provision of close protection officers, and intelligence and assessment teams to identify persons and events of concern.
The Protection Liaison portfolio within the AFP Protection function collects, analyses, evaluates and disseminates intelligence/information to the AFP and relevant agencies. It conducts liaison and intelligence investigations into threats against holders of high office, foreign dignitaries and diplomatic missions. Its intelligence-gathering activities facilitate contact with community groups and assist in determining possible acts of politically-motivated violence, criminal offences or acts likely to affect the dignity of a diplomatic mission, its representatives or Australian holders of high office. Protective Liaison gathers intelligence on issue-motivated groups; those planning acts of politically-motivated violence; and psychologically-disturbed individuals who may pose a threat or embarrassment to high-office holders, guests of government or members of the diplomatic community.

Community liaison is a fundamental security intelligence collection activity and an integral element of Protective Liaison operations. The aim of its Community Contacts Program is to liaise with, develop and enhance relationships with relevant ethnic, community and business communities to facilitate the acquisition of relevant intelligence to the AFP and key stakeholders. It is an overt process, intended to raise the awareness and responsibilities of the AFP, enhance community understanding of the AFP's role, and provide a point of contact for the provision of information.

The AFP's Protection Assessment Team liaises directly with Protective Liaison members and other relevant AFP teams to exchange and coordinate information, and to provide timely and accurate intelligence and analytical support. The Protection Assessment Team is the dedicated target development and analytical function for the Protection function, providing targeting and analytical support to all AFP offices, as requested or required by operational necessity.

This support includes strategic and operational targeting; the provision of written analytical product to assist in operational planning; and advice on potential risks, threats and emerging issues. The Protection Assessment Team is also responsible for the production of specialist analytical products, including association charts, timelines and profiles. Protective Liaison and the Protection Assessment Team both work closely with ASIO, the Attorney-General's Department, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and state and territory protection and intelligence units.

The teams have drawn on US experience and doctrine, such as the Protective Intelligence and Threat Assessment Investigations Guide produced in July 1998 by the US Department of Justice. Although the Guide's 'Exceptional Case Study Project' indicated high levels of mental health issues in persons who approached or attacked public profile figures, this did not originally form part of the construct for effective protective security teams. The findings of the case study were included in the author's earlier work and showed that 44 per cent were diagnosed with mental health illnesses, although some practitioners indicated that all had some form of mental health instability.

To date, there has only been one significant assassination attempt on an Australian holder of high office. It occurred in June 1966, when a 19-year-old man shot then Leader of the Opposition, Arthur Calwell, at the Mosman Town Hall in Sydney, after he had spoken on conscription for the Vietnam War. Fortunately, Calwell sustained only minor injuries. It is significant to note that the offender, Peter Kocan, was suffering mental health issues and subsequently hospitalised for over ten years. A more recent example was the threat made on Facebook by Jeffrey Geaney in June 2011 to kill then Prime Minister Julia Gillard. Undoubtedly, there have been other threats over the years that have not come to public attention but have been managed by law enforcement agencies.

**Australia's National Security Framework**

Australia's National Security Framework provides clear responsibilities for the government agencies chartered with cooperating in the prevention, investigation and response to terrorist attacks in Australia, as well as response for attacks offshore that affect Australians. The role of the AFP is described as:
Investigating national terrorist offences, providing overseas liaison and protective services, and performing a state policing function in the ACT. The AFP Protective Service provides physical protection services in relation to foreign embassies and certain government facilities, and also counter-terrorism first response at major airports. These counter-terrorism arrangements were implemented in 2002 and stipulate that the national responsibility for counter-terrorism and protection operations resides with the AFP. The framework for cooperation with state and territory police and intelligence agencies is articulated in the Australian Government’s 2012 ‘National Counter-Terrorism Plan’. The AFP can also utilise the international liaison network and police-to-police cooperation to ensure persons of concern in Australia, if they intend to travel, are known to other countries and, conversely, that foreign persons of concern intending to travel to Australia are brought to the attention of the AFP.

ASIO has a threat assessment role, although it does not include the assessment of individuals against the basis of escalating behaviour. The role of ASIO, Australia’s national security intelligence service, is described as ‘gathering information and producing intelligence so that it can warn the government about activities or situations that might endanger Australia’s national security’.

Early consultation with ASIO needs to occur to ensure that it understands that the proposed NFTAC would not be replicating or replacing the function of the National Threat Assessment Centre, which issues ‘threat assessments to inform the actions of the police and other agencies with a role in protecting Australians and Australian interests from threats to national security’. A NFTAC would complement the threat assessments conducted by ASIO, and also provide an alternate point of assessment by specialised clinicians.

After the Lindt café siege by Man Monis in December 2014, the Federal and NSW Governments conducted a review into the incident. As a result of that review, a new ‘Counter-Terrorism Strategy’ has been developed; however, it does not include a specialist unit, such as the proposed NFTAC, that can assess the threat of individuals and provide prioritisation for investigation, response and monitoring.

**Part 5 - Policy proposal for a National Fixated Threat Assessment Centre**

Both the earlier work by the author and this paper have argued that the typologies for lone wolf terrorists and fixated persons are similar, and that impaired mental health, the Internet and sociological factors increase the risk of such persons undertaking attacks within Australia. Threat assessment of persons of concern is not a new law enforcement tool. However, the assessment against behaviours and communications by psychiatrists/psychologists is not currently utilised in Australia on a national level.

Nevertheless, there are a number of examples, notably the UKFTAC, QFTAC, US Capitol Police Threat Assessment Section and the US Secret Service, of organisations effectively utilising behavioural threat assessments, with complementary research assessing that:

> Warning behaviours are acts which constitute evidence of increasing or accelerating risk. They are acute, dynamic, and particularly toxic changes in patterns of behaviour which may aid in structuring a professional’s judgement that an individual of concern now poses a threat—whether the actual target has been identified or not.

As the Australian Department of Health does not have state-level equivalent mental health providers, mental health clinicians would need to be contracted directly by the AFP. A memorandum of understanding would need to be developed between the AFP, Department of Health, and state government health departments to allow for appropriate consultation between the AFP’s forensic psychologists/psychiatrists and state and territory mental health providers.

Queensland-based persons of concern that come to the attention of the AFP could either be referred to the QFTAC or managed jointly with the NFTAC. It is probable that federal legislative
reform would be required to enable the sharing of mental health information between the AFP’s mental health clinicians and state-based mental health providers, so the Attorney-General’s Department would need to be consulted on this, as well as the Department of Health.

Concept phase

This paper makes no allowance for funding the concept and pilot phases of the introduction of a NFTAC, on the assumption that the resources would be provided by the AFP and any costs absorbed in the existing operating budget. It is suggested that a Superintendent, Sergeant and senior sworn member would be required for this phase, to work cooperatively with the Human Resources, Finance, Counter-Terrorism, Policy, and Protection sections of the AFP. They would also need to liaise with the Attorney-General’s Department, ASIO, Department of Health, Department of Education, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the QFTAC.

Phase 1

The suggested staffing level for the NFTAC is for the first four years only, which would need to be reviewed during this period. It is expected that the tempo of the unit would be high in the first two years as it assesses current persons of interest, assesses and responds to new referrals, and implements protocols, processes and procedures. Fortunately, the governance arrangements could be expedited through consultation and lessons learned from QFTAC, while the processes and protocols of the Protection Assessment Team and Protection Liaison could be expanded and incorporated as appropriate.

The response mechanisms would need to be discussed with state and territory police, as well as the Joint Counter Terrorism Teams, to ensure they understand that requirements for response are based on the probability these persons would come to their attention, or may have already come to their attention. Referrals would likely be directly from Parliament, AFP, state and territory police (including the Joint Counter Terrorism Teams) and also education establishments, such as schools, universities and colleges.

However, third-party advice is essential in the identification of persons unknown. These could be made from work colleagues, religious leaders, friends and family or persons who see social media notifications. This is the reason that a separate hotline for reporting is required and, preferably, a hotline that is different to the National Security Hotline to encourage early advice and intervention as behaviour changes or radicalisation commences—and, importantly, before an urgent response is required. The referral and response process is depicted at Figure 3.
**Proposed staff**

The staffing template for the unit has been considered against current AFP staffing, with the intention that the team would work closely with the Protective Assessment Team and also the Counter-Terrorism portfolio, including the Joint Counter Terrorism Teams and the Counter Violent Extremism Team.

The proposed template is:

- 1 x AFP Superintendent—to sit across the Protective Assessment Team and the NFTAC, and to work closely with Counter Terrorism and Counter Violent Events teams;
- 1 x AFP Sergeant;
- 4 x senior AFP sworn members (Band 4-5) drawn from Protective Liaison and Joint Counter Terrorism Teams;
- 1 x analyst;
- 3 x intelligence officers for additional Internet monitoring and intelligence product preparation/collection/collation;
- 1 x Band 3 administrative support; and
- 2 x forensic psychologists/psychiatrists and 1 x clinical psychiatric nurse.
Table 2: Proposed NFTAC budget*

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<td>2,521,235</td>
<td>2,546,238</td>
<td>10,280,279</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* These estimates have been prepared utilising advice from AFP Finance.

Phase 2

The cost of a new hotline (Recommendation 1) may be relatively minor and possibly within the resources of the Attorney-General’s Department, which could be explored during the first year of operation. An e-referral system by a provider such as SupportLink may be more expensive and, again, would benefit from further consultation and exploration in the first year of operation.

Should either or both of these recommendations be found to be effective and supported, then it is possible a separate budget proposal would be required dependent on the cost of expanding the service. Marketing would need to be conducted with all national security agencies and could possibly be built into current Counter Violent Extremism marketing through the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Final proposal

Fixated persons or those that may seek to use violence as a method of revenge or action such as lone wolves could also be a threat to other persons and government agencies as explained in the earlier work. An example was David Lia, who planned and prepared to conduct two bombings in Sydney in March 2013 due to a grievance against a doctor. Historically, there have been other cases, such as the attacks against the Family Law Courts in the 1980s, which resulted in the deaths of four persons. Leonard Warwick was arrested in August 2015 and it is alleged that he conducted the attacks based on a grievance with the Courts over child custody.

The analysis of behaviour and other indicators is essential in discerning the difference between those that make threats against persons or places, and those that pose an actual threat. Often, those that provide commentary on social media sites, write threatening letters or make verbal threats will never act on those threats or escalate from radical violent opinion to radical violent action. It is essential, therefore, that qualified clinicians, experienced in mental health, and behavioural analysis are engaged in an effort to effectively prioritise persons who are at risk of violent action.
Recommendation 4:

A National Fixated Threat Assessment Centre be established, hosted by the AFP, to work cooperatively with state and territory police, intelligence agencies and health departments. The Centre would employ mental health clinicians to assist in the threat assessment of individuals and their risk mitigation through community programs, mental health intervention or police action.

This policy proposal purposefully avoids increasing policing resources for physical surveillance teams, covert investigators, criminal investigators, and telephone intercept staff. The intention is that the proposal be lean to reflect the current fiscal environment while, at the same time, providing a specialist unit to assist in prioritising persons for further consideration of investigation, or mitigate the risk through community or mental health intervention.

It would be essential for the policy and legislative reform proposal to be socialised through the national security community, primarily the counter-terrorism committees, and be supported by the Counter-Terrorism Coordinator in consultation with the Senior Executive Counter Terrorism Group and the National Counter Terrorism Centre. During the four-year proposal period, assessment of its effectiveness and the utilisation of existing police and intelligence agency resources should be conducted to consider additional gaps in capability.

The ‘Living Safe Together’ website provides referral options, such as the National Security Hotline, Lifeline and Kids Lifeline: callers could also use Crime Stoppers. However, concerned persons may not want to refer to a security authority and Lifeline may not identify the gravity of the information they are being provided, so education and marketing needs to ensure that these other referral points understand the function and role of the unit so that they forward such referrals.

As discussed earlier, a separate hotline could be created for use by persons who are concerned and do not want to contact law enforcement agencies directly but seek advice or other pathways such as mental health or community intervention. These persons need to be assessed against behavioural indicators and other background information of personal crises, social isolation or personal/political grievance, regardless of the type of intervention outcome.

Conclusion

The threat in Australia from lone wolves has been demonstrated on three occasions in recent years. The threat is enduring, and the global reach of the Internet is contributing to the ongoing radicalisation of Australian youth. The earlier work by the author argued that this phenomenon is global and is not confined to Islamic terrorism but is affecting socially-isolated, disenfranchised and mentally-unstable young people throughout the world. The earlier work and this paper have tried to explain why this is occurring and that not all persons will follow the radicalisation path from opinion to violence.

The typologies of lone wolves, fixated persons, school attackers and assassins are very similar and provide behavioural indicators that can inform threat assessments. The cooperation between police and specialist psychological clinicians has been recognised and implemented in the UKFTAC and QFTAC in an effort to mitigate the risk to holders of high office in the protective security environment.

The results have been proven and the risk mitigation has not only prevented attacks but has also provided a mental health pathway for persons in the community who require it. These results
and the lessons and governance that have already been created can contribute to a NFTAC which would not only mitigate the risk from fixated persons but also other lone actors that are intent on using violence to further their causes or bring notoriety to themselves.

It has been suggested in this paper that the AFP is the most appropriate agency to accommodate this unit as it has the national responsibility for the protection of Australian holders of high office, and also for terrorism investigations. The AFP also has an international liaison function that provides for police-to-police cooperation and information exchange to ensure that law enforcement agencies are aware of persons of concern travelling overseas. Given that the national and international relationships and frameworks already exist and do not need to be expanded, this policy proposal complements arrangements rather than seeking to alter them. The emphasis is on effectiveness and efficiency and to work within current models and recent Counter Violent Extremism initiatives.

This paper also provides options for referral including the creation of a new hotline for reporting. This would be a small and inexpensive option that may encourage greater reporting from diverse minority groups who are concerned for their family member or friend but are fearful of police intervention. By triaging these referrals, alternate pathways that are appropriate to the behaviours could be recommended, such as community programs, mental health intervention or low-level police contact. It would also provide for cases that would not come to the attention of law enforcement agencies to be brought forward for immediate intervention if required.

Recent reporting has indicated that Australia is experiencing its highest level of counter-terrorism investigations, and it is reasonable to assume that security agency resources are finite. This policy proposal would enable these agencies to focus on the threat from large terrorist groups and seek assistance from a NFTAC for the assessment of individuals that are on the periphery of these investigations. It would also provide for referral from persons who come to attention through protection operations, local policing matters, educators, religious leaders and the broader community. This is important because lone wolves and fixated persons generally communicate their intention—and third parties are privy to their behavioural changes.

The policy proposal is cost effective and it would provide three significant outcomes, namely:

• A preventative strategy against lone wolf terrorists (all ideologies);
• A preventative strategy against fixated persons, including enhancing the protective security arrangements for Australian holders of high office; and
• Mental health intervention and monitoring for those that require it.

The UKFTAC has reported that two of its future challenges are the use of social media and lone actors. The research conducted by the author concludes that while these are challenges, there is the ability for units like NFTAC to incorporate the threat assessment of persons referred by counter-terrorism teams. This policy paper also addresses these challenges by proposing community-friendly options of e-referral and a new hotline in an effort to identify persons that are on a radicalisation pathway, possibly mentally unwell and in need of intervention. The effectiveness of using Fixated Threat Assessment Centres for the intervention of fixated persons has been proven and, by its extension, may provide a solution to countering lone wolf terrorism.
Notes


2  For the purposes of this paper, I define ‘lone wolves’ as a person or persons (a small cell of less than three) who may be influenced or inspired by extremist ideology but undertake, or plan to undertake, a violent attack independent of the direct command of an extremist group. The term ‘fixated’ refers to ‘an obsessionnal pre-occupation with an individual and activity or an idea’: see Paul Mullen, David James, J. Reid Meloy et al., ‘The Fixated and the Pursuit of Public Figures’, *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology*, Vol. 20, No. 1, February 2009, p. 34.

3  Katrina Buggy, ‘The threat from lone wolves and fixated persons will increase in the years ahead unless the threat is mitigated: is there currently a gap in the Australian National Security Framework?’, unpublished paper, Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, Australian Defence College: Canberra, July 2015.


5  ISIS (Islamic State Iraq and Levant) is also referred to as Islamic State or Daesh in academic papers, news reporting and political commentary; for the purposes of the paper, ISIS will be used.

6  Yaakov Lapin, *Exposing the Islamist State on the Internet*, Potomac Books: Washington DC, 2011, p. 3 defines ‘caliphate’ as ‘a state governed according to the rules of the Koran—after destroying the world’s current impure regimes’.


Berkovic, ‘Sydney shooting’.

Buggy, ‘The threat from lone wolves and fixed persons will increase in the years ahead unless the threat is mitigated’.


‘Unfreezing’ is a change in circumstances, especially a sudden change, that leaves an individual in some kind of personal crisis. Examples include financial problems, physical threat, and loss of connection with loved ones. When predictability and control are threatened, individuals become open to new relationships, new behaviours, and new values in trying to regain control. Unfreezing is thus an opening in an individual’s life that decreases the perceived cost of acting on a grievance and increases the value of acting to gain or regain status and respect.


Fife-Yeomans, ‘Sydney siege’; and Farrow, ‘Lindt siege not a terrorist’.

Tim O’Reilly, ‘What is Web 2.0?: design patterns and business models for the next generation of software’, O’Reilly [website], 30 September 2005, available at <http://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html?page=1> accessed 21 June 2015, noting that the term is used to explain the ‘technology-enabled, peer-to-peer network that the Internet now provides such as blogs, web forums, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. The rise of the new media created a new era in communication allowing much greater and broader participation from users in commerce, social networking and terrorism’.

Mark Hamm and Ramon Spaaj, Lone Wolf Terrorism in America: using knowledge of radicalization pathways to forge prevention strategies, Indiana State University: Terre Haute, 2015, p. 10.

Hamm and Spaaj, Lone Wolf Terrorism in America, pp. 7-10.

The term ‘enablers’ is referenced as being ‘either direct means in the form of people who unwittingly assist in planning attacks, or indirectly by people who provide inspiration for terrorism’: Hamm and Spaaj, Lone Wolf Terrorism in America, p. 9.

Hamm and Spaaj, Lone Wolf Terrorism in America, p. 9.

Hamm and Spaaj, Lone Wolf Terrorism in America, pp. 7-10.

Hamm and Spaaj, Lone Wolf Terrorism in America, p. 11.


Schleibs, ‘We must keep pace with ISIS, says ASIO Chief Duncan Lewis’.


Buggy, ‘The threat from lone wolves and fixated persons will increase in the years ahead unless the threat is mitigated’, p. 30


Bench, ‘Dangerous Speech’.


MacLean, ‘Can “Dangerous Speech” be used to explain “Lone-Wolf” Terrorism?’, pp. 19-46.

Jesse MacLean, ‘Can “Dangerous Speech” be used to explain “Lone-Wolf” Terrorism?’, p. 47.


Ghaffar Hussain and Erin Maree Saltman, Jihad Trending: a comprehensive analysis of online extremism and how to counter it, Quilliam Foundation: London, May 2014, p. 36; they also provide a definition of the ‘Dark Web’ as ‘content that is not accessible on the web through conventional means and is unreachable through open source browsing’, p. 9.

Hussain and Saltman, Jihad Trending, pp. 27-37.

Hussain and Saltman, Jihad Trending, pp. 31-2; ‘Auto complete’ is the software function that completes words, or strings of words, without the user needing to type them in full. This function is based on what is inputted before by a user.

Hussain and Saltman, Jihad Trending, p. 40.

Hussain and Saltman, Jihad Trending, p. 4.


53 Newman et al., Rampage, p. 294.


59 AFP, ACT Policing, [AFP website], available at <http://www.police.act.gov.au/about-us> accessed 28 October 2015. ACT Policing is the community policing arm of the AFP and was created for the purpose of providing policing services to the ACT under the auspices of a policing arrangement between the Commonwealth and ACT Governments.


64 Kate Connolly, ‘Austrian racist gets life for five-year bomb terror’, The Guardian [website], 11 March 1999, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/mar/11/kateconnolly> accessed 28 October 2015. Franz Fuch was a racist fanatic who terrorised Austria with a five-year letter- and pipe-bombing campaign that killed four people and maimed a dozen others. See also Spaaij, Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism, pp. 82-S, noting that ‘the criminal investigation of Franz Fuchs’ bombing campaign featured the close involvement of criminal psychologists and behavioural scientists, with psychologist Thomas Muller playing a significant role in the search for the bomber’.


67 As above.

68 James, Farnham and Walsh, ‘The Fixated Threat Assessment Centre’, p. 299.


80 James, Farnham and Walsh, ‘The Fixated Threat Assessment Centre’, p. 305.


82 James, Farnham and Walsh, ‘The Fixated Threat Assessment Centre’, p. 317.

83 James, Farnham and Walsh, ‘The Fixated Threat Assessment Centre’, p. 318.

84 Buggy, ‘The threat from lone wolves and fixated persons will increase in the years ahead unless the threat is mitigated; is there currently a gap in the Australian National Security Framework?’, pp. 12-5.


87 Queensland Government, The Queensland Fixated Threat Assessment Centre [brochure].

88 Queensland Government, The Queensland Fixated Threat Assessment Centre [brochure].

89 Queensland Government, The Queensland Fixated Threat Assessment Centre [brochure].


91 Pathé et al., ‘Assessing and managing the threat posed by fixated persons in Australia’, p. 433.

92 Pathé et al., ‘Assessing and managing the threat posed by fixated persons in Australia’, pp. 432 and 435.


99 James, Farnham and Walsh, ‘The Fixated Threat Assessment Centre’, p. 300.


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