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## **AUSTRALIANS WANT TOUGHER ACTION AGAINST TERRORISM – ANUpoll**

A new ANUpoll on national security has found Australians believe the government could do more to prevent a terrorist attack in Australia, but also have concerns that Muslims are being singled out for increased surveillance and monitoring.

ANUpoll found a large majority (71 per cent) are concerned about the possible rise of Islamist extremism in Australia, although 70 per cent also believe Muslims in Australia should not be subject to additional scrutiny based on their religion.

The poll, conducted by The Australian National University (ANU), also found strong support for the government's strict border protection controls, the retention of telecommunications metadata, revoking citizenship for foreign fighters with dual nationalities, and for bans on Australians traveling to conflict areas.

However, ANUpoll found a majority (55 per cent) said they were not concerned about being a victim or having a family member as a victim of a future terrorist attack in Australia, while 45 per cent were concerned.

"While many Australians fear terrorist attacks and a majority are prepared to compromise their individual rights and freedoms in favour of living in security, they have at the same time conflated terrorism with extremism, and have not been able to make a clear distinction between the two," said co-author Professor Amin Saikal, Director of the ANU Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies.

"The same applies to their understanding of the differences between 'Islamic', 'Islamist' and 'Islamism', as even Australian political leaders have used the terms interchangeably."

Key findings of ANUpoll *Attitudes to National Security: Balancing Safety and Privacy* are:

- 56 per cent believe the government could do more to prevent terrorist attacks, 36 per cent believe the government is doing all it can, and 8 per cent believe the government has done too much;
- 67 per cent support retention of communications meta data;
- 59 per cent believe counter-terrorism policies single out Muslims for surveillance and monitoring, and 46 per cent of those say they are bothered by that;
- 80 per cent approve or strongly approve current border control measures as needed to protect Australia from extremism and terrorism;

- 69 per cent say Australia should prevent citizens from participating as fighters in overseas conflicts;
- 85 per cent support removing citizenship from dual nationals involved in terrorist activities overseas; but most support the courts having the power to remove citizenship rather than the Immigration Minister;
- 71 per cent are either concerned or very concerned about the possible rise of Islamic extremism in Australia, with personal concerns easing as education levels rise; and
- 70 per cent believe Muslims in Australia should not be subject to additional scrutiny due to their religion.

Researcher Dr Jill Sheppard from the ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods, said the poll reflected recent findings in support of Muslim Immigration, but shows underlying concerns about attacks.

“A substantial number of Australians are worried about the prospect of experiencing terror attacks, and that number has increased in recent years,” Dr Sheppard said.

“Those who are most concerned about terror attacks are also the most likely to support strict border protection policies and government retention of telecommunications data. We see that as levels of education increases, fears of terrorism and support for counter-terrorism policies both decrease.”

Co-researcher Kajta Theodorakis said the ANUpoll demonstrated the need for more engagement between Muslim and non-Muslim Australians.

“The findings highlight a public perception of Muslims as a potential security threat to our society, with this group seen as being at a higher risk of radicalisation and a propensity to violent extremism,” said Ms Theodorakis, a PhD Student at the ANU Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies.

“Whilst the Government's 2015 White Paper on Terrorism identifies such 'at-risk' communities, it also clearly stresses the need to work 'with' them, rather than alienate them.

“These findings warrant further attention as singling out Muslims could lead to stigmatisation and socio-political divisions which would be counter-productive to a holistic, inclusive narrative of national security.”

The ANUpoll is available at the [ANUpoll home page](#). *(Available from 7am Monday)*

The latest ANUpoll is a result of a national random telephone survey of 1,200 people, interviewed between late June and early July 2016.

ANUpoll is conducted by the Social Research Centre, an ANU Enterprise business.

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