

WITNESSES (*via videoconference*)

Dr Colin Rubenstein AM, Executive Director, and

Mr Jeremy Jones AM, Director of International and of Community Affairs, Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council.

The CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. I declare open the Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee's public hearings for the Inquiry into Extremism in Victoria. All mobile phones should now be turned to silent.

I would like to begin by respectfully acknowledging the traditional custodians of the Wurundjeri land from which I am joining you here today and all the various First Nations lands that we are variously joining this online hearing from and paying my respects to their ancestors, elders and families past and present and Aboriginal elders of others community who may be here today.

By way of introduction, I am Samantha Ratnam, and I will be chairing this morning. We are joined by fellow committee members Ms Nina Taylor, Dr Tien Kieu, Ms Cathrine Burnett-Wake and Dr Matthew Bach, and I understand we have an apology from Ms Maxwell for the hearings this morning.

By way of explanation of parliamentary privilege and the Hansard transcript, all evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during this hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following this hearing. Transcripts will ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website.

We warmly welcome the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council representatives here with us this morning. May I ask you to both state your name and the organisation you are representing here today for the record, please.

Dr RUBENSTEIN: Thank you. I am Dr Colin Rubenstein. I am Executive Director of the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council.

Mr JONES: Jeremy Jones, Director of International and of Community Affairs, Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council.

The CHAIR: A warm welcome, Mr Jones and Dr Rubenstein. We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your submission as well. We now welcome you to make an opening statement of up to 10 minutes, after which the committee would love to ask you some questions and discuss your contribution. I will hand over to you.

Dr RUBENSTEIN: Thank you very much, Chair. AIJAC welcomes the decision of Victoria's Legal and Social Issues Committee to conduct this inquiry into the security, political and social threat posed by far-right extremism in this state. We thank the committee very much for the opportunity to present our testimony today, which will attempt to put these threats into perspective, particularly in relation to the Jewish community, and outline how the threat should be addressed to best protect all Australians, including Jewish Australians.

The first point I would like to make is that when it comes to the security threat Australians are very lucky not to have experienced the racially motivated mass casualty violence conducted by self-radicalised lone-wolf attackers that we have seen recently in the United States, in 2019 in New Zealand of course, in 2011 in Norway and elsewhere. Now, while there have been several such attacks over decades, it was the terrorist mass shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019 that spawned a transnational wave of copycat attacks specifically referencing the shooter's ideology and manifesto. Such attackers are always completely unaffiliated individuals, and in almost every case they were radicalised on various social media networks and other digital platforms as part of a toxic online ecosystem that encourages users to conduct such attacks by spreading

footage and manifestos from previous shooters and engaging in the quasi-religious sanctification of attackers. This is a leaderless, horizontal ecosystem, making it virtually impossible to disrupt attacks, and it is here where Victorian security agencies, in conjunction with federal agencies of course, must remain most vigilant and invest resources for monitoring.

These attackers are always driven by some variant of the ‘great replacement’ or ‘white genocide’ conspiracy theories—the idea that the white race and white culture are under imminent existential threat due to immigration or minority birthrates. There have also been unaffiliated individuals on the far right that have planned to conduct attacks in Australia, though only a handful over several decades and almost always against infrastructure rather than people. As Australian Federal Police Commissioner Reece Kershaw recently testified, it is these unaffiliated individuals and potentially small cells of three to four individuals that primarily concern security agencies.

The second point I would like to make is that there are organised far-right groups, such as nationalist and racist violent extremist groups, several of which have now been listed as terrorist organisations by Australia, including The Base, the National Socialist Order and Sonnenkrieg Division. These have little, if any, presence in Australia, and there is no evidence that they pose an organised security threat despite their rhetoric online and off. The same applies to the National Socialist Network, an Australian Neo-Nazi group primarily based in Victoria, which has been described as ‘a disorganised, amateurish outfit, riven with internal conflicts’ and comprised mostly of ‘blowhards’ and which apparently took part in the Grampians cross burning and Nazi salutes last year. Another group, QAnon, has some sort of presence in Australia as well that could be discussed. That description really applies to the entire far right in Australia and elsewhere, which has always been hopelessly fractured and forever engaged in internecine competition. Insofar as such groups are active in the real world, it is overwhelmingly in the form of intimidating, hateful messages, online and off; giving Nazi salutes and celebrating Hitler; and potentially vandalism in the form of swastika graffiti, although it is unclear how much of this activity is organised by the groups themselves.

As described by ASIO Director-General Mike Burgess last year:

These groups promote hateful ideologies but that does not automatically put them in the same threat category as ISIL or al-Qa’ida.

ASIO has the difficult but critical job of distinguishing between talk and action, aspiration and capability.

Whatever their actual aspirations, there is hitherto no concrete evidence any of these groups have the capability to conduct mass casualty attacks nor any evidence linking them to lone-wolf attacks despite their ideology of inspiring ‘leaderless resistance’. And I should mention here it is welcomed that we have seen the banning of groups like Hezbollah and Hamas in Australia recently, and the fact is Islamist extremism still constitutes a major concern to authorities.

The third point—and I know I am pushing my time limits here—is that unfortunately the COVID-19 pandemic and associated conspiracy theories have created a political opening for far-right individuals to recruit across the political spectrum from a coalition of conspiracy theorists and those opposed to government-imposed health measures, such as lockdowns and mask and vaccine mandates. For example, one anti-lockdown protest organiser in Victoria, Harrison McLean, allegedly intended to slowly but surely mainstream antisemitic conspiracy theories among this conspiratorial coalition.

One point on terminology: the ideological conflation based on conspiracy theories has led to ASIO and other security agencies rejecting the use of the term ‘far right’ in favour of ‘ideologically motivated violent extremism’—IMVE—as opposed to religious-motivated violence extremism. In the words of the ASIO director-general:

... the current labels are no longer fit for purpose ...

We are seeing a growing number of individuals and groups that don’t fit on the left–right spectrum at all; instead, they’re motivated by fear of societal collapse or a specific social or economic grievance or conspiracy.

The point is that the pandemic has unfortunately helped bring many once fringe beliefs into the mainstream, with antisemitic signs and graffiti common at anti-lockdown protests; dangerous conspiracy theories, like the great replacement one, promoted by politicians and media personalities; an increase in Holocaust distortion, with symbols like the yellow star, forced on the Jews by the Nazis, used by anti-lockdown protesters; and Nazi comparisons increasingly and inappropriately used to describe government officials and policies. ‘Far right’ has

long been a very vague descriptor, and the Victoria Police noted in their submission to that parliamentary joint committee on intelligence and security inquiry into extremist movements and radicalism in Australia that:

... individuals and groups who adhere to—
right-wing extremist—

... ideologies have diverse and multifaceted ideological views. It is not a cohesive cohort ...

Moreover, they asserted that even that diverse cohort could not be analysed in a vacuum but only in terms of its ‘symbiotic relationship with the threat of left-wing extremism’.

Finally, a critical point: that is why AIJAC urges future Victorian inquiries to focus on extremism across the political and religious spectrum, including left-wing extremists and including Islamist hate groups and jihadi terrorism, rather than singling out right-wing extremism as a threat in a vacuum. And our submission, you will note, discusses why Islamist groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir should also be included in any discussion on extremism, given their violent, hateful, conspiratorial rhetoric and activity, particularly directed towards Jews and Israel. They are largely based in New South Wales, but of course they have a presence in Victoria as well and a presence in many countries, as our submission points out.

Just a final point: to deal with the security and political issues presented by these racially motivated extremists, AIJAC does urge, together with many others, that the Victorian government should move to operationalise the recently adopted International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism across government and beyond—that is the IHRA definition—because we think it is an essential tool for identifying and responding to the antisemitism so widespread in extremist circles. Furthermore, the implementation of Victoria’s swastika ban as well as the recommendations to the Victorian government, supported as part of the 2020 Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee inquiry into anti-vilification protections, would go a long way in addressing the threat to multicultural communities from racial extremist intimidation. We also urge the Victorian government to ban the Nazi salute and ensure any new racist code words and gestures are included in anti-vilification measures. Victoria should also lobby the commonwealth government, we respectfully submit, to list the National Socialist Network as a terrorist organisation to increase pressure on the group and any affiliated individuals.

The very last point of course is the challenge of the internet—we have been on this issue for several decades; I think we held the first conference on this issue in Sydney nearly 20 years ago—because the greatest security threat stems not from the organised far right but from lone actors steeped in online ecosystems promoting conspiracy theories, hate and bigotry. The primary focus should be on working with the federal government to regulate and monitor social media and other digital platforms and create accountability for damages caused by dangerous misinformation and hate content posted by users. Thank you very much, and thanks for indulging me. I now hand over to Jeremy Jones.

Mr JONES: Thank you. I just want to make some very brief comments, if I may, based on my more than 40 years observing Australian extremist organisations. First, extremist organisations have always been with us. They have waxed and waned in their numerical strength and activity, but regardless of the issue, they are willing to exploit it, and in this context we can see the rise of extremist activity in response to COVID public health restrictions. It is just the latest manifestation of a phenomenon which responded to, for example, gun control policies and a variety of social policies.

The second point is conspiracy theories provide alternate explanations for those who are feeling disaffected or simply confused. I cannot underestimate the importance of good messaging by policymakers; the need for restoration of trust in institutions, including Parliament; and the hard work involved in reaching out to the disaffected. The third point is imported extremist ideas have generally not been successful in reaching beyond a very small group of Australians. The American far-right groups have had a series of failures in translating to the Australian context, and there is no reason to suspect that the freedom movement imported from America will catch on in Australia the way it has seemed to catch on, unfortunately, in parts of the United States.

There have been real changes with the development of online media. One change has been the globalisation of extremist ideas. Another has been the megaphone effect, with individuals and groups, previously able only to propagate their message in print, having access to a much larger audience with much lower expenses. I should also point out there are very few really evil people of the type who would be logically addressed through punitive measures. There are many more confused and misled people. It is up to government and responsible members of civil society to extract the less committed from those who would misguide them. When we look at

the issue of religiously motivated violence it is important that culturally appropriate programs be in place. Religious leaders need to assert their authority over extremist fringes where possible. And when it comes to the very small number of individuals who are committed extremists, it is important that there are real and visible consequences for their activities.

I am the 'Jones' in the federal anti-racist cases of *Jones v. Toben*, *Jones v. One Nation*, *Jones v. Scully* and some other matters. The effect in each of these matters, brought under 18C of the federal anti-discrimination Act, was to bring a halt to a range of racist activities in the locality in which the defendant was operating because there had been awareness there could be consequences. Very few, if any, Australians want to be martyrs. They might go along with an idea as long as there are no consequences, but that is the limit. And historically, as Dr Rubenstein mentioned, the Australian extremist movements that have been categorised as far right have been led by people with limited skills and abilities and by egoists who prefer to be the leaders of the far right than part of a successful movement. The classic historical work on this phenomenon is called *Everyone Wants to be Fuehrer*. We have been fortunate and blessed by the incompetence of some extremists in Australia. We cannot depend on always being so graced, and that is why the work of this committee can be so important.

The CHAIR: Thank you so much, Mr Jones and Dr Rubenstein, for that really insightful presentation and for your submission to the inquiry as well. If I could begin the questioning, one of the things that you have highlighted is the assessment of the threat of violence and extremism, and we have certainly heard evidence throughout this inquiry that the threat posed by extremism can take a violent form but there are also threats to social cohesion and democracy and the communities that are subject of the marginalisation and the racism and discrimination that far-right extremist movements often spout out and try to normalise and spread throughout communities. I am interested in your views and your feedback from the communities you represent in terms of the impact of the spread of that misinformation and conspiracies. You have cited the pandemic as being a moment when it was rife, where some of these antisemitic conspiracy theories were taking hold or being spread. What is the experience of the community when you have these moments when those kind of extremist views are propagated within the community, let alone the violent threat, but the views and the conspiracies and the potentially racist attacks or racist threats to communities?

Dr RUBENSTEIN: Well, there is no doubt that this vilification is very hurtful, harmful and potentially very dangerous, and that is why anti-vilification measures actually are extremely important. And largely they have been effective, but in conjunction with those measures the condemnation of reputable leadership is extremely important in marginalising those efforts to incite hatred and perpetrate vilification. So yes, there has been great concern and upset about the misuse particularly of Nazi analogies, for example. There is no doubt this is seen as a genuine concern, but that is why we attach such great importance to your committee, for example, and other efforts to confront this vilification and incitement and to deal with it in terms of effective democratic, moral and political leadership.

Mr JONES: If I may add, if the extremists were to achieve their ends without using violence, they would be very happy. They could get away with reshaping Australian society in a way in which various of us feel intimidated, inferior and looking over our shoulder every 5 minutes. They would be very happy they have achieved their ends, and that is why, as Dr Rubenstein said, we have to look at this also in terms of vilification and intimidation as well as threats of violence.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. I really appreciate your response there. Dr Kieu, do you have a question?

Dr KIEU: Thank you, Dr Rubenstein and Mr Jones, for appearing today in this very important inquiry. As you just mentioned, the group of far-right extremists is small, but their actions could start softly, particularly with a lone wolf, and that is why ASIO and other agencies around the world are worrying about it. Nevertheless the conspiracy theories propagated and disseminated by these people are quite widespread in a way because of the cheap and convenient way through social media, and even politicians and influential people have taken them up. So what can we do in terms of social media and also education, particularly in the role of what the government can do to stem this propagation and disinformation and also to bring harmony and cohesiveness to our community?

Mr JONES: If I may go first on this one, I think there needs to be an understanding at government level that in everything now there is a contest of ideas. We cannot just assume that because something is common sense,

because members of Parliament and others understand that something is being done for the common good and has been thought out in this carefully developed policy, that is not how it is understood by others. There has to be an understanding that no matter what you say there is a chance that somebody with no interest in honesty or the communal good can put out another view, and you have to be in competition with them in ideas. It is very difficult to reach people who are no longer in the ‘good old days’, you could say, where we had four or five television stations and the news was basically the same. We had a lot of common sources. Now people draw their information from everywhere. One of the big, important issues is finding role models and finding people who are listened to by those who are so far being open to being misled easily. It is not an easy thing to find role models in different communities, but they do exist. I have seen in New South Wales, where I am based, sporting figures have been very active in works against gang violence. They have been seen as role models in the community who are able to go and say, you know, ‘There’s a better lifestyle than the one you’re following through’. So we have sporting heroes. We have other people who have earned respect just by being celebrities—they are able to earn respect. But we do have to understand that whatever the issue is, there is a contest for ideas, and even though you know you might be telling the truth, sometimes you have to prove it against somebody who is not interested in the truth.

Dr RUBENSTEIN: If I could just add—of course I refer to our recommendations in our submission; I will not repeat all of them—fully implementing anti-vilification measures, including the swastika ban and moves to outlaw the Nazi salute; keeping abreast of new racist code words and gestures by the far right and other conspiracy theorists in order to ban their public use under anti-vilification measures; specifically, adopting the IHRA working definition of antisemitism and operationalising it across government and in community organisations, which is what it is really designed to do—is the next important step; I think also continuing to develop the countering violent extremism programs in Victoria would be very helpful; and obviously making social media platforms more transparent and accountable.

Dr KIEU: What can be done more in terms of education, do you think?

Dr RUBENSTEIN: Absolutely. Jeremy?

Mr JONES: Well, education is something which operates on a number of levels. There is formal education within schools, for example, where teaching about respect of each other you could say is fundamental. If somebody is educated to believe that the normal way of seeing another human being is not in any way racialised, genderised or whatever else, if they are seeing them as a human being, they have a big advantage over somebody who might be educated to think of people in different categories. But this is a matter really for educators. Holocaust education has been seen as one way of helping people sometimes understand the consequences of where their actions might lead. This is not for the hardline extremists, this is for somebody who might be drawn towards an idea of racism or separation of society, and they are able to be exposed to consequences which they do not really want. Here we are not talking about somebody who has already committed some bad behaviour; we are looking at somebody who is being influenced in a way, and you are trying to find ways to remove them from bad influences and look in other directions.

There is also education in terms of understanding social media. I am not sure where things stand at the moment, but way back at the first international conference on hate on the internet, which was about 25 years ago in Canada, there were people looking at the importance of educating people to evaluate what they were exposed to on social media. It was very important to help people make good judgements about what was reliable information and what was something which was misleading information. I know there have been people involved in education all around the world working on this for many years. I really cannot tell you where they are up to at the moment, but I think it is very helpful, obviously, if you have a community who are well educated in having the antennae up and alert to when people might be trying to sell them bad goods.

Dr KIEU: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. Dr Bach.

Dr BACH: Thanks very much, Chair, and thank you, gentlemen, for being with us today. I perhaps want to push further on your comments just now, Mr Jones, regarding the role of education. Our committee, unsurprisingly, has already heard calls for the introduction of new programs in schools, and I think whenever the community hears those calls and whenever the call is related to a very good cause—and I cannot think of a better cause, quite frankly, than combating the hatred of Jewish people—well, people’s heads nod along, yet you just presented a slightly different model. I come at this from the perspective of a former schoolteacher who

was always frustrated, as so many schoolteachers are, about the constant introduction of new standalone programs from our education department here in Victoria that to the best of my knowledge are almost never evaluated and clutter our curriculum. Perhaps could you talk to me a little bit more about Holocaust education as you see it. I was a history teacher who taught 20th century history and therefore taught the period of the Holocaust. In your mind, noting that currently there is a review of the Australian curriculum underway and so this is a very apt conversation to be having, what are the sorts of things that you feel, Mr Jones—and I would love your view too, Dr Rubenstein—should be included in our formal curriculum when it comes to Holocaust education?

Mr JONES: It is a very tough question for me because I know you have been speaking to people with more expertise than me on this same subject and I would not want to contradict them. I would say that it is one thing talking about Holocaust education as being part of World War II history education as against education about the way the world works in terms of racism, seating it somewhere other than in history. I studied modern history in high school, and we probably had 2 hours on the Nazi Holocaust. That might have been considered Holocaust education. I do not think so; I think it was part of something else—it belonged somewhere else. So if you want to think of Holocaust education as part of social development of the individual in terms of appreciating broad society issues, it does not sit in modern history; it sits in other parts of the curriculum, and there will be people with, again, much more expertise than me who would be able to advise you as to exactly how that could be programmed. But I really do not think we are talking history. We are talking about human relationships and what happens, what is the logical conclusion of dividing our society into us and them—people who belong and people who do not belong. Dr Rubenstein?

Dr RUBENSTEIN: I will briefly comment as someone who also was an academic and taught public policy and Middle East politics for over 30 years, mainly at Monash University and before that La Trobe University. Finding ways of incorporating these issues in the curriculum, both in secondary school and at the tertiary level, is not straightforward; I certainly concede that point. But the importance of teaching the realities of history, certainly 20th century history and the unique evil of the Holocaust, I think is a central part of education, and the division of us and them, demonisation and vilification of others and racism in general of course as a corollary of the importance of understanding 20th century history, the Second World War and what Nazism really meant. So I am encouraged by efforts of incorporating Holocaust education in particular at different levels of education, but that is part of the broader sensitisation to the evil of racism more generally, the reality of genocide that has occurred and unfortunately still occurs in this world, as being a central component of education, education which tries to convey an accurate and objective understanding of historical realities and does not descend into vilification, generalisations, demonisation and division. So I can only say, yes, this is a big challenge, but like Jeremy, I concede there are others who are working on the incorporation of these themes into secondary education in particular, maybe even earlier on than secondary school but absolutely into tertiary education, where I think there is a major challenge in Australia and internationally in terms of anchoring education and teaching in the realities of what has transpired historically and learning the lessons of that. And particularly bringing us back to where we are today, the importance of mainstream political leadership in setting standards and maintaining the standards of an open, democratic and multicultural society—I think that is absolutely critical as heading up all of these various efforts.

Dr BACH: Thank you both very much.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. Ms Burnett-Wake.

Ms BURNETT-WAKE: Thank you, Dr Rubenstein and Mr Jones, for coming along today and speaking with us. Just picking up on the last comment there about setting standards, in what ways can we try to improve Victorians' faith in international, national and local institutions? I would be really grateful if you could unpack that a little bit more for me, please.

Dr RUBENSTEIN: All I can say is that I think we are on the right path. I mean, I take great heart from the efforts, and I should say with bipartisan support in the main, to expand anti-vilification measures in Victoria—the support for the IHRA definition of 'antisemitism' in particular, which clearly has bipartisan support and is part of national adoption of that very useful working definition, and the way in which our security authorities and the police, certainly in Victoria and I think federally and elsewhere in Australia, are really focusing on the spectrum of extremism, realising that the terms 'far right' and 'far left' actually have a lot more to do with each other. I used to teach the horseshoe theory of politics, where the far left and the far right have actually much

more in common than the elements converging towards the bottom of the U. I think there is a lot of truth in that proposition, and it certainly applies to an analysis of extremism and coping with that extremism. But basically I think we are on the right path, particularly in the area of trying to engender a great degree more transparency and accountability in the social media universe, social media platforms. Good public policy is always a complicated and difficult process, but I am heartened by the fact that our legislative representatives and leaders are making a very good fist at dealing with these complexities—getting our head above water and making good progress. There is always a long way to go—there is a way to go—but recognising the problems and the need to deal with them I think is a crucial first step, and we are certainly way beyond that first base.

Mr JONES: And if I could just add the issue I mentioned earlier on in my presentation about messaging—understanding that there is a contest of ideas about absolutely everything. So when members of Parliament say something, they have to assume somebody is going to be out there wanting to contradict it. The selling of the good work being done is essential. The idea that the only time you would ever hear about a particular institution is when it has got something corrupt or problematic about it, as against the whole context of a large institution which often does very good things, is problematic. It is easy for the conspiracy theorist to jump on any matter of perceived secrecy or lack of sharing with the community with what is being done at the level of parliament. Once respected institutions, we look at churches who were rightly brought to account by issues relating to abuse of children under their influence, under their control, under their authority. Those institutions have to work very hard to rebuild credibility. We are also seeing challenges to organisations which have not had that sort of corruption issue proven, and we have to work out how we keep these institutions trusted by the public. It is a really tough issue.

The CHAIR: Very important point. Dr Kieu, I think you have another question. This is the final one, I think. We will have to wrap up after that.

Dr KIEU: Thank you, Chair. I would like to pick up, Jeremy, on what you just said—that the ideology of extremism or far-right extremism has not taken root as widely as it has in the US. Why is that? Is there any danger that over time it could develop and become more acceptable or accepted in this country?

Mr JONES: There is always a danger because there are people who hate multiculturalism as much as there are people who value multiculturalism. There are people who feel disenfranchised whenever anybody else seems to be doing a bit better than them economically or whatever else. There are going to be people who want to change our society in a way I would imagine any responsible member of Parliament or member of civil society would find abhorrent. So they are out there, and they need to be combated on a number of levels. One is the war of ideas. That is extremely important. We seem to be doing better at it than many other societies, many more divided societies. I mean, you can look at the great success. Australia has world's best practice in interreligious dialogue. I will argue that point with anybody from anywhere around the world. Our religions get on better here than anywhere else. Overwhelmingly our immigration and multicultural society building have been successful, but there are those who do not want them to be successful, and the fact that they have not yet succeeded in developing the right leadership and skill set to bring down our institutions sometimes is a matter of our good fortune as much as our good planning. We constantly have to be vigilant. We constantly have to be aware of these ongoing battles for the hearts and minds of society.

Dr KIEU: Thank you.

Dr RUBENSTEIN: If I could just add, as someone who was involved in Victorian multiculturalism and its development from the 1970s onwards, I would say that our model of Australian multiculturalism, particularly as it was developed in Victoria many decades ago, is world's best practice, but we should always remember that our successful multiculturalism is dependent not only on the rights that it affords us but the responsibilities that it places on us as Victorian and Australian citizens. I think getting that balance right is the key to maintaining the cohesiveness and harmony of our successful Victorian and Australian multiculturalism going forward.

And as a last word I would say that it is very important that our decision-makers continue to liaise with local multicultural community organisations, particularly in monitoring the extent and type of IMVE activity. It has been a very successful pattern of development and cooperation over the years, and I think it has given a lot of integrity and quality to our open and democratic multicultural way of life. Maintaining those relationships going forward, I think, continues to be extremely important.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. On that note I think we will have to draw this session to a close. Thank you so much for your evidence, both in the written submission and in appearing before us today.

Witnesses withdrew.