

The Rise of Right-Wing Extremism

Speakers:

Dr Anne Aly MP, International Counter Terrorism Expert, Member for Cowan

Dr Richard Denniss, Chief Economist at The Australia Institute

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Ebony Bennett 00:00 G'day everyone, welcome back. My name is Ebony Bennett. I'm Deputy Director at the Australia Institute. And welcome back to our webinar series. We're delighted you can join us again, I can see people I like to say streaming through the doors, but it's certainly virtual a virtual participant can't cropping up there on the right, but we do have more than two and a half 1000 people RSVP for today's webinar. So thank you so much for coming along. I'd like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which I live in work here in Canberra, cameras, none of your country and I acknowledge that sovereignty was never stated, pay my respects to elder's past and present, and also recognise that the 2017 statement from the hot was an invitation for us to participate in creating a voice to Parliament, a treaty making process and a truth telling process and that we all need to be a part of making that happen. And we'll be looking for ways to continue to support that process this year through the webinar series. We have created these webinars in response last year to the pandemic, but they were so popular that we've decided to keep doing them. So thank you for all your support. And the same as last year. We're aiming to do these webinars at least weekly, but the days and times will vary. So please head to our website that's Australia institute.org.au forward slash events so that you don't miss out. And just a few tips before we begin today to help things run smoothly. If you hover over the bottom of your zoom screen, you should be able to see a q&a function where you can ask questions of our panellists. Or you can upvote questions of other people and make comments on their questions as well. Please keep things civil and on topic in the chat or will boot you out. We haven't had too much trouble with trolls as you will know. But given today's topic, if you spot someone causing problems, saying anything racist or anti semitic or anything else like that, please help us out by letting us know in the chat. So our staff members who are helping to

moderate can remove those people. And lastly, a reminder that this discussion is being recorded and will be posted on our website on our YouTube channel and emailed to everyone after the discussion. So it's just a few weeks since a group of neo nazis burned across in the Grampians in Victoria. It's just a few months since the head of Asia warned that far right. Violent Extremism constitutes now around 40% of the Australian domestic spy agency's counterterrorism caseload that's up from about 10 to 15% back in 2016. And of course, it's not even two years since a white Australian terrorist murdered 51 people at the mosque in Christchurch in New Zealand. So the rise of right wing right wing extremism is happening all around us yet it doesn't seem to dominate our national security discourse in the way Islamic extremism did in the years after 911. So to help us unpack the nature of this problem, we're really privileged today to have our guests by Dr. En la, the MP for callin in Western Australia prior to entering parliament and was a professor at Curtin University and Edith Cowan University, leading world renowned research into counterterrorism and countering violent, violent extremism. She's published over 100 articles and books on the subject. And she her contributions to national and global security have been recognised internationally. She's been an advisor to the UN Security Council counterterrorism Directorate, and was the only Australian invited to address President Obama's summit on countering hostile and violent extremism at the White House. And he is the founding Chair of people against violent extremism, which is a not for profit organisation focused on empowering communities to challenge violent extremism. And she's currently the Deputy Chair of Parliament's joint Standing Committee on law enforcement and a member of the parliamentary joint Standing Committee on Intelligence and Security. And I'm sure there's a few other committee assignments in there as well. Dr. Ali, Ali will be joined in conversation today with Richard Dennis, our chief economist, but firstly, to you, Dr. Ali. May I call you and thanks for joining us today.

Dr Anne Ali MP Thank you so much. And can I also acknowledge that I come to you from the
04:20 land of the word Jeff known our people and pay my respects to the elders past and present. It's great to see so many people joining us and I look forward to a really interesting conversation.

Ebony Bennett Yeah, so I wanted to start really with kind of the more recent events, it was
04:33 only towards the end of last year that we saw the head of HBO making that comment that about 40% of its workload is now right wing extremism, and that's up from about 10 to 15% a few years ago. What did you think when you heard that stat? I wasn't surprised. I wasn't surprised at all. In fact, I think that the focus should have been on

Dr Anne Ali MP 05:01 a rising right wing extremists, and much earlier, I would say as early as 2009, even before then, so I wasn't surprised that that was the workload, I guess I was the element of surprise. And that was that day that they are finally focusing on the on the right wing. It through throughout my career at least raising a rising right wing extremism has been particularly frustrating. It with, it's often been kind of relegated to the political fringes to a disorganised disoriented kind

Ebony Bennett 05:42 of group.

Dr Anne Ali MP 05:44 But the nature of contemporary terrorism is that it's not organised through a hierarchical base, or al Qaeda type type movement, that it is very diffused that it is about individuals who are loosely affiliated to organisations and to movements and who are inspired by other individuals and other what they perceive to be successful terrorist attacks. So I think that the focus on right wing is was really essential if we're going to keep up with modern trends in terrorism.

Ebony Bennett 06:21 And so just before we get kind of too much more into it, for people who are unfamiliar with the topic, what do we mean by right wing? right wing extremism?

Dr Anne Ali MP 06:31 That's a really good question, because it is a very, very broad umbrella term. And the fact that it is a broad umbrella term, I think actually makes it quite difficult to pinpoint what we're talking about. But it also makes it difficult to really focus in on, on on what we're actually trying to target because you have people who associate themselves with being conservative, or the right wing going well, that's not me. And mainstream ideals made it a mainstream values that are considered to be right wing. And people who adhere to those values or identify with those values find it incredibly difficult to understand what what right wing extremism is. But it is very much an umbrella term that encompasses a whole lot of a broad range of beliefs and movements that are associated more with far right political and social ideologies. And so within that broad category of right wing terrorism sets white nationalism, neo nazi ism, eco fascism, which is not to do with the with the environment, white separatism, ethnocentrism, patriot militia movements, some scholars will also include Christian identity movements in their anti abortion extremism in there. And others argue that it really when we talk about right wing extremism, we differentiate between racist extremism and anti government extremism at its core, right wing extremism or far right extremism is all about anti authoritarianism. There's an area and kind of white supremacist element in there. Some groups also are site satanic. So the order of nine angles, for

example, is also satanic. And there's also within that massaging and the insell, the involuntary celibate movement. Hmm. So it's very, very broad and encompasses a whole range.

Ebony Bennett 08:42 Yeah, that's certainly a lot to unpack. And just when we were kind of catching up, before this webinar started, you were saying that Australia's actually got a really long history with right wing right wing extremism. Can you just tell us a little bit more about that?

Dr Anne Ali MP 08:58 Yeah, I might take you through that history. quite quickly, though, you know, I have a quick thing. So. So even though we've had this kind of focus over the past couple of years, Australia does have a very long history. And if we go back to the 1920s, and 30s, was when organised forms of right wing terrorism really took hold in Australia, and they were mainly anti communist and anti unionist. And they were also in the 30s that can fascists National Socialists, highly, highly anti semitic, and highly driven by Aryan ideals. In the 1940s, they've been viewed more towards patriotism, and the idea of the ideal of a white Australia vision. And they had something called the Australia first movement, they adhere to very strong, anti semitic conspiracy theories. So we had a lot of stuff coming out in Australia published in Australia, that was anti semitic. In the 60s and 70s. It was constant in Australia, though it remained kind of on the political fringes. In the 1980s. We had a surge in it and that was mainly due to the Australian nationalist movement in this and national action that were involved in a text in Sydney but also, Jack van Tongeren, who led national action in Sydney ran under the banner for the Senate in 1984. In the 1984 election in 1077 votes for that didn't didn't get in. Thankfully, the Australian nationalist movement in the late 1980s in Perth, prior to that was mainly involved in poster campaigns, anti Asian propaganda, but in the late 1980s turned to violence and there was a campaign of fire bombing Chinese and Asian businesses and in the light at Van Tongeren sorry, 1990 John Jacques van Tongeren, who was the leader was arrested in connection with the murder of another ama member who was suspected of being a police informant. After his release, he again ran under the Australian nationalist Workers Union ran for parliament. One of the most interesting stories that I've come across though, is I don't know if any of your listeners here are familiar with David Lane. David Lane is considered one of the most significant ideologues in the right wing movement, and he was an American who died in 2017 in the federal prison, where he was serving a 190 year sentence for racketeering, conspiracy and violating the civil rights of a radio talk show hosts called Alan Berg, who was murdered in his driveway by Lane, Lange was the head of a group called the order. It wasn't listed as a terrorist organisation. He had always also been involved in the Ku Klux Klan, but he's most known for coining the 14 words and

if you have a look at terrorists, right wing symbolism and, and some of the insignias that they have 14 and 88, or two numbers that that crop up, and the 14 in that refers to the 14 words, coined by David Lang, we must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children. Now, in 2007, after his death, there was an idea that his ashes would be buried in a white homeland. And the Aryan women tried to build raise money to build a shrine, but they didn't get enough money to build a shrine. So his ashes were separated into 14 little kind of pyramids and sent around the world to different countries. One of those countries is Australia. Wow. It doesn't blow your mind to think that right here in Perth, where I'm coming to you from. There is a shrine to David Lane, one of the fathers of the modern white supremacist, right wing extremism movement right here in Perth. So the story goes that and for all intents and purposes, I believed the story to be true. They shipped over one of the vials of his ashes, there was a big commemoration service in Perth. Those ashes still are here in Perth. And there are regular gatherings of white supremacists to come to pay their respects to David Lane on an annual or more than annual basis here in Perth. So that shows you the extent to which it has been in in in Australia 2016 we had the arrest of Philip de Lille, probably the first arrest of a kind of more of a right wing terrorist under Australia's pretty broad suite of terrorism laws. Prior to that, there had not been really an arrest of right wing terrorists under four foot terrorism charges even Jack Van Tongeren wasn't charged with terrorism to members of Combat 18 who shot at Perth mosque, or were not arrested for terrorism. And if I could just go through the groups that have been kind of around in Australia, particularly over the last decade and this is just touching the tip of the iceberg. We've got something cross hammer skin blood and on our Combat 18 women of the Southern Legion Aryan Nations area in Strikeforce Australian Defence right wing resistance reclaim Australia, the United Patriots, True Blue Crew, anti Polian resistance proud boys led society, the soldiers of Odin, the Klu Klux Klan, the Australian nationalist alternative identity Australia, the Australian Liberty Alliance, new at new national action, the patriotic Youth League, the base, the order of nine angles, which is a neo nazi satanic group affiliated with the atomwaffen Division, which has been prescribed in other Western countries. And that's just the tip of the iceberg of the number. Yeah, have been or are currently active.

Ebony Bennett So while extremism is definitely right wing extremism is definitely on the rise.
15:38 There's a very long history in in Australia to that goes back many years there. And, Richard, did you want to chime in with a question there?

Dr Richard Denniss Yeah. Look, I so thanks. And it's fascinating. And, you know, so incredibly
15:55 diverse. And I guess we when we talk about right wing extremism, you know,

perhaps we were uniting them, perhaps more than they unite themselves. They clearly like to set up lots of little groups. But I guess, what is the difference between people holding extremist views? Like, you know, they convinced that white people are genuinely special, and acting on those views in terms of fixed string behaviour? Like, is there? Is there always a link between the two? Or are there other a lot of people out there with? What might seem extreme views that they don't act on? And how in a democracy with free speech? Can we kind of juggle that? And we, it's obvious that we like to outlaw behaviours that a dangerous and offensive but is it the views themselves that are dangerous? How do we how do we kind of grapple with that?

Dr Anne Ali MP As such? It's such a fascinating question, because it's not just a question for the right wing. I mean, this was a question that we grappled with, with other forms of terrorism as well, what's the difference between holding views, and acting, acting on those views, so you can still be a radical and an extremist, without being a violent radical or a violent extremism, there's been a lot of work done about what is that tipping point, from ideology and from belief, to actual, actual action. There's not a lot of clarity on that. Because the fact is that each individual's trajectory to violence can be quite different from another individual's trajectory to violence. The fact also is that there are a lot of people who hold fairly extremist views, you believe in conspiracy theories, but never actually act on those those those views and what that tipping point might be. One of the clues that we could have to that is there there are have been a number of topologies of different terrorist actors that kind of tries to look at any kind of patterns of behaviour or any kind of patterns of indicators. And one of the most interesting that I've come across in terms of the far right, has been William's study of the social and biographical characteristics of perpetrators of far right xenophobic violence in Germany. And he looked at the process of escalation. He his study was particularly interesting, because he, he kind of extracted four different kinds of people, or individuals who would be attracted to the far right or who, who have been attracted to the far right and who have acted on that. And importantly, he defers them based on their political ideological orientation and their propensity to violence, right. So he's got the four categories that he has a right wing activists, ethnocentric youth, criminal youth, and fellow travellers. There is there is four types of actors. Of those four types, three of them have a history of criminal activity, right. So right wing activists had prior records for political crimes. If no centric youth had prior records for juvenile crime, criminal youth had multiple records of criminal activity. So what his model suggests is that some people will be attracted by the ideology and it will be the ideology that fuels them to undertake violence, because a core part of the ideology is that we're under threat. You're part of

16:56

my group, my group is under threat. The only way to deal with this threat is to take up arms, right? So there are some people who will be drawn to the ideology and then come to violence via the ideology. There are others who will be drawn to the violence, with very little or no connection to the ideology. And in fact, fellow travellers are mostly attracted by the symbolism. So you see them that they're kind of the skinheads, they'll have the tattoos, they'll wear the clothing that identifies them with the subculture of skinheads, and that's what attracts them to the movement. That's no different than the kinds of research what research was revealing about young people who go and join ISIS, for example, that some of them were driven by the ideology, others were driven by the violence, the and kind of almost a sense of adventure, as well. So I guess the answer to your question is, we we don't have a clear idea of what that tipping point is to, from from belief, to violence. But we do know that the two don't always go hand in hand, that you can have beliefs and not become violent, and you can have violence without a deep psychological identification with the ideology.

Dr Richard Denniss 21:32 And social media make it easier for these groups to fall? Or does it make it easier for us as citizens and our intelligence community to actually find them? Like, by searching mating? is it helping or harming

Dr Anne Ali MP 21:49 a bit of both? Actually, do you know so like, um, so social media really operates more of an echo chamber. You're the kinds of likes and habits that that that people in the right wing, far right share are usually very blatant on their social media, they'll like things like Norse mythology, for example, Odinism, they're into all of that kind of stuff. And so it serves as an echo chamber, because one of the purposes of media generally, is that it serves a social identity need in in, in each of us as individuals. And that's the kind of name that social media like Facebook fulfils. It gives you a social identity. But more and more, they're moving more towards the dark spaces of the internet where there isn't that kind of overt presence. So for example, like gaming platforms, like discord has become very prolific and useful, I guess, recruitment platforms for some groups that are operating. And they'll use this chat function within the gaming platforms to connect with young people influence them, recruit them, radicalise them. So social media does play a part. On the other side, as you say, I've used social media and developed social media tools for identifying people who would be candidates for some kind of intervention. And it can be very, very handy in identifying people who are candidates for early intervention. We did a project where we actually had a group of farmers for more right wing former jihadist, smaller jihadists, former political terrorists or actors as well find people on Facebook, who they knew through their Facebook profiles through their social media profiles. Were getting involved in and and becoming

immersed in the the ideology of a particular extremist view, worldview, and contact them. So at the same time, it can be a very powerful tool for identifying people for early intervention. The issue is where do you Where do you draw the line? Where's the balance?

Ebony Bennett 24:30 Yeah, I did know the the New Zealand Royal Commission into the Christchurch massacre really showed that that perpetrator was radicalised through Facebook and YouTube primarily. Just, you know, we all think of those as being quite benign, but actually, you know, they seem to have played a big role there, but coming to Christ Church. It seemed to me that there was no real reckoning in Australia with the fact that that was an Australian terrorists. And kind of really dropped out of the national discourse quite quickly. Do you think we've really reckoned with the fact that that terrorists was born and bred in and radicalised in Australia? And are we doing enough? We've talked about a zero. But it seems to me, it's not really a big national discourse around this type of problem and what we're going to do to tackle it.

Dr Anne Ali MP 25:28 No, you're absolutely right, if any, I think we haven't reckoned with the fact that he was an Australian, I mean, you know, the whole or he's not one of us. He's not one of us. But let's be honest, and Frank, that when it is a, a violent jihadist Muslim communities were asked to own that, that that individual to say, Oh, he is one of us. And we need to reckon with that. Now I get it, I get it. Because we've been in that situation. I'm here as a member of Muslim communities. I've been in that situation where you have to go, Oh, my gosh, and turn the mirror on yourself. It's an incredibly difficult thing to do. It is incredibly difficult to turn the mirror on yourself and say, could be one of us. Could there be something that we have done something in our values in the way that that we communicate those values that could have contributed to this? I don't think we've gotten to that point here in Australia. In terms of what could be done, what I find really interesting in in terrorism studies, we talk about something called domino theory. And domino theory means that one attack one individual who's perceived to be successful and successful, meaning you're able to carry out a successful attack inspires other attacks, right? So the Christchurch terrorist inspired note list in 13 other attacks in the US, and what I've been noticing, I've had to do more research on this, but from a kind of like a kind of a first look kind of level. domino theory seems to be a lot more prominent with the far right, then it has with, for example, ISIS and Al Qaeda, who had a very hierarchical structure where there was no one leader, whereas with far right groups, it's all kind of, it's more individual based. It's more based on manifestos and and manifestos are used to inspire further attacks. Now, what New Zealand has done is actually prescribed the terrorist attack on himself as a terrorist entity, which I think is a very smart move. And I think a

move that kind of gets ahead of trends in terrorism, I think, often in counterterrorism, where we were behind the trend. And were always playing catch up. And, and I think I mentioned earlier that the trend in terrorism now is more diffused, it's more about inspiring, it's more lone actors, who are, who watch something on YouTube, who have all of this. You have all of these kinds of grievances, and then are inspired to act by somebody else who has acted that kind of domino theory. And so I think the idea of, of prescribing individuals as terrorist entities as what New Zealand has done, is a really intelligent way of dealing with this new trend or what seems to be not new. But But what seems to be the more kind of prolific trend with right wing terrorism than it has been with the forms of terrorism that we've been dealing with predominantly over the past two decades or so. Hmm.

Ebony Bennett 28:57 That makes me ask as well. Sorry, Richard, I can come back to you if you had another question there. And I thought it was really interesting that right from the get go Prime Minister Jacinda Arden just refuse to speak his name. And really took that approach of not trying to glorify that perpetrator. And it makes me think about how media reports on these types of issues and there's often critiques from people of colour about platforming neo nazis, for example. Or from the other side, the media kind of talking about well, we have to get both sides of the story type of thing. What are the things that media needs to think about in terms of responsibly reporting on right wing extremism considering that inspiration is one of the main objectives

Dr Anne Ali MP 29:49 any one of the first things you know we have a history in the Australian media with you know, stereotyping Australian media If you go back way, back way, way back to the 18 1800s, before we had like mainstream media, the popular novel in Australia was the invasion NATO invasion narrative, which was like, you know, all we're going to be swamped by Asians. And so throughout history, our media has kind of been complicit in this idea that, you know, we're not we're not Asian, and that we're going to be swamped by by hordes of people flooding our shores. And they've done it in like tacit ways you with stereotypes and so so there's, there's a, there's a, there's a primed audience, for this kind of stuff here in here in Australia. And it's been primed that way over over decades and decades of mainstream media, building and building and building this kind of you report all mainstreaming and normalising a level a certain level of xenophobia in Australia. In terms of reporting attacks, you know, I often hear when when there is an attack, it's often called the gunmen, you know, instead of the terrorists. So there's a there's a, there's a lot to be said about naming. Yeah, naming them as terrorists, labelling them as terrorists. And I think a lot of it comes out. I hear it a lot from people in Muslim communities who see a double standard. When it comes to reporting about

acts of violence that have been perpetrated by violent jihadists, versus acts of violence that have been perpetrated by white supremacists, or the far right, there is a there is not a consistent standard in reporting in our media, I think that's a really good place to start. Also, giving more attention to it is a really good place to start. And but underlying all of that is coming back to this whole idea of let's turn the mirror on ourselves. Yeah, and let's have a look at what it is in terms of what we espouse as values of in our history. In our head, the dark parts of our history, that is now kind of giving rise to and has for many years normalised some of these values and some of these ideals that have been adopted by by violent movements.

Ebony Bennett 32:38 We might go now to questions from the audience. We've got about 1200 people on the line with us today. So we're not going to get to everyone's questions. I'm sorry. But thank you so much, again, for joining us. The first question I'm going to ask is from Christine ages, she says, and to what extent do you see far right ideas and discourses in mainstream politics? Would you say these ideas have become appropriated or used by politicians more so recently?

Dr Anne Ali MP 33:09 Thank you, Irene. Irene, was it Christine? Christine? Sorry? Yes, definitely. They have in our political discourse. And they have been for a long time, as I've said, you know, the Australian nationalist movement tried to gain a senate seat. You know, Pauline Hanson, phrase ehning these are people who study now parliament and talked about Asian invasion. These are people who stood in our parliament, and espoused the very ideals that people in these far right groups are core to their belief system. I think also, the far right operates in a way in the they operate in a way in which they utilise these kind of mainstream ideas of patriotism, nationalism, and use them in ways to further their cause, again, not different to any other terrorist movement, they're violent jihadist did the same thing they used. They used religion, too, as a vehicle to mobilise their cause. Right. And these guys use these values of patriotism, these values of nationalism based patriotic these values of national pride, to mobilise their causes as well as their cause as well. So you have your average mom and dad who sit there and go, well, what's wrong with being proud of your country? What's wrong with being a patriot? Because it has become so normalised because they're using those mainstream ideas to capture the attention of a wider of a wider population. And yes, it has been in our political discourse for some time now. And it's not just those fringe groups. It's Not just those smaller political parties, there are members of larger political parties who also espouse some of those views. I mean, you only have to look at Alex Hawk, denying the advice that came from our security agencies with regard to the right wing being an increasing threat in Australia. It should not be political

Ebony Bennett 35:25 copayment, immediately equated right wing extremism with left wing,

Dr Anne Ali MP 35:30 exactly litical. And though it's called right wing, really in its essence, it's not about left and right politics. It's not about left and right politics because the right wing are anti authority, authoritarian, right. So they don't want you either. So, you know, we really need to get over this, or you're in the left, so you support this or you're in the right spot that it really needs to be bipartisan in its approach. And unfortunate, we're coming up against a few challenges in that regard.

Ebony Bennett 36:06 The next question is from Denise Ravel. She asks what makes people vulnerable to these groups and ideologies? And what's the attraction? And do they seem to gather pace during times of uncertainty, which reminds me actually the the stage of the US Capitol that seem to be just very disparate groups, you know, you queue in on conspiracy theorists, the proud boys, white supremacist, there was like, lots of different people in there. Could you just comment on what attracts these people going back to perhaps those ideologies you were talking about? Or topologies? earlier?

Dr Anne Ali MP 36:45 Yeah. So I'll answer that question by going through the ways in which all terrorist movements construct themselves. And they do that by constructing themselves as a movement that is responding to some kind of existential threat. Either a real threat or a perceived threat. That terroristic propaganda has some consistencies regardless of where it comes from. And those consistencies can be found in four elements. The first one is orientation. And that is it within the right far right, it's about the condition of the white races, it's about reclaiming white nationalism, then comes the problem. The problem is that society is degenerating because of lefties of the Muslims because of Jews because of multiculturalism because of homosexuality, etc. And that's fueled, of course, by the great replacement conspiracy, which is a theory that the white races are being overtaken, if you like by multiculturalism. The third part is the solution, the solution is, according to them to restore the white races and the superiority of the white race. And then the fourth part is the required course of action, which is violence, bringing about a race war anarchie basically anti authoritarian bringing down the or the authoritarian institutions that are part of this conspiracy to replace the white races. And what attracts people to that is that young people in particular have very strong personal identity needs, right. And they become particularly vulnerable to influence because they have a need to form social bonds, and to define their identity as members of a group that will deny it. as it were, when I was a teenager, I you identified with particular kinds of music, and defined my

identity through those kinds of music. violent extremists exploit that need, they exploit that need for belonging, they exploit that need for identity. So young people in particular, again, I'm coming to young people who have a grievance if they feel angry, they feel that they're a victim of injustice. That might be you know, we've seen in a time of a global pandemic, people are searching for something, you know, they they believe that they're getting the raw end of the deal, if you like, they become drawn to those messages, because those messages emphasise in group and out group relations. They they say you're part of us, you're one of us. And as part of us, if there's an us event, and that then wants to destroy us. So I'm going to give you a purpose in your life. And your purpose in life is to protect us to be a part of this group and to protect us. So yeah, that's, I guess, kind of the social psychological part of it. But of course, there are a whole A lot of other things like global events playing to what? Your individual contexts social contexts all come into it as well. I think that, Was there another part of that question that I get?

Ebony Bennett No, that's great. Thank you. The next question is from David Everett, who we
40:12 accidentally made this one into answered questions, but we hadn't yet you've kind of touched on it. He says, Is it useful to try and describe extremism is either right or left? And why not just brand all extremism as dangerous?

Dr Anne Ali MP Yeah, that's a good question. And I, the thing is not all extremism is dangerous.
40:32 there's a there's a theory out there that there are extremist movements that are violent, and there are those who are not yet violent, but eventually they will become violent. I don't know that there's enough enough empirical evidence to support that, that all extremist groups become violent. I think it is useful to name the groups because or the the, I guess, the mode, or the what David Rapoport would call the wave of terrorism. I mean, he describes your different waves of terrorism that have been precipitated by global events. The anarchist wave, the new left wave, oh, gosh, I can't remember the one. But the last one is the religious life and each wave lasts about 40 years. So I think it's useful in terms of being able to pinpoint who we're talking about instead of just all extremists because all extremism isn't dangerous. That's the fact some forms of extremism out here. And if we're going to be bold about this, the fact is that some forms of extremism and radicalism have become essential to paradigm shifts in society to changing the ways in which society looks at itself and the values that society has in positive ways. Right, not in negative ways, but in positive ways. So I think it is important that we we we identify the kind of extremism it is, because on a practical level, it helps us to identify the individuals and the groups that we should be targeting. And and and I think our counterterrorism efforts are assisted by that.

Ebony Bennett 42:27 The next two questions I'm going to put together because I think they're linked even though they're different. So Peter hoverboard has asked what can state and federal governments do to mitigate the radicalising impacts of growing right wing extremism? Actually, he's specified in the traditional media in Australia. But Mark diesen, Dorf has asked, under the guise of protecting against terrorism, the Australian Government has passed legislation that some believe is undermining basic human rights and democracy, for example, being able to arrest people without allowing them to inform their families. So both questions about what federal governments have done, I think one asking Have they gone too far? And when asking, have we not gone far enough?

Dr Anne Ali MP 43:10 They both go, you're right. They're both very interconnected. And I often observed that Australia has the broadest and most comprehensive suite of laws related to terrorism or terrorism related offences, more than any other western country, more than any other western country more than Canada, more than the US more than the UK, even though we have not had a mass casualty attack on our soil. We have the broadest suite, and the most far reaching, far reaching and far ranging terrorism laws of any western country. And the reason for that is because traditionally, the way that we've dealt with terrorism has been with a legislative response. And so it kind of grew into this thing that we we have layers and layers and layers and layers and layers and layers of laws to deal with terrorism. What we haven't done equally comprehensively has been to really look at how terrorism extremism, violent extremism in all its forms is a battle for hearts and minds. And laws don't change hearts and minds. If that was the case laws against murder means there would be no murders, right? laws don't change behaviour. laws don't change hearts and minds. So we've kind of neglected this aspect, which I think is a central and should be a centrepiece of our counterterrorism efforts. We've left that part to civil society and a civil society that has not been well equipped with Dealing with forms of extremism in the way that civil society in parts of Europe have been really well equipped with dealing with forms of terrorism. I mean, in Europe, you have the radicalization awareness network, which is huge, hugely funded, and this huge network across all different European countries to deal with radicalization. You have. And you have had for many years, civil society groups that have been funded, and are very well equipped to deal with different forms of extremism. But we haven't had that in Australia. And we still don't have that. In Australia, it was part of the reason that I started pave, was to develop civil society capacity to deal with these early intervention and extremism, the prevention side of it. And I think as part of that, that's where we can do the media work as well, just coming back to the question. So the answer is we've we've had so much focus on the legislative response, and not a balanced focus on the civil society response. And I think, and I've been

advocating for much more focus on developing civil society structures, and civil society capabilities to deal with early intervention and prevention.

Ebony Bennett Um, Richard, we've got 10 minutes left. Did you have any other questions
46:22 before I finish up with the the q&a from the public?

Dr Richard Denniss, Chief Economist, The Australia Institute Yeah, look, I guess, you know, so many of the things you've said, and
46:29 particularly in terms of how New Zealand responded, and as you said, kind of tried to get ahead. I guess it makes me think about a meta question. And that is, I mean, experts, you know, I'm an economist, I get frustrated by the economics debate. Yeah, medical scientists get frustrated by debates about how to deal with an epidemic. Makes me realise it must be excruciatingly difficult to have expertise in counter terrorism and extremism, because I really wonder what your perception is of where policy makers in Australia have got their expertise from I mean, people in the military didn't learn how to deal with terrorism 20 or 30 years ago, they wouldn't have fought conventional wars, people in counterterrorism, we've got really quite different skills, you know, from, from the kind of hearts and minds campaign you're talking about. So, you know, as a country, not just Australia as any country, how do we go about actually having some evidence basis for dealing with something both as rare, but as shocking as as acts of terrorism? Because, as you said, I mean, we've obviously responded by having, you know, some of the toughest anti terrorism laws in the world, arguably toughest breaches of civil liberties. But where do we get the evidence base From where do people like yourself sort of see this debate evolving to? Or? Or is everyone got an idea of a terrorist from watching a movie and thinks they're an expert?

Dr Anne Ali MP Yeah, pretty much. Pretty much. That's pretty much the thing that 911 brought
48:11 terrorism to our screens. Now, terrorism was on our screens before that, as well, in the 1970s, when you had the rise of international terrorism, aeroplane hijackings, and whatever, but you think about 911. And the world witnessed in real time, through the magic of television, witnessed a major terrorist event. And think about putting people in the position of witness is kind of almost put them in the position of expert as well, if I can't tell you how many people have told me I'm wrong, and my evidence is wrong. And my 10 years of research is wrong, because they saw on TV. So people do and and, you know, that's what the kind of the new media ecology has done, as well as giving people the tools to develop their own kind of knowledge and expertise. It but you know, hasn't, it's not that clear cut. You're very right in saying we approached counterterrorism in a very traditional way. And the wisdom of employing a traditional military response to terrorism has rightly been questioned, because what we find is that you can't, you can't bomb terrorism out of people's minds.

You can't arrest it out of the hearts. You can't do these things. So that that, that that shift is necessary. In terms of the level of expertise that we have in Australia, I don't I think we need to build that level of expertise. We have a really great generation of young people coming up who have who had who was studying chemistry Terrorism, who are developing some expertise in it, we still lack expertise in the cyber elements of it. And cyber enabled terrorism in particular, where digital technologies are used to do everything from influence recruit, raise funds for terror acts of terrorism. I think we need a lot more international cooperation. This is not an issue that Australia is facing on its army. And so that's something that I've been really frustrated with the lack of the lack of kind of international cooperation, working with countries in Europe that have a long history of dealing with, as I mentioned earlier, your civil society structures and dealing with prevention of terrorism, particularly in the far right space, working with our nearest neighbours, Indonesia and Malaysia, and countries like that. So I think we do need to develop the the kind of the the, the professional base in terms of develop developing an evidence base, obviously, it's difficult to interview convicted terrorists, or a number of reasons. Sometimes also, you know, because they, they did. So it's not just difficult, it's impossible. But there's a lot of, there's a lot we can learn by talking to foreigners, to people who have left terrorism behind. And there's some great work that's done in the US on on why people leave terrorism behind. One of the things that I always say is nobody I've interviewed about over about 20, former former former terrorists as part of a project that I was doing, one of the things I always say is nobody ever lifted terrorism because somebody presented them with a fact sheet. Never is always an emotional connection. Right? There's always a seed of doubt that's been planted, and then almost a kind of an epiphany of some sort. That happens to move people away. Make them question their involvement in the movement and move people away from that. I don't know if I've answered your question, Richard, but other than to say, Yes, absolutely. I agree. We need more more more expertise in Australia, we need a bigger evidence base, but we're not going to get that working solely among ourselves. We need to work more internationally with that, and most of the research that I did was International, because simply because there was no empirical base evidence base that I could draw on in Australia. And and that, you know, developing the expertise and developing that professionalism needs to be also part of that, is that that development of civil society structures to be able to deal with it.

Dr Richard Denniss Well, it's all right. I mean, anyone that's ever run a business knows how to run
53:13 the entire economy. So it's not like, like, there's any overconfidence, you should, you should

Dr Anne Ali MP 53:23 say, I have to read you one day, some of the emails that I get from the experts, oh, an hour, you know, nothing missing.

Ebony Bennett 53:31 We've only got a couple of minutes. And we do like to finish on time. So just very quickly, and there's two questions here, one from Christine, and I think one from neuro Wilson, both asking about the role of gender in right wing extremism, and is there any overlap in ideologies? Christine says our research seems to suggest that there's some overlap between the far right and anti feminist groups online in Victoria, trying to comment on that we've only got a couple of minutes to go. Yes. Very.

Dr Anne Ali MP 54:00 Yes, yes. And certainly misogyny is part of that right wing extremism umbrella. Attackers in the US in particular, have also had like, kind of anti feminist views. And you add into like, all of the anti things that they are all of the things they hate feminism is also one of the things they hate as well. So there is that in terms of the the kind of the gender nuances as well, there are women for Aryan causes as well. So there are some pretty active women's only groups. And let's not forget Prussia blue, the two young twin girls who, you know, pop stars basically with the white supremacists as well. So there's definitely a gendered element. And I don't think we have enough data and we don't have enough research on the gender element in it and I'd like to see more. I'd like to see more about that that gendered element so if you guys are doing research, I'd love to hear about it.

Ebony Bennett 55:00 Thanks, Anne, and anything that you want to say, to wrap up and then I'll wrap this all up? That's all we've got time for.

Dr Anne Ali MP 55:07 No only to say thank you very much. It's great to see some familiar names coming up on the chat Hello to you. Hello, and and a few other people that I recognise their names as well.

Ebony Bennett 55:21 Yeah, that's it. Thank you very much. No worries. Well, thank you so much for joining us. We really appreciate having your expertise. And I want to thank everyone who's been online today. My colleagues Tell me everyone kept it pretty civil in the chat. So we really appreciate it. Thank you to Dr. n. Le. Thank you to Richard Dennis. And thank you all for all your excellent questions. We do have some more webinars coming up in the next few weeks for February, next week, where on Wednesday, February 17. We're talking to journalist and author Amy and require and the topic is black witness, we'll be talking about her book and interactions between the criminal justice system and in particular, the experience of Aboriginal people. And Amy was the Australian Institute's writer in residence in 2020. So we do hope that you can join us for

that Again, that's 11am next Wednesday, February the 17th. And the week after that February the 24th at 11am. We'll be talking to Professor ruska know about his new book reset restoring Australia after the pandemic recession. There's loads more on our website, Australia institute.org.au. Please check them out. And remember to stay safe. We're not through this pandemic yet. Stay one and a half metres away, keep washing those hands and stay safe everyone. Thanks so much for joining us today. And hopefully we'll see you next week. Thanks again.