

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Policing for all the community

Dr Michael Kennedy, of the School of Social Sciences and Psychology, is investigating the strength of partnerships forged between police and Sydney's Muslim community. With funding from the NSW Police force, Dr Kennedy will particularly look at how such relationships are tested by controversial events, such as in September 2012 when there were protests over a video that ridiculed the Prophet Mohammed.

'Police cannot be everywhere and they certainly are not able to know about every person who is at risk of extremism,' says Dr Kennedy. 'An indicator of the success of counter-terror policing is the extent to which there is co-operation and trust between communities and police. It is during crises and events that such relations are most useful and important, yet it is also when they are most imperilled.'

Modern policing has long ago moved from a purely reactive role – just responding to crime – to a more proactive model, requiring direct contact with the public (not just criminals or suspects), consultation with the community, and community partnerships. Success is driven by a community's engagement with its police force.

Building trust between communities and police is no easy task, however, in the context of reported high levels of racism experienced by Australian Muslims and perceptions of over-policing among some sections of Muslim communities. Against that background, previous UWS research has collaborated with NSW Police to gauge the success of the community engagement strategy operated by the Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command. In face-to-face surveys with members of Sydney's Muslim communities, researchers found that more than 80 per cent of respondents were eager to co-operate with Community Contact Officers.



This latest stage of the project will undertake a more focused study of the NSW Police Community Engagement Counter Radicalisation model. Researchers will collect data on community perceptions of how the police dealt with the crisis of September 2012 (public statements, arrests, public order); the nature of contact between police and the community; and the outcome of that engagement. Surveys will be distributed at Sydney's mosques, Islamic centres and other community sites, and it is intended that responses will be collected by the Islamic Sciences and Research Academy.

The importance of strong and resilient partnerships is underlined by the events of September 2012. It is widely recognised that there is a need for sufficient levels of trust and transparency so further community engagement is not put at risk by crises and major events.

Project Title: Resilience and the NSW Police Community Engaged Counter-Radicalisation Model
Funding has been set at: \$30,000
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