Victoria State Government | Justice and Community Safety

Victoria's Strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism

2025–2028

Acknowledgement of Country

The Victorian Government acknowledges Aboriginal people as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and waterways upon which our lives depend.

We acknowledge and pay our respects to ancestors of this country, Elders, knowledge holders and leaders – past and present. We extend that respect to all Aboriginal people in Victoria. We recognise that Victorian Aboriginal communities are steeped in culture and lore having existed within Australia continuously for some 65,000 years.

Acknowledgement of victims and survivors

We acknowledge the devastating impact of acts of violent extremism and terrorism on individuals, families and communities, and the strength and resilience of victims and survivors.

We pay our respect to those who have sadly lost their lives or were harmed through an act of violent extremism or terrorism and to their family members and friends.

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Key definitions

Radicalisation	The process whereby a person's thinking and behaviour become significantly different from how most of the members of their society and community view social issues and participate politically. As a person radicalises, they may begin to seek to significantly change the nature of society and government. This does not mean that they will become violent. The radicalisation process is unique to each person who goes through it, and in most cases will not cause serious harm. However, if someone decides that using fear, terror or violence is justified to achieve ideological, political or social change, then radicalisation to such views becomes significantly more concerning.
Violent extremism (VE)	Acts of or support of violence to achieve social, political, or legal outcomes, or as a response to specific political or social grievances. Violent extremism includes threats or acts of violence towards people and property but does not include things such as peaceful protesting, industrial action or nonviolent extremist political or religious views.

Countering violent extremism (CVE)	Initiatives that seek to build individual and community resilience and disengage those who have radicalised or are vulnerable to radicalisation towards violent extremism. Countering violent extremism initiatives span across a continuum, encompassing:

1. **Primary initiatives** – preventative actions, strategies, and policies aimed at reducing the likelihood that individuals or groups will adopt violent ideologies or behaviours. Primary initiatives consist of community-based initiatives, such as support groups, school programs, and educational programs. These initiatives build protective factors by promoting social cohesion, trust, belonging and resilience.

2. **Secondary initiatives** – early interventions that support and divert vulnerable individuals before they radicalise or mobilise to commit acts of violent extremism.

3. **Tertiary initiatives** – interventions that aim to disengage radicalised individuals from violent behaviour.

Terrorism	Terrorism is one of many tactics that violent extremists can use. Refer to *Appendix 5* for the definition of terrorism and Victoria's counter-terrorism response.

Victorian Government foreword

In an ever-changing world, violent extremism presents a complex and enduring threat to the safety and wellbeing of Victorians. Acts of violent extremism perpetuate a cycle of fear and division, undermine social cohesion, erode trust and confidence in government, and place considerable strain on social and economic resources.

Violent extremism is a threat that can manifest in many ways and is reflective of continuous changes to social, political and technological environments. It is not an issue confined to a particular ideology or group; it can be influenced by a range of extreme beliefs and ideologies such as racial supremacy, anti-democratic views, and ideologies inspired by terrorist organisations like Islamic State and Al-Qa'ida.

A small number of individuals misuse religious language or beliefs to justify violence and do not represent the beliefs or practices of religious communities more broadly. This threat exists within the broader context of politically motivated violence, defined as violence or the threat of violence intended to advance political, ideological or religious objectives.

Victoria is also experiencing a growing threat of violent extremism involving individuals who engage in or support violence in response to specific political, social or single-issue grievances. As the threat of violent extremism continues to evolve and diversify, the Victorian Government recognises the need for a flexible, responsive approach to countering violent extremism.

Victoria's Strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism 2025-2028 (the Strategy) outlines the Victorian Government's forward goals, objectives and initiatives that will be undertaken to prevent and counter violent extremism. The Strategy also contains a range of educational content on radicalisation, reporting avenues, and support programs available in Victoria.

The Victorian approach to preventing and countering violent extremism includes projects designed to build and sustain resilience within our communities, to address the immediate threats posed by violent extremism and to reduce the harms to individuals and families. These projects support vulnerable individuals whilst empowering communities to protect against violent extremist attitudes and behaviours.

Building a safer, more inclusive society requires long-term commitment and ongoing collaboration. By working together, we can identify and address the drivers of violent extremism, provide support to those who need it most, and create communities that are resilient to the divisive forces of violent ideologies. Through a connected and coordinated approach, we will continue to prioritise Victorians feeling safe, supported and protected from the physical and social harms associated with violent extremism.

Introduction

The Victorian Government's approach to preventing and countering violent extremism is holistic. It aims to be flexible and adaptive to the changing threat environment, to build and enhance strong partnerships across government and community, and to proactively seek to understand emerging trends and contemporary research.

The underlying drivers of radicalisation and individual vulnerabilities that may lead a person to violent extremism have been well researched and are widely recognised. However, individual pathways towards radicalisation are unique, dynamic, and can occur in a combination of in-person and online contexts. This is because extremist ideologies and behaviours can be diverse and often intersect with broader societal issues or unique personal experiences. These experiences, as well as feelings of inequality, social isolation, and/or political polarisation, can play a part in an individual's path to radicalisation. The Strategy is designed to provide a comprehensive, multi-faceted, and long-term approach in response to violent extremism in Victoria. It incorporates the full continuum of preventing and countering violent extremism responses including primary, secondary and tertiary interventions.

The Strategy recognises the importance of initiatives that build protective factors to prevent the emergence of violent extremism in the community, also known as *primary interventions*. These interventions focus on building and enhancing community partnerships and strengthening cohesion and inclusivity through education, awareness and engagement initiatives. By developing strategies to reduce social divisions, the Strategy aims to create stronger, more united communities that are better equipped to resist and respond to violent extremism.

Community initiatives are complemented by *secondary/tertiary interventions*. They encompass therapeutic intervention and case management interventions that aim to support individuals (and their families) who are displaying signs of vulnerability to radicalisation, or have radicalised to violent extremism. The Strategy is focused on tailoring referral pathways for vulnerable individuals, increasing community awareness of these referral pathways, delivering early intervention initiatives for vulnerable youth, and strengthening interventions for those in contact with the justice system who pose a risk of violent extremism and those that may be vulnerable to radicalisation.

Finally, the Strategy highlights the Victorian Government's critical role in driving integrated, evidence-based and contemporary solutions to preventing and countering violent extremism. Community and individual initiatives are supported by research and partnerships that aim to produce best practice outcomes, such as translating research on the drivers of violent extremism into practical in-person and online interventions and ensuring that policy, training, and professional development are aligned.

The Strategy includes 5 key goals and an array of accompanying strategic objectives that are designed to be flexible and adaptive to the changing threat landscape, and ultimately lead to improved responses for individuals, communities and government.

The Strategy was informed by consultations across government, academia and the community. It provides a holistic roadmap for the Victorian Government's preventing and countering violent extremism work from 2025 to 2028, helping government, in partnership with community and academia, to tackle this dynamic and evolving threat.

Victoria's strategy

Vision

To build a stronger and more resilient community where Victorians are safer, more connected, and are better protected from the threat and harms of violent extremism.

Mission

To provide effective, contemporary responses to the threat of violent extremism and reduce harms to Victorian individuals, families, and the community.

Approach

The Victorian Government's approach to preventing and countering violent extremism is holistic and includes multiple components which address different vulnerabilities and needs. It is designed to be long-term, adaptive and collaborative, with a key focus on addressing the underlying factors that lead to violent extremism.

The Victorian Government's response is underpinned by knowledge that intervention initiatives, evidence-based policy, and community partnerships are critical mechanisms to address the dynamic and varied nature of violent extremism. In addition to being informed by evidence-based practice, it is also governed by State and Commonwealth legislation which underpins agency approaches to intervention initiatives.

Goals and strategic objectives

The Victorian Government has developed 5 goals and accompanying strategic objectives for departments and agencies to work to over the period 2025-2028.

Goal 1: Seek evidence-based, contemporary solutions

a) Translate research on current drivers, dynamics, threats, and risks into practice.

b) Increase ways in which academia and government can work together to deliver evidence-based policy and drive change.

c) Implement advice from the Countering Violent Extremism Expert Advisory Committee[1].

Evidenced-based policy and academic partnerships are critical because they ensure that policies and actions are grounded in the latest research, fostering collaboration between academia and government to address emerging risks and drive effective, evidence-based change.

The Victorian Government's partnerships with academic and industry experts facilitate an evidence-based approach to policy development to ensure that key insights and robust research findings support the implementation of practical in-person and online interventions that are relevant to the Victorian community. For example, research conducted on current drivers associated with violent extremism in Victoria will be used to inform the development of policy, programs and interventions that address contemporary forms of violent extremism.

Notable outputs from research and industry partnerships include:

- Resilience building and community awareness of threats towards social cohesion in Victoria, such as current forms of extremist hate and their mobilisation to violence.

- The establishment of a Countering Violent Extremism Expert Advisory Committee and an expert Multi-Agency Panel to enhance information sharing for people referred to intervention initiatives and promote best-practice responses across government.

- Ongoing engagement with academic and community experts ensures that the Victorian Government continues to be at the forefront of adaptable, contemporary responses to the evolving nature of violent extremism threats.

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[1] The Expert Advisory Committee was established in response to recommendations of the *Expert Panel on Terrorism and Violent Extremism Prevention and Response Powers*. It is a non-statutory committee established by the Department of Justice and Community Safety to provide advice on countering violent extremism disengagement policy and programs to the Victorian Government.

Goal 2: Build community wellbeing and resilience

a) Strengthen partnerships with community groups, social enterprises and service providers to enable broader countering violent extremism awareness and intervention.

b) Develop products and programs that reduce social divisions and vilification and increase social cohesion.

The Victorian approach recognises the crucial role that community plays in building individual and community resilience, and protective factors that prevent violent extremism. Through partnerships with community groups, we are working to prevent violent extremism through primary interventions that enhance social connection, reduce isolation, and model positive relationships. These partnerships are integral to reducing social divisions and vilification, whilst promoting awareness of violent extremism and vulnerability factors within the community.

Goal 3: Strengthen frontline knowledge and capability

a) Provide training and professional development opportunities for frontline countering violent extremism practitioners and policymakers.

b) Deliver training to frontline staff, such as health and education, to increase understanding of violent extremism indicators and vulnerabilities, and intervention opportunities.

Increasing professional capability and organisational capacity of government to deliver preventing and countering violent extremism policy and programs is critical in identifying and responding to the early signs of violent extremism and supporting rehabilitation of individuals with enduring risk. By providing training and professional development opportunities, key decision-makers can recognise vulnerabilities, understand indicators of extremism, and intervene effectively. This enhances community safety and ensures timely, informed responses to emerging threats.

Goal 4: Provide tailored countering violent extremism programs for individuals and families

a) Strengthen therapeutic intervention and case management programs by reviewing legislation, policy, and operations.

b) Seek opportunities to expand referral pathways for individuals requiring therapeutic intervention and build awareness of these referral pathways, including from the national rollout of the Step Together[2] program.

c) Identify and implement diversion and disengagement initiatives for young people and those vulnerable to radicalising towards violent extremism.

d) Provide support and information for families of people who are radicalising towards, or have radicalised to, violent extremism.

The Victorian Government administers a range of intervention and disengagement programs aimed at individuals who adhere to a violent extremist ideology, are identified as vulnerable to radicalising towards violent extremism, or have already engaged in violent extremist behaviours. The Victorian programs are supported by the Commonwealth through the National Support and Intervention Program.

Programs delivered by the Victoria Police, Department of Justice and Community Safety, and Corrections Victoria, with multiagency support provided by other Victorian Government departments, address the dynamic and varied nature of violent extremism through targeted, therapeutic interventions in both community and custodial settings.

These programs cater to individuals across the ideological spectrum at various levels of risk or vulnerability. This includes voluntary early intervention programs for individuals who are displaying vulnerabilities to violent extremism through to disengagement programs for individuals in custody for terrorism offences.

Tailored countering violent extremism programs can also offer critical support to individuals and families affected by radicalisation. Supporting families with information and guidance plays a crucial role in preventing further radicalisation and fostering long-term resilience within communities.

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[2] https://steptogether.gov.au/

Goal 5: Deliver a coordinated, whole-of-government response

a) Establish processes that allow for thorough oversight and coordination of strategic policy and operational activities.

A coordinated, whole-of-government response ensures that efforts to counter violent extremism are efficient and effective. This holistic approach strengthens the impact of interventions and ensures a comprehensive, consistent response to emerging threats.

Implementation

To realise these goals and objectives, the Victorian Government will deliver a variety of initiatives. These initiatives are delivered across community organisations and government departments, through a coordinated, multiagency approach. An overview of the primary, secondary and tertiary countering violent extremism initiatives delivered under this Strategy is provided in Table 1 below. For information on how to access these initiatives, refer to *Appendix 3*.

Table 1 - Whole of Victorian Government primary, secondary, and tertiary countering violent extremism interventions

Type of intervention	What are they?	Victorian Government initiatives
Primary countering violent extremism interventions	Strategies, policies, and community-based initiatives which build community resilience to violent extremism	Community support groups, government-funded academic research projects with in-person and online applications, community-led programs to combat specific forms of vilification, other co-designed community initiatives
Secondary countering violent extremism interventions	Early interventions for individuals who are displaying behavioural signs which may indicate that a person is engaging with, or radicalising to, violent extremism	Bespoke case management programs (government-run programs, community-run programs, and government-community partnership programs)
Tertiary countering violent extremism interventions	Disengagement interventions for individuals who have radicalised to violent extremism	Bespoke case management programs (government-run programs)

Human rights

In Victoria, the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* sets out the basic rights, freedoms and responsibilities of all people in Victoria. The Charter protects 20 civil and political rights that promote the values of freedom, respect, equality and dignity. All countering violent extremism interventions are governed by the Charter.

Oversight, coordination and reporting

Governance

The Strategy is underpinned by Victoria's whole of government approach to preventing and countering violent extremism. It utilises existing robust governance structures that comprise key representatives from across government, to promote collaboration and ensure ongoing accountability.

The Security and Emergency Management Committee of Cabinet is the governance body that manages risk and ensures accountability and compliance for the Victorian Government's countering violent extremism responses. The Countering Violent Extremism Expert Advisory Committee and the Countering Violent Extremism Multi-Agency Panel are key advisory bodies. Representatives from these governance and advisory bodies provide ongoing oversight, expert advice, and facilitation of information sharing between Victorian Government departments and agencies to promote a consistent, whole of government approach.

The Australia-New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee (ANZCTC) also plays an important role in Victoria's countering violent extremism work program. The ANZCTC enables effective counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism coordination through inter-jurisdictional and inter-agency cooperation. The ANZCTC is responsible for reviewing current and emerging domestic and international trends in terrorism, identifying risks and appropriate mitigation activities, and developing strategic and policy advice on Australia's counter-terrorism efforts.

ANZCTC's Countering Violent Extremism Sub-Committee (CVESC) is responsible for the development of nationally coordinated policy, advancement and maintenance of specific countering violent extremism capabilities, and the provision of strategic advice to counter the risk of violent extremism.

Reporting

Departments and agencies that are responsible for delivering the Strategy's goals and objectives will be required to provide project updates for annual reporting.

The Victorian Government will report back to the public on the outcomes and efficacy of its countering violent extremism efforts towards the conclusion of the Strategy.

Evaluation

The Victorian and Commonwealth Governments conduct regular evaluations of Victoria's countering violent extremism programs. Evaluation findings promote shared learnings across jurisdictions and facilitate continuous improvement of countering violent extremism programs.

Understanding radicalisation
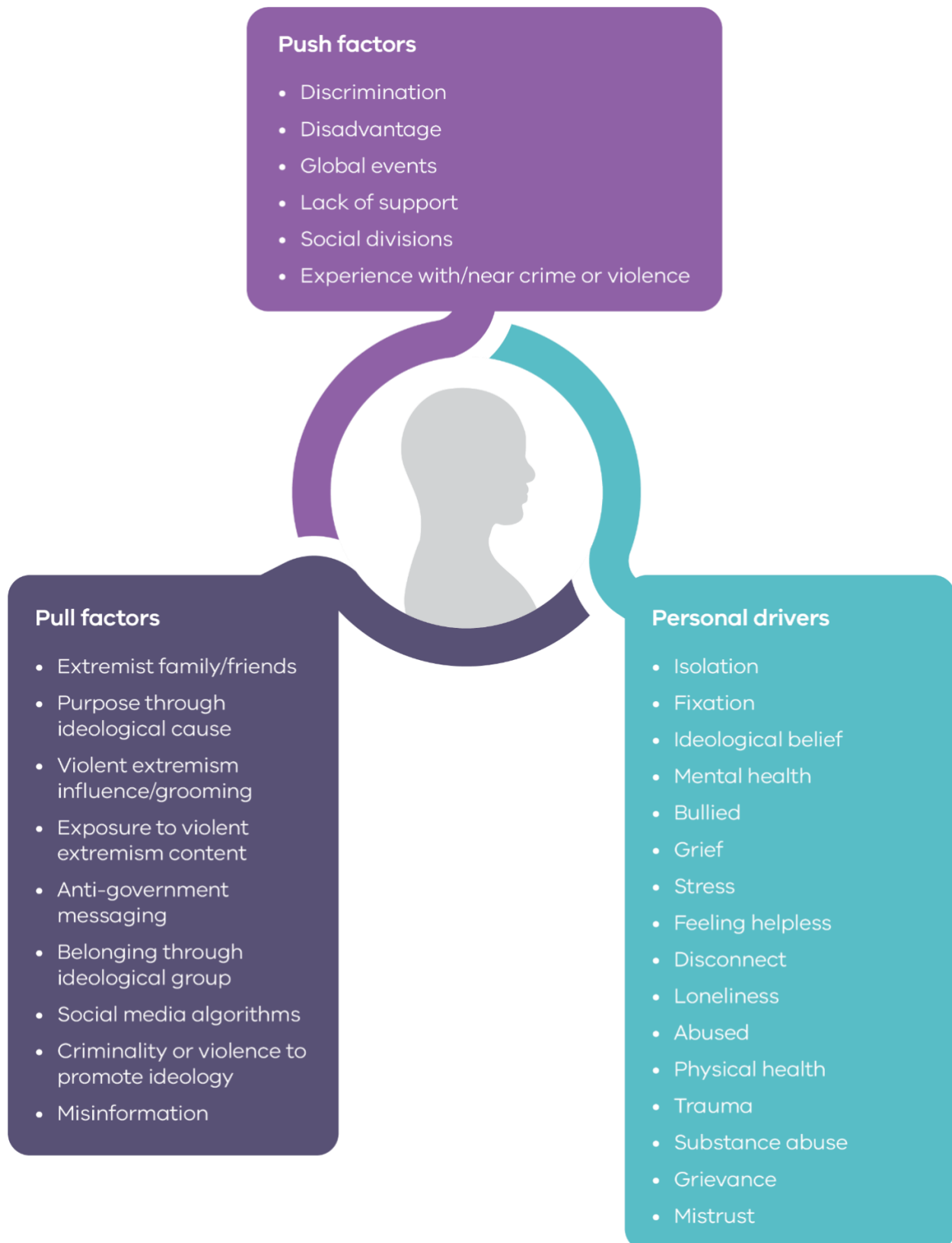
How does radicalisation happen?

There is no singular cause of violent extremism; rather, it is a culmination of vulnerabilities that can lead to radicalisation towards violent extremism. Violent extremism is not limited to people of a particular faith, ethnicity, nationality, gender or age group. An individual's vulnerability to radicalisation can be impacted by a number of personal and external factors. These factors include specific grievances, mental health related concerns, criminality, social factors, and exposure to misinformation or violent extremist content, which can happen online or through in-person networks.

Social factors like alienation and discrimination can make individuals more vulnerable to radicalisation. Individuals may seek to express their sense of identity, belonging or justice through extremist groups and behaviours. Peer networks, such as contact with peers who promote violent extremist attitudes and behaviours, can play an important role in shaping an individual's pathway to radicalisation. These influences can be in the form of friends, family or online communities, which can expose individuals to violent extremist ideologies and create echo chambers that isolate individuals from alternate perspectives.

However, these factors alone do not determine a person's likelihood of becoming a violent extremist.

The diagram at *Figure 1*, demonstrates a non-exclusive assortment of vulnerability factors as an example only of how an individual might become radicalised.

Figure 1 – How does radicalisation happen?

Push factors

- Discrimination
- Disadvantage
- Global events
- Lack of support
- Social divisions
- Experience with/near crime or violence

Pull factors

- Extremist family/friends
- Purpose through ideological cause
- Violent extremism influence/grooming
- Exposure to violent extremism content
- Anti-government messaging
- Belonging through ideological group
- Social media algorithms
- Criminality or violence to promote ideology
- Misinformation

Personal drivers

- Isolation
- Fixation
- Ideological belief
- Mental health
- Bullied
- Grief
- Stress
- Feeling helpless
- Disconnect
- Loneliness
- Abused
- Physical health
- Trauma
- Substance abuse
- Grievance
- Mistrust

Push factors drive a vulnerable individual towards an interest in violent extremism. They can be societal, such as inequality or marginalisation, or individual, such as low self-esteem or isolation. Push factors create a perceived grievance or marginalisation that propels individuals towards seeking change through a radical ideology.

Pull factors entice or draw an individual towards violent extremist narratives or groups. Examples of pull factors include the influence of peers or a charismatic leader, or consumption of violent extremist content. Pull factors offer a perceived sense of belonging, purpose or solution. Push and pull factors are compounded by an individual's personal traits and drivers that can make them more vulnerable to influence and radicalisation.

Note that radicalisation is unique to each individual, which means that:

- none of these factors in isolation are indicative of an individual's vulnerability to radicalisation

- there are many more factors that can contribute to an individual's pathway to radicalisation

- the presence of all factors does not mean that an individual will become radicalised, and

- thinking and behaviour can become more extreme (radicalised), but this becomes more concerning when it escalates to include the use or support of violence (violent extremism).

What does radicalisation look like?

The pathway to becoming radicalised is unique to each person. Individuals may be drawn to extremist ideologies through a complex interplay of personal, social, and environmental factors. In some cases, there is a mix of radical beliefs rather than one preeminent ideology.

While some may be influenced by political or religious beliefs, others may be motivated by feelings of marginalisation, identity crises, or a desire for belonging. Individuals are exposed to extremist ideologies in a variety of ways – whether that be through online networks, personal grievances or peer association and influence. The process can often be subtle, evolving over time or rapidly, and is shaped by an individual's particular emotions, experiences, and life circumstances.

Radicalisation is a psychological process that is unique to each person who undergoes it, and in most cases will not cause serious harm. However, radical beliefs become more concerning when they influence an individual to use fear, terror or violence as justification to achieve ideological, political or social change.

Refer to *Appendix 1* for case studies which offer examples of different radicalisation pathways and warning signs to look out for.

Seeking support or making a report

Family, friends, colleagues or others who engage regularly with an individual (such as community groups or services) are often the first to notice changes in an individual's behaviour, appearance, language, friendships or online commentary. Therefore, these are often the people who are best placed to report any concerning behaviour and are often motivated to do so through care and concern for the individual.

The support provided by members of the community is greatly valued and integral in identifying and responding to concerns of violent extremism in Victoria. It is understandable that people can feel worried or confronted when it comes to reporting the behaviour of someone close to them. By reaching out for help and support, you are referring those you are concerned about to professional services designed to keep them safe and reduce harm to themselves and the community.

Recognising concerning behaviour is the first step. Doing this as early as possible can help prevent a future path toward violent extremism.

Seeking support

The recently released *'A Safer Australia: Australia's Counter-Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy 2025'* includes a Fact Sheet which identifies some of the signs, and what to do if you are concerned about someone who may be going down a path of radicalisation or violent extremism.

Appendix 1 also provides case study examples and key warning signs to look out for if you think someone you know might be engaging with, or radicalising to, violent extremism.

The *Step Together* website has a range of relevant services, including a confidential help line, advice on disengagement programs, community support networks as well as health and education support services.

Step Together
Phone: 1800 875 204 (available 9am – 5pm AEST Monday to Friday)
Website: Step Together

To report concerning behaviour

The National Security Hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to report suspicious activity or signs that someone has been or may be radicalising to violent extremism. The hotline also provides information to callers on a wide range of national security matters.

The National Security Hotline
Phone within Australia: 1800 123 400
SMS: 0498 562 549
Email: hotline@nationalsecurity.gov.au

In an emergency, always call 000.

Early intervention and disengagement

Approach

The Victorian Government's approach to early intervention and disengagement is predicated on providing support to people who are showing signs of vulnerability to radicalisation or have been radicalised to violent extremism, so they can make positive changes and avoid a pathway to violent extremism. This approach is holistic and long-term focussed, remaining flexible and adaptive to the changing threat environment.

In Victoria, intervention and disengagement programs are delivered by Victoria Police, the Department of Justice and Community Safety, and Corrections Victoria, with multiagency support provided by other Victorian Government departments. These programs are designed to support individuals who are at various stages including those identified as vulnerable to radicalising towards violent extremism, who adhere to a violent extremist ideology, or who have already engaged in violent extremist behaviours.

All Victorian countering violent extremism interventions are therapeutic in nature, tailored to the unique needs of the individual and informed by the expertise of relevant government staff, community groups, academics and industry partners.

Interventions

Early intervention

Early interventions provide a way to identify, support and divert vulnerable individuals before they mobilise to perpetrate acts of violent extremism. By acting early, government can work to prevent the accumulation and convergence of violent extremist drivers in an individual, acting before they mobilise to violence. This in turn reduces the risks of harm associated with violent extremism to both the individual and the community.

To achieve this, case managers work with clients to:

- Plan goals based on an individuals' vulnerabilities, needs, circumstances and personal objectives

- Provide direct intervention to jointly plan and support individuals to achieve their goals

- Access programs and services to address these goals, such as linking to education, employment, and mental health support

- Connect with positive social and community supports

- Work with other government and non-government agencies to access the services required as part of an individual's case plan

- Determine client success and plan appropriate exit strategies.

Disengagement

Disengagement interventions are also delivered to those who pose a risk of violent extremism or are already in contact with the justice system. These interventions aim to address the needs of those who adhere to violent extremist ideology, have shown support for violence, have already engaged in violent extremist behaviours, and/or have been convicted of terrorism offences. The aim of these programs is to disengage the individual from such behaviour and/or prevent future engagement.

Disengagement programs also support individuals who have been convicted of a terrorism offence to reintegrate into the community post sentence or whilst subject to community-based orders.

Appendix 1 – Case studies

The following three scenarios are <u>examples only</u> of individual pathways to radicalisation. They do not represent the full range of circumstances that may make an individual more vulnerable to radicalisation, nor the range of ideologies that individuals may be drawn to. The pathway from radicalisation to violent extremism is not linear. It is a process that starts when an individual no longer believes in conventional ideas or generally accepted means of effecting change and instead adopts extreme political, social or religious ideals. The step from radicalisation to violent extremism will see the individual justifying support for or resorting to violence to achieve their goals.

The scenarios are informed by real cases referred to the Victorian Government and triaged to an appropriate program run by Victoria Police, the Department of Justice and Community Safety, or Corrections Victoria. These programs cater to individuals across the ideological spectrum and include voluntary early intervention programs for individuals who show vulnerabilities to violent extremism, and disengagement programs for individuals convicted of terrorist offences.

Example scenario 1 – Jessica

Jessica is a 34-year-old woman. Over the past few years, Jessica's racist views have morphed into a rigid, white supremacist belief system. She actively participates in online hate groups and has also begun expressing racist, antisemitic, and xenophobic sentiments in public. Jessica believes in the superiority of the white race and holds deep disdain for various ethnic and religious groups, frequently referring to them with derogatory terms.

Jessica has isolated herself from friends and family who do not share her extreme views. She actively seeks out online communities that support white supremacism, where she finds validation in her contempt for multiculturalism, immigration, and diversity. These groups often share content glorifying historical figures associated with white nationalism and hate speech. They also frequently express their hatred for Jewish people, who they believe are promoting mass immigration and interracial relationships to replace white people.

At work, Jessica has made discriminatory remarks about colleagues, leading to tensions and formal discipline. Emotionally, Jessica shows signs of increasing anger towards society, believing that her values are under threat by what she perceives as the decline of white identity. This increasing frustration leads Jessica to believe that her only option is to use aggression and violence to make society understand her fears.

Jessica has become more confrontational and intolerant and often uses inflammatory language to provoke others into offensive debates. She has expressed hostility towards people of different races or ethnicities, refusing to engage with them on a personal or professional level. Jessica was recently involved in a violent altercation at a local fast-food restaurant, whereby she refused to be served by a staff member wearing a kippah (headwear traditionally worn by Jewish males). Upon being asked to leave the premises, Jessica's behaviour escalated, and she attempted to physically assault the staff member.

Key Warning Signs:

- Active participation in online hate groups

- Consumption of content which glorifies historical figures associated with white nationalism and hate speech

- Expression of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic views

- Hostility towards people of different races and ethnicities

- Isolation from friends and family that do not share her views

- Incident of physical assault against an identifiably Jewish individual.

Example scenario 2 – Aidan

Over the past six months, Aidan, a 16-year-old boy, has come to adopt an increasingly rigid interpretation of his religion which is not practiced by his family or others in his local faith community.

Earlier in the year, Aidan started following a social media page which featured funny and light-hearted memes and videos. One day, another boy messaged Aidan after the pair both commented on the same post. He asked Aidan to join a private online group, promising more of the same content Aidan enjoyed and a community of others who were interested in similar content.

Aidan joined the group and was immediately engaged by the memes and funny videos he had been promised. However, this content was interspersed with heavier content and commentary. The group often talked about people from different religious backgrounds, critiquing and ridiculing them for their perceived faults. Some group members also shared video content which depicted targeted violence towards atheists and people of different faiths.

Whilst attending a prayer group 3 months ago, Aidan met Sam who told him that society is straying from its "true path" and that the time has come for those who do not adhere to their interpretation of religion.

Over the past month, Aidan has started distancing himself from his school friends, which has been noticed by Aidan's teachers. When one teacher raised this with Aidan, he became agitated and said that he wasn't hanging out with his friends anymore because they were sinners. Aidan has also started vocally criticising his parents' actions, accusing them of not following the faith properly.

Last week, Aidan got into a physical fight with another boy from his class. The fight started with a religious debate which quickly turned into a yelling match. Aidan then pushed the other boy into a wall and punched him.

Key Warning Signs:

- Increased isolation from friends

- Confrontational and aggressive behaviour towards those with different beliefs

- Consumption of violent extremist content

- Active participation in an online group which promotes hate

- Recent physical altercation.

Example scenario 3 – William

William is a 23-year-old university student who holds several different extreme beliefs. William began to show signs of extreme misogynistic beliefs a year ago after a string of failed dating attempts and instances of rejection from women. William developed severe social anxiety, and a fear of rejection. He blamed women for the way he was feeling and believed that they hold unrealistic standards for men. Consequently, he started avoiding all interactions with women.

William began to feel resentment towards societal dating norms, such as the emphasis on physical attractiveness and what he perceived to be superficial traits. He blamed women for these sentiments, and for not being 'fair' in their dating preferences.

William started to participate in online communities, and his harmful attitudes escalated. He found like-minded peers who validated his extreme beliefs about women. Through these online communities he was introduced to material from influencers associated with the 'manosphere' (online communities, forums, and social media groups that focus on issues related to men, often with a particular emphasis on promoting certain views about gender roles, masculinity, and relationships between men and women). The material conveyed dangerous and deeply misogynistic language, including images of physical and sexual violence towards women. William actively seeks out this material and frequently contributes violent and sexist narratives to online forums that share his beliefs.

Through his engagement in these forums, William met Toby, who connected him to an encrypted messaging chat group. In addition to sharing violent misogynistic content, the chat group also frequently discussed conspiratorial and anti-government views. Toby and others in the group stated that government officials should be overthrown due to their complicity in diversity and inclusion initiatives and giving women too many rights.

William has withdrawn from friends and family and completely relies on online forums and the chat group for emotional support and advice. In the chat group, William has said that the government has too much power and more people need to stand up to it. William and his chat group friend, Toby, have been trolling their local Member of Parliament (MP) on social media. This trolling escalated recently, when Toby sent a private message to the MP threatening violence unless he 'stops publicly supporting government violations of our civil rights and wasting money on pointless, woke stuff for women'.

A couple of days ago, William, Toby and other members of the chat group met in person to talk about opportunities to get the MP to listen to and heed their message. One of the group members suggested graffitiing the MP's office.

Key Warning Signs:

- Participation in online communities promoting harmful beliefs about women and violent, anti-government views

- Consumption of violent misogynistic material, including images of physical and sexual violence

- Withdrawal from friends and family, seeking comfort primarily from online communities

- In-person expression of violent, hateful attitudes towards women

- Close involvement with a peer making threats of violence

- Participation in planning acts of violence.

Appendix 2 – Making a report or seeking support for a friend or family member

For further resources and support if you are concerned about someone

Step Together – a nationwide resource, accessible to individuals across all states and territories.

Phone: 1800 875 204 (available 9am – 5pm AEST Monday to Friday)
Website: Step Together

To report online material

Where possible, report material directly to the platform the material is on, such as the social media site. Refer material to the eSafety Commissioner's website for review and possible take down.

Website: eSafety Commissioner – Report online harm

National Security Hotline

It is important to stay aware and to immediately report any suspicious activity.

Phone within Australia: 1800 123 400
Phone outside Australia: (+61) 1300 123 401
Teletypewriter: 1800 234 889
SMS: 0498 562 549
Email: hotline@nationalsecurity.gov.au
Website: National Security Hotline

If there is an immediate threat to life or property

Police phone: 000

Non-urgent reporting to Victoria Police phone: 131 444
Online: Victoria Police – Online Reporting

You can use the National Relay Service (NRS) to contact Victoria Police if you are Deaf, have a hearing impairment, or have difficulty with speech or communication.

For information on what to do in the event of a terrorist attack, go to the Australian National Security Website – What to do in an attack

Appendix 3 – Countering violent extremism resources

Victorian resources

[Department of Justice and Community Safety, Countering Violent Extremism Webpage](#)

[Parliament of Victoria, Legislative Council | Inquiry into Extremism Report, 2022](#)

National resources

[A Safer Australia | Australia's Counter–Terrorism and Violent Extremism Strategy 2025](#)

Appendix 4 – Resources for supporting community wellbeing and resilience

Victorian resources

Department of Premier and Cabinet - Victoria's Anti-Racism Strategy 2024-2029

Our Equal State: Victoria's Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2023 - 2027

Pride in Our Future: Victoria's LGBTIQA+ Strategy 2022-32

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission – Guideline: Race discrimination in the workplace 2024

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission - Reducing Racism Hub

National resources

The Department of Home Affairs – Report of the Strengthening Democracy Taskforce, 2024

Australian Human Rights Commission – National Anti-Racism Framework, 2024

Appendix 5 – Terrorism resources

What is terrorism?

An act of terrorism is a criminal offence in Australia under Part 5.3 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995*. The Australian Government defines a 'terrorist act' as an act, or a threat to act, that meets the following criteria:

- it is done with the intention of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause,

- it is done with the intention to intimidate the public, or coerce, or influence by intimidation, any government, and

- it causes one or more of the following

  o death, serious harm or endangers the life of a person

  o serious damage to property

  o a serious risk to the health or safety of the public

  o serious interference with, disruption to, or destruction of critical infrastructure such as a telecommunications or electricity network.[3]

Victorian resources

Victoria Police - Counter Terrorism Strategy 2022-2025

The Victoria Police SHIELD network

Victorian Government - 'Protecting Crowded Places'

National resources

Australian Government - Australia's Counter-Terrorism Strategies

Australia-New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee - Australia's Strategy for Protecting Crowded Places from Terrorism

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[3] Attorney-General's Department, 'Australia's counter-terrorism laws,' *Australian Government: Attorney-General's Department* (Website) https://www.ag.gov.au/national-security/australias-counter-terrorism-laws