REPORT TO
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES AND JUSTICE
OCTOBER 2019

NSW COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM PROGRAM EVALUATION

FINAL REPORT

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In November 2015, the NSW Government committed $47 million for a suite of measures to respond to the rise of violent extremism, referred to as the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Program. The CVE Program aims to ensure that violent extremists are disengaged from violent extremism, at-risk individuals are diverted from violent extremism, and community resilience in NSW in prevention of and response to violent extremism is improved.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) commissioned ACIL Allen Consulting to conduct a systemic evaluation of the suite of projects initiated under the CVE Program. The purpose of the evaluation was to examine the collective impact of the CVE Program.

This report presents findings at the whole-of-program level, including outputs and outcomes across funded projects. It draws on the project-level evaluations, project summaries, and interviews with line agencies.

Key activities under the CVE Program

The CVE Program has funded a spectrum of work from broad social cohesion efforts to focused intervention activities. Figure ES 1 provides an overview of the key projects under the CVE Program, including reach, outputs and outcomes.

The CVE Program has also produced important resources that have enhanced NSW Government's capability to respond to CVE, including the NSW Counter Terrorism Strategy, the NSW Strategic Communications Plan, the NSW Strategy for managing individuals returning from foreign conflict zones and the NSW CVE Evaluation Approach.

To support implementation of the CVE Program, the CVE Team has built significant relationships across government and community. The engagement with the Commonwealth (in particular, the Department of Home Affairs) has allowed NSW to influence the broader CVE agenda to support the achievement of the CVE Program's objectives. Deep community engagement has played a substantial role in building trust and relationships with community members which has been essential to project success and mitigating risks of community mistrust.

FIGURE ES 1   SUMMARY OF KEY OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

	COMPACT	CVE Training Program	Engagement and Support Program (ESP)	Juvenile Justice (JJ) CVE Package	PRISM	School Communities Working Together (SCWT)	Step Together
Reach	COMPACT has reached over 20,000 people, including engagement in 130 schools as well as youth and community centres in NSW.	CVE Training Program has reached over 550 people across government, non-government organisations and local councils.	The ESP has engaged a diverse cohort of difficult-to-reach or at-risk individuals.	The JJ CVE Package has established infrastructure and `resources to support sustainable CVE capability.	PRISM successfully engaged difficult to reach offenders at-risk or known to have radicalized.	SCWT has broad reach covering 3,200 schools and over 1.2 million students, with vulnerable students receiving case management support.	Step Together has reached over 83,000 community members across NSW.
Key outputs	• 12 funded community-based programs covering youth leadership, education programs, counter-narratives and youth re-engagement. • Establishment of the COMPACT Alliance.	• 24 capability building activities. • Development of a Professional Library. • Provision of access to 5,500 licenses for cultural diversity competency training for correctives and youth justice employees.	• Formalisation of partnerships with line agencies. • Development of program materials. • Steady number of referrals to program. • Participants successfully engaged onto ESP. • Development of case plans and interventions.	• Development of a CVE Strategy. • Conduct of assessments and intervention strategies to disengage or divert offenders from violent extremism. • Recruitment of ideological advisors. • Delivery of training for Juvenile Justice staff. • Development of a best-practice guide. • Formation of a security and intelligence designation to manage of terrorism related offenders.	• Engagement of inmates that CSNSW had historically found difficult to engage. • Conduct of RADAR assessments of program participants. • Development of intervention plans and goals. • Provision of supports.	• Establishment of the Incident Report and Support Hotline. • Delivery of training to school staff. • Provision of intensive support to schools by a Specialist Support Team. • Reports of anti-social and extremist behaviour related incidents. • Triage of cases of anti-social and extremist behaviour, with students supported through the Case Management Services.	• Development and implementation of the helpline and website. • Handling of an average of 41 calls per month, 13 webchats and 2871 unique website visitors. • Community engagement activities (141 meetings and 28 presentations).
Key outcomes	• Increased respect for others. • Increased engagement with the community. • Empowered young people to have a voice. • Improved social connection for young people. • Improved engagement in future education opportunities.	• Improved awareness of NSW Government's CVE-related efforts. • Increased sharing of expertise across line agencies. • Increased likelihood of referrals and reporting from line agencies. • Improved local connections between service providers and line agencies.	• Improved access to support services. • Improved confidence and self-worth. • Formation of prosocial relationships with peers. • Enhanced social and independent living skills. • Increased employability. • Positive signs of attitudinal change. • Improved interagency collaboration.	• Improved awareness of CVE. • Increased capability to identify individuals at risk of radicalization. • Improved case notes. • Increased collaboration and coordination. • Improved relationships with community.	• Improved participant outcomes including ceasing communication with associates, improved engagement with religious supports, increased moderated beliefs, willingness to engage in work and educational programs.	• Improved support for NSW to report, manage and respond to anti-social and extremist behaviour. • Improved school confidence in managing incidents. • Improved access to supports for vulnerable students. • Improved partnerships.	• Improved understanding of violent extremism. • Increased community awareness of violent extremism.

Summary of findings

Reach of almost 1.5 million people in NSW

The CVE Program represents an innovative and flexible approach to addressing resilience, capability, diversion, and disengagement. The activities under the CVE Program have reached nearly 1.5 million people, including engagement with communities, service providers, schools, government employees and local councils. Community-based programs were able to demonstrate broad reach, engaging a large number of community groups and young people, while the more targeted projects provided intensive service delivery to a small and relatively homogenous cohort.

Strengthened social cohesion and inclusion outcomes

The CVE Program has achieved enabling and intermediate outcomes related to capacity, community resilience, and awareness of violent extremism. The work to date has strengthened protective factors against violent extremism, while building a robust recovery capability should incidents occur. The projects are supporting the breadth of the CVE Program objectives, with the strongest evidence of impact contributing towards community resilience and capacity building activities.

Impact on diversion and disengagement from violent extremism is challenging to measure

Reporting against the high-level outcomes of diversion, disengagement and reduced likelihood has been difficult due to measurement challenges. This is not unique to NSW and is commonly encountered when working in CVE. While it is important to acknowledge these ultimate outcomes, in the short to medium term there is greater value in focusing on the impact on the communities in which the programs are implemented.

Enhanced CVE capability in NSW Government

The CVE Program has increased CVE capability in government but that there is an ongoing need to continue to build whole-of-government responses to address CVE. This necessitates continued funding for a coordinated approach as the system is not sufficiently mature to support CVE as a business-as-usual function. Ongoing effort by Government requires monitoring of emerging threats and risks, close connections with community, stronger information sharing arrangements across agencies (both state and Commonwealth), and continued links with both domestic and international research.

Linking CVE and CT presents risks to the CVE Program's success

A key challenge for the future of the CVE Program is its positioning in relation to counter terrorism (CT). To date, this has hindered community confidence necessary for the achievement of program objectives. There is a need to address this risk while continuing to be able to report against CVE outcomes. Components of the CVE Program that address violent extremism as one of many vulnerabilities should be mainstreamed, while maintaining accountability for outcomes at a whole-of-government level.

Emerging risks and issues to be addressed

Future funding should continue to cover the range of activities from resilience building through to specific interventions for at-risk individuals. This will provide a holistic and integrated whole-of-government approach. Current research on effective practice suggests further effort could be directed to community-based prevention, and to addressing emerging issues such as right wing extremism, incels, other ideologically motivated groups and children/families returning from conflict zones. There is also an opportunity to improve linkages between existing projects to help address program gaps.

Summary of project recommendations

The table below provides specific findings and recommendations in relation to the key projects funded through the CVE Program. These should be read alongside the broader recommendations made for the CVE Program overall, which are provided in the next section.

FIGURE ES 2   PROJECT-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Project	Recommendations
COMPACT	• Expand funding, with a continued focus on community-based programs and co-design. • Explore opportunities to provide programs that address emerging issues. • Require the development of project logics, evaluation frameworks and embedded data collection where possible.
CVE Training Program	• Re-allocate funding to coordination function. • Focus on supporting capability building on emerging issues and improvements in practice.
Engagement and Support Program (ESP)	• Enhance case management capabilities and function, while maintaining linkages with intelligence gathering and community services.
Fund for Future Initiatives	• Maintain current level of funding. • Maintain collaborative governance structure through CVESC. • Establish prioritization criteria that addresses alignment with objectives, collective need and potential risks.
Juvenile Justice (JJ) CVE Package	• Mainstream business-as-usual activities (i.e. training, case management, legal and policy advice). • Allocate CVE funding to specialised and innovative components, including CVE risk assessments, expert reports and research.
PRISM	• Strengthen interface with other CVE Program activities (including JJ CVE Package, ESP and community-based programs) and provide support to explore interface with community corrections.
School Communities Working Together (SCWT)	• Mainstream SCWT activities. • Allocate CVE funding to other education-related projects (i.e. student focused education programs, curriculum development on peacebuilding and social cohesion, linkages with other CVE Programs).
Step Together	• Collect additional data on outcomes for services users to support a cost-benefit assessment. • Review the relative benefit of community engagement activities against the support line/online supports.

Summary of program recommendations

1. **Maintain dedicated funding for policy and program coordination of CVE to deliver the CVE priorities under the NSW CT Strategy.**

   There is a need for ongoing funding for a CVE Program in NSW. Line agencies continue to develop their internal approaches to CVE policies and programs. Should the funding be removed, it is likely that CVE-related projects will not receive internal funding or may become a lower priority within line agencies. This would risk losing the momentum built to date.

   Ongoing funding should be supported by a collaborative approach across government that allows the CVE Program to respond to changing dynamics and emerging issues. This requires the continuation of relationships between line agencies and the Commonwealth, and connections with international jurisdictions and research bodies. This approach supports the continued implementation of a coherent policy and program agenda that is clearly articulated, funded and evaluated.

2. **Develop a work plan for the second phase of the CVE Program that includes projects across the spectrum from community resilience through to diversion and disengagement.**

   The second phase of the CVE Program requires a strategic approach to planning that ensures coverage across the objectives of resilience, capability, diversion and disengagement. Projects funded under the CVE Program should continue to address both community resilience and cohesion programs as well as more targeted individual interventions, in line with the current evidence base on preventing and countering violent extremism.

   Opportunities to expand the investment in community-based programs should be identified, given their demonstrated contribution to achieving outcomes. Funding allocation should also consider recommendations 3 and 4.

3. **Develop responses to address current program gaps regarding emerging issues and whole-of-government approaches.**

   Current program gaps should be addressed through initiatives concentrating on right wing extremism and other emerging risks such as children and families returning from conflict zones. Other gaps include initiatives in the education system (particularly whole-of-school or curriculum approaches) and supports for at-risk adults in the community not currently known to law enforcement or justice. The Community Support Groups run in Victoria provide a valuable model for programs that address this cohort. In line with recommendation 2, opportunities through community-based approaches should be explored.

   The CVE Program should also increase the focus on connecting the funded projects to ensure advantage is taken of opportunities to provide holistic supports. For example, this could initially take the form of a mapping exercise to understand definitions, thresholds and supports provided by line agencies to track the potential journey of an at-risk individual.

4. **Continue to support the Fund for Future Initiatives to maintain the responsiveness of the CVE Program.**

   The Fund for Future Initiatives provides flexible funding to enable quick responses to emerging issues. This unique design is essential to operating effectively in a constantly changing policy and practice environment.

   The next phase of the CVE Program should embed the Fund for Future Initiatives with a similar funding level, or potentially pooling resources from other project activities that are not continuing. This will allow the CVE Program to respond to emerging issues and adaptations to practice as both

Australian and international jurisdictions build the evidence base. Whole-of-government governance processes should be embedded to support collaboration, ensuring an effective prioritisation process is in place to identify areas of common need or high risk.

5. **Maintain the central coordination function for the CVE Program to continue to strengthen the whole-of-government capability while managing the interface with the Commonwealth and line agencies.**

The central coordination function for the CVE Program has been critical to its effectiveness. The CVE Program has helped build interagency relationships, collaboration and capacity. While this has helped line agencies to build their understanding and formalise relationships, it is considered too early to move away from a centralised and coordinated approach. Continued central support is required to coordinate activity across NSW and with the Commonwealth, using a single contact point or relationship lead within government to maintain strong agency alignment at both a state and national level.

Specifically, there is further work to do in developing a whole of government capability, understanding the interface between CVE objectives and line agencies' priorities, and the overarching goals for the program. The centralised coordination role should continue to develop this approach to ensure coherence, engagement and support for ongoing work – with a particular focus on agreeing whole-of-government responses to emerging risks.

6. **Develop individual project logics for funded activities, supported by evaluation frameworks and data collection strategies.**

The CVE Program would benefit further from improved measurement of impact, which requires an investment of time and planning. This could be done through the development of project-level logics that are consistent with the overall NSW CVE Approach. These logics should be supported by localised, project-level indicators that provide tangible measurement of the progress of project activities, and their impact on the community that they operate within.

An appropriate way to progress this would be via integration into the Evaluation Tool, which provides an evidence-based approach to identifying key outcomes and indicators for program and project design. However, further funded support may be required (potentially through the CVE Training Package) to build internal line agency skills in evaluation.

7. **Allocate a portion of the CVE Program funding to knowledge sharing and the translation of research to practice.**

Extensive work is underway in other jurisdictions including the Commonwealth to enhance the evidence base for CVE initiatives. The collective impact of the CVE Program could be extended by developing a knowledge sharing function that assists in translating contemporary research, and local experience, into practice for line agencies.

This would ensure that the lessons learned can be shared and agencies maintain knowledge currency on emerging issues, developments in practice and potential innovations. The Commonwealth Research and Evaluation Working Group provides an existing forum that could be leveraged to support NSW-led projects on CVE-related research.

1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 This evaluation

The Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) commissioned ACIL Allen Consulting to conduct a systemic evaluation of the suite of projects initiated under the NSW Government's Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Program. The purpose of the evaluation is to examine the impact of the CVE Program, drawing on the evidence collected through previous reviews and evaluations of the individual projects.

The specific objectives of the evaluation are to:
— determine the extent to which funded initiatives have contributed to outcomes identified in the Program Logic
— assess the credibility of the evidence base to guide future data collection and enhance the quality of future interventions
— identify opportunities for program improvements, including in relation to program design and implementation
— establish a feedback loop to share information about the CVE program to support continuous improvement.

The evaluation has been conducted in line with the NSW CVE Evaluation Approach. This outlines the role of evaluation in building a more comprehensive CVE evidence base, identifying emerging patterns and lessons, and establishing feedback loops to share information about CVE projects to encourage learning and adaptation. The Approach is based on the following principles:
— There is a need to learn more about violent extremism and the best way to tackle it.
— This will require experimentation, which should be based on lessons learnt from previous CVE efforts around the world, as well as any available evidence.
— Information about violent extremism and CVE approaches should be shared as widely as possible.
— Violent extremism should be addressed using existing capabilities and services, including in the community and non-government sectors, wherever possible.[1]

The table over page summarises the projects that form part of this evaluation, and an overview of their purpose.

[1] Department of Premier and Cabinet (2017). *NSW Countering Violent Extremism Evaluation Approach*. Sydney: NSW Government.

TABLE 1.1 OVERVIEW OF PROJECTS AND FOCUS

Project	Focus
Ambassador's Program	A community-based program where community leaders working with students in schools and the community to promote social cohesion and cultural harmony
COMPACT	A grants-program for locally based projects involving young people, using a community resilience-building approach to countering hate, violence, fear and division in society.
COMPLAN	Aims to maintain and promote community harmony, build community resilience, and better equip the State to prevent, limit, withstand, respond to, and recover from situations that threaten community harmony in NSW.
CVE Training Program	A comprehensive package of professional learning for NSW Government workers and to establish broader capacity building programs for community organisations.
Engagement and Support Program (ESP)	A voluntary program jointly administered by NSW Police Force and Office of Community Safety and Cohesion seeking to reduce the risk of violent extremism incidents occurring in NSW through referral and diversion processes aimed at assisting individuals to disengage from negative influences.
Evaluation Tool	An online CVE tool to help identify relevant outcomes, indicators and measurement tools to inform program design and evaluation plans.
Fixated Threat Assessment Centre (FTAC)*	A dedicated NSW Police Force and Health initiative to identify and respond to individuals who are seemingly fixated on issues or individuals but are not considered persons of interest for counter-terrorism police.
Fund for Future initiatives	A fund used to resource projects that are identified in response to changing dynamics, emerging issues and good practice research on addressing CVE.
Juvenile Justice (JJ) CVE Package	A package of activities within Juvenile Justice that aims to rehabilitate and reintegrate juveniles charged with terrorism-related offences, support diversion of young people who are vulnerable to violent extremism and develop resilience to all forms of violent extremism across the division.
Premier's Fund for Social Cohesion	A small grants program for schools and local community organisations for community-led events and activities that bring together people from diverse cultural backgrounds to discuss and celebrate diversity.
Proactive Integrated Support Model (PRISM)	A custody-based, voluntary pilot intervention delivered by Corrective Services NSW aimed at prison inmates who have been convicted of terrorist-related offences or have been identified as at-risk of radicalisation.
School Communities Working Together (SCWT)	A multi-faceted program which is designed to address the risk of anti-social and extremist behaviour in NSW schools.
Step Together	A telephone, webchat, website and social media service that provides information, advice and referrals to those concerned that someone they know may be headed down the path to violent extremism.
The Point Magazine	Aims to be a trusted, accessible source of information, news and current affairs relating to violent extremism and its social impacts on local communities in Australia.

Note: * No documentation on FTAC was available for this evaluation. References to FTAC are based on information collected through stakeholder consultation only.

SOURCE: ACIL ALLEN CONSULTING, 2019.

1.1.1   Method

An overview of the evaluation method is provided in Figure 1.1.

FIGURE 1.1   METHOD OVERVIEW

1.	Project establishment	• Inception meeting • Project plan • Administrative documentation review
2.	Stakeholder consultation	• Interviews with line agencies and key stakeholders (16) • Group discussions with NSW DPC teams (2)
3.	Document review	• Review of evaluation reports and program documentation
4.	Synthesis and reporting	• Analysis • Draft and final reports
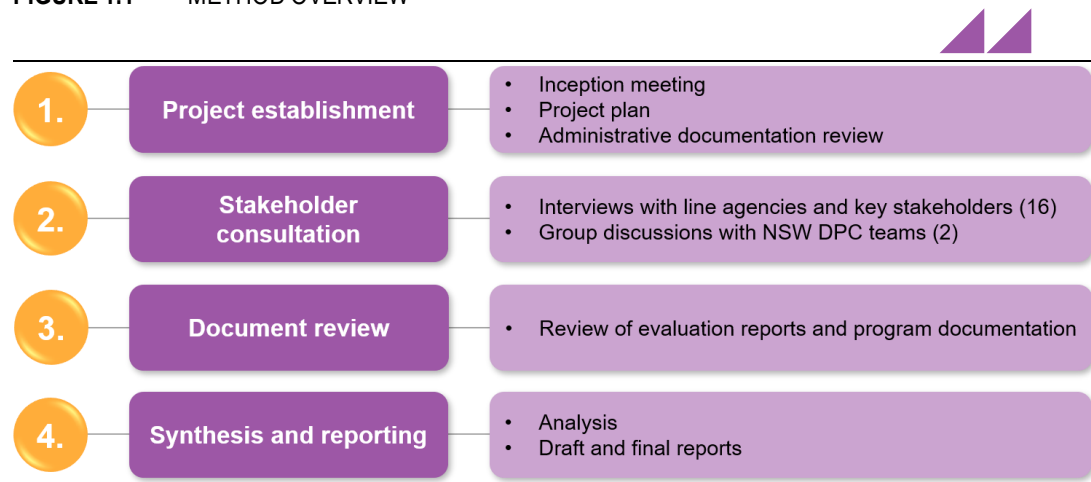
SOURCE: ACIL ALLEN CONSULTING, 2019.

Considerations for interpreting findings

There are challenges in measuring and quantifying outcomes (discussed further in section 5.1). This is a common challenge for CVE, not unique to NSW, which can be attributed to the lack of consensus on which local-level outcomes CVE-related projects should target, or what indicators should be tracked.

The NSW CVE Evaluation Approach provides an agreed evaluation framework for CVE related projects, including overarching objectives. The Approach acknowledges the challenges of measurement but highlights the need for agencies to identify and monitor meaningful outputs and outcomes related to CVE.

While this agreed Approach provides a framework, line agencies have used diverse indicators to measure success. This accords with the focus of individual projects, which address different policy areas, objectives and audiences – however, it presents some challenges for aggregating data across the CVE Program. There were further challenges in the limited availability of outcomes data and, where such data were available, the relatively small number of participants. This limits the conclusions that can be drawn both on the effectiveness of individual projects and the CVE Program overall.

1.1.2   Structure of the report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

— *Chapter 2: The NSW CVE Program* outlines key areas of activity and program outputs

— *Chapter 3: Projects – Implementation and outcomes* summarises the outputs and outcomes from each of the funded projects

— *Chapter 4: NSW CVE Program – Implementation* examines the effectiveness of the overarching program design

— *Chapter 5: Collective impact* assesses the extent to which outcomes have been achieved

— *Chapter 6: Key findings and recommendations* provides next steps for the future of the CVE Program.

1.2 The policy context for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs

CVE initiatives have become increasingly common in the security landscape as the nature of threats change. CVE is an umbrella term for non-coercive activities aimed at reducing involvement in terrorism and extremist activities. It involves an ongoing approach to maintaining community cohesion, preventing the potential precursors of violent extremism and supporting community recovery from incidents of violent extremism or terrorism. This generally includes identifying and engaging those at risk of becoming willing to use, support or facilitate violence.

CVE programs span a broad range of activities from individual behaviour change activities (such as counter-radicalisation programs) through to community-based programs to build social cohesion, resilience, and community harmony.[2]

The CVE context has evolved as a result of the changing nature of terrorism, and there is an increasing recognition of the need for a coordinated approach across law enforcement, intelligence and social policy.[3] The threat of terrorism is increasingly coming from 'homegrown' sources in Western countries, with motivations including religious, political or ideological extremism.

This has generated a shift towards a much broader range of CVE activities focused on prevention, including early intervention strategies to strengthen resilience and social cohesion and lessen the appeal of violent extremism.[4]

1.2.1 International context

There are significant differences in the strategies and approaches to CVE worldwide, including how long organised efforts have been underway, and how governments and other partners and stakeholders work together.[5]

The United Kingdom implemented the Prevent strategy in 2003, which aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. In 2015, the Prevent programme was placed on a statutory footing following the introduction of the *Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015* (UK), which created a legal obligation (referred to as the 'Prevent duty') on specified authorities, such as schools, the National Health Service (NHS) and councils, to report activities and behaviours related to radicalisation.[6]

This approach has raised considerable controversy. Concerns include the creation of a "culture of fear" and a "chilling effect" on human rights such as freedom of speech; the disproportionate targeting of British Muslims (particularly Muslim youths); the broad definition of 'non-violent extremism'; the paradoxical relationship of the statutory duties of safeguarding children at risk and reporting 'risky' children; and accusations of state-sanctioned spying.[7] In response to ongoing community concerns, a formal independent review of Prevent was announced in 2019.

The United States has adopted a Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) approach, embedded in the 2011 *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* strategy. The strategy emphasises the importance of a community-based approach to preventing violent extremism, stating: "The best defences against violent extremist ideologies are well-informed and equipped families, local communities, and local institutions."[8]

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[2] Harris-Hogan, Barrelle and Zammit. 2015. What is countering violent extremism? Exploring CVE policy and practice in Australia. *Behavioural Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression,* Vol 8(1), pp.6-24.

[3] Australia-New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee (n.d.). *Countering Violent Extremism Sub-Committee Terms of Reference*. Canberra: Australian Government.

[4] Australia-New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee (n.d.). *Countering Violent Extremism Sub-Committee Terms of Reference*. Canberra: Australian Government.

[5] Neymann. 2017. *Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation that Lead to Terrorism: Ideas, Recommendations, and Good Practices from the OSCE Region*, London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, p 22.

[6] *Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015* (UK), s 26.

[7] Dudenhoefer. 2018. Resisting Radicalisation: A Critical Analysis of the UK Prevent Duty. *Journal for Deradicalization*, Spring 2018, Nr. 14, pp 158-159; Lewis. 2018. Prevent as an Intractable Policy Controversy: Implications and Solutions. *Journal for Deradicalization*, Summer 2018, Nr. 15, p 112; Dearden, 2019. UK's Prevent counter-extremism programme to be independently reviewed, government says. *Independent*, 22 January 2019.

[8] US Government. 2011. *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*. Washington: The White House.

A corresponding Strategic Implementation Plan was released shortly afterward. The plan reaffirms that strong and resilient local communities are the most effective means of safeguarding individuals in the US against violent extremist recruitment and radicalisation.

It states that effective domestic CVE strategy requires a multi-tiered approach, with coordinated efforts at the national, local and individual levels; and that where possible, CVE should be incorporated into existing programs related to public safety, resilience, inclusion and violence prevention.[9] In 2016, the Department of Homeland Security shifted back toward CVE language with the *Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism*, which continues to focus on community-based efforts.

At an international level, the United Nations has supported the importance of CVE programs. In 2005, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1624 which reaffirmed the commitment to combatting all forms of terrorism and called on states to continue to improve dialogue and understanding among civilisations. This resolution highlighted the important role of the media, civil and religious society, education and the private sector in promoting tolerance and cohesion.[10]

In 2014, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2178 to create a new policy and legal framework for international action in response to the foreign terrorist fighter threat worldwide. For the first time, the Council emphasised that CVE was an essential element of an effective response to this threat.[11]

In 2015, the UN Secretary-General issued a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, encouraging member states to develop national plans of action which set priorities for addressing local drivers of violent extremism and complement any existing national counter-terrorism strategies.[12] This has led to over 30 countries developing National Action Plans that formalise national arrangements.

1.2.2 National context

In Australia, CVE is closely connected with counter terrorism (CT) portfolios in most agencies. The arrangements for managing CVE/CT in Australia are complex and involve close interaction between Commonwealth, State and Territory law enforcement and security agencies to develop consistent and coordinated practices.

At the Commonwealth level, the Australia New Zealand Counter Terrorism Committee (ANZCTC)[13] has been operating since 2002 to support the development and coordination of a nation-wide CT capability, including the maintenance of effective arrangements between agencies and across jurisdictions. To help formalise and guide cross-jurisdictional practices, the Commonwealth developed a formal counter-terrorism strategy in 2008, taking particular note of the models centred on CVE developed in the UK.[14] This led to the release of the Counter-Terrorism White Paper in 2010, *Securing Australia: Protecting our Future*, which stated that the *'Commonwealth and the states and territories are working cooperatively to develop a national approach to countering violent extremism which will form an integral part of Australia's national counter-terrorism strategy'*[15].

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[9] US Government. 2016. *Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*. Washington: The White House.

[10] United Nations Security Council Counter Terrorism Committee. 2005. Resolution 1624.

[11] Lauland et al. 2019. *Countering Violent Extremism in Australia and Abroad: A Framework for Characterising CVE Programs in Australia, the United States, and Europe*. RAND Corporation, p 3.

[12] United Nations (nd). *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*. United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force; available from https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/en/plan-action-prevent-violent-extremism.

[13] Previously the National Counter-Terrorism Committee.

[14] Bergin. 2009. *Contest two and counter extremism: Lessons for Australia.* Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

[15] Australian Government. 2010. *Securing Australia, Protecting our Community.* Canberra: Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Changes in the international and domestic environment, alongside a developing evidence base, saw the evolution of the Commonwealth's approach to Australia's first national CVE framework, released in 2015. The Framework proposes four key outcomes for CVE:[16]

1. identify and divert violent extremists and provide them with disengagement options
2. identify and support at-risk individuals
3. support community resilience and build cohesion
4. achieve effective communications which challenge extremist messages and support alternatives.

In the same year, the Commonwealth released the *Australia's Counter Terrorism Strategy: Strengthening our Resilience*, which outlined five areas of effort:

1. Challenging violent extremist ideologies
2. Stopping people from becoming terrorists
3. Shaping the global environment
4. Disrupting terrorist activity within Australia
5. Effective response and recovery.

The CVE Framework and the CT Strategy support the Australian CT arrangements, *The Inter-Governmental Agreement on Counter Terrorism* and the accompanying *National Counter-Terrorism Plan* (the Plan).

The Plan sets out an overarching framework for the Commonwealth to work alongside State and Territory governments to *'prepare for, prevent, respond to and recover from a terrorist act'.*[17] This includes the various legal and administrative arrangements necessary to ensure a coordinated approach towards CT/CVE, intelligence sharing and threat assessments, as well as the roles and responsibilities for responding to and recovering from terrorist acts. The Plan provides three strategic objectives:[18]

1. build the resilience of communities to violent extremism
2. support the diversion of individuals at risk of becoming violent extremists when possible
3. rehabilitate and reintegrate violent extremists when possible.

While efforts in 2015 began to link community development as a means to preventing violent extremism, the thinking on CT/CVE has changed recently. At a national level, a small number of incidents and the perception of an increased threat level has seen a shift back towards a more securitised approach by the Commonwealth to the associated issues, as demonstrated by the Special Meeting of the Council of Australian Governments on Counter-Terrorism focused on counter-terrorism measures, held in October 2017.

Current efforts at the Commonwealth level are coordinated by the Department of Home Affairs, with work occurring in four streams:

1. building strength in diversity and social participation (for example, through settlement and multicultural community initiatives)
2. targeted work with vulnerable communities and institutions (developing training packages and programs to rehabilitate people convicted of terrorism related offences)
3. addressing terrorist propaganda online (including the development of counter narratives for extreme perspectives)
4. diversion and deradicalization (through early intervention programs for those attracted to radical perspectives).[19]

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[16] Australian Government. 2015. *Review of the Commonwealth's Counter Terrorism arrangements.* Canberra: Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

[17] Australian Government. 2012. *Submission to the joint standing committee on migration inquiry into multiculturalism (Submission no. 501)*. Canberra: Attorney General's Department, 2 March.

[18] Australia New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee. 2017. *National Counter-Terrorism Plan*. Ed. 4. Canberra: Australian Government.

[19] Australian Government Department of Home Affairs. 2018. National Security – Countering Violent Extremism. Accessed at https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/our-portfolios/national-security/countering-extremism-and-terrorism/countering-violent-extremism-(cve) 15 March 2019.

1.2.3   NSW context

Historically, the focus of CT activities in NSW has been on law enforcement, security and emergency management agencies, and their role in preparedness and response. For example, the Australia-New Zealand Counter Terrorism Committee and the NSW Counter Terrorism Exercise Steering Committee regularly conduct training exercises in preparation for responding to terrorist threats.

However, recent developments both internationally and domestically (outlined above) have impacted on the context for CT/CVE activities in NSW. There is an increasing focus on the need for more centralised coordination across agencies and the integration of other Departments and portfolios. In particular, this includes government activities related to youth, education and employment as a core focus of prevention initiatives concentrated on minimising disenfranchisement and the possibility of radicalisation.

The *NSW Counter Terrorism Strategy* (the Strategy) released in December 2018 outlines the NSW Government's approach to coordinating counter terrorism and violent extremism across government and addressing the evolving threat of terrorism.[20] The Strategy outlines five principles guiding the approach:

1. community safety is our first priority
2. efforts to enhance public safety reinforce our way of life
3. we all share responsibility for action
4. our approach is based on evidence and intelligence
5. our approach is responsive and able to adapt.

These principles, underpinned by legislative framework and investment, guide NSW Government activity towards five objectives: Resilience, Diversion and Disengagement, Disruption, Protection, Incident management. These objectives align with a range of national and state plans and strategic documents, including the *NSW State Emergency Management Plan*, *NSW Counter Terrorism Plan* and *NSW Community Resilience and Response Plan*.

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[20] NSW Government. 2018. *NSW Counter Terrorism Strategy December 2018*. NSW: NSW Government.

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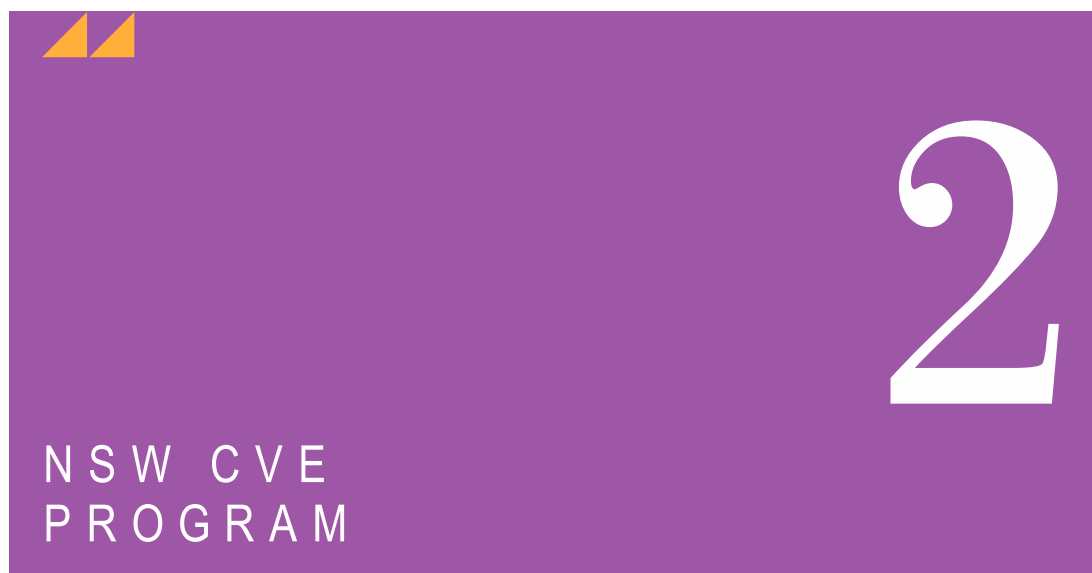
NSW CVE PROGRAM

This Chapter outlines the administrative arrangements, activities and program-level outputs for the CVE Program. It also addresses the interface with Commonwealth-funded activities.

2.1 Overview

In November 2015, the NSW Government committed $47 million to fund a suite of measures to respond to the rise of violent extremism, referred to as the CVE Program. The Program Logic was developed based on the agreed National CVE Framework, and is summarised in Figure 2.1.

2.1.1 Administrative arrangements

The Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) held responsibility for the central coordination of the CVE Program from announcement in 2015 to 2019 when Machinery of Government (MoG) changes shifted responsibility to the Department of Communities and Justice as part of the Stronger Communities cluster. This report uses 'CVE Team' to refer to the Director for CVE and CVE Team originally housed in DPC, who have supported the implementation of the CVE Program but are now housed in the Department of Justice.

The CVE Team has acted as a central agency, but also held operational responsibilities similar to a line agency. The CVE team worked to both the Premier and the Minister for Counter Terrorism, with associated portfolio responsibility for some of the projects funded under the CVE Program. The new form of these arrangements following the MoG changes is still being finalised.

The CVE Team coordinates the relevant work across the NSW Government, in close consultation with the federal and jurisdictional governments, communities and the non-government sector.[21] Line agencies also collaborate with other NSW line agencies and their jurisdictional counterparts as needed, separate from the CVE Team coordination function.

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[21] Justice and Community Safety Branch (2018). *Countering Violent Extremism Policy and Programs*. Sydney: NSW Government.

FIGURE 2.1   CVE PROGRAM – PROGRAM LOGIC

ULTIMATE OUTCOMES

NSW residents face a lower risk of violent extremism, measurable at two levels:

Reduced likelihood of violent extremism in NSW, through effective early intervention.

Reduced consequences in NSW of violent extremism, through effective preparedness and response.

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

At-risk individuals in NSW are diverted away from violent extremism.

Violent extremists in NSW are disengaged from violent extremism.

Community resilience in NSW, in prevention of and response to violent extremism, is improved.

ENABLING OUTCOMES

Drivers of violent extremism in NSW, including both push and pull factors, are mitigated.

Protective factors against violent extremism in NSW communities are strengthened.

Capacity in NSW Government to respond to violent extremism is improved.

Capacity in communities and the non-government sector to respond to violent extremism is improved.

Communications which challenge violent extremism, promote cohesion and support positive narratives are more prominent in communities.

NSW Government communities, service providers and experts have a better awareness and understanding of violent extremism, its risks and optimal approaches to tackling it.

SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET, NSW CVE EVALUATION APPROACH, 2017.

The CVE team provides the conduit between NSW agencies responsible for implementing funded projects and the following CVE governance structures:

— **NSW State Counter Terrorism Committee** – chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Communities and Justice, the State Counter Terrorism Committee has broad responsibilities that include maintaining the NSW Counter Terrorism Plan which contains the operational arrangements and agency responsibilities regarding CT.

— **NSW Countering Violent Extremism Steering Committee** – responsible for providing whole-of-government strategic guidance and oversight on countering violent extremism in NSW. It consists of members from the following Departments and agencies: Communities and Justice, Multicultural NSW, NSW Police Force, Education, Corrective Services, Health and Treasury.[22]

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[22] NSW Countering Violent Extremism Steering Committee (2016). *Terms of Reference*. Sydney: NSW Government.

2.2 CVE Program activities

Projects

The CVE Program has funded a suite of initiatives, as summarised in Figure 2.2. In the majority of cases, funding is administered through the CVE Team – however, some funding associated with the CVE Program has been allocated to line agencies, with individual organisations responsible for implementing specific projects.[23] The projects have different objectives, including general resilience-building, capability building, targeted interventions to divert vulnerable individuals, and specific interventions seeking to disengage those known to be associated with extremism or terrorism.[24] A detailed analysis of each of the funded projects is provided in Chapter 3.

FIGURE 2.2   OVERVIEW OF THE CVE PROGRAM - PROJECTS
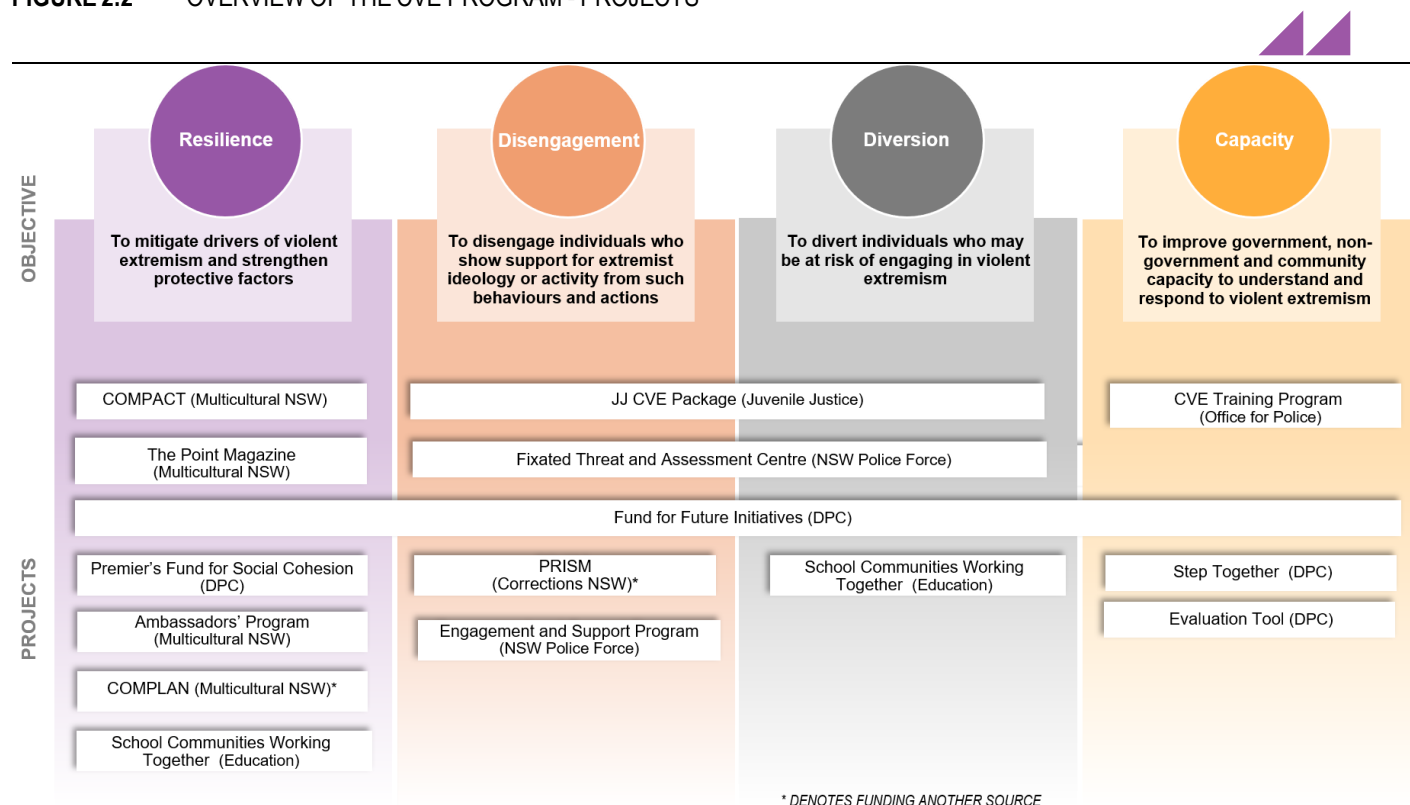
SOURCE: ACIL ALLEN CONSULTING, 2019.

Each project focuses on a specific cohort and seeks to achieve related, but generally separate, outcomes. Most of the projects at the intervention-end focus on individuals who are at risk of engagement with the justice system or have had prior interactions. Resilience and awareness-building projects have taken a broader community-based approach with wide reach across NSW.

Projects have varying degrees of interaction. For example, the Engagement and Support Program will often interact with organisations engaged in COMPACT to help access community services for individuals. Similarly, some of the capability building delivered through the CVE Training Program has involved the workforce engaged in other CVE-related work.

Over time, it is expected that new projects will be developed based on an improved understanding of CVE. This process is facilitated through the Fund for Future initiatives, which ensures that the CVE Program can adapt to best practice and learnings from existing projects.

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[23] NSW Government (n.d.). *NSW CVE Evaluation Approach - Attachment A - Theory of Change*. NSW: NSW Government.
[24] The definitions of objectives used here are aligned to Harris-Hogan, S, Barrelle, K and Zammit, A. 2015. *What is countering violent extremism? Exploring CVE policy and practice in Australia*. Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression.

Interface with Commonwealth activities

The CVE Program encompasses activities and efforts that are funded separately (generally through the Commonwealth). These activities form part of the whole-of-government response and include significant interagency cooperation through the projects in the CVE Program. The effectiveness or implementation of Commonwealth funded activities are outside the scope of this evaluation; they have been included to provide a comprehensive picture of the activities in NSW.

The CVE Team has undertaken significant engagement through intergovernmental mechanisms with the Commonwealth, including ANZCTC, NSW Countering Violent Extremism Steering Committee (CVESC) and other working groups, to drive outcomes for NSW. This engagement is in scope for the evaluation as it has significantly influenced NSW's ability to guide and direct the agenda at a Commonwealth level. This has been an important asset in achieving the success of the CVE Program's objectives given the ongoing challenges federal CVE initiatives have experienced.

Community engagement

The CVE Team has engaged deeply with the community to build trust and relationships. This has been an important enabler as the international experience shows the challenges of gaining community buy-in to CVE programs which can be both controversial and sensitive.

Community engagement has been supported through a dedicated Community Engagement Manager who has helped establish connections with community leaders, run community roundtables, ensure government representation at community events, and form linkages with international researchers. The NSW Government objectives have been clearly communicated and community concerns addressed through these interactions. The impact of this engagement can be felt across projects, with the trust and confidence established through the community supporting implementation at a local level.

Capability building

The CVE Team has undertaken capability building and information sharing through research, evaluation support and engagement with international subject matter experts. These activities have provided an important foundation for whole-of-government discussions on CVE, the development of agreed approaches, and support for information sharing across line agencies. In turn, this has helped to share lessons learned and develop strategies to overcome common challenges.

2.3 Program outputs

Program-level outputs can be categorised as follows:

— whole-of-government outputs, that are intended to benefit all NSW agencies

— organisational outputs, generally internally-focused products

— community outputs, reflective of the community's engagement.

2.3.1 Whole-of-government outputs

The CVE Program has produced a number of key documents to assist the whole-of-government response, namely:

— The NSW Counter Terrorism Strategy. While not a direct product of a CVE Program, the Strategy was developed through the CVE Team in close consultation with CVESC to assist in communicating the objectives and direction of the NSW Government's approach to both CVE and CT, noting that the two areas are 'distinct but complementary'.

— The NSW Strategic Communications Plan, which was designed to provide a unifying communications approach across government agencies. This narrative was developed through extensive consultation with community, academics and government stakeholders.

— The NSW Strategy for managing individuals returning from foreign conflict zones, which guides the NSW Government's response to returned foreign fighters.

— The NSW CVE Evaluation Approach, which outlines the overarching objectives, key research questions and agreed evaluation approach for CVE related programs.

2.3.2 Organisational outputs

Five of the eight line agencies consulted reported that the CVE Program had led them to develop or update organisational policies and procedures to reflect:

— a contemporary understanding of the nature of CVE

— the relationship to the organisation's mandate

— and roles and responsibilities from prevention through to response.

In some areas, such as education and justice, legislative changes had been enacted to support the management of risk and sharing of information.

All line agencies had either facilitated, or participated in, capability building activities related to CVE. This ranged from general awareness training through to more specialised educational activities for specific cohorts within organisations. As an emerging policy area, the introduction of the CVE Program required significant knowledge and skill uplift across policy makers, practitioners and frontline workers such as police, juvenile justice and corrections officers.

An additional output for most line agencies involved in the CVE Program relates to evaluation. Independent evaluations were facilitated for five of the funded projects while internal evaluations were undertaken for two. The data from these contain valuable learnings for future work in this area, particularly in informing future program design.

2.3.3 Community outputs

The CVE Program has involved substantial collaborative activity, including co-design processes and community workshops. Key examples include COMPACT, Step Together, and the CVE Strategic Communications Plan, which have produced a high level of community engagement.

There has been a high level of community participation in project activities, with the CVE Program reaching over 1.5 million participants collectively. This engagement is a sign of community trust and the strength of relationships between line agencies and the communities they service. Again, COMPACT provides the strongest example of this work. Even the more individually-focused interventions (such as PRISM and Engagement and Support Program) show significant signs of success in garnering engagement from cohorts who traditionally have low levels of participation in government-led or funded activities.

2.4 Summary

The CVE Program encompasses a broad range of efforts to form a whole-of-government approach. Projects span specific interventions for those known to be involved in extremism, targeted interventions for vulnerable individuals, capability building activities, and resilience and cohesion building. Implementation of the CVE Program is well progressed, with most of the projects now demonstrating maturity through formalised objectives, policies and procedures.

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3

PROJECTS – IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

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This Chapter provides the project-level analysis of activities funded under, or related to, the CVE Program, including activities, outputs and key learnings to date.

3.1 Overview

The project-level analysis drew on:

— five formal, independent evaluations (addressing both process and outcomes)

— two internal evaluations (largely focused on process)

— eight project summaries (process focused).

There was significant variability in the data collected across the projects. Some evaluations included a rigorous method with multiple data collection points to triangulate findings, while others used a simpler and largely qualitative approach. This affected the assessment of impact for some projects, which are identified below.

The above information was augmented by qualitative information collected through consultations which included discussions with the eight line agencies, four key partners (at both a State and Commonwealth levels), three internal Department areas, and a group interview with academics. Two further group discussions were held with the CVE and CT teams. These consultations provided valuable data on implementation and outcomes observed to date.

3.1.1   Implementation status

The CVE Program commenced in November 2015 with the first phase of programming concluding in 2020. Further programming will consider the findings of the first phase. It is anticipated that program activities will be adapted to reflect the evolving evidence base and developing context.

Projects were implemented at different times, depending on the existing capability, resources and infrastructure within the responsible agency. A standard set of definitions were applied to measure implementation progress:

— *planning* refers to projects that are in the development and/or consultation phase, but have not yet commenced implementation

— *mid-way* refers to projects that have commenced implementation but may still be undergoing adaptation as time progresses and understanding improves

— *mature* refers to projects that are well-established, with supporting systems and structures, and were not undergoing significant change at the time of the evaluation

— *complete* refers to projects that have reached the end of their funding period or have had their funding merged into other projects.

3.2 Ambassadors' Program

TABLE 3.1   AMBASSADORS' PROGRAM – QUICK REFERENCE

Lead agency	Multicultural NSW.
Funding source	NSW - $330,000 (over two years).
Lifecycle stage	Completed.
Evaluation	Phase 1 was supported by an external evaluation that collected data from February to April 2017, including student surveys, interviews with program leaders, and feedback on program sessions. Quantitative data were not available in the evaluation report.
	Phase 2 was not formally evaluated as remaining funding was diverted to COMPACT. No outcome data was collected.

Description

The Ambassadors' program involved high-profile community leaders working with students in schools and the community to promote social cohesion and cultural harmony, and to provide advice on the risks of violent extremism and the importance of community cohesion.

Activities and outputs

The Ambassadors' Program reached over 130,000 people through the Sydney Thunder Leadership Program and Remove Hate from the Debate campaign

Phase 1 commenced in July 2016 with the *Sydney Thunder Leadership Program*. This program used the language of cricket to positively impact the lives of recent migrants and refugees, their non-migrant peers, and their communities. The program was delivered in 39 schools across Western Sydney, reaching 22 per cent of all relevant schools.

Phase 2 commenced in September 2017 with the *Remove Hate from the Debate* social media campaign. This campaign aimed to build community resilience by empowering a team of community influencers and role models to lead communities in NSW with a strong, united, public response to extremist hate, fear, division and conflict. The campaign reached over 130,000 people and included engagement from the NSW Police Force, the Office of the E-Safety Commissioner, the National Rugby League (NRL), Google, and Police Citizens Youth Clubs (PCYC) NSW.

Evidence of impact

The evaluation of the *Sydney Thunder Leadership Program* showed 'limited empirical evidence of success…qualitative survey findings and other sources indicated that the vast majority of students found the program inspiring.'[25]

Learnings

The flexibility of the *Sydney Thunder Leadership Program* was important in allowing the program to deliver consistent content across differing contexts. This design feature was a key enabler for the delivery of community-based programs that need to operate in diverse environments and should be embedded in any similar projects in future.

The *Sydney Thunder Leadership Program* lacked established objectives and would have benefitted from clearer planning. The development of a project logic that outlines activities, intended audience and intended outcomes would have ensured targeted and coherent efforts across schools.

In turn, this would support appropriate onboarding of staff involved in delivering the program. Implementation highlighted the necessity of appropriate staff expertise and capability when delivering programs. Community-based programs should include an induction process for staff that clearly outlines the objectives of the project and the focus of activities.

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[25] Australian Catholic University. 2017. Sydney Thunder Leadership Program Evaluation – Summary & Recommendations. Pg 1.

An important learning from the *Sydney Thunder Leadership Program* relates to school-based programs. There is a wealth of programming available to schools regarding inclusion and, more broadly, student wellbeing. School-based programs should ensure they are aligned with the objectives of the curricula and provide a clear value-add to schools to help overcome the challenge of competing priorities.

Finally, it is important to embed evaluation in the delivery of community-based programs. While the *Sydney Thunder Leadership Program* gathered some data, the evaluation could be enhanced through pre- and post- surveys and gathering feedback from diverse audiences (for example, both students and school staff). This would support an assessment of the relevance and effectiveness of project activities.

BOX 3.1   AMBASSADORS' PROGRAM – KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The *Sydney Thunder Leadership Program* is a valuable model for school community-based programs. In particular, the flexibility of the content and delivery demonstrated the viability of school-based programs in reaching diverse cohorts.

The Program would benefit from strengthened planning. Future community-based programs should be supported by a program logic or theory of change to ensure that there is a coherent set of objectives and supporting activities. This will keep project activities focused.

While there is value in the community-based model, further funding for this activity is not recommended.

3.3 COMPACT

TABLE 3.2 COMPACT – QUICK REFERENCE

Lead agency	Multicultural NSW.
Funding source	NSW – $9.2 million over 4 years ($5.2m from the CVE package).
Lifecycle stage	Mature – established in 2016, with 12 local projects underway, most to be completed by end 2019. New projects will commence in 2019, due to end at the end of 2020, bringing the total to 24 projects
Evaluation	A mid-term external evaluation was undertaken including stakeholder interviews, focus groups with Alliance partners, and pre and post surveys. This covered both process and impact. This evaluation covered the period 2016 to 2018.

Description

The primary aim of COMPACT is to safeguard Australia's peaceful and harmonious way of life by adopting a community resilience-building approach to countering hate, violence, fear and division in society.

COMPACT provides grant funding to 12 locally based projects focused on engaging with young people. Projects funded under COMPACT were selected based on their capacity to address one or more of the following project-level objectives:

— To build on the strengths of our multicultural society to protect young people from hateful and violent extremist influences.

— To build community resilience to the impacts of extremist hate and violence on social cohesion and community harmony.

— To address and resolve issues and tensions in NSW arising from current overseas conflicts.

The intended outcomes of COMPACT are an increased level of respect for others, an increased sense of identity, self-worth and belonging, and greater participation in community and civic life among young people.

Activities and outputs

COMPACT has reached over 20,000 people, including engagement in 130 schools as well as youth and community centres in NSW

Through COMPACT, 12 lead organisations have been funded to deliver community-based programs and an additional 20 partner organisations engaged to assist with implementation. Programs included:

— 5 B4 5 – Youth Leadership Program

— Celebrating Stories of Strength – creative content development

— Community Action for Preventing Extremism – training of youth leaders to counter far-right narratives

— Community Resilience Engagement Solutions Together – in-school programs to strengthen multicultural society

— CONNECT UP! Youth Against Violence and Racism – youth leadership, conflict resolution and anti-violence training

— IQRA: Educating Young Australian Muslims – education programs related to contextualising Islamic principles

— In League in Harmony – sport-based leadership program

— Moving Towards Middle Ground – an online portal to access counter-narratives, global citizen programs,

— The Sydney 2020 Youth Challenge – youth councils and leadership programs

— Young Humanitarians Project – youth mentoring and training for community leadership and volunteering

— Youth Led Social Cohesion – school-based Global Citizens program

— Youth Off the Streets Case Management – youth re-engagement activities.

The COMPACT Alliance members include the funded organisations and additional stakeholders. The COMPACT Alliance has helped build a sustainable network of community resilience building practitioners to develop best practice in community resilience-building initiatives through shared learning.

Evidence of impact

COMPACT demonstrated strong evidence of impact on social cohesion and resilience within NSW communities. Key outcomes observed through the COMPACT funded projects include:

COMPACT contributed to greater respect, improved engagement in learning and greater community participation

— the creation of spaces free of judgement enabled participant engagement - 53 per cent of participants agreed they could discuss issues without being judged

— generating greater respect for others - 66 per cent of participants agreed they had a greater appreciation for different perspectives and ways of life

— greater engagement with the community - 52 per cent of participants agreed they were more confident in their ability to speak up about issues that matter among friends and family

— empowering young people to have a voice - 54 per cent of participants agreed they have a say within their community on important issues; 59 per cent of participants agreed they have the potential to positively influence their community's future

— greater social connection for some young people – 43 per cent of participants met new people during the program

— greater engagement in future education opportunities – 59 per cent of participants know more about education, training and work opportunities.[26]

The COMPACT Alliance has contributed to improved knowledge sharing, increased partnerships to support projects, and cross-sector engagement between government and community organisations.

Learnings

The flexible design of COMPACT has supported progress toward the achievement of objectives. This has allowed COMPACT to be responsive at both the overarching program level and within the individual funded projects. The evaluation found that this adaptiveness was a critical success factor for the achievement of participant outcomes, by allowing organisations to responsively tweak their project design.

Other useful design features included co-design processes and intensive community consultation, which have been essential for the success of community-led programs. This close engagement has helped to address some of the challenges of CVE funding and the potential impact on community perception.

Multi-year funding assisted in maintaining institutional knowledge and maximising program momentum. However, the process and timelines need to recognise the amount of time required to effectively plan and implement community-led projects (particularly when applying co-design processes).

Though COMPACT shows positive contributions to outcomes, there are opportunities to improve the collective measurement of impact. Measuring outcomes is challenging due to the localised nature of projects, their small scale, the short time frame between inception and evaluation, and methodological difficulties in capturing changes to participants' sense of identity or belonging. However, the development of clear project logics, evaluation frameworks and data collection templates to be embedded at the local level could assist.

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[26] Urbis. 2018. Evaluation of the COMPACT Program.

BOX 3.2   COMPACT – KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

COMPACT has a strong program design, supported by a program logic and aligned to the contemporary evidence base on building community resilience and social cohesion. The flexibility, multi-year funding model and partnership approach (including the COMPACT Alliance) are all effective features that should be maintained.

COMPACT has established processes, systems and infrastructure that are well-positioned to continue to support the delivery of community-based programs that will contribute to the achievement of the CVE Program's objectives.

The current funding allocation for COMPACT should be expanded, with a continued focus on community-based programs and co-design processes. In particular, COMPACT should explore the possibility of supporting community-based programs that address the gaps in the CVE Program (for example, right wing perspectives).

Funded projects should be supported by a project logic that links activities to the objectives of COMPACT and the CVE Program. This should be supported by local data collection embedded within the funded project activities to assist sustainable and contextual evaluation.

3.4 NSW Community Resilience and Response Plan (COMPLAN)

TABLE 3.3   COMPLAN – QUICK REFERENCE

Lead agency	Multicultural NSW.
Funding source	NSW – value not available.
Lifecycle stage	Mature - Commenced in 2017.
Evaluation	N/A.

Description

NSW Community Resilience and Response Plan (COMPLAN) aims to maintain and promote community harmony, build community resilience, and better equip the State to prevent, limit, withstand, respond to, and recover from situations that threaten community harmony in NSW.

Multicultural NSW provides an integrated response to assist in resolving issues associated with cultural diversity that are identified by a range of agencies through their community networks. This involves a multi-agency response, drawing on diverse capabilities, in a coordinated, whole-of-government manner. COMPLAN addresses a range of potential risks to community harmony, including terrorism-related incidents.

COMPLAN details the preparedness, prevention, response and recovery arrangements for a coordinated approach by NSW Government agencies and local government partners to managing and mitigating community harmony risks and improving conditions for community harmony within NSW. In the event of a terrorist incident, COMPLAN arrangements support state emergency management and counter terrorism recovery, including the State Emergency Management Plan and the NSW Counter Terrorism Plan.

The objectives of COMPLAN are:
— to clearly define roles and responsibilities of NSW Government agencies and local government partners in managing and mitigating community harmony risks across all plan phases (PPRR)
— to facilitate coordination, cooperation and communication across NSW Government agencies and community stakeholders throughout each plan phase (PPRR)
— to identify resources available to agencies and communities to assist in implementing the COMPLAN and meeting community harmony objectives
— to specify protocols and procedures to activate, implement, evaluate and amend the plan
— to establish the COMPLAN Committee and to detail the management arrangements adopted by the COMPLAN Committee.

Evidence of impact

On 15 March 2018, a COMPLAN notification was issued to agencies in response to the far-right extremist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand. Members' agencies shared information and resources over the weekend of 16-17 March 2019, and on 18 March 2019, the COMPLAN Committee convened an out-of-session meeting in response to the attack. This was the first time COMPLAN Response arrangements had been activated. As this was in response to an overseas terrorist incident, formal state emergency management recovery arrangements were not activated, so it was appropriate that the Committee came together under COMPLAN to share information and coordinate agency responses. The Committee discussed the impacts of the Christchurch attack on communities in NSW and actions taken by agencies since the attack. The Committee identified a range of resources that may assist communities and agencies, including information and advice, referral points and messaging. Resources and messages were collated and disseminated to agencies.

Learnings

A 2015-16 review showed the need to focus on:

— prevention and preparedness measures

— increasing the operational component of the plan

— the need to recognise the plan addresses a range of potential risks to community harmony

— including better coordination between agencies' community engagement activities

— leveraging social media networks

— aligning with new cluster and agency structures and supporting the existing State Emergency and Rescue Management Plan

— regularly testing the plan, once endorsed

— developing a process to assess plan outputs.

These review findings were adopted in the revised COMPLAN and endorsed in 2017.

BOX 3.3   COMPLAN – KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

COMPLAN forms an important part of NSW Government's ability to effectively managing and mitigating community harmony risks and improving conditions for community harmony.

3.5 CVE Training Program

TABLE 3.4   CVE TRAINING PROGRAM – QUICK REFERENCE

Lead agency	Office for Police.
Funding source	NSW– $1.8 million (over four years).
Lifecycle stage	Mature – activities to conclude in 2019-20.
Evaluation	Internal process evaluation undertaken by the Office for Police. No outcome evaluation undertaken.

Description

The aim of the CVE Training Program is to provide professional learning for front line NSW Government workers, such as teachers and Family and Community Services officers, and to establish broader capacity building programs for community organisations to ensure they are well placed to respond to the needs of vulnerable individuals and families.

The CVE Training Program intends to support the understanding and awareness of those working in Government and in the community to better enable them to "see, say and support" those requiring assistance, and enhance programs and policies that could achieve these outcomes.

The key objectives of the CVE Training Program are to:
— increase general CVE awareness in NSW Government and non-government agencies and community.
— increase capacity of government services staff involved in the Engagement and Support Program.
— enhance capacity and knowledge of services and staff involved in CVE work.

Activities and outputs

The CVE Training Program reached over 550 people across government, non-government organisations and local councils through 24 training activities

The CVE Training Program produced significant outputs, including the conduct of a training needs analysis of key government departments, development and sourcing of training packages to meet different agency needs (including internal and consultancy services), and development and sourcing resources and literature for training purposes.

The CVE Training Program delivered 24 individual capability building activities that spanned:
— general CVE awareness training delivered to government, non-government organisations and communities
— specialist capability training provided to CVE-involved practitioners
— capability training delivered for Engagement and Support Program (ESP) staff.

In addition, the CVE Training Program included the development of a Professional Library of CVE resources and the purchase of 5,500 licenses for e-learning modules.

These capability building activities for government reached over 550 participants, including government staff across all line agencies, local government employees, non-government organisations and young people.[27]

The CVE Training Package also helped to build the COMPACT Alliance as a CVE Community of Practice, contributing to improved capability.

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[27] Office for Police. 2019. CVE Training: Evaluation of the Program covering the period 1 July 2016 to 30 December 2018.

Evidence of impact

Evidence of impact is relatively limited as no formal outcomes data were collected by the CVE Training Package.

The CVE Training Program has contributed to improved CVE-related capability in government, non-government and community sectors

Qualitative feedback indicates that the CVE Training Program has improved awareness of NSW Government's CVE-related efforts across government, non-government and community. This has resulted in:

— increased sharing of expertise across line agencies

— increased likelihood of referrals and reporting from line agencies, in turn generating opportunities for diversion and prevention

— increased opportunities for small agencies to access CVE-related training and build capability

— improved local connections between service providers and line agencies.

Learnings

The CVE Training Program highlighted the demand for tailored or bespoke training products that explore the role and requirement of individual line agencies in relation to CVE, rather than generic programs that apply across government. The flexibility of the program design allowed for a range of products to be delivered to a range of agencies, and for continual adaptation to changing threats. This was supported by a multi-agency collaborative approach, which has assisted in sharing expertise across agencies.

There is varied appetite for CVE training, with the market reaching saturation. There has been an increase in the amount of CVE-related training available with agencies reluctant to deliver additional learning. There is a varied level of understanding of the relevance of CVE Training to different agencies, with some staff not seeing the material as relevant to their organisation or role.

Close working relationships and consultation are needed to avoid duplication of efforts and interactions across teams or contacts, which occurred in most key agencies. Some participants identified 'subject fatigue', expressing the need for better coordination.

The funding model also presented obstacles, with the bulk of the allocation provided in the initial two years. This aligned with a period of exploration and planning, with delivery of training occurring in the latter two years. This resulted in an underspend which was returned to DPC for use in other NSW CVE Program activities.

BOX 3.4   CVE TRAINING PROGRAM – KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The flexibility of the CVE Training Program was essential in enabling training activities to respond to the different levels of capability across NSW, contributing to enhanced capability. However, the training market is approaching saturation and there remain ongoing obstacles to building line agencies' understanding of their roles in relation to CVE.

General CVE training for line agencies should be mainstreamed or transitioned to business as usual in recognition of the ongoing responsibilities for CVE.

A pool of funding should be allocated to the coordination function for CVE in NSW. This funding should be able to be used flexibly either for whole-of-government or individual line agency initiatives. Funding should be allocated to capability building efforts that address new or emerging risks and improvements in practice.

This would help ensure that any training offered does not duplicate other internal line agency programs or generic material (such as cultural competence programs).

Training activities should embed formal evaluation processes, including reporting on outcomes through pre- and post- surveys of training participants and from agencies more broadly on the relevance to their staff.

3.6 Engagement and Support Program

TABLE 3.5   ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT PROGRAM – QUICK REFERENCE

Lead agency	NSW Police Force (Operations) and Department of Communities and Justice (Governance).
Funding source	Combined Commonwealth and in-kind support from NSW.
Lifecycle stage	Mature – commenced in 2015/16.
Evaluation	Multiple external evaluations undertaken, covering both process and outcomes, including a rapid evidence assessment, and interviews with those delivering the program. Limited information on outcomes was available due to security considerations.

Description

The Engagement and Support Program (ESP) is a voluntary program seeking to reduce the risk of violent extremism incidents occurring in NSW. This is supported through referral and diversion processes aimed at assisting individuals to disengage from negative influences. ESP is part of the national Living Safe Together Program.

The key objectives of the ESP are to:

— assess referred individuals to determine their suitability for the program

— identify and recommend a management plan for risks associated with an individual's participation in the ESP

— successfully engage individuals to participate in the program

— develop, implement and oversight Participant Support Plans to ensure a holistic and multi-agency approach to providing opportunities to engage in positive pathways.

— provide case management support to program participants to ensure they remain effectively engaged in services and regularly review cases to maintain relevance and appropriateness

— implement an evaluation framework to ensure the program is being reviewed and learnings incorporated regularly.

Activities and outputs

The key outputs of the ESP include:

The ESP has engaged a diverse cohort of difficult-to-reach participants to provide individual support

— development of materials to advertise the program among agencies who may be able to make referrals (including information sheets, pamphlets and presentations)

— steady number of referrals to program, most of which have originated from law enforcement agencies[28] and were referred due to religious ideology aligned with extremism or far-right perspectives

— participants successfully engaged onto ESP through NSW Police Force (NSWPF) officers who perform case management functions

— development of case plans for ESP participants to guide individual support

— interventions ranging from life skills, mental health referrals, community engagement, and employment or education activities.[29]

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[28] Quantitative data on number of referrals, participants or services provided were not available to the evaluator.
[29] Australian Institute of Criminology. 2018. Evaluation of the Living Safe Together Intervention Program: New South Wales site report.

Evidence of impact

Due to the security and privacy considerations associated with the ESP, there are limited data available on the impact of the intervention program on ESP participants.

Qualitative feedback from ESP Case Managers provides some preliminary evidence about the changes that have occurred in the lives of (primarily young) people who have engaged in the intervention program, including:

— improved access to mental health services, improved confidence and self-worth, the formation of prosocial relationships with peers, enhanced social and independent living skills, increased employability and improved access to various government and non-government support services

— positive signs of attitudinal change among young people with extremist views.

In addition, the ESP has improved capability within NSW Government and interagency collaboration. For example, Intervention Coordinators have developed expertise and knowledge which has enabled them to reach and support clients.

Learnings

The ESP has been implemented as a wrap-around support model that has effectively engaged difficult to reach participants. While not formalised in an intervention framework, the design of the ESP aligns with the evidence base for similar high-risk cohorts. This is supported by the involvement of key line agencies in assessing and supporting ESP participants, which promotes a holistic approach.

There are clear synergies between the ESP and other CVE Program activities, such as COMPACT, PRISM and the Juvenile Justice CVE Program. These present opportunities for connections to be made with services and partners to support participants as they move through the community, be it engagement with law enforcement or community programs.

Programs designed to provide individual support require established case management expertise and infrastructure (for example, clinical supervision). It may be useful to consider case management expertise, training and supervision in the delivery of the ESP. There are opportunities to leverage the expertise in line agencies for whom case management is a core function, such as Community Corrections, Youth Justice and Family and Community Services. This would ensure that interventions were undertaken in line with contemporary good practice which are not unique to the CVE context (for example, motivational interviewing).

A further challenge in the ESP is the referral threshold. Line agencies operate under different frameworks of vulnerability, risk and threat assessment with associated definitions of early intervention. The threshold is currently led primarily by the NSWPF perspective, which results in other line agencies perceiving the threshold as too high and thus not referring potential participants.

BOX 3.5   ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT PROGRAM – KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ESP has filled an important gap in providing intensive individualised support to at-risk or radicalised individuals. There is a clear need for these supports to be provided in a sustainable and appropriate way to effectively mitigate risk in NSW.

There are opportunities to enhance the case management practices within the ESP to support the achievement of objectives. Reviewing current case management practices and approaches would assist in clarifying objectives, ensuring best practice and improving outcomes.

3.7 Evaluation Tool

TABLE 3.6   EVALUATION TOOL – QUICK REFERENCE

Lead agency	DPC.
Funding source	Commonwealth - $200,000.
Lifecycle stage	Planning - the project commenced in November 2018 and will be completed by August 2019.
Evaluation	No evaluation undertaken – too early to assess.

Description

The Evaluation Tool is aimed at program designers and evaluators and will contain a repository of CVE evaluations from Australian jurisdictions and overseas. Users will be able to identify relevant outcomes, activities and indicators to inform program design and evaluation plans.

The objective of the Tool is to increase capability across the sector to design, implement and evaluate CVE policies, programs and other initiatives and support CVE practitioners to align programs with both the Australian and NSW CVE outcomes frameworks.

Activities and outputs

The Evaluation Tool is still under development. The tool will be tested in NSW initially, and include outcomes from the NSW Evaluation Framework and then be available to all jurisdictions. Data to populate the tool will be actively encouraged from all jurisdictions through CVESC.

Evidence of impact

As the Tool is still under development, there is no evidence of impact. However, the production of the Evaluation Tool has contributed to building evaluative CVE capability within the NSW Government by developing an understanding of indicators, measurement and the state of the evidence base.

Learnings

While the project is still in the early stages of implementation, key learnings to date include:

— challenges in encouraging line agencies to contribute information to the repository, acknowledging obstacles to information sharing and confidentiality requirements

— difficulty in measuring outcomes, given the lack of agreed consensus on indicators and measurement approaches.

BOX 3.6   EVALUATION TOOL – KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Evaluation Tool provides an evidence-based approach to building evaluative capability in relation to CVE and will provide a practical resource to assist line agencies and others to contribute to broader knowledge on what works.

Future funding under the CVE Training Program could be allocated to implementing the Evaluation Tool by building capability within line agencies. This would also encourage line agencies to contribute data through the CVE Program governance structures.

3.8 Fund for Future Initiatives

TABLE 3.7   FUND FOR FUTURE INITIATIVES – QUICK REFERENCE

Lead agency	DPC.
Funding source	NSW - $2,000,000 over four years.
Lifecycle stage	Mature.
Evaluation	No evaluation undertaken – too early to assess.

Description

The Fund for Future initiatives is a separate budget allocation within the CVE Program to ensure that the program adapts to best practice in this new field. The Fund has been used to resource projects that are identified in response to changing dynamics, emerging issues and good practice research on addressing CVE.

Key activities and outputs

The Fund for Future Initiatives is designed to be responsive to the changing political and environmental context. As such, there are no pre-determined activities or outputs.

The Department has been running workshops across NSW to identify emerging needs, in order to develop a running list of new projects and proposals. These projects are approved on a rolling basis through NSW CVESC and have demonstrated the ability to produce a responsive system.

Examples of projects funded through the Fund:
— NSW Government CVE Strategic Communications Approach – to support cohesive, consistent, whole-of-government communications on CVE which have been used in diverse government communications following their endorsement, and have been shared with other jurisdictions to support alignment across Australian governments
— Fixated Threats Case Management System
— the COMPACT evaluation (referenced above)
— Victims of Terrorism support package – a community-based resilience program that includes access to counselling, community education, and development of guidance material to help support victims or terrorism and strengthen community resilience
— Community roundtables – engagement with the Muslim community to build trust, understand barriers to CVE programs and explore potential opportunities to improve the NSW Government's approach.

Evidence of impact

Qualitative feedback from Departmental staff indicated that the Fund has played a significant role in the responsivity and iterative nature of the CVE Program. It is anticipated that the impact will become more visible over time; however, there are early signs of impact. For example, The CVE Strategic Communications project has improved the language of government, creating more coordinated, positive messaging across agencies and elected representatives. The key messages have been used on several occasions since they were endorsed, including following the Christchurch terror attack in March 2019.

Community responses indicate an appreciation for opportunities to speak directly to government about issues of importance to their communities, influence policy thinking and work directly with government on projects to influence government messaging and programming. This is a significant outcome, given the known challenges in engaging communities in CVE programs.

Learnings

The Fund for Future Initiatives highlights the value, and benefit, of an isolated funding stream to respond to emerging issues. As a new area of policy and a dynamic context, this funding approach allows government to be responsive to changing requirements without compromising the overall objectives and design of the CVE Program.

The process used to select, design and implement the funded projects which leveraged a collaborative governance structure through CVESC has supported collection of promising evidence. Collaboration is essential in supporting whole-of-government responses. Line agencies have their own mandate and organisational priorities related to CVE. Formalising a collaborative governance framework that recognises different directions and establishes a prioritisation process is important in ensuring engagement and buy-in.

An isolated funding stream may present risks in terms of unallocated funding within a given funding cycle; however, the benefit provided to government in terms of responsivity outweighs the concerns of such a model.

BOX 3.7   FUND FOR FUTURE INITIATIVES – KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Fund for Future Initiatives is an innovative project that enables the NSW Government to be responsive to the changing dynamics of CVE, including addressing emerging issues and adapting to community requirements.

The collaborative approach to governance and prioritisation is a key asset in developing shared ownership and buy-in to whole-of-government responses. Future governance should continue to leverage CVESC while establishing a prioritisation process that considers alignment with CVE Program objectives, the collective need across whole-of-government and potential risks associated with emerging issues.

The current level of funding is sufficient.

3.9 Juvenile Justice CVE Package

TABLE 3.8   JUVENILE JUSTICE CVE PACKAGE – QUICK REFERENCE

Lead agency	Juvenile Justice
Funding source	NSW - $2 million over two years.
Lifecycle stage	Mid-way – implementation commenced in 2017.
Evaluation	No evaluation undertaken to date.

Description

The Juvenile Justice (JJ) CVE Package includes a multi-faceted approach to building CVE capability. Funding was provided to establish a specialised CVE team, a National Security Interest (NSI) designation, specific interventions as well as better information-sharing arrangements to ensure a coordinated response and effective management of the risk of violent extremism within Juvenile Justice NSW (JJNSW). JJNSW is one of the few Western jurisdictions working with juvenile terrorism related offenders.

The JJ CVE Package has three primary objectives:

— rehabilitate and reintegrate juveniles charged with terrorism related offences

— support diversion of individuals who are vulnerable to violent extremism

— develop resilience to all forms of violent extremism across the division.

In order to achieve these objectives, four priority areas were identified: 1. Assessment and Intervention; 2. Education and Training; 3. Security and Intelligence; and 4. Collaboration and Coordination.

Activities and outputs

The JJ CVE Package has produced the following:

The JJ CVE Package has established infrastructure and resources to support sustainable CVE capability, with activities reaching over 1200 staff

— recruitment of an expert, multi-disciplinary team *(complete, six staff recruited)*

— development and endorsement of a CVE Strategy *(endorsed in February 2018)*

— establishment of a governance structure – an Operational Review Committee *(established in 2018)*

— conduct of effective assessments and targeted intervention strategies to disengage or divert offenders from violent extremism *(ongoing, eight completed as at February 2019)*

— recruitment of ideological advisors *(ongoing)*

— delivery of education and training for Juvenile Justice staff, including the:

  – Radicalisation and Extremism Awareness Program (REAP) *(reached 1200 staff)*
  – Far-Right Extremism Training, Cultural Competency Training *(to be rolled out to all staff)*
  – Islamic Awareness Training *(attended by six staff)*
  – Resilience to Hate and Extremism Workshops *(piloted with 96 young people)*
  – development of a best-practice Caseworker Guide *(underway)*[30]

— formation of a security and intelligence designation to facilitate effective management of terrorism related offenders by Juvenile Justice NSW.[31]

Evidence of impact

Evidence of impact is limited as it is too early to collect formal outcomes data on the JJ CVE Package. Impact is expected to increase over time as the program matures.

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[30] These outputs are also related to the CVE Training Program.
[31] CVE Juvenile Justice. 2019. Project Summary Report.

To date, outcomes primarily relate to REAP. Post-surveys reported:

— a greater awareness of violent extremism

— improved ability to identify individuals at risk of radicalisation

— the training was relevant to their needs and that the facilitators were well prepared, clear and understandable.[32]

Observational data indicates an improvement in the quality of case notes.

Qualitative feedback indicates that the JJ CVE Package has increased collaboration and coordination through various mechanisms including the CVE Government Network, the Young People and Violent Extremism Workshop, internal communications, stakeholder engagement, information sharing, Inspector of Custodial Services Report, production of subpoena material and media engagement.

In addition, the significant effort dedicated to community engagement has increased community partnerships. Juvenile Justice has improved relationships with religious leaders, community members and non-government organisations that had not traditionally worked closely with government.

Learnings

The flexibility of the JJ CVE Package was essential in both building infrastructure and developing a responsive capability that could support JJNSW's needs. Stakeholder requirements changed significantly over the implementation period, producing an expanded scope and broad-based capability.

The JJ CVE Package demonstrates the time required to effectively build and mobilise internal capability, infrastructure and resources. The current political and operational climate creates competing priorities and a fiscally constrained environment that can render it challenging to increase the focus on emerging issues like CVE – however, the need for such capability is ongoing.

As with other programs, the JJ CVE Package experienced difficulties in being associated with CVE/CT – particularly at a community level. The approach taken to community engagement provides valuable learnings on the importance of rehabilitative and strengths-based approaches when working with young people and the community. Feedback indicated that this perspective was heartening and helped support community engagement as juvenile offenders were approached as members of the community, rather than participants in the justice system. Communicating the interface between legislative responsibilities and the strengths-based approach took significant time but resulted in positive engagement.

An operational learning from the JJ CVE Package is the absence of evidence-based risk assessment tools and intervention approaches for juvenile offenders at risk of or involved in violent extremism. This is an emerging area that requires further research, which could be achieved through effective monitoring and evaluation of the JJ CVE Package activities.

BOX 3.8   JJ CVE PACKAGE – KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The JJ CVE Package shows early signs of impact in terms of capability building, improvement of capacity and increase in effective risk management practice. At the time of the evaluation, there was limited comparable practice in other Australian jurisdictions which highlights the importance of these efforts in an evolving context.

A key challenge for the JJ CVE Package is separating activities which should form business as usual as part of JJNSW's core responsibilities, as opposed to CVE-specific funding. The next phase of activity in the JJ CVE Package should mainstream training, legal advice, and general case management. This would require the maintenance of internal capability and allocation of funding from within JJNSW, which may be a challenge.

Continued funding should be provided from the CVE Program for the innovative and specialised components, including undertaking CVE risk assessments, producing expert reports, research into appropriate risk assessment approaches for juvenile offenders and the evaluation of effective practice.

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[32] Raw data on participant responses were not available for this evaluation.

3.10 Premier's Fund for Social Cohesion

TABLE 3.9   PREMIER'S FUND – QUICK REFERENCE

Lead agency	DPC.
Funding source	NSW - $1,000,000.
Lifecycle stage	Complete - Final round projects to be completed 30 June 2019.
Evaluation	No evaluation undertaken to date.

Description

The Premier's Fund for Social Cohesion was a small grants program for schools and local community organisations. It provided financial support for community-led events and activities that brought together people from diverse cultural backgrounds to discuss and celebrate diversity and its importance to countering violent extremism. The program aimed to:

— build on the strengths of multicultural society

— develop stronger social cohesion and community resilience, particularly among young people

— inspire young people to stand up against the divisive forces of fear, hate and violence.

The objectives were to:

— encourage people to reflect on and celebrate the role of diversity in society

— promote intercultural and interfaith understanding, particularly among young people

— build positive cross-cultural networks

— empower people to speak about the value of diversity and to counter hateful and divisive messages

Activities and outputs

The Premier's Fund projects have involved over 110 community organisations, over 40 schools and over 2,700 young people

The Premier's Fund for Social Cohesion delivered three rounds of grants since November 2016, supporting 56 projects, totaling $912,323.

Evidence of impact

It is too early to assess the impact of the projects funded under the Premier's Fund. An end of program report will be compiled once the final round of projects is completed in June 2019. Projects were required to provide an acquittal report three months after the completion of the project. including outcomes aligned with the COMPACT evaluation framework.

Learnings

A decision was made to re-direct $1 million from the Premier's Fund for Social Cohesion to support a new round of COMPACT grants in 2018. The decision was based on the understanding that the COMPACT partnership grants model and COMPACT Alliance model could deliver greater impact than a small grants program.

BOX 3.9   PREMIER'S FUND – KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Premier's Fund provided a positive avenue to encourage community-led projects. However, the model duplicates the processes and priorities of COMPACT.

No further funding is recommended for the Premier's Fund (or similar isolated grant programs), as absorbing functions into COMPACT's operations has demonstrated improved effectiveness of processes. Community-based initiatives should be promoted through existing infrastructure of COMPACT.

3.11 Proactive Integrated Support Model (PRISM)

TABLE 3.10   PROACTIVE INTEGRATED SUPPORT MODEL – QUICK REFERENCE

Lead agency	Corrective Services NSW.
Funding source	NSW – value unavailable.
Lifecycle stage	Mature – commenced in 2016.
Evaluation	An external evaluation was undertaken which included interviews with PRISM staff, consultation with government agencies, review of case notes, reports and RADAR assessments, and interviews with PRISM participants. Limited information on outcomes was available due to security considerations. The information in this section is based on the external evaluation undertaken by University of Queensland.

Description

Proactive Integrated Support Model (PRISM) is a custody-based, voluntary pilot intervention delivered by Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) to prison inmates who have been convicted of terrorist-related offences or have been identified as at-risk of radicalisation. PRISM aims to address the psychological, social, theological and ideological needs of radicalised offenders and aims to redirect them away from extremism and help them transition out of custody.

PRISM is currently the only dedicated custody-based intervention aimed at violent extremists and radicalised offenders in Australia. It is delivered by a team of psychologists who work in partnership with a range of stakeholders (for example religious support officers, allied health) required for an individual's case assessment and intervention plan.

Activities and outputs

PRISM successfully engaged difficult to reach offenders at-risk or known to have radicalised

PRISM has successfully:

— recruited inmates that CSNSW had historically found difficult to engage

— conducted RADAR assessments of program participants

— developed intervention plans and goals

— provided supports.[33]

Evidence of impact

PRISM participants were observed to have demonstrated the following positive outcomes:

PRISM positively impacted on indicators related to disengagement and reintegration

— ceased communication with associates

— improved knowledge about Islam

— engaged with religious supports and showed respect when presented with different views

— moderated beliefs i.e., open to other points of view

— demonstrated a willingness to engage in work and educational programs

— engaged with other nationalities in prison

— improved the quality of their interactions with other inmates – including the type of religious instructions they are giving to other inmates and their leadership style such as inciting extremism.[34]

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[33] Quantitative data on number of referrals, participants or services provided were not available to the evaluator.
[34] University of Queensland. 2018. An Evaluation of the Proactive Integrated Support Model (PRISM).

Learnings

PRISM embedded a sufficient degree of flexibility to account for the variation in the offender cohort. The potential participants of this, and similar, programs are diverse. The PRISM cohort is characterised by previous contact with the criminal justice system and exposure to violence and conflict. The cohort was affected by different sources of radicalisation and varied in their religious knowledge and understanding. The intervention goals also varied.

The voluntary nature of the program has contributed to its success, with offenders appreciating the innovative approach to interventions. Partnering with community service organisations that are able to operate as neutral third parties has been a useful strategy in encouraging engagement from difficult to reach cohorts.

Demonstrating effectiveness of interventions of this nature is challenging, given the small sample size, reliance on qualitative data, and lack of consensus on what constitutes success. While there are positive signs of impact, there is a need for embedded data collection to track outcomes. Formalised written intervention plans and data capture methods are needed to enhance PRISM client engagement and track progress against intervention goals. Investment in systematic documentation and data capture is needed to understand client progress.

Implementation in an emerging policy environment is challenging. There is a need to clarify the overarching objectives, intended audience, types of activities and intended outcomes for PRISM. This will help with ongoing implementation, understanding of roles and responsibilities, and engagement of participants.

BOX 3.10   PRISM – KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PRISM fills a gap in custody-based interventions aimed at violent extremists and radicalised offenders. There is evidence that the program is impacting on a range of indicators related to disengagement and reintegration. Given limited evidence base in working with this cohort, PRISM is contributing to the understanding and knowledge of what works in effective interventions.

A key question for PRISM is the interface with other related programs and line agencies, such as the rehabilitative approach used in the JJ CVE Package, the case management model in the ESP, community corrections processes, and community-based programs.

Funding for PRISM should be maintained, with support from the CVE Package to build connections between related projects to ensure a coherent approach is applied across government and in the community.

3.12 NSW Strategy for the management of people returning from a foreign conflict zone

TABLE 3.11   NSW STRATEGY – QUICK REFERENCE

Lead agency	DPC.
Funding source	NSW – undertaken through existing resources.
Lifecycle stage	Midway.
Evaluation	No evaluation undertaken to date.

Description

The *NSW Strategy for the management of people returning from a foreign conflict zone* was developed as part of the CVE Program, funded through the Fund for Future Initiatives. The Strategy provides a coordinated, whole-of-government approach involving Commonwealth and NSW agencies to safely support the reception and reintegration of returnees into NSW.

The arrangements in the Strategy reflect the agreed national approach for managing returnees, approved by the Australia-New Zealand Counter Terrorism Committee in 2017, which focuses particularly on the welfare of returning children. The arrangements build on existing processes for the management of returning Australians of National Security Interest and are consistent with the NSW Counter Terrorism Strategy and NSW Counter Terrorism Plan.

Activities and outputs

The Strategy was developed through comprehensive whole-of-government consultation and collaboration.

Evidence of impact

While it is too early to assess the impact of the Strategy, the production of the Strategy has helped improve consistency of approach through the development of a whole-of-government response to a new and emerging risk. This is a significant outcome for positioning the NSW Government to be agile and prepared for such issues, should they occur.

Learnings

There is very limited case experience in NSW and other Australian states and territories, which reduces the available evidence to inform approaches to this and similar risks.

BOX 3.11   NSW STRATEGY – KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The *NSW Strategy for the management of people returning from a foreign conflict zone* has assisted in improving the NSW Government's understanding of, and readiness to respond to, the emerging risks of returning foreign fighters. Monitoring of impact will contribute directly to improved understanding of the cohort.

3.13 School Communities Working Together

TABLE 3.12   SCHOOL COMMUNITIES WORKING TOGETHER – QUICK REFERENCE

Lead agency	Department of Education and Training.
Funding source	NSW - $15,200,000 (over four years).
Lifecycle stage	Mature – commenced in 2015.
Evaluation	An external evaluation was conducted and involved a document review, interviews with external stakeholders, Department staff and school management, five school site visits, an online survey, and analysis of incident reporting, case management and training data.

Description

School Communities Working Together (SCWT) is a multi-faceted program which is designed to address the risk of anti-social and extremist behaviour in NSW schools. The SCWT program aims to support schools work in partnership with parents to provide an environment that encourages students to connect with each other and their community, so they can succeed and thrive. The program model uses a strengths-based approach, leveraging risk management and student wellbeing frameworks to respond to anti-social and extremist behaviours within schools.

The SCWT program objectives are:

— to foster resilient and inclusive school communities

— to ensure school systems can successfully identify vulnerable students

— to ensure school systems can successfully provide support for vulnerable students

— to ensure schools have effective incident management and recovery arrangements.

Activities and outputs

SCWT has broad reach covering 3,200 schools and over 1.2 million students, with vulnerable students receiving case management support

The foundational components of the SCWT were the recruitment of Specialist Support Teams, delivery of professional development, establishment of the Incident Report and Support Hotline, and implementation of case management services and targeted programs (focused on reintegrating students from conflict zones and transitioning students leaving youth justice). The SCWT model was tested internationally with CVE experts, and was broadly supported.

Other key outputs were:

— the formation of the cross-sectoral Agreement between the Department, Catholic Schools NSW, and the Association of Independent Schools NSW

— the development of an online Awareness Module for Anti-Social and Extremist Behaviour

— delivery of training on anti-social and extremist behaviour to school executive and staff members from government and non-government schools

— provision of intensive support to schools by a Specialist Support Team (SST)

— reports of anti-social and extremist behaviour related incidents by NSW schools

— triage of cases of anti-social and extremist behaviour, with individual students supported through the case management services.

Evidence of impact

There is strong evidence of impact from the SCWT program.

The SCWT has improved the capacity of the education system to support vulnerable and at-risk students, with staff more confident in their ability to recognise vulnerabilities

The SCWT has improved support for NSW schools, providing access to a centralised gateway to report, manage and respond to anti-social and extremist behaviour. This has helped build school capability to identify and report students vulnerable to antisocial and extremist behaviour.

The SCWT has improved school confidence in responding to and managing incidents of antisocial and extremist behaviour. Schools that engaged with the SST demonstrated greater confidence in their abilities to address such issues.

The online awareness module contributed to this increase in capacity. A survey of school executives and staff who completed the training showed that the training resulted in 90 per cent having an increased awareness and understanding of how to best manage antisocial and extremist behaviour in a school setting, and 88 per cent feeling more confident in their ability to recognise vulnerable students.

Students are receiving improved support through the education system, with highly vulnerable students now accessing coordinated support to mitigate risk factors and encourage more positive behaviour.

Departmental processes and partnerships have been established or improved to enhance the ability for schools to support vulnerable students.

Collectively, these efforts may have contributed to the absence of a school-based CVE related incident in any NSW school since the SCWT was introduced.

Key learnings

The SCWT is 'the first and only program of its kind in Australia'[35]. The development and implementation of this program provides important lessons on what works in an education context for CVE-related programs.

The flexibility of the SCWT has been an important enabler in responding to the diversity of needs. The program was designed to be flexible and allow different approaches to meet the specific needs of individual schools and students. This is essential given the evidence indicates there is no clear profile for a young person at risk of anti-social or extremist behaviour.

A strengths-based and capacity building approach has contributed to achieving outcomes. This allowed the SCWT to enhance the structures, programs and capabilities within the school system, equipping school communities with the skills and resources to identify and respond to student vulnerability. This leveraged the existing knowledge and expertise of schools.

The language associated with CVE represents a challenge for the SCWT and other programs. The Department identified the need to manage the language closely to ensure school communities were not stigmatised or disengaged from the SCWT, the damage of which has been demonstrated through other CVE-related efforts domestically and abroad.

A related, but separate issue, relates to working collaboratively with other line agencies. While multi-disciplinary approaches are important to the effectiveness of these programs, it can be hard to develop a consensus on thresholds for concern and levels of risk when operating from different frameworks and mandates. This has presented challenges for implementation.

There are opportunities to improve the SCWT, particularly in relation to data. As the program represents a new approach, it is well positioned to contribute to the evidence base on risk factors associated with anti-social and extremist behaviour, and which strategies or supports are effective in improving outcomes. Current data reporting focused on output measures like participation or engagement, whereas as impact data would be valuable.

[35] Urbis. 2019. School Communities Working Together Evaluation.

BOX 3.12   SCHOOL COMMUNITIES WORKING TOGETHER – KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The SCWT has broad reach and was seen to identify and engage vulnerable students in an effective and appropriate manner. The flexibility of the model, diversity of activities and focus on a greater range of vulnerabilities were key enablers in supporting the success of the SCWT.

Given the focus on a broader definition of vulnerability (including other anti-social behaviours), the SCWT should be mainstreamed and embedded as a core capability within the Department of Education. This would also address some of the issues associated with language, while ensuring the knowledge and skills required to manage CVE are maintained.

The second phase of the CVE Program should examine other areas of the Department of Education that interface with the Program's objectives, namely the development of school-based programs (which link with current COMPACT activities), the development of curriculum on global citizens, and the linkages with other CVE Program projects like the JJ CVE Package, children and families returning from conflict zones, and the ESP.

3.14 Step Together

TABLE 3.13   STEP TOGETHER – QUICK REFERENCE

Lead agency	DPC.
Funding source	NSW – $6,400,000.
Lifecycle stage	Mature – commenced in June 2017.
Evaluation	External process evaluation undertaken. No outcomes data available.

Description

Step Together is a telephone, webchat, website and social media service managed by the non-government sector (On The Line) that provides information, advice and referrals to programs and support service in relation to CVE. The service operates in a 'social health' framework, staffed by experienced and skilled counsellors. It is available to all members of the NSW community.

Step Together takes a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to building whole-of-community awareness and capacity to recognise early warning signs and seek the appropriate support before an issue gets to a law-enforcement stage. This includes recognising the crucial role of friends, family, community leaders, and service professionals in providing early intervention.

Activities and outputs

Step Together has reached over 83,000 community members across NSW

Step Together includes:

— development and implementation of a support line and website

— delivery of training for 32 Step Together staff on CVE

— production of marketing collateral and communications material

— establishment of internal processes, including building relationships with the Department of Education, General Practitioners, relevant/appropriate law enforcement, and other referral organisations

— recruitment of a Community Engagement Manager

— community engagement activities, including 141 meetings and 28 presentations

— establishment of the Community Advisory Committee.

The support line has received an average of 41 calls per month, and the webchat an average of 13 chats per month. The website has averaged 2871 unique visitors since commencement. Online promotional activities have reached almost 4 million people through Google, Facebook and Twitter.

The Community Engagement Manager has reached over 83,000 community members in metropolitan and regional areas of NSW.

Evidence of impact

Evidence of impact is relatively limited as there were no outcomes data available for Step Together.

Community engagement activities have helped improve referral pathways between services

Qualitative feedback indicates that the support line has achieved service uptake among its target audience. However, many of the contacts through the support line or webchat fall out of the scope of the service and are referred on to other options. This indicates that the service is reaching beyond the intended audience.

The community engagement activities have contributed significantly to improved understanding of violent extremism. These activities have increased community awareness and trust of Step Together. However, the most important impact appears to be the extensive referral links and pathways generated between communities and services through the Community Engagement Manager.

Key learnings

Step Together meets a gap in prevention and early intervention services, in particular, the need for an alternative to the National Security Hotline, through which they can 'support, not report' individuals.

Step Together focuses on deconstructing prevalent stereotypes around violent extremism, which creates a culturally sensitive and accessible service. This positive approach to violent extremism is valuable and well received by communities.

However, the program has encountered common challenges associated with CVE language. The discussion of violent extremism has been a barrier to community engagement and education due to ongoing sensitivities and fears of securitisation. Efforts to promote the supportive focus of Step Together, as opposed to reporting and intelligence, have assisted in breaking down these barriers.

Initial usage rates were low, due to a deliberate 'soft' launch. This increased in December 2017 following implementation of a three-pronged Marketing and Community Engagement Plan. This shows the importance of active promotion and engagement campaigns to increasing reach, awareness and uptake. This has built brand awareness and generated trust within communities.

BOX 3.13   STEP TOGETHER – KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Step Together's community engagement activities have demonstrated positive impacts and outcomes, filling a valuable gap in the community for awareness-raising and the creation of safe discussion spaces.

The value of the telephone service is unclear, which can be attributed in part to the limited uptake of the service and limitations of the evaluation regarding outcomes data.

Additional data on Step Together should be collected. This data should explore the outcomes for service users, as opposed to the processes of the service itself.

A cost benefit analysis of Step Together should be undertaken to examine the relative value of community engagement activities to the support line.

3.15 The Point Magazine

TABLE 3.14   THE POINT MAGAZINE – QUICK REFERENCE

Lead agency	Multicultural NSW.
Funding source	Commonwealth - $789,000 over five years.
Lifecycle stage	Mature - Commenced in 2013.
Evaluation	An external Market Research Study was conducted by Horizon Research. This evaluation involved quantitative (online questionnaire) and qualitative (telephone interviews) research with key subscribers and stakeholders.

Description

The Point Magazine aims to be a trusted, accessible source of information, news and current affairs relating to violent extremism and its social impacts on local communities in Australia. The project facilitates collaboration, dialogue and informed debate at the community level in Australia, providing new opportunities to engage, enable, and empower communities to speak about and address issues relating to violent extremism.

The Point Magazine gives young people and community leaders a voice to address sensitive issues by serving as a non-judgmental engagement tool and showcasing role models and best practice in community-based resilience. It draws on the expertise and opinions of a range of stakeholders in these issues including young people, community and religious leaders, governments at all levels, the media and academia. The objectives are to:

— become a trusted and accessible source of information, news and current affairs relating to violent extremism in Australia

— stimulate collaboration, dialogue and informed debate between governments, communities, young people, the media, and academic experts on the issue of violent extremism in Australia

— understand the attitudes and opinions of young people about violent extremism, terrorism and counterterrorism, and their impact on communities in Australia

— build public awareness of what communities and young people can do, and what they are currently doing, to address issues relating to violent extremism and the local effects of global terrorism and counterterrorism on community harmony

— understand the impact of mainstream and new media on community relations in their coverage of issues relating to Islam and terrorism.

Activities and outputs

The Point Magazine has reached over 100,000 readers over five years

The Point Magazine has established a national profile as a trusted source of accessible information. Since the publication of its first edition in July 2013, The Point Magazine has published more than 41 issues and 324 stories (up to May 2018), and in November 2017, reached a milestone of 100,000 readers and 200,000 page views.[36]

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[36] Horizon Research. 2018. Findings of a Market Research Study to Evaluate 'The Point Magazine'.

Evidence of impact

There is evidence that the program is achieving a range of objectives as a trusted provider of information that is building collaboration, positive attitudes, trust and awareness.

Qualitative feedback indicated that The Point Magazine was fostering greater harmony across all sections of the community. It was noted to contribute in a subtle and effective way, influencing views without passing judgement. In particular:

— 91 per cent of respondents thought it helped bring a sense of community harmony

— 97 per cent had a positive view of The Point Magazine and its contribution to objectives

— 94 per cent believed The Point Magazine was doing a very good job/a good job letting real people tell their stories

— 88 per cent thought The Point Magazine was doing a very good job/ a good job in providing a strong voice against hate/extremism.

Learnings

There is a deliberate bias towards younger contributors. Respondents believed younger people were seeking a voice, to have their views heard. Importantly, younger people wanted to hear from their contemporaries.

The Point Magazine has a strong bias towards the Muslim community and the issues it faces. This could be expanded to include other communities to foster harmonious acceptance of all groups within the community.

BOX 3.14   THE POINT MAGAZINE – KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Point Magazine fills a gap in information-provision related to violent extremism and its impacts. This helps with the availability of informed dialogue and resources. While the reach has some limitations, readers value the contribution to community understanding and opportunities to share their voice.

There are opportunities to improve the targeting and content of The Point Magazine through a strategic review of who the intended readership is and what content should be featured. Opportunities to interface with other funded projects (for example, youth leadership projects under COMPACT) should be explored.

3.16 Summary

The CVE Program is well progressed and many of the funded projects are now reaching maturity. The design of the CVE Program has been responsive to changing requirements and there has been a collective commitment to supporting the whole-of-government objectives. Beyond having impacts on potential violent extremists, the community also benefits more broadly from efforts to protect vulnerable cohorts, support vulnerable individuals and build inclusion.

Though the projects span diverse activities and objectives, there were commonalities in effective practice. Flexible program design, clearly articulated aims and activities, strong community engagement and formal partnership approaches all contributed to the success of project activities. Future activities under the CVE Program should ensure these attributes are embedded where possible.

As with enablers, there were common challenges across projects. Using CVE language presented barriers to community engagement and slowed or hindered the formation of relationships. A lack of clarity on objectives, activities and audiences resulted in delays or confusion in what projects were working towards. While the language presents an ongoing challenge for the CVE Program and is discussed later in this report, the issue of clarity could be addressed through establishing clear and agreed project logics, supported by evaluation frameworks and data collection strategies.

4

NSW CVE PROGRAM – IMPLEMENTATION
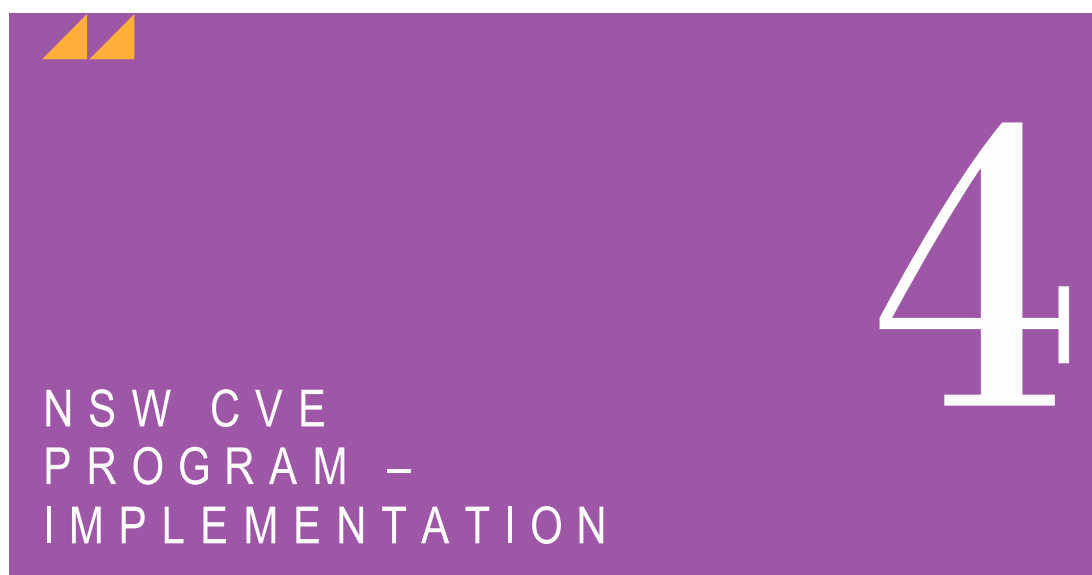
This Chapter examines the effectiveness of the implementation approach for the CVE Program, including the appropriateness of program design and supporting structures.

4.1 Program design

The following elements were assessed as part of the examination of the design of the CVE Program:

— the overarching approach
— the alignment with organisational priorities of line agencies
— the association between CVE and CT
— the intended participation (be it the wider community or a specific cohort of vulnerable individuals).

Overarching approach

The CVE Program provides the guiding approach for CVE-related work in the NSW Government, including the enabling outcomes and the ultimate objectives. The program design provides a responsive approach that supports the evolving understanding within line agencies while continuing to promote collective goals. This progressive approach was appreciated by line agencies and stakeholders, who recognised the value of a flexible whole-of-government model in such a dynamic policy context.

'Each agency is coming at it from a different space and different approach, they are complementary and not trying to do the same things. The problem of violent extremism is much broader than that.'

(Government agency)

Alignment with priorities

The focus of the CVE Program aligns with other initiatives targeting similar objectives, such as supporting diverse communities and protecting community safety. All agencies consulted reported that the objectives and outcomes of the CVE Program could be connected with their organisational priorities to some extent.

This alignment was considered closest for those working in justice and law enforcement where there was a stronger correlation between business-as-usual operations, the projects funded under the CVE Program and Commonwealth priorities for CVE. In particular, the CVE Program was seen to align with the prevention, diversion and rehabilitation priorities. Key project examples were PRISM, the JJ CVE Package, and the Engagement and Support Program.

'We don't view it to differently to what we're doing around [outlaw motorcycle gangs] or those with a mental illness that are prone to violence. It's business as usual for us. The tricky thing is how you manage…when the spotlight is on it and the media is there. It's the fear and the unknown nature, but ten years ago we had the same issue with sex offenders.'

(Government agency)

The alignment between organisational priorities and the CVE Program was more challenging for those working in prevention. These agencies identified a tension between internal organisational philosophies and the objectives of CVE-related work. A factor here appears to be the specific mandate of the agency, particularly its focus on:

— vulnerability, risk and/or threat

— prevention versus response.

Agencies who viewed their core role as prevention and risk mitigation often reported greater difficulty in integrating CVE-related work. These stakeholders felt CVE projects concentrated on response and threat management. For example, line agencies whose business-as-usual was providing services or support to vulnerable cohorts found it more challenging to link the objectives of their everyday operations with the CVE Program.

While recognised as an important area of policy, CVE was not always given strong internal priority. Three of the eight line agencies consulted indicated that there was limited buy-in within their organisations for the CVE Program or associated work. This often impacted on the human and financial resources available to support projects and was applicable for agencies directly implementing CVE projects and those in a supporting role.

'We have to be careful that we're not directing our resources to prioritise these matters over others because the consequences of prioritisation are really significant…we had to think really carefully about where we get involved.'

(Government agency)

This could be due to the level of understanding of the CVE across Government. The maturity of the discourse varies in line agencies, with some perceiving CVE as a highly specialised policy area inherently disconnected from other social issues. Others have begun developing a more integrated understanding of the relationship between risk and protective factors, connecting CVE with other vulnerabilities.

Association between CVE and CT

There were mixed perspectives on the formal connection that the CVE Program makes with CT. Agencies involved in justice and law enforcement projects felt the connection between the two was positive as it helped build an understanding of the role of prevention in mitigating threats to the community.

'Everyone has a role to play. It's important that every organisation understands that those involved in CT have a role in CVE…We need that to effectively stop terrorism and violent extremism from occurring.'

(Government agency)

However, agencies involved in resilience and capacity projects found the linkage between CVE and CT problematic. The primary issue relates to the language of CVE as the association between CVE-projects and CT branding was seen to inhibit community engagement, resulting in mistrust and an unwillingness to participate.

In these instances, the connection between CVE and CT worked against the objectives of building and maintaining community cohesion and resilience. This presents a significant risk to the CVE Program as maintaining the trust of members of communities is "critical to realizing the potential benefits of terrorism prevention, in both terrorism risk reduction and minimizing the costs associated with enforcement-focused approaches"[37].

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[37] Jackson, B. et al. 2019. Practical Terrorism Prevention: Reexamining U.S. National Approaches to Addressing the Threat of Ideologically Motivated Violence. Homeland Security Operational Analysis Center: pg 249.

'Counter Terrorism is a poor program title to provide funding under, especially because most of the programs are about social cohesion. This creates misperceptions regarding the goals of the projects…communities do not like that CT is the funding body.'

(Government agency)

Agencies consistently reported hesitation in using CVE terminology in their communication with the public due to fears of stigmatising communities. The CVE Strategic Communications Plan was seen as a useful tool in overcoming these issues. The language used was considered well positioned and mitigated risks of inflammatory media coverage. However, there were concerns that the messaging had not yet been taken up consistently across Government due to internal organisational priorities (for example, a preference for linkages with CT). This produced disjointed positioning of the whole-of-government response that undermined community trust and engagement.

The matter of language is complex when working in CVE[38] as there are degrees of ambiguity, complexity and conflict between community and government. In a heightened security environment, there will be ongoing tension between the social cohesion, CVE and CT agendas, with the latter tending towards securitisation in the current context. The need to balance or clearly delineate between these agendas will likely become increasingly important, particularly when considering the sustainability of the CVE Program and relationships with community.

Intended participants

Defining who CVE projects should involve is an ongoing question for both academics and practitioners. For those interventions closer to the 'pointy end' of the spectrum, the target population is easily identifiable and generally relates to those at risk of radicalisation, or already radicalised. For example, PRISM and the JJ CVE Package were able to identify participants with relative ease.

Identifying the participating cohort is much more challenging for other projects. In a context of limited evidence, the relationship between vulnerability to extremism and vulnerability to other social issues (such as organised crime, or drugs and alcohol) is ambiguous. Line agencies felt that there was little information on 'what works' when identifying where they should focus their efforts.

'The challenge is that this is such a new space that no one knows what really works. Some of the international examples look like they're working, but then deteriorated. There's little evidence to develop our programs on. It made it hard to have the conversation, to work out what we were going to invest in and how do you get your bang for buck?'

(Government agency)

Many line agencies expanded the focus of their projects due to the challenges of tightly defining a target cohort. This focus was generally expanded from those at risk of radicalisation to a more general profile which included risk factors for mental health, anti-social behaviour and aggression. This was seen to provide a larger benefit, building traction and increasing the impact for individuals and the community.

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[38] The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, for example, has recently shifted away from CVE towards 'terrorism prevention' to help address some of the challenges associated with language.

4.2 Supporting structures

The implementation of the CVE Program was facilitated by the CVE Team, who provided supports to line agencies for projects and the collective whole-of-government response. The key mechanisms used to support implementation, and their effectiveness, are discussed below.

Governance

The formal governance forum is the NSW Countering Violent Extremism Steering Committee (CVESC). Line agencies reported that CVESC is a productive governance forum to share learnings and identify opportunities to assist other partners. Line agencies recognised that individual agencies will engage in discussions from their own perspective and mandate, the meetings built understanding of emerging issues and collectively solved problems.

'We're a lot clearer than we were a year ago, it was very siloed. We're more across what our collective aim is. We're all doing our own bit, and collectively we have to do more. It will take time for that.'

(Government agency)

The involvement of all key governance agencies was key to developing a common view. The inclusive approach helped build networks, with all line agencies reflecting that they had developed new relationships and partnerships through participation in the CVE Program. In turn, this contributed to information sharing across agencies.

Broader collaboration also occurs through ad hoc and informal engagement outside the CVE Program as contacts and cross-agency understanding have matured. For example, NSW Police, Departments of Health and Education highlighted examples of collaborative case-level discussions to develop more holistic solutions to building protective factors against violent extremism.

While CVESC is working effectively, there are opportunities to build on the work to date. The impact of the forum could be enhanced through an increased focus on the strategic perspective and whole-of-government coordination. While CVESC has provided a platform for strategic initiatives (such as the NSW Evaluation Approach and Strategic Communications Plan), feedback from line agencies indicated there is further work to be done in developing a collective vision, understanding of the objectives and ultimate goals for the CVE Program.

'All the agencies went into it with a good mindset, something different and new. They all tried really hard to make it work and make sure they weren't hindering each other. It shows you can provide a whole-of-government response because everyone did step out of their service provision environment, it proved what we can do so now it's about getting clearer on how we can make the biggest difference and utilise our combined resources in the best way.'

(Government agency)

Focusing on collaboration rather than accountability or compliance has been essential in the achievements to date. This approach has provided flexibility, allowing the CVE Team and line agencies to influence and adapt the direction of projects to respond to changing needs. This was clearly embodied in the work conducted through COMPACT and their partners, but also in the evolution of project approaches taken by Juvenile Justice and the Department of Education.

'We're all learning as we go, we keep evolving what we're doing and how we're doing it.'

(Government agency)

Coordination and collaboration

The CVE Team has guided the CVE Program through the provision of advice and the facilitation of connections between agencies. Line agencies and external stakeholders consistently identified that the CVE Team's coordination role has been instrumental in informing the whole-of-government perspective and ensuring consistency across approaches.

'I think where [the CVE Team] is very useful for us is the political lens to apply over what we do, to determine whether its palatable for the ministers or for the community. It helps with risk mitigation, particularly from a media perspective.'

(Government agency)

The CVE Team's role as a conduit between NSW agencies and Commonwealth bodies (namely, the Department of Home Affairs) has been essential in achieving objectives. This role included the development of funding applications, facilitation of linkages between programs, and influencing the direction of the Commonwealth agenda. The leadership demonstrated by the CVE Team has helped to drive both the State and Commonwealth agendas, in line with the CVE Program's objectives.

'[The CVE Team] has also been good when there's an attempt at the Commonwealth level to roll everything across jurisdictions. They help with highlighting the resource needs which has helped…the systems to come together.'

(Government agency)

The ability to navigate the sensitivities of language and build strong relationships was seen as a key enabler in supporting this coordination and influence. The maintenance of this functionality is essential in the continuation of the CVE Program and achievement of outcomes.

Capability building

Capability building efforts have developed a consistent level of understanding across government. When the CVE Program commenced, government agencies had varied internal capability and experience in delivering CVE-related programs. For those agencies who had a pre-existing skill set, capability building helped ensure capabilities were current and addressed the changing dynamics of the CVE environment. For others, capability was essentially built from scratch through participation in the CVE Program.

'The violent extremism landscape has changed enormously. It's taken time for government programs to become more aware of how fluid and how changing that is...It's difficult for government to respond to rapidly.'

(Partner organisation)

The CVE Program drew on national and international expertise, current research and emerging practice. Engaging with visiting academics, participating in conferences and workshops and disseminating literature enhanced the understanding of line agencies. This focus on increasing knowledge and expanding exposure to content was highly valued and the broad use of research and subject expertise has assisted with the implementation of well-targeted projects.

'There's been a strong focus on the research, and we've all been heavily in touch with international experts. It helped to find out what was going on, what was working.'

(Government agency)

Significant resourcing has been invested in enhancing evaluative capability. A particular example is the development of the Evaluation Tool, designed to support line agencies and others (including those in other jurisdictions) to embed an evidence-based approach to program design. This will, in turn, build the evidence base for CVE programs – providing line agencies share information and findings on what has worked.

4.3 Summary

The design of the CVE Program encourages alignment with the organisational priorities of line agencies, and there has been a collective commitment to supporting the whole-of-government objectives.

The CVE Program was developed and implemented rapidly in a changing political and social context. The supporting structures have helped develop an exploratory approach to policy that is responsive to this changing context, based on learning and continuous refinement.

The comprehensive focus of the CVE Program promotes a holistic view of at-risk behaviour. The embedded flexibility supports the diverse objectives of line agencies and whole-of-government responses. Beyond impacts on at-risk individuals, the community also benefits more broadly from efforts to protect vulnerable cohorts and build inclusion.

The use of a highly collaborative approach has helped build relationships and trust between agencies, supporting information sharing and the development of partnerships. These positive outcomes have been enhanced by the CVE Team's coordination role, which has enabled a whole-of-government response and influenced discussions at a cross-jurisdictional level. The CVE Team has successfully leveraged both the direction of, and outcomes for, the CVE Program through the engagement and negotiation with the Department of Home Affairs.

However, the close proximity of the CVE and CT portfolios presents a risk to the CVE Program. The language and positioning of CVE/CT can undermine community trust and cohesion, which are essential enablers for successful CVE programs. The continuation of this association has the potential to impede the success of the CVE Program and the ability to achieve the intended outcomes.

5

NSW CVE PROGRAM – IMPACT
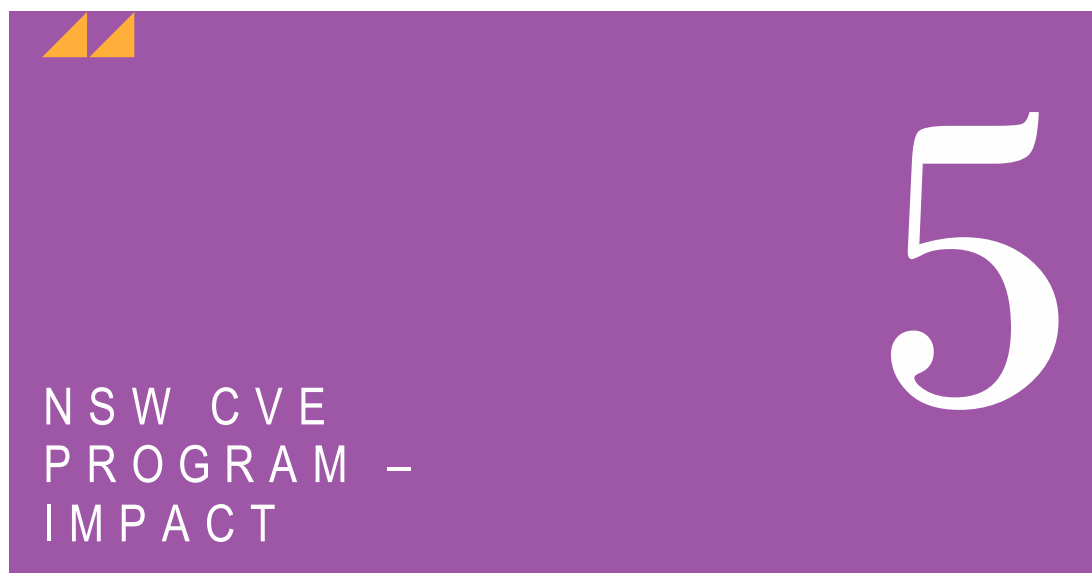
This Chapter outlines the contribution of the CVE Program to the outcomes identified in the NSW CVE Approach, drawing on the documentation review and consultations.

5.1 Measuring impact in the CVE context

Measuring impact of the CVE is challenging, due to the long term focus of many of the projects. Some projects are still quite early in the implementation phase (such as the Juvenile Justice activity), and it is too soon to comment on their outcomes. Others are well progressed and have demonstrated early signs of impact.

In addition, there is no defined set of methods or indicators to evaluate the impact of CVE-related programs, especially given the diverse nature of efforts.[39] The indicators used are dependent on the context of the CVE project. For initiatives that target at-risk individuals, impact can be measured by exploring the change in attitudes and behaviours. This approach could be valuable for programs like PRISM and the ESP.

However, for community-based programs where the link to extremism is unknown, such lines of enquiry would be inappropriate and could undermine community trust and engagement. Measuring impact of community-based programs is therefore more difficult, as the linkage between indicators and overarching objectives of the CVE Program can be more challenging.

The CVE Program is supported by three key evaluation documents (the NSW CVE Evaluation Approach, the Program Logic and Theory of Change). These resources have helped address measurement issues by providing a set of agreed outcomes and have assisted in linking activities to CVE outcomes.

Line agencies require further support to link the overarching outcomes to project-specific indicators, tailored to their objectives and intended participants. Generally, line agencies have not embedded the Evaluation Approach in their own activities – rather, they had developed individual approaches to evaluation that are more closely aligned to their project focus. The development of project logics would bridge this gap between project activity and the CVE Program, while supporting local-level data collection and measurement of impact.

In addition, the Program Logic predominantly uses the language of diversion and disengagement – with a lesser focus on prevention and resilience. For some line agencies working on social cohesion and community resilience, this made it harder to align with their projects or activities.

There are opportunities to review these documents for the second phase of the CVE Program to leverage the lessons learned and encompass the future scope of work. This would ensure that the outcomes reflect the focus and intended impact of funded activities.

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[39] Holmer, G. and Bauman, P. 2018. Measuring up – Evaluating the impact of P/CVE Programs. United States Institute of Peace.

5.2 Collective impact of the CVE Program

The CVE Program has intended outcomes at three levels:

1. enabling outcomes
2. intermediate outcomes
3. ultimate outcomes.

At this stage, it is only possible to assess the contribution of the CVE Program to the enabling and intermediate outcomes. The early nature of the CVE Program (two years into implementation) and the aforementioned measurement challenges make it difficult to demonstrate achievement of ultimate outcomes.

5.2.1 Enabling outcomes

The CVE Program outlines six enabling outcomes, which are discussed below. At this stage of implementation, the projects provided some evidence against all but one (the fifth) of the enabling outcomes. The figure below provides an overview of the projects and evidence of outcomes.

EO1 – Drivers of violent extremism in NSW, including both push and pull factors, are mitigated

Drivers of violent extremism are diverse and the literature has explored the role of the lack of socio-economic opportunities, marginalisation and discrimination, radicalisation in prisons, individual motivations, and distortion and misuse of beliefs.[40] Under the CVE Program, the following projects provided evidence of addressing these drivers:

— COMPACT
— School Communities Working Together
— PRISM
— Engagement and Support Program
— JJ CVE Package.

The limited data available across the projects means it is not possible to quantify the extent to which these drivers have been mitigated. However, qualitative evidence from line agencies points to the positive impact of the projects for participants at a local level.

EO2 – Protective factors against violent extremism in NSW communities are strengthened

Protective factors against violent extremism include connectedness to society and community, trust and confidence in law enforcement and justice, educational engagement, strong social relationships, and non-violent peers.[41]

The primary contributor to this outcome is the COMPACT program, which provided evidence of improved respect, community participation and inclusion, and strengthened social connections. COMPACT also had unanticipated outcomes associated with greater engagement in learning for young people – which directly supports academic achievement.

Other projects also demonstrated a contribution to this outcome, albeit to a lesser extent – namely the Engagement and Support Program, PRISM, School Communities Working Together, JJ CVE Package, and the Ambassadors' Program. These projects addressed a broad range of protective factors relevant to their target cohort, such as access to support services, connection to community, and health and wellbeing. However, the size of impact is difficult to quantify due to the limited data available.

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[40] United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism. 2016. Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Accessed in March 2019 at https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/en/plan-action-prevent-violent-extremism.
[41] Grossman, M. et al. 2017. Understanding Youth Resilience to Violent Extremism: A Standardised Research Measure. Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation. Melbourne: Australia; Friedrich, L, King, S and Jugl, I. 2018. Protective Factors Against Extremism and Violent Radicalization: A Systematic Review of Research. International Journal of Developmental Science, 12(1-2):89-102.

EO3 – Capacity in NSW Government to respond to violent extremism is improved

The improvement in capacity within the NSW Government is the clearest outcome demonstrated through the CVE Program. The projects collectively contributed to increased capability, both directly through efforts to build capacity and indirectly through the enhancement of internal capabilities.

The core objective of the CVE Training Program was to improve capacity across NSW government, non-government agencies and community. Through the delivery of general awareness training and specialist professional learning, the project increased the likelihood of concerns being reported and the ability to provide improved responses.[42]

The suite of projects administered by the Department of Education, Corrective Services NSW, Office for Police and Juvenile Justice have built capacity in both individual line agencies and for interagency responses. The work of the CVE Team has contributed to developing the interagency cooperation and communication required to effectively collaborate, share information and develop collective responses.

EO4 – Capacity in communities and the non-government sector to respond to violent extremism is improved

The CVE Program has shown early signs of impact on community capacity to respond to violent extremism. While not specific to response, COMPACT provided evidence of improved capability in young people, particularly in relation to leadership and communication skills to counter hate and divisive messages online and in their communities.

The COMPACT Alliance contributed to this outcome, evident through the focus on the Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery Framework and associated exercises, and response in the post-Christchurch period.

COMPLAN provides a clear and guiding strategy for addressing issues that threaten community harmony. This resource and approach is designed to assist in protecting communities and building resilience during future incidents.

Step Together has supported an average of 54 requests for assistance per month, with participant feedback viewing Step Together as a "helpful, credible and trustworthy point of contact for information, support and referrals on violent extremism"[43].

Other projects, such as the Victims of Terrorism support package, are likely to produce evidence for this outcome as their implementation matures. However, further examination is required to understand the extent to which the CVE Program has impacted on community capacity to respond to violent extremism. This may necessitate expanded ongoing data collection from participants in similar projects.

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[42] The evaluation of the CVE Training project did not capture the reach of training activities, nor were any pre and post data collected. This limits the ability to quantify the impact.

[43] Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation and the Australian Multicultural Foundation. 2018. Seventeen Month Evaluation Report: New South Wales Community Advice and Support Service.

EO5 – Communications which challenge violent extremism, promote cohesion and support positive narratives are more prominent in communities

Evidence supporting the achievement of this outcome is limited. Line agencies reported that there had been minimal use of CVE-related language in the promotion and implementation of their projects due to fears of stigmatisation and community disengagement. Consequently, there is low visibility of communications that challenge violent extremism.

Qualitative feedback collected from some COMPACT partners and the Step Together projects did provide some evidence that the discourse surrounding violent extremism is maturing, and incremental signs that awareness of violent extremism and the value of community cohesion in countering such perspectives is increasing. In particular, partners reported an increase in understanding and discussion of associated ideas, such as marginalising factors, community inclusion and community resilience. Similarly, the Point Magazine provides communications that challenge these notions, but the impact is not clear from the evaluation.

It is anticipated that the evidence of positive communications that challenge violent extremism and reinforce harmony will grow over time, as organisational approaches to CVE mature and the Strategic Communications Plan provides the foundation for broader communication. For example, the post-Christchurch response from the NSW Government used key messaging within the Communications Plan.

EO6 – NSW Government communities, service providers and experts have a better awareness and understanding of violent extremism, its risks and optimal approaches to tackling it

There is a close relationship between the enabling outcome *'Capacity in NSW Government to respond to violent extremism is improved'*. As discussed above, all projects under the CVE Program have contributed directly to the achievement of this objective.

The project-level evaluations and implementation of the Evaluation Tool are expected to contribute to the awareness of 'what works' in addressing violent extremism in NSW. Again, over time, this will increase the impact on the understanding of effective approaches to addressing violent extremism.

FIGURE 5.1   ENABLING OUTCOMES AGAINST PROJECTS

	EO1 Drivers of violent extremism in NSW, including both push and pull factors, are mitigated	EO2 Protective factors against violent extremism in NSW communities are strengthened	EO3 Capacity in NSW Government to respond to violent extremism is improved	EO4 Capacity in communities and the non-government sector to respond to violent extremism is improved	EO5 Communications which challenge violent extremism, promote cohesion and support positive narratives are more prominent in communities	EO6 NSW Government, communities, service providers and experts have a better awareness and understanding of violent extremism, its risks and optimal approaches to tackling it
Ambassadors' Program		◗		◗	○	●
COMPACT	◗	●		●	◗	●
COMPLAN			○	○		●
CVE Training Program			◗	◗		●
Engagement and Support Program	●	●	●			●
Evaluation Tool			○			●
JJ CVE Package	○	○	◗			●
Premiers' Fund for Social Cohesion		○		○	○	●
PRISM	●	●	●			●
School Communities Working Together	●	●	●			●
Step Together			◗	◗		●
The Point Magazine		●			●	●
Witness to War		○		○		●

Note:

● indicates the project demonstrated the outcome through an external outcomes evaluation

◗ indicates that there was partial evidence through an evaluation

○ indicates qualitative evidence. Empty spaces indicate that no data were available for the project/outcome combination.

SOURCE: ACIL ALLEN CONSULTING ANALYSIS OF DEPARTMENT INFORMATION, 2019.

5.2.2 Intermediate outcomes

The CVE Program outlines three intermediate outcomes, of which evidence of impact was clearest in relation to intermediate outcome 3. The challenges of measuring causal effect on absence of activity limited the ability to determine whether intermediate outcomes 1 and 2 had been achieved.

Figure 5.2 shows the relationship between the projects and intermediate outcomes.

IO1 – At-risk individuals in NSW are diverted away from violent extremism

IO2 – Violent extremists in NSW are disengaged from violent extremism

There was limited evidence for the diversion or disengagement of violent extremists or at-risk individuals.

For the diversion outcome, the School Communities Working Together evaluation found that the project had "identified and supported several extremely vulnerable young people who are deemed to pose a significant potential threat to community safety"[44]. Other projects, such as the JJ CVE Package, the Engagement and Support Program, the *NSW Strategy for managing individuals returning from foreign conflict zones* and the Fixated Threat Assessment Centre, also target this outcome – however, the limited data available mean that no definitive assessment is possible.

For the disengagement outcome, the need to identify violent extremists and to track their disengagement from such ideology and behaviour is challenging. Within the CVE Program, only two of the projects address those already engaged in extremism – the PRISM project, and the JJ CVE Package (which has no data available at present). While the impact is restricted by the number of program participants, PRISM shows promising signs of disengagement by some participants, and staff report expanded religious understanding and knowledge, acceptance of plural views, and improved skills to challenge extremist perspectives.[45]

The evidence does suggest that the efforts of the CVE Program are likely to contribute to diverting and disengaging vulnerable individuals or violent extremists over time. This assumption draws on the evidence-based approach embedded in the theories of change used by the respective projects.

IO3 – Community resilience in NSW, in prevention of and response to violent extremism, is improved

Measuring resilience has many of the usual challenges associated with the CVE sector discussed previously. There is, however, a broader base of literature in the emergency management sector that may provide a potential framework for CVE. Generally, indicators are aligned to a number of factors, including financial, human, natural, physical, political, and social (the most relevant domain for CVE work).[46] Social factors include "networks and connectedness that increase people's trust and ability to work together and expand their access to wider institutions".[47]

The strongest evidence for intermediate outcomes is visible in this outcome, in particular through the reach and impact of the COMPACT program. The evaluation of COMPACT showed improved respect for other ways of life, participant reflections on their ability to influence their community, and participation in community activities. While it is possible that other activities like the Step Together program, Victims of Terrorism support package and COMPLAN, have the potential to build community resilience there was no evidence available at the time of the evaluation to support this.

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[44] Urbis. 2019. School Communities Working Together Evaluation.

[45] Cherney, A and Belton, E. 2018. An Evaluation of the Proactive Integrated Support Model (PRISM). School of Social Science University of Queensland

[46] Jordan, E. and Javernick-Will, A. 2012. Measuring Community Resilience and Recovery: A Content Analysis of Indicators. Construction Research Congress.

[47] Atreya, A. and Kunreuther, H. 2016. Measuring Community Resilience: The Role of the Community Rating System (CRS). Risk Management and Decision Processes Center, Working Paper # 2016-07.

FIGURE 5.2   INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES AGAINST PROJECTS

	IO1 At-risk individuals in NSW are diverted away from violent extremism	IO2 Violent extremists in NSW are disengaged from violent extremism	IO3 Community resilience in NSW, in prevention of and response to violent extremism, is improved
Ambassadors' Program			
COMPACT			●
COMPLAN			◐
CVE Training Program			◐
Engagement and Support Program	◐	◐	●
Evaluation Tool			
Exercise Restore			○
JJ CVE Package	○	○	
Premiers' Fund for Social Cohesion			○
PRISM	●	●	
School Communities Working Together	●		◐
Step Together			○
The Point Magazine			
Witness to War		○	

Note:

● indicates the project demonstrated the outcome through an external outcomes evaluation

◐ indicates that there was partial evidence through an evaluation

○ indicates qualitative evidence. Empty spaces indicate that no data were available for the project/outcome combination.

SOURCE: ACIL ALLEN CONSULTING ANALYSIS OF DEPARTMENT INFORMATION, 2019.

5.2.3 Ultimate outcomes

The CVE Program outlines two ultimate outcomes, described below.

UO1 – Reduced likelihood of violent extremism through effective early intervention

UO2 – Reduced consequences in NSW of violent extremism, through effective preparedness and response

The challenges of measurement described above significantly constrain comment on the achievement of these objectives.

In relation to the reduced likelihood of violent extremism through effective early intervention , the combination of both effective prevention activity and early intervention activities (for example, the COMPACT, School Communities Working Together, NSW Strategy for managing individuals returning from foreign conflict zones and JJ CVE Package projects) may contribute to a reduction in the possibility of violent extremist incidents.

Regarding reduced consequences in NSW of violent extremism, through effective preparedness and response, the CVE Program has involved extensive interagency collaboration and communication through different panels and groups. The formalisation of COMPLAN also provides a framework and infrastructure for the reduction of consequences at a community level. It is likely that these activities, when combined with ongoing capability building efforts, will assist the NSW Government in being prepared to respond to an incident, should one occur.

However, it will take time and the examination of longitudinal data to conclusively demonstrate the impact of the CVE Program against this outcome.

5.3 Future directions in impact measurement

Although there are recognised obstacles to monitoring and evaluating CVE programs, there is a strong need to measure impact to support accountability and transparency on the use of public funds. There is emerging research on measuring community-level resilience to violent extremism which will be beneficial in developing robust metrics for assessing the impact of CVE programming. Most of this work, however, has been undertaken in the developing world and has not been tested in Western contexts. Given the need to measure and the difficulties in doing so, there is value in reviewing traditional techniques to consider new approaches for CVE programs.

The use of local approaches

Recent research by the United States Institute of Peace highlighted the value of using locally-developed indicators that track change on the micro scale. While these indicators would traditionally have held little value due to the limitation for comparing programs and contexts, in the CVE context they provide an avenue to collect highly relevant and contextualised data for the local community. These indicators can be used to construct a toolkit of relevant, valid and rigorous indicators tailored to the micro-environment that can be tested in other contexts and adapted to support comparative analysis over time.

The value of outputs

Given the current absence of consensus on appropriate outcome indicators, CVE is an area where 'outputs', such as participation, may be thought of as positive 'outcomes'.

Ensuring projects have a strong theory of change, aligned (where possible) to the available evidence on 'what works' for other vulnerable cohorts or programs, such as crime prevention or early intervention youth justice programs provides an innovative approach.

This approach would mitigate the need to count negatives or 'absences' and would allow government to examine the effectiveness of the program against demonstrated theories of change. Examples here could include the literature on crime prevention and public health.

Under this approach, evaluation of impact could focus on such things as:

— individual participation or engagement in CVE-related projects (which may have traditionally been counted as an output, rather than outcome)

— interaction between and within communities (as a proxy for gauging cohesion and integration at a community-level).

Further research is required to test the validity and reliability of using outputs as a proxy for outcome indicators, particularly when tracking change over time for different cohorts and communities. The project-level evaluations, and Evaluation Tool, produced through the CVE Program are an opportunity to examine whether this direction is viable and would support ongoing data collection.

5.4 Summary

The CVE Program seeks to reduce the risk of violent extremism in NSW, by minimising the likelihood of an incident, while also ensuring appropriate response capability is in place. While there are well documented challenges for assessing the effectiveness of the CVE Program against these objectives, there is clear evidence of impact against enabling and intermediate outcomes related to resilience and capability building.

The work under the CVE Program to date is strengthening protective factors against violent extremism, while building a robust recovery capability should incidents occur. There is evidence that the projects are collectively supporting the breadth of the CVE Program objectives, with the strongest evidence against community resilience and capacity building.

The CVE Program involves a spread of activity from resilience building to specific interventions. While consistent data were not available, there are early signs that both the cohesion and resilience building initiatives and targeted interventions for individuals have contributed to outcomes. The cohesion and resilience projects were generally able to demonstrate a strong reach into the community, engaging a large number of community groups and young people, while the more targeted projects generally showed intensive service delivery to a small and relatively homogenous cohort.

Reporting against the high-level outcomes has been more challenging due to measurement issues. While important to acknowledge these ultimate outcomes, there is value in focusing on the impact on the communities in which the programs are implemented. Future measurement of outcomes could consider the use of local-level indicators (which are particularly valuable for social cohesion and community resilience-focused projects) or measurement of outputs as a proxy for outcomes (leveraging the evidence base in other fields to build a strong case for factors like participation).

6

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Chapter provides the key findings and recommendations for the future of the CVE Program.

6.1 Findings

The CVE Program was launched in response to the rise and continuing threat of violent extremism, both specifically within NSW and more generally. As demonstrated by the Christchurch attack in March 2019, there is an ongoing if not increasing threat to peace, harmony and inclusion in the Western world.[48] These incidents highlight the need for whole-of-government responses at both a state and federal level to ensure that governments are able to prevent violence wherever possible.

They further highlight the importance of monitoring emerging vulnerabilities and risks which requires a combination of close connection to community, information sharing arrangements across agencies (both state and Commonwealth), and strong research links (including international jurisdictions and centres of excellence).

In recognising the clear need for ongoing efforts in this area, the future design will need to consider the positioning of the CVE Program, projects funded under the CVE Program, and populations addressed.

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[48] RAND Corporation. 2019. Practical Terrorism Prevention: Reexamining U.S. National Approaches to Addressing the Threat of Ideologically Motivated Violence. Accessed at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2647.html. P 33.

6.1.1   Positioning

BOX 6.1   KEY FINDING - POSITIONING

Connections with CT securitises CVE programs which risks community engagement and confidence. CVE programs should be mainstreamed where possible, addressing violent extremism as one of many vulnerabilities, while maintaining whole-of-government accountability. This approach is best suited to community-based programs focused on prevention and resilience.

The CVE Program has encompassed a wide spectrum of activities to build community resilience, divert those at risk, disengage those with extremist views, and improve recovery from incidents. While the confluence of these objectives has been positive, it has limited the ability of some line agencies to engage with community, which is an essential success factor for CVE projects.

Bringing CVE together with CT in this way has rendered achievement of the CVE Program's objectives difficult in any community-based setting, impacting not only on projects like COMPACT but also on education, policing and community services. Although an inherently complex and difficult area of policy, the future impact of the CVE Program is dependent on addressing these tensions.

If the status quo is maintained, using the language of CVE and CT while still incorporating projects that address community resilience, the challenges referenced above are likely to perpetuate, with ongoing community concerns and the fear of securitised approaches.

One strategy to mitigate this risk is to actively engage on the interface between community resilience, CVE and CT – both with community stakeholders and within government. This approach has largely been adopted by the CVE Team and the resultant engagement efforts have significantly mitigated community criticism – with the CVE Program relatively well received by community stakeholders when compared to other CVE initiatives

This approach aims to build a mature understanding of the relationship between general programming for line agencies and CVE-specific activities which could, in the longer term, produce a holistic and well-integrated policy agenda. In the short term, however, the linkages with the CT are likely to continue to cause challenges that may place at some risk the achievement of the CVE Program's objectives.

Another, and perhaps the most fundamentally different, strategy is to take de-exceptionalise violent extremism while maintaining accountability for CVE outcomes. This approach, common to emergency management, public health and crime prevention, recognises that the steps relevant to prevent and respond to one vulnerability are similar to the next. For the CVE context, program philosophy would be inclusive of the threat of violence from all sources (ranging from ideologically inspired individuals to aggressive or anti-social behaviours). This would support the integration of mainstream programs with CVE-related components to ensure adequate prevention and response capabilities.

De-exceptionalising violent extremism would provide opportunities for the NSW Government to maintain accountability for CVE-related outcomes while mitigating some of the risks associated with linking CVE and CT. Program design could include line agencies receiving CVE funding for mainstream activities that target similar vulnerabilities, without requiring an explicit or public focus on CVE. In turn, this would enable closer alignment with the concept of preventing violent extremism, which recognises that the protective factors for violent extremism cannot be easily differentiated from those for other forms of anti-social behaviour.

6.1.2   Project approach

BOX 6.2   KEY FINDING – PROJECTS APPROACH

Further effort should be directed to community-based prevention, in line with the current research base on effective CVE initiatives.

It is important that the CVE Program continues to address the spectrum from general resilience building through to specific interventions to provide a holistic and integrated whole-of-government approach. However, there is a great deal of variability in project approaches across such a broad spectrum.

The literature on CVE initiatives stresses the need for a community-based prevention-focused, rather than securitised, approach in order to engage communities and empower effective locally-driven programs. The 2019 RAND Report, *Practical Terrorism Prevention*, recommended that efforts should be focused on locally designed, managed and driven programs with government helping communities to identify and implement solutions for their context.[49]

Within prevention-focused initiatives, there are two general approaches – one involves 'protecting' the community from extremism (a more top-down approach), whereas another involves empowering the community to address divisive and polarising perspectives (a ground-up approach).[50]

The bulk of initiatives under the CVE Program would be considered 'top-down' in that they have been developed, designed and delivered by line agencies (although generally involving some form of community consultation). These provide a valuable mechanism for the early identification of individuals who may be radicalising toward violence while attempting to circumvent (further) engagement in the justice system. However, top-down approaches are more likely to increase stigma and discrimination which can lead to an increased risk of violent extremism.

The 'ground-up' approach lends itself to an increase in the number of community-based projects to help build protective factors. This would align with the evidence base of other subject areas, where communities "have long been understood to be critical to violence prevention across a spectrum of violence types"[51]. At present, COMPACT, Step Together, the NSW Strategic Communications Plan and the CVE Training Program have included components that equip communities with the resources to operate in such contexts.

The CVE Program could benefit from exploring other opportunities to build capability within the community to respond to divisive elements, be it through educational initiatives for young people or access to community programs for adults.

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[49] RAND Corporation. 2019. Practical Terrorism Prevention: Reexamining U.S. National Approaches to Addressing the Threat of Ideologically Motivated Violence. Accessed at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2647.html.
[50] Stephens, W., Sieckenlinck, S. and Boutellier, H. 2019. Preventing Violent Extremism: A Review of the Literature. Studies in Conflict and Terrorism.
[51] Ellis, B. and Abdi, S. 2017. Building Community Resilience to Violent Extremism Through Genuine Partnerships. American Psychologist Vol. 72 (3):289 –300.

6.1.3 Populations

BOX 6.3   KEY FINDINGS – POPULTATIONS

There are gaps to be addressed in the form of emerging issues (right wing extremism, incels, other ideologically motivated groups and children/families returning from conflict zones) and linkages between existing projects to help address program gaps.

There is an ongoing policy debate regarding which cohorts should be the primary beneficiaries of CVE projects, namely whether the focus should be on a tightly defined population or a broader approach.

If the CVE Program were to adopt a stronger community-based, preventative approach, mainstreaming or diffusing activities could help address other risk factors that directly or indirectly contribute to violent extremism by de-stabilising individuals and communities. These factors include drug use, anti-social behaviour, unemployment and disengagement.[52] Such an approach would align with the broader scope adopted by a number of the projects (such as School Communities Working Together and PRISM) to working with vulnerable individuals, regardless of their connection to violent extremism.

If, however, the CVE Program retains a more constrained approach with a concentration on top-down interventions, any mainstreaming of activities is likely to experience ongoing challenges with both line agencies and the communities they serve. Given the experience of similar initiatives domestically and abroad, such an approach could be expected to encounter ongoing community mistrust and an undermining of the overarching objectives.

A further consideration in terms of populations relates to the nature of the issue being targeted. The majority of the projects under the CVE Program have reached multicultural and diverse communities, or individuals associated with Islamist extremism. There is increasing recognition of the risk inherent in other ideologically driven communities, particularly:

— right wing extremists[53]

— women and children of returned fighters[54]

— issue based extremism (for example, animal libertarians, environmental activists and incels)

— the release of radicalised inmates from custodial sentences.[55]

However, programming has not kept pace with these developments and there are often gaps in the projects available, particularly in the space of targeted and specific interventions. The CVE Program could, in future, consider prioritising resources to either research or projects aimed at addressing these gaps.

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[52] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2018. Drivers of violent extremism, accessed at https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/terrorism/module-2/key-issues/drivers-of-violent-extremism.html; Lauland et al. 2019. Countering Violent Extremism in Australia and Abroad: A Framework for Characterising CVE Programs in Australia, the United States, and Europe. RAND Corporation, pp 35-36; UN General Assembly. 2015. Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, A/70/674. Accessed at https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674; Angus. 2016. Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Causes and Responses, NSW Parliamentary Research Service e-brief 1/2016.; Bergin and Thomas. 2017. Building community resilience to counter violent extremism, Policy Forum, ANU College of Asia & The Pacific, accessed at http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/news-events/all-stories/building-community-resilience-counter-violent-extremism
[53] Centre for Strategic and International Studies. 2018. The Rise of Far-Right Extremism in the United States. Accessed at https://www.csis.org/analysis/rise-far-right-extremism-united-states.
[54] Cook and Vale (2018), *From Daesh to 'Diaspora': Tracing the Women and Minors of Islamic State*, London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation.
[55] Graver (2018), *Managing the release of convicted terrorists*, The Lowy Institute, accessed at https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/managing-release-convicted-terrorists 12 June 2016.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1   Project-level recommendations

The table below provides specific findings and recommendations in relation to the key projects funded through the CVE Program. These should be read alongside and are consistent with the broader recommendations made for the CVE Program overall.

FIGURE 6.1   PROJECT-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Project	Recommendations
COMPACT	• Expand funding, with a continued focus on community-based programs and co-design. • Explore opportunities to provide programs that address emerging issues. • Require the development of project logics, evaluation frameworks and embedded data collection where possible.
CVE Training Program	• Re-allocate funding to coordination function. • Focus on supporting capability building on emerging issues and improvements in practice.
Engagement and Support Program (ESP)	• Enhance case management capabilities and function, while maintaining linkages with intelligence gathering and community services.
Fund for Future Initiatives	• Maintain current level of funding. • Maintain collaborative governance structure through CVESC. • Establish prioritization criteria that addresses alignment with objectives, collective need and potential risks.
Juvenile Justice (JJ) CVE Package	• Mainstream business-as-usual activities (i.e. training, case management, legal and policy advice). • Allocate CVE funding to specialised and innovative components, including CVE risk assessments, expert reports and research.
PRISM	• Strengthen interface with other CVE Program activities (including JJ CVE Package, ESP and community-based programs) and provide support to explore interface with community corrections.
School Communities Working Together (SCWT)	• Mainstream SCWT activities. • Allocate CVE funding to other education-related projects (i.e. student focused education programs, curriculum development on peacebuilding and social cohesion, linkages with other CVE Programs).
Step Together	• Collect additional data on outcomes for services users to support a cost-benefit assessment. • Review the relative benefit of community engagement activities against the support line/online supports.

6.2.2   Program-level recommendations

BOX 6.4   RECOMMENDATION ONE – FUNDING

Maintain dedicated funding for policy and program coordination of CVE to deliver the CVE priorities under the NSW CT Strategy.

The funding provided through the CVE Program has provided a dedicated focus for CVE efforts within the NSW Government, ensuring priority is given to both individual projects and the development of whole-of-government perspectives.

At present, the majority of resourcing for line agencies is provided through the CVE Program, and feedback indicated there was limited support available through internal budgets. There is no readily available funding through private or philanthropic sources for community-led activity in this area.

There is a need for ongoing funding for a CVE Program in NSW. Line agencies are continuing to develop their internal approaches to CVE policies and programs. Should the funding be removed, it is likely that CVE-related projects will not receive internal funding or may become a lower priority within line agencies. This would risk losing the momentum built to date.

Ongoing funding should be supported by a collaborative approach across government that allows the CVE Program to be responsive to changing dynamics and emerging issues. This requires the continuation of relationships between line agencies and the Commonwealth, and connections with international jurisdictions and research bodies. Such an approach would support the continued implementation of a coherent policy and program agenda that is clearly articulated, funded and evaluated.

BOX 6.5   RECOMMENDATION TWO – WORK PLAN

Develop a work plan for the second phase of the CVE Program that includes projects across the spectrum from community resilience through to diversion and disengagement.

The second phase of the CVE Program requires a strategic approach to planning that ensures coverage across the objectives of resilience, capability, diversion and disengagement. Projects funded under the CVE Program should continue to address both community resilience and cohesion programs as well as more targeted individual interventions, in line with the current evidence base on preventing and countering violent extremism.

Funding allocation should be aligned with the workplan reflecting the level of priority and effort. Opportunities to expand the investment in community-based programs should be identified, given their demonstrated contribution to achieving outcomes. Funding allocation should also consider recommendations 3 and 4.

BOX 6.6   RECOMMENDATION THREE – PROGRAMS

Develop responses to address current program gaps regarding emerging issues and whole-of-government approaches.

Current program gaps should be addressed through the development of initiatives concentrating on right wing extremism and other emerging risks such as children and families returning from conflict zones. Other gaps include initiatives in the education system (particularly whole-of-school or curriculum approaches) and the absence of supports for at-risk adults in the community not currently known to law enforcement or justice. The Community Support Groups run in Victoria provide a valuable model for programs that address this cohort. In line with recommendation 2, opportunities to do so through community-based approaches should be explored.

The CVE Program should also increase the focus on connecting the funded projects to ensure that opportunities to provide holistic supports are provided. For example, this could initially take the form of a mapping exercise to understand definitions, thresholds and supports provided by line agencies to track the potential journey of an at-risk individual.

The research is, however, less clear on the need for a formal connection with CT. It is anticipated that balancing the evidence of 'what works' with community and stakeholder responses in this area will be an ongoing challenge as the policy develops and matures. This will be directly impacted by the future positioning of the CVE Program, discussed in the previous section.

BOX 6.7   RECOMMENDATION FOUR – FUND FOR FUTURE INITIATIVES

Continue to support the Fund for Future Initiatives to maintain the responsiveness of the CVE Program.

The Fund for Future Initiatives provides flexible funding to enable quick responses to emerging issues. This unique design is essential to operating effectively given the policy and practice environment continues to change.

The next phase of the CVE Program should embed the Fund for Future Initiatives with a similar funding level, or potentially pooling resources from other project activities that are no longer continuing. This will allow the CVE Program to respond to emerging issues and adaptations to practice as both Australian and international jurisdictions build the evidence base.

BOX 6.8　　　　RECOMMENDATION FIVE – CENTRAL COORDINATION

Maintain the central coordination function for the CVE Program to continue to strengthen the whole-of-government capability while managing the interface with the Commonwealth and line agencies.

The central coordination function for the CVE Program has been critical to its effectiveness. The CVE Program has helped build interagency relationships, collaboration and capacity. While this has helped line agencies build their understanding and formalise relationships, it is considered too early to move away from a centralised and coordinated approach. Continued central support is required to coordinate activity across NSW and with the Commonwealth, using a single contact point or relationship lead within government to maintain strong agency alignment at both a state and national level.

Specifically, there is still further work to do in developing a whole of government capability, understanding of the interface between CVE objectives and line agencies' priorities, and the overarching goals for the program. The centralised coordination role should continue to develop this approach to ensure coherence, engagement and support for ongoing work – with a particular focus on agreeing whole-of-government responses to emerging risks.

Given the recent MoG changes, it is likely that this coordination function will transfer from DPC to the Department of Justice. There are a number of benefits from such a move, including an enhanced ability to leverage operational expertise, improved oversight of other programs related to (but not traditionally associated with) CVE, and improved conceptual alignment with organisational priorities.

While the work to date has built a strong collaborative approach, driven by interagency relationships rather than accountability, there are risks of operating a coordination function outside a central agency – namely, the perception of reduced accountability and limited levers to engage line agencies. Maintaining a coordination function outside of DPC will thus require the embedding of collaborative approaches, ongoing support for formal governance structures, and champions within Justice to lead the CVE agenda.

BOX 6.9　　　　RECOMMENDATION SIX – MEASUREMENT

Develop individual project logics for funded activities, supported by evaluation frameworks and data collection strategies.

The NSW CVE Approach provides a clear articulation of intended outcomes, supported by a Theory of Change. While these resources have been helpful in guiding the focus and direction of activities, line agencies have had some difficulty in identifying project-level outcomes and indicators. This, in turn, makes it difficult to build a picture of the collective impact of the CVE Program.

The CVE Program would benefit further from improved measurement of impact, and this requires an investment of time and planning. This could be done through the development of project-level logics that are consistent with the overall NSW CVE Approach. These logics should be supported by localised, project-level indicators that provide a more tangible measurement of the progress of project activities, and their impact on the community that they operate within.

An appropriate way to progress this would be via integration into the Evaluation Tool that has been developed, which provides an evidence-based approach to identifying key outcomes and indicators for program and project design. However, further funded support may be required (potentially through the CVE Training Package) to build internal line agency skills in evaluation.

BOX 6.10   RECOMMENDATION FIVE – RESEARCH

Allocate a portion of the CVE Program funding to knowledge sharing and the translation of research to practice.

There is extensive work underway in other jurisdictions and with the Commonwealth to support the enhancement of the evidence base for CVE initiatives. The collective impact of the CVE Program could be enhanced through the development of a knowledge sharing function that assists in translating contemporary research, and local experience, into practice for line agencies.

This would ensure that the lessons learned can be shared and that agencies maintain knowledge currency on emerging issues, developments in practice and potential innovations. The Commonwealth Research and Evaluation Working Group provides an existing forum that could be leveraged to support NSW-led projects on CVE-related research.

This function will be particularly relevant for changing practices and the trialling of CVE programming with different cohorts. For example, the CVE Program has included projects with application to young people and juveniles, where there is limited available information on how to appropriately assess risk, what tools are effective for this cohort, and how to monitor progress.

Support could be provided for external academics to conduct research in collaboration with line agencies, or through the provision of direct assistance to line agencies to conduct research in practice. An important feature here is that research activity is aligned to needs (for example secondary research, primary research, or applied research) or emerging gaps (such as developing threats or risks to government practice). The Commonwealth Research and Evaluation Working Group provides an existing forum that could be leveraged to support NSW-led projects on CVE-related research.

APPENDICES

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The Appendices include:

— **Appendix A:** Research Questions.

KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A

The table below contains the key research questions that guided the evaluation, including data collection and analysis.

TABLE A.1   KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Heading
Process evaluation
Were mechanisms in place to enable continuous program and capability improvement?
How effective were these mechanisms in changing program parameters?
To what extent has the process been effective? For example: – Program design?   – Governance arrangements?   – Supporting processes?
To what extent has the process demonstrated a culture of learning, sharing and improvement?
How well was the NSW/CVE team able to drive the CVE program agenda through collaboration with existing and new networks, both in NSW and at a national level?
How well did the program align and/or interact with other government or community programs targeting similar objectives, clients or activities?
Did the programs reach the groups that needed the programs most (i.e. target population)?
What opportunities are there to improve the process and program?
Should any programs be scaled up or scaled back?
Was the implementation of a CVE package appropriate?
Outcomes evaluation
To what extent has the NSW CVE approach pointed to indicators of high level CVE outcomes?
What impact have the activities had on outcomes, and to what extent can this be measured?
Have CVE activities at the pointy end or the soft end displayed greater contributions to outcomes?
Is there any indication that mainstreaming or diffusing activities in the CVE space is more beneficial?
To what extent has the CVE branding helped or hindered progress towards outcomes?
Where should future CVE resources be allocated?
Were there unintended consequences?

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