



Islamic Council of Victoria president Mohammed Mohideen. Picture: Lawrence

Islamic Council so out of touch

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THE Islamic Council of Victoria's failure to understand the challenges posed by Islamist extremism has been laid bare by its extraordinary submission to a parliamentary inquiry into freedom of religion.

By calling for "safe spaces" for young Muslims to make "inflammatory" comments and criticising measures including the use of control orders against terror suspects, the ICV has not only shown itself to be out of touch with mainstream Australia but has also revealed a permissive attitude to Islamist attitudes.

It is clear that ICV does not grasp the importance of counter-terrorism measures nor the role it must play in defeating the extremist scourge. Such wilful blindness to the reality of the terrorism threat can only aid radicalisation, not eliminate it.

By seeking to wrap the Muslim community in the cloak of victimhood, the ICV does a disservice to the 200,000 Victorian Muslims it seeks to represent.

Deadly acts of jihad around the world, from Manchester to Tehran to Jakarta, show that Islam is providing a framework for terrorism. Impressionable youth can already access all manner of disturbing material on the net. The last thing any government should be doing is aiding their path to radicalisation by providing a "safe space" for them to air their hateful beliefs.

As it is, there are 300 Victorians on terror watchlists, many of them young men, who are suspected of holding extremist views and wishing harm on Australia.

If we are to make real inroads into eliminating ugly, intolerant, anti-Australian attitudes among elements of the Muslim community, then we need Islamic leaders, including imams, and parents to take action. It is not enough to simply condemn acts of terror after they have occurred.

The interests of Victoria's Muslim community are not served by the ICV's efforts in seeking to minimise and obfuscate the incidence of Islamist terrorism. In the aftermath of this week's deadly Brighton siege, committed by radicalised Muslim Yacqub Khayre, the ICV questioned whether the crime should be characterised as an act of terror.

In 2014, the ICV objected to radicalised Muslim Numan Haider — who launched a vicious knife attack against two counter-terrorism officers in Endeavour Hills before being shot dead — being called a terrorist.



Multicultural Affairs Minister Robin Scott. Picture: Mark Dadswell

As Victoria's peak Islamic group, the ICV has been the beneficiary of millions of dollars of taxpayer money over the years. That funding is now under threat with both Labor and the Coalition condemning the group's permissive attitude to extremism. "There is no safe way to rail against the West. There is no safe way to rail against the values that we hold dear," Victorian Premier Dan Andrews said. "I am very troubled by the suggestion that we might have a space where people could be radical as part of a deradicalisation program. That makes no sense to me. "We will be having a very close look at the Islamic Council of Victoria's funding in a broader sense."

Multicultural Affairs Minister Robin Scott was similarly scathing of ICV's proposals: "This idea is deeply unhelpful and wrong. Under no circumstances would we support the diversion of state funding from counter-terrorism initiatives for such a proposal."

Tim Smith, parliamentary secretary to Opposition Leader Matthew Guy, also condemned the submission as "head-in-the-sand ignorance that will do nothing to improve social cohesion".

Instead of giving cover to those who hold abhorrent views, the ICV should be devoted to identifying and eliminating extremist elements whose inflammatory anti-West rhetoric can lead to deadly acts of violence.



Masked men launch an attack against Andrew Bolt. Picture: Sky News

DEFENDING FREE SPEECH

THE level of public debate in Australia hit a new low on Tuesday when Leftist activists stalked and physically assaulted conservative columnist Andrew Bolt. In an act of cowardice that should be condemned by all, the masked men launched an attack against Bolt as he talked to a female fan outside a Lygon St restaurant ahead of a book launch.

Increasingly, far-Left activists are using the threat of violence to shut down debate and events, including Bolt's own book launch last July. Robust debate is a feature of a free society, but attacking an idea should never descend to physical violence against an individual. The attack against Bolt was all the more loathsome given the string of death threats the columnist has received from Islamist extremists.

Bolt is to be applauded for fighting back and refusing to be a victim of the thugs who use violence to intimidate those who do not share their world view.

Victoria Police are, thankfully, taking the assault seriously. And in another welcome development, Bolt is auctioning the suit the attackers ruined with proceeds going to Very Special Kids. The top bid last night stood at \$5500.