



ACT
Government

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM STRATEGY

2023-26



We thank the many and diverse stakeholders who have collaborated with Security and Emergency Management Division to develop this Strategy.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF MINISTER AND ATTORNEY-GENERAL

The ACT is a successful and harmonious multicultural society. This is one of our greatest strengths against hatred and division which can lead to radicalisation and violent extremism. Our nation-leading efforts in promoting wellbeing, human rights and inclusivity across the community support Our Vision for this inaugural ACT Countering Violent Extremism Strategy – for Canberra to continue to be a safe, connected, and inclusive city.

The ACT is not immune to the increasingly complex and changing threat of violent extremism, which erodes social cohesion and undermines Government efforts for community safety and inclusiveness. Countering violent extremism (CVE) is a long-term challenge that requires the combined efforts of governments, law enforcement, community groups, academia and individuals. Our approach to CVE is underpinned by a coordinated national approach through partnerships between all Australian Governments, non-government agencies and community groups that supports a consistent approach to prevent and counter violent extremism, and provides support to individuals at risk of radicalising to violent extremism.

In the first *ACT Countering Violent Extremism Strategy* (the Strategy), the ACT Government will enhance whole-of-government awareness and understanding on violent extremism, the emerging challenges and complexities it presents, and how collectively we can prevent and counter it in our communities. The Strategy provides guidance for officials to build a shared understanding of violent extremism and awareness on how existing and planned activities contribute positively to CVE efforts. The Strategy also supports broader initiatives to strengthen safety, prosperity, wellbeing, cohesion and inclusivity in the ACT, such as the *ACT Wellbeing Framework*, and the *National Security Priorities 2023-26*.

Through our combined efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism in the Strategy, we will continue to strengthen the safety, connectedness and inclusivity of our city.

Andrew Barr MLA
ACT Chief Minister

Shane Rattenbury MLA
ACT Attorney-General

INTRODUCTION

The ACT is a welcoming, prosperous and cohesive community which has not experienced significant violent disruption to-date. However, as with other jurisdictions, the Territory is vulnerable to the increasingly complex and changing threat of violent extremism. The drivers of violent extremism are complex and unclear, making detection and disruption difficult for authorities.

Our response to violent extremism is focused on those who are vulnerable to radicalisation, manipulation and disinformation. As the security landscape continues to evolve in coming years, we will proactively collaborate as 'One Service' to prevent, counter and respond to violent extremism threats. These efforts are supported by wider initiatives to strengthen inclusivity and cohesion in our communities, and support the aims of the **ACT Wellbeing Framework**, including safety, identity and belonging, and social connection.

Preventing Violent Extremism is one of six priority areas under the ACT Government's **National Security Priorities 2023-26**. The National Security Priorities 2023-26 include objectives to integrate national security with our broader interests and values to support safety, prosperity, wellbeing, cohesion and inclusivity in our communities.

The **ACT CVE Strategy** (the Strategy) has been developed by the Justice and Community Safety Directorate Security and Emergency Management Division (JACS SEMD), in collaboration with the ACT CVE Steering Committee (ACT CVESC), to ensure our personnel understand what violent extremism is, how it manifests and why we strive to minimise

its impact on our community. The Strategy defines our objectives and activities to enhance whole-of-government CVE awareness and education.

The Strategy draws from, and is informed by, national frameworks, strategies and initiatives. It is underpinned by a coordinated national approach through partnerships between all Australian Governments, non-government agencies and community groups. These partnerships support a consistent approach to prevent and counter violent extremism, and support to individuals at risk of radicalising to violent extremism.

Violent extremism is a willingness to use unlawful violence, or support the use of violence by others, to promote a political, ideological or religious goal. Violent extremist actions and behaviours are undertaken by a minority of individuals who seek to inflict harm, inspire fear and undermine our community cohesion. As a result, an act of violent extremism can have a significant impact that may last years after an incident.

Countering violent extremism (CVE) is about preventing violence before it occurs. It is a long-term challenge that requires the combined efforts of governments, law enforcement, community groups, academia and individuals.



OUR VISION

For Canberra to continue to be a safe, connected and inclusive city where the risk of violent extremism is minimal.



OUR MISSION

To enhance whole-of-government awareness and understanding on violent extremism, the emerging challenges and complexities it presents, and how we can prevent and counter it in our communities.



OUR GOAL

The ACT Public Service has the knowledge and capability to prevent and counter violent extremism in our community through effective and consistent measures, reporting and early intervention programs.

OUR SHARED VALUES

Preventing and countering violent extremism is a shared responsibility that takes whole-of-community effort.

We strive to continuously improve our understanding and awareness, and share knowledge and learnings across government.

We take a strategic approach to our CVE activities to maintain sustainable capabilities and processes.

Our work supports a cohesive, safe and inclusive ACT community.



WHAT IS VIOLENT EXTREMISM?

In discussing violent extremism, and ways that we can help individuals who might be vulnerable to it, it is important to understand the terminology used to describe and differentiate violent extremism from other behaviours.

Violent extremism is defined as a willingness to use unlawful violence, or support the use of violence by others, to promote a political, ideological or religious goal. It includes terrorism, other forms of politically motivated violence and some forms of communal violence.

While it is okay to hold certain beliefs (even extreme ones), it is not acceptable to plan, use or explicitly encourage the use of violence as a method to further those beliefs. When an individual's beliefs move from being relatively mainstream to being supportive of drastic change in society that would have a negative impact on the rights and freedoms of others, this is known as **radicalisation**. This does not mean that an individual will become violent.

However, if an individual believes that violence is justified to achieve ideological, political or religious goals, this is where radicalisation has the potential to become **violent extremism**. The difference between radicalisation and violent extremism is that individuals can believe radical things or even promote radicalisation, but until violence becomes involved, it is only radicalisation. It becomes more dangerous and considered a threat to the community when it develops into violent extremism.

The term **countering violent extremism (CVE)** refers to a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from preventative measures through to engaging with

those who have radicalised to violent extremism. Intervention programs are a key CVE activity in the ACT to prevent individuals from becoming or remaining violent extremists, and to address the social impacts of violent extremism.

Is countering violent extremism the same thing as counter-terrorism?

Effective prevention and countering of violent extremism is distinct from but complements law enforcement and counter-terrorism activities. It requires a combination of initiatives that draw on law enforcement, intelligence, social policy, and community expertise to:

- identify and engage those at risk of radicalising to violent extremism;
- rehabilitate violent extremists; and
- to undertake focused activities to build communities' resilience to violent extremism and to counter the divisive social impacts of violent extremism by promoting community cohesion.

Visit the [Security and Emergency Management Division Intranet page](#) for factsheets and further information about the types of concerning behaviours that may indicate someone is radicalising to violent extremism.

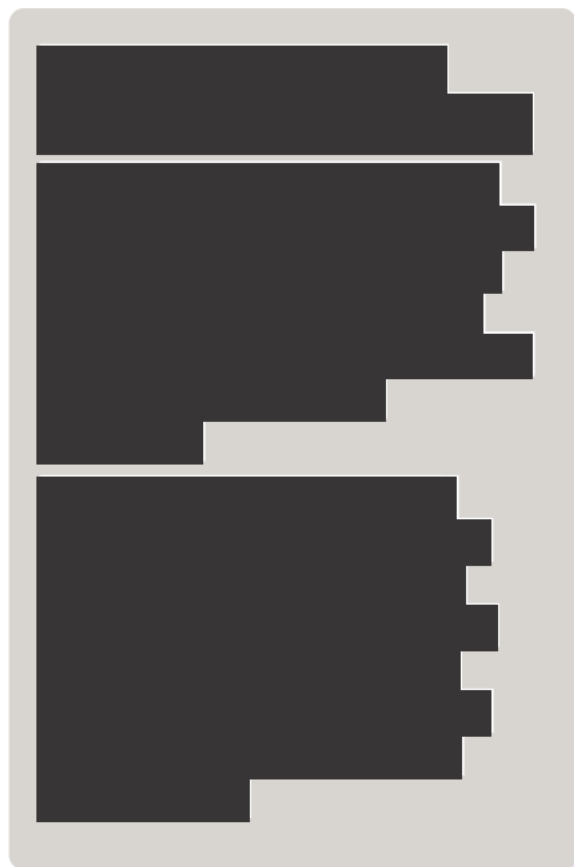
DESCRIBING VIOLENT EXTREMIST MOTIVATIONS

There are many different types of violent extremism. Motivations are varied and people can also be motivated by more than one issue, adding complexity to understanding the drivers of violent extremism. A growing number of individuals and groups no longer fit on the left-right spectrum, rather they are motivated by fear of societal collapse or a specific social or economic grievance or conspiracy.

Schedule 1.3(6)



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A CHANGING SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Violent extremism presents an enduring and evolving threat to the ACT, influenced by dynamics at the local and national levels, and overseas. The reach of extremist content online means individuals are radicalising very quickly. The radicalisation of minors is another concerning trend.

Schedule 1.3(6)

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Increased exploitation of the online environment

Violent extremists exploit the Internet to glorify terrorist acts; radicalise and recruit; incite others to commit acts of terrorism; and disseminate misinformation and disinformation with the intention of weakening the resilience of democracy and the social and cultural bonds of our communities. While a single piece of propaganda is unlikely to be the sole catalyst for violence, it can be amplified in online echo chambers where violent extremist ideologies proliferate without being challenged.

Increasingly, violent extremists are migrating away from mainstream social media sites to alt-tech and fringe platforms with permissive moderation and encryption that allows their behaviours to thrive. Online gaming platforms popular with young people are also exploited by violent extremists to share and encourage violent extremist ideologies and violence against others.

A TAILORED RESPONSE FOR THE ACT

The ACT is not immune to national and international challenges and trends in the security environment, particularly with the increasing threat posed by online radicalisation to violent extremism. However, while we can learn from our national and international partners, we acknowledge that the ACT environment is unique. Our approach to preventing and countering violent extremism will be commensurate to the differing risks, challenges and opportunities in the ACT, while being aligned and supporting national initiatives.

A tailored response to preventing and countering violent extremism enhances our understanding of, and response to, emerging issues and trends in the ACT context. We will deliver a tailored ACT approach to CVE by building:

- awareness and education across government on CVE and why it is important
- understanding of the CVE risks in the ACT
- an integrated whole-of-government approach to prevent violent extremism.

The Strategy has **five Objectives** to enhance whole-of-government awareness and understanding of violent extremism, emerging challenges and complexities, and how we prevent and counter it in the ACT. It provides a framework to identify, develop, enhance and maintain the capabilities required for the Territory to deliver CVE programs that align with national best practice, at a localised level.

Delivery of Phase 1 activities under the Strategy by 2025 will position us to deliver more coordinated and agile programs that support community engagement and wider social cohesion. Phase 2 activities by 2026 will expand our approach to include community sector stakeholders and partners in a whole-of-Territory effort to prevent and counter violent extremism.

The ACT CVE Steering Committee (ACT CVESC) will oversee delivery of activities under the Strategy. The ACT CVESC leads the Territory's effort to prevent and counter violent extremism and is responsible for the development of coordinated policy and programs, development and maintenance of CVE capability and awareness, and provision of strategic advice. Membership of the ACT CVESC comprises:

ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate

ACT Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

ACT Community Services Directorate

ACT Education Directorate

Canberra Health Services

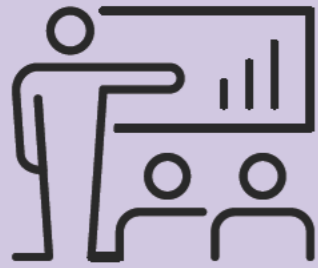
ACT Human Rights Commission

ACT Policing

The broad representation on the ACT CVESC recognises the breadth of work that is undertaken across the Territory that contributes to preventing and countering violent extremism outcomes. Harnessing the collective expertise of ACT CVESC members supports enhanced coordination, alignment and expansion, while minimising siloes and duplication of effort.

OUR OBJECTIVES 2023-26

PHASE 1: 2023-25



OBJECTIVE 1

Understand CVE trends, risks and emerging issues in the ACT

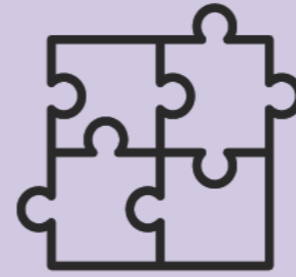
- Build capacity to understand and respond to current and emerging risks and needs



OBJECTIVE 2

Enhance capability and expertise in CVE

- Identify and implement training and education on how to recognise and respond to violent extremism concerns



OBJECTIVE 3

Align with and be led by national expertise and frameworks

- Support national priorities to ensure a unified approach to CVE

PHASE 2: 2025-26



OBJECTIVE 4

Provide an integrated, consistent approach to CVE prevention, minimisation and response across the ACT

- Coordinate a consistent policy direction for the ACT that is adaptive, flexible and supportive of national and local priorities



OBJECTIVE 5

Support community engagement and social cohesion

- Support the capacity of the ACT region to build resilience to counter violent extremism

PARTNERS

ACT PUBLIC SECTOR AGENCIES AND DIRECTORATES
FRONTLINE SERVICE SUPPORT ROLES

ACT COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR
ORGANISATIONS

Annex 1 sets out the activities to meet the Phase 1 Objectives.

Schedule 2.2(a)(x)

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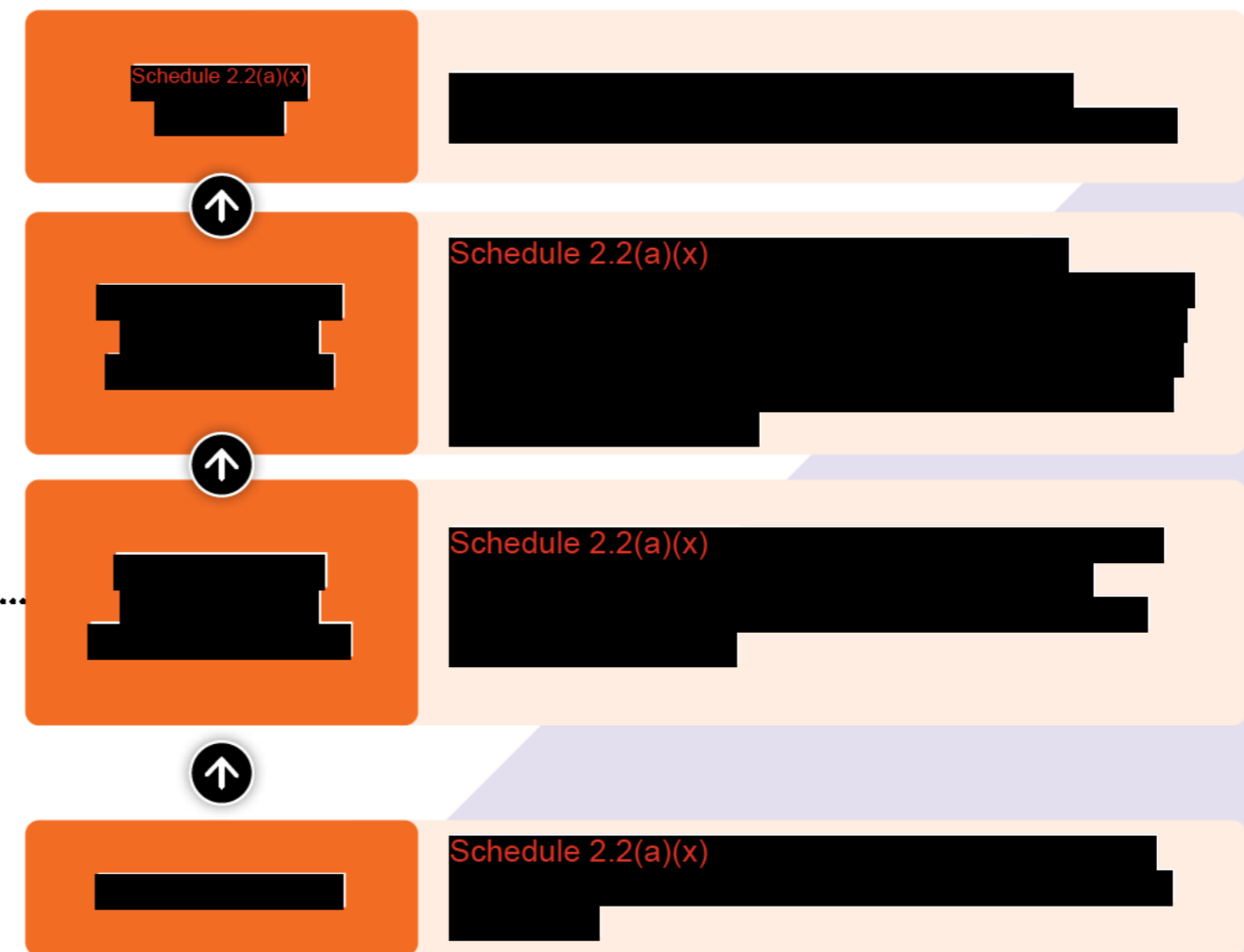
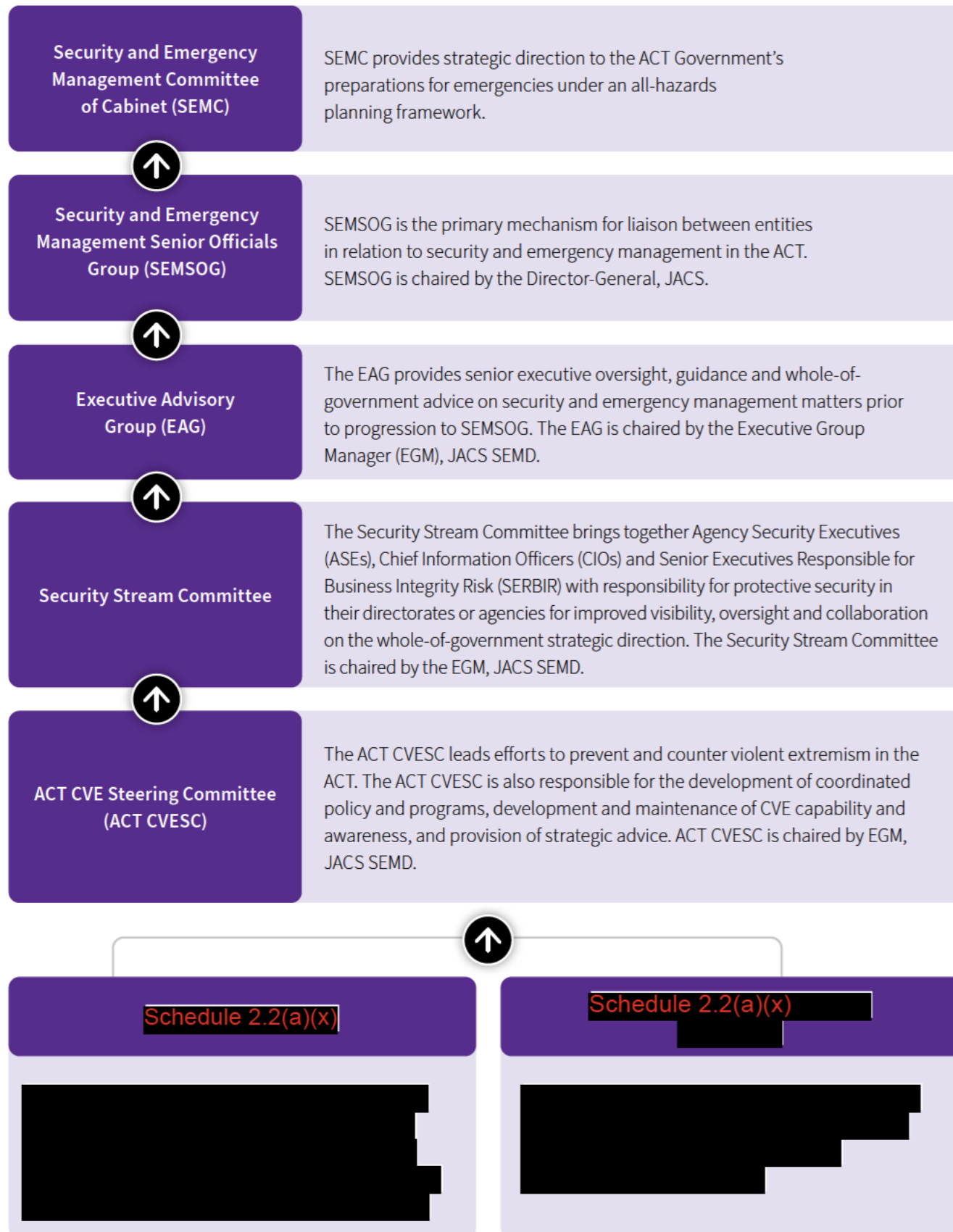
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DIAGRAM 1 – ACT AND NATIONAL CVE GOVERNANCE

Key

- Informs
- ↑ Reports to
- ACT Committee
- Commonwealth-led Committee with ACT representation



WHERE TO FIND FURTHER INFORMATION

CALL 000 IF THERE IS AN IMMEDIATE OR IMMINENT THREAT TO SAFETY

Report any suspicious activity to the *National Security Hotline* by calling 1800 123 400.

Suspicious behaviour that does not present an immediate threat should also be reported to *Crime Stoppers* on 1800 333 000, or via the online reporting form.

For queries relating to the Strategy or other CVE activities in the ACT, please contact *JACS SEMD* via ACTCVECoord@act.gov.au

For further information including factsheets, information about the LSTIP and our other CVE activities, please visit the *Security and Emergency Management Division Intranet*:

<https://actgovernment.sharepoint.com/sites/extranet-JACSSEMD>

Further information on the national *Living Safe Together Intervention Program* is available at:

<https://www.livingsafetogether.gov.au/>

ANNEX 1: PHASE 1 ACTIVITIES 2023-25

<p>OBJECTIVE 1</p>	<p>Understand CVE trends, risks and emerging issues in the ACT.</p> <p>Build capacity to understand and respond to current and emerging risks and needs.</p>
<p>ACTIVITIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work collaboratively with government and non-government stakeholders to identify risks and needs for the ACT. • Deliver training and awareness sessions to frontline public employees, to increase the understanding of radicalisation indicators and reporting pathways. • Maintain understanding of the local and regional security threat environment through proactive engagement with security, law enforcement and community partners. • Mapping of existing referral pathways and program coordination for CVE in the ACT, to identify improvements including deconfliction and collaboration with other programs, and to ensure sound program governance. • Identify improvements to data collection and sharing practices across the ACT, to better inform our understanding of the totality of CVE trends in the ACT. • Utilise the ACT CVESC to strengthen cross-directorate identification of CVE trends and priorities in the ACT, to bolster a proactive and strategic approach to addressing CVE challenges and opportunities. • Continuously review CVE risks and identification of mitigation strategies, through the CVE Risk Register overseen by ACT CVESC.
<p>OBJECTIVE 2</p>	<p>Enhance capability and expertise in CVE.</p> <p>Identify and implement training and education on how to recognise and respond to violent extremism concerns.</p>
<p>ACTIVITIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify CVE training needs in the ACT through gap analysis and comparison against national best practice. • Develop a tiered training plan to enhance, develop and maintain CVE capabilities for ACT Practitioners. • Develop and distribute an awareness-raising campaign and products for use across ACT Government, in schools and community sector organisations. • Harness existing materials, frameworks and learnings as part of continuous improvement reviews.
<p>OBJECTIVE 3</p>	<p>Align with and be led by national expertise and frameworks.</p> <p>Support national priorities to ensure a unified approach to CVE.</p>
<p>ACTIVITIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the development of national CVE policies through national and cross-jurisdictional engagement. • Promote national initiatives that raise awareness and understanding of CVE, including grants programs that ACT stakeholders are eligible to apply for. • Deliver national CVE programs in the ACT and contribute to the continuous improvement of these programs. • Represent the ACT at national committees and working groups, continuing to take active leadership roles.

ANNEX 2: PHASE 2 ACTIVITIES 2025-26

OBJECTIVE 4

Provide an integrated, consistent approach to CVE prevention, minimisation and response across the ACT.

Coordinate a consistent policy direction for the ACT that is adaptive, flexible and supportive of national and local priorities.

ACTIVITIES

Activities to deliver Phase 2 Objectives will be developed in consultation with government and community partners following the completion and evaluation of Phase 1.

OBJECTIVE 5

Support community engagement and social cohesion.

Support the capacity of the ACT region to build resilience to violent extremism.

