

**Australia should heed warning of top UK officer about ‘Muslim stereotyping’**

There were lessons for Australia in warnings issued in London by a top British police officer, Civil Liberties Australia president Dr Kristine Klugman said today.

“In the fight against terror tactics, we need Muslims on side – alienating Muslim communities is counter-productive,” she said.

“The new extended powers and draconian laws haven’t led to conviction of a terrorist in Australia; it’s old-fashioned intelligence work that is proving invaluable.

“Laws and secret powers won’t prevent terrorism; only excellent intelligence work, in cooperation with the community, can stop attacks before they happen,” Dr Klugman said.

In Manchester, Metropolitan Police assistant commissioner Tarique Ghaffur told a Black Police Association conference this week that only 17 of the 701 people arrested under anti-terror laws between the September 11, 2001 and the end of 2004 had been convicted.

Three only of the 17 involved Islamic terrorism, he said.

Assistant Commissioner Ghaffur is the head of Scotland Yard’s central operations squad, which includes its specialist firearms team,

“There is a very real danger that the counter-terrorism label is also being used by other law-enforcement agencies to the effect that there is a real risk of pressurising minority communities,” he said.

“The impact of this will be that just at the time we need the confidence and trust of these communities, they may retreat inside themselves.”

Assistant Commissioner Ghaffur called for an independent judicial review into the pressurizing of young Muslims as part of the over-riding imperative to stop a repeat of last year’s London transport bombings.

He cited anti-terrorism stops and searches and ‘passenger profiling (the screening of passengers on flights and other transport) as examples where Muslims felt unfairly stereotyped.

Such practices tended to be based more on physical appearance than on information, he said.

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