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## MEDIA RELEASE

### AIS Condemns the Terrorist Attack on Mosques in Christchurch

The Australian Intercultural Society not only condemns the terrorist attack on the Mosques in Christchurch but is deeply concerned about how right wing extremist ideology has been able to plan a devastating attack in one of the most peaceful cities in the world. The mass shooting of Muslim worshippers in the 2 Mosques – Al Noor Mosque and Linwood Mosque resulted in 49 deaths with many injured.

From the media reports thus far, this was a pre-meditated and carefully orchestrated attack by an extremist imbued with hate against Muslims. The perpetrator, Brenton Tarrant, knew very well that the Friday prayer time attracts a large congregation and was determined to wreak maximum damage. It is concerning to hear from the footage of the perpetrator that mental health issues were not at play and that this callous act was deliberate and executed in full consciousness with the purpose of killing as many Muslims as possible. Brenton Tarrant specifically references Anders Behring Breivik, the anti-Islam Norwegian terrorist as being his source of inspiration.

The term terrorist is not exclusively applicable to one group of faith adherents, ethnicity or ideology. Terrorism is an ideology of its own making attracting individuals who are determined to violate the fundamental rights of others and through violence get their message amplified, however much it contravenes the convention of human rights. The AIS believes every individual has a right to exercise freedom of speech but it should be done so in the democratic framework by using the art of persuasion underpinned by mutual respect, even if you disagree with the other person's views. The AIS affirms all citizens of a nation should respect the laws of the land and work within the political, legal and social framework of the nation to argue their views.

We applaud the New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern in her firm resolve to unite her country against hate. We believe the resilient people of NZ will rise above this incident and be a stronger nation because of it. We also thank the Police in their swift response in neutralising the perpetrator.

Now more than ever is a time for the people of goodwill to continue to work together to grow the core of humanity, to foster a society of peaceful co-existence for their loved ones and future generations. We express our heartfelt condolences to the victim's families afflicted by today's heinous act and wish a speedy recovery to those injured.

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