

# Research reveals the key to reducing prison radicalisation

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Credit: Les Haines

New research from The ANU shows people imprisoned on terrorism offences stand a better chance of being rehabilitated when placed in general prison populations, than when kept in isolation or in a separate location with other terrorists.

The study, which primarily looked at inmates in Philippine prisons over

a 10-year period, challenges the traditional view that violent extremist offenders will spread their radical ideology amongst other prisoners.

Researchers Dr. Clarke Jones of the ANU Research School of Psychology and Dr. Raymund Narag said the study conducted a comparison between incarcerated terrorists dispersed within the general [prison](#) populations versus those isolated and segregated.

"We found when inmates interact with other inmate cohorts, you get a change of beliefs and sometimes behaviours over time," Dr. Jones said.

"If you isolate inmates and keep them together in their cohorts, they enhance their attitudes and come out worse."

While policy differs from country to country and state to state, Dr. Jones said many Australian states choose to keep terror offenders separated from general prison populations, in facilities such as the NSW Goulburn Correctional Centre known as the 'Supermax'.

The study also showed conditions within a prison played a strong role in a terror offender's chance of rehabilitation.

"The results showed the harsher the environment, the greater the chance of prison radicalisation, and the less [chance](#) of rehabilitation," he said.

"When you put someone into really bad conditions, you can't expect positive change."

Dr. Jones said over the course of 10 years the study had been able to track the results of change to the Filipino prison system, from fairly lax conditions to tight conditions.

"In the last 12 to 18 months we have seen significant change following

the strict [conditions](#) implemented by the Duterte Government," Dr. Jones said.

"Since then we've seen a fairly drastic change to the attitudes, behaviour and health of the inmates."

The research was conducted in partnership with the University of Southern Illinois and has been published in a new book titled *Inmate Radicalisation and Recruitment in Prisons*, which has been published by Routledge.

Provided by Australian National University

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