

## Survey tracks fear of Muslims syndrome

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Australians feel less threatened by Muslims once they have had the chance to talk about issues of potential conflict, a new survey shows.

Australia Deliberates: Muslims and Non-Muslims in Australia was the first attempt to survey non-Muslims' attitudes to Muslims and their culture, values and any perceived threat to national security.

"Before the deliberations, an initial survey by Issues Deliberation Australia (IDA) and Newspoll, showed nearly half of Australia thought that incompatibility between Muslim and Western values was a big contributor to terrorism," IDA managing director Pam Ryan said.

"After an intense weekend of ... discussions, information from a vast array of points of view and persuasions, and the opportunity to ask questions of competing experts, the Australians surveyed shifted their opinions dramatically.

"On the question of terrorism, the number who thought an incompatibility between values was a big contributor dropped from 49 per cent to 22 per cent."

Opposition multicultural affairs spokesman Laurie Ferguson said the forum enabled many voices to be heard.

"Most importantly Australia Deliberates provided members of the Islamic community with a forum in which they can debate and discuss many of their trials tribulations with other ordinary Australians," Mr Ferguson said.

"This was done with the spirit of an open mind and wanting to gain greater mutual understanding."

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