

# ISIS group namesakes caught in crossfire, ponder changing titles

By Verity Edwards

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Audette Exel of the ISIS Foundation says a name change is essential to avoid being mistaken for the jihadi terror group. Picture: Renee Nowytarger Source: News Corp Australia

**TWO Australian companies are suffering a backlash because of perceived connections to Islamic State terrorism, with one about to change its name and another removing all branding because of concerns that staff safety is at risk.**

Charity group the ISIS Foundation and fit-out and refurbishment company ISIS Group Australia — which are not associated with one other — have been in contact with business partners to express their concern and disassociate themselves from the Islamic State jihadi group, also known as ISIS.

The ISIS Foundation has operated internationally for 17 years and funds health, education and other development programs in countries such as Uganda and Nepal. Subject to shareholder approval, it will soon be known as the Adara Group.

Founder Audette Exel, who funds the majority of ISIS Foundation's development work through her corporate consultancy business, said it was unfortunate the group was being associated with terrorism when it existed to help some of the world's poorest people. "We have built a brand around sharing, compassion and giving over the last nearly 17 years, so sharing our name with groups associated with violence at a global level is really untenable," she said.

ISIS Group Australia chief executive Michael Barnes has written to business partners to say "the risk posed via mistaken and ill-informed association" with the terrorist group is growing and poses a health and safety risk.

"For some time now, ISIS Group Australia has been monitoring the situation with Islamic State in the Middle East and its effect on our operations and stakeholders," he wrote.

"We all know ISIS is an Australian-owned business with a proud 25-year history, however, not every member of the public shares this understanding."

Mr Barnes said while his company did not want to "provide oxygen to such groups, our overriding concern is for the health and safety of our people and business partners".

He said the company would remove ISIS branding from work clothing and branding on work sites would be modified.

Ms Exel said ISIS Foundation workers in Africa had concerns about their safety. "The transport companies that ship medical equipment for us to Uganda have told us they can't work with us with the name ISIS," she said.

"Marketing departments of potential new donors have resisted connecting with us because of the name."