



14 January 2026

ANIC's Opening speech at the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security for the opportunity to engage with its review of the Exposure Draft Legislation: Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism Bill 2026.

We thank the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security for the opportunity to engage with its review of the Exposure Draft Legislation: Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism Bill 2026.

The Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) is the peak representative body of Muslim religious leadership in Australia, representing more than 350 Imams across all states and territories. ANIC works to preserve the Australian Muslim identity while strengthening a shared sense of belonging among Australian Muslims, grounded in both their faith, Islam and their commitment to Australia as their home and country.

ANIC and the Australian Muslim community unequivocally condemn the recent terror attacks in Bondi. Such acts of violence are rejected by Islam, Muslims and all faith communities and stand in direct contradiction to religious and moral teachings. We extend our deepest sympathies to the victims, their families, and loved ones, and we stand in solidarity with the Australian Jewish community at this painful time.

The perpetrators who took the lives of innocent people on 14 December 2025, while targeting Jewish people, were motivated by a violent terrorist organisation that has inflicted immense harm on many communities, including Muslims worldwide. ANIC has consistently and publicly condemned ISIS since its emergence and continues to do so. As stated publicly on 16 December 2026 and on many occasions prior, ISIS is an evil and dangerous terrorist organisation with no connection to Islam.

The Muslim community feels it is being subjected to heightened scrutiny in the aftermath of the Bondi attacks and is bearing the burden of suspicion because of the actions of terrorists and criminals.

ANIC supports strong action against all forms of hate and violence against any community, race, faith, or those of no faith, while not undermining freedom of speech and expression. ANIC raises serious concerns with both the process and the substance of this Bill.



This legislation has been rushed through with less than a week's consultation, despite proposing major changes to criminal, national security, and migration law. There must be meaningful and good faith consultation with faith leaders, Muslim communities, and Palestinian and Arab civil society organisations, given these groups are among those most directly affected. Legislation of this magnitude requires careful scrutiny. Proceeding at speed weakens the quality of the law and undermines social cohesion.

As drafted, the Bill treats religious leadership as a risk factor. It introduces aggravated offences targeting religious and community leaders and relies on narrow defences that do not reflect how faith is actually taught or lived. Islamic and religious teachings involve theology, ethics, and engagement with social and political issues. Without explicit safeguards, religious sermons, pastoral guidance, and public religious commentary may be criminalised, prosecuted or unfairly targeted.

The Bill also creates serious legal uncertainty by exposing past lawful speech to new penalties. This contradicts fundamental principles of legality and places religious leaders, whose sermons are often publicly recorded, under ongoing retrospective risk.

Taken together, these features disproportionately burden the Australian Muslim community.

Islamophobia is not recognised as a protected category, despite well-documented increases in Islamophobic and anti-Muslim harm in Australia.

ANIC's position is clear. Laws to combat hate must not suppress lawful religious teaching, must not apply retrospectively. We are calling for explicit protection for religious instructions and teachings. This includes quoting and interpreting text from sacred books and scriptures, the recognition of Islamophobia within vilification laws, and genuine consultation with faith communities before this legislation proceeds.

That is how we can protect communities from hate while strengthening democratic freedoms and not undermining social cohesion that holds our nation together.

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President

Australian National Imams Council (ANIC)