ANIC Urges National Approach To Extremism That Protects All Communities

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The Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) has told a federal parliamentary inquiry that violent extremism must be countered collectively, comprehensively and consistently, and that no faith community should be held responsible for the crimes of individuals.

In its submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security's (PJCIS) inquiry into the nature and drivers of radicalisation in Australia, ANIC condemned terrorism, politically motivated violence and incitement regardless of the perpetrator's religion, ethnicity or ideology.

ANIC President Imam Shadi Alsuleiman reiterated the Council's core position and said, "Terrorism and attacks on innocent people are unacceptable and there can be no exceptions, and no justification can be claimed. Protecting Australians from violence and protecting Australians from collective suspicion are complementary responsibilities," Imam Shadi said.

Key recommendations of the ANIC submission include:

- nationally consistent guidelines for official statements, media reporting and headlines, so criminal actions are not attributed to whole communities
- stronger accountability for political leaders, media, online commentators and digital platforms in addressing misinformation, stereotyping, online threats and incitement, while protecting legitimate debate and free expression
- stronger protections against religious hatred, including Islamophobia and hatred directed at other faith communities
- improved online safety and youth protection measures against extremist recruitment, manipulation and violent content across social media, gaming and messaging platforms
- sustained investment in the safety, security and capability of religious institutions, while respecting their independence and religious integrity
- genuine, long-term partnerships between government and faith, youth and women's organisations, which do not treat religious leaders as extensions of law enforcement or intelligence agencies
- transparent implementation plans, annual reporting, independent evaluation and consistent data collection to identify unintended consequences and prevent discriminatory outcomes.

In its submission, ANIC calls for approaches to prevention that clearly distinguish genuine threats of violence from lawful religious belief, political expression and peaceful dissent. Responsibility must rest on evidence of conduct, involvement or legal culpability, never on religious identity, cultural background or incidental association.

ANIC recommends the PJCIS review and that it replaces the term "religiously motivated violent extremism" with more accurate language such as "politically motivated" or "ideologically

motivated" violent extremism, warning that the current terminology reinforces misconceptions, contributes to Islamophobia and undermines community trust.

Imam Shadi said. "Language matters. When criminal acts are attributed to an entire faith, it harms social cohesion and makes all of us less safe."

ANIC's submission stresses that prevention cannot rest solely with police, intelligence agencies, families or religious communities. ANIC proposes a coordinated national framework involving governments, security agencies, faith and community organisations, educators, media organisations and digital platforms.

ANIC also urges the PJCIS to safeguard religious freedom, freedom of speech, peaceful protest, theological teaching and lawful political and humanitarian advocacy, so that religious observance or political disagreement is never treated as evidence of extremism.

Imam Shadi said, "No Australian should feel that a national conversation about radicalisation places their faith, loyalty or belonging under suspicion. Our objective is protection for every community. Safety is strengthened by trust, not division."

ABOUT ANIC

ANIC is a national religious and professional membership organisation representing Muslim Imams, Islamic scholars and Shaykhahs across Australia. Its work includes religious guidance, professional development, community advocacy, interfaith engagement and cooperation on matters affecting community wellbeing and safety.

ANIC makes this submission from its experience as a peak and representative religious organisation, while advocating principles that should protect all Australians, regardless of their faith, belief or background.

Link to submission: https://anic.org.au/PJCIS-Submission-2026
Link to Royal Commission submission - https://anic.org.au/anics-submission-to-the-royal-commission-into-antisemitism-and-social-cohesion/

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