



Statement on Responsible Leadership, Social Cohesion, and Rejecting Collective Blame

28 January 2026

The recent comments by former Prime Minister Scott Morrison, calling on Muslim leaders to undertake so-called “wholesale reform” and to take “accountability and responsibility” to address “political Islam”, and implying that Islam or Muslims bear responsibility for the recent terrorist attacks at Bondi, are reckless, irresponsible, and deeply ill-informed.

Law enforcement authorities have been unequivocal that these attacks were not directed, organised, or endorsed by any religious community.

It is profoundly disappointing to hear such divisive language from a former Prime Minister who understands, better than most, the importance of unity, social cohesion, and responsible leadership. To suggest that an entire faith community should be held accountable for the actions of two criminal offenders, both of whom law enforcement agencies have confirmed acted alone, is unacceptable and categorically rejected. Law enforcement has been clear on this point. To collectivise blame and shift responsibility onto an entire community reflects flawed logic and reveals a troubling willingness to exploit fear at the expense of social cohesion for political ends.

The Australian Muslim community is built on a deep desire for harmony, a commitment to our shared Australian values, and mutual respect for our differences. These are the very qualities that define our sense of belonging and our shared commitment to Australia.

This is not the first time Scott Morrison has made such reckless remarks. During his time in office, Mr Morrison made similar claims following the Bourke Street attack in 2018, asserting that Muslim leaders and communities should be “more proactive” and implying they would know who was being radicalised. That attacker was later confirmed to be mentally ill, yet blame was still unfairly directed at the wider Muslim community.

At the same time, it was during Mr Morrison’s prime ministership that an Australian national murdered 51 innocent people in Christchurch after being radicalised on Australian soil. On that occasion, no collective blame was placed on a race, religion, or community, nor should it have been. That same standard must apply consistently.

More recently, Senator Bragg’s comments on ABC Radio, suggesting that Australian Muslims should “take responsibility” for acts of terrorism, reinforce the same divisive and dangerous narrative. This rhetoric, coming from senior opposition figures, reflects a failure of leadership at a time when calm and responsibility are required.

Islamophobia does not require spectacular acts of violence to be harmful. The normalisation of stereotypes, pejorative labels, and inflammatory language steadily erodes social trust and undermines social cohesion. As Australia’s Islamophobia Special Envoy, Mr Aftab Malek, has warned, when entire communities are treated as suspects, trust breaks down, and with it the effectiveness of security policies intended to safeguard Australians. Eroding trust with entire communities does not enhance security; it weakens it.



Political leaders and public officials carry a heightened responsibility in shaping public understanding and behaviour. The Australian Muslim community continues to live with the real-world consequences of political rhetoric. Ill-informed or inflammatory language has contributed to a documented rise in Islamophobic incidents, including online abuse, verbal and physical attacks on Muslim women, assaults on Imams and community leaders, arson attacks on homes, and threats and vandalism directed at mosques.

Political leaders have a duty to unite the nation in moments of crisis, not divide it. Associating terrorism with Islam is wrong, rejected, and has no factual or moral basis. We cannot and must not blame entire communities for the actions of a few criminal individuals.

We call on former Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Senator Bragg, and all political parties and leaders to act with responsibility, restraint, and integrity in their public commentary, and to refrain from using divisive and misleading terms such as “radical Islam”, “extremist Islam” or other divisive language. Australia deserves leadership that strengthens social cohesion, brings people together in times of crisis, and firmly rejects narratives that fuel fear, division, and harm. Australia’s strength lies in fairness, consistency, and the shared responsibility to protect both public safety and social cohesion.