



# Islamophobia in Australia

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**Dr Derya Iner**

Editor



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# Introduction

## A NOTE FROM THE ISLAMOPHOBIA REGISTER AUSTRALIA

Noticing the growing anecdotal evidence that suggested a rise in incidents of Islamophobia, I felt compelled to start the Islamophobia Register Australia in September 2014. The Register was the first of its kind in Australia to provide a platform for incidents of Islamophobia to be reported, recorded and ultimately analysed.

Despite being under-resourced and only having a small number of regular volunteers, we have sought to provide first hand support services to victims and related parties, including liaising with authorities on their behalf and referring victims to counselling and victims' support services where applicable.

It has become apparent in our work in this area over the past few years that there are deeply inadequate resources committed to the effective investigation of Islamophobic incidents across Australia.

This is particularly concerning given that a rather significant number of reports detail the verbal and physical abuse directed at Australian Muslim women, with a large number happening in the presence of young children. Many victims and their loved ones are left feeling further vulnerable and end up restricting their civic and public engagement out of fear.

Over the past few years of tracking Islamophobia in Australia, I believe we have seen a normalisation of Islamophobia and its continued growth will continue to plague the Australian Muslim community and in turn, adversely affect community harmony and social cohesion.

We hope this report helps provide the academically scrutinised evidence required for authorities at every level to start to tackle Islamophobia in a more uniform and serious manner.



**Mariam Veiszadeh**

President, Islamophobia Register Australia

## **A NOTE FROM THE CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES AND CIVILISATIONS**

### ***For a More Harmonious and Cohesive Australia***

Throughout its history, Australia has emanated hope as a land of opportunity and become a beacon of refuge for immigrants from around the world. Australia has been a model multicultural society welcoming people from a broad array of cultures and religions for decades. From Afghan cameleers to recent arrivals, Muslims have blended in the Australian multicultural story. They continue to work as colleagues, study as fellow students and live as neighbours in every community in Australia. However, radicalisation and Islamophobia stand to threaten social cohesion and multicultural harmony.

Radicalisation is a fact and in its violent form is a serious malignancy that threatens Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Much research has been exerted to understand radicalisation and enormous resources are invested in addressing it as a security and to some extent as a social problem.

Islamophobia, on the other hand, is under-researched, under-documented and as a result not accepted as a serious issue. This report makes a key contribution to our knowledge and understanding of Islamophobia. It demonstrates that not only is Islamophobia a real societal problem, it also illustrates for the first time the scale of the problem with quantitative data. Significantly, only a small percentage of Islamophobic incidents were related to terrorism, showing that acrimonious emotions expressed in Islamophobic acts are not necessarily associated with terrorism and instead appear to be largely about contempt of Islam and Muslims.

A very important aspect of Australian liberal democracy is the protection of its minorities. Minorities do not always have a voice in politics or media and can often find themselves overwhelmed by negative perception and antagonism. We would do disservice to the betterment of Australia if the problem of Islamophobia is ignored or played down. It only serves to entrench the problem deeper.

This report is an opportunity to openly discuss Islamophobia so strategies can be developed to counter it as a national threat and societal problem.



**Assoc. Prof Mehmet Ozalp**

Director, Centre for Islamic Studies and Civilisation



# Executive Summary

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## Executive summary

This report focuses on the critical analysis of Islamophobia and its various manifestations in Australia since 2014. Leaving aside terminology and historical Islamophobia within Western (e.g. Orientalism, colonialism, neo-conservatism) and Australian (e.g. dispossession of Indigenous Australians and racism towards different ethnic groups) settings, this report documents and analyses the present manifestations of Islamophobia. Grounded within a theoretical and empirical framework, the report explores the individual and institutional aspects of Islamophobia and the relationships between the two. While analysing diverse manifestations, the report does not claim to capture all forms of Islamophobia inclusively.

The report is organised in two sections. Section I describes the theological, political and cultural aspects of Islamophobia as reflected in various institutions. Section I also examines the interplay of Islamophobia within the religious plane, the political sphere, media reporting of Islam and Muslims, right-wing organisations and in the field of criminology.

Section II presents and analyses data gathered via the Islamophobia Register Australia reflecting Australian Muslims' Islamophobic experiences. The report captures and critically analyses 243 verified incidents reported between September 2014 and December 2015. While these incidents do not reflect all local experiences of Islamophobia in Australia, they shed light on many aspects of its manifestations, nuances and complexities. The report findings signify the circumstances under which anti-Muslim hate incidents exist, operate and affect Australian Muslims, and illustrate specific characteristics of Islamophobia.

### IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Sections I and II demonstrate the disturbing amount of Islamophobia present in Australia. Islamophobia can be institutional or personal. While Australian society is officially pluralist and its culture is predominantly inclusive, there is an exclusivist minority of individuals and political entities that see Australia as a Christian country with no place for Muslims in its society. Furthermore, Islamophobia is turning into a normalised political rhetoric as the anti-Islamic far-right groups become louder in the political arena. Yet, the Islamophobic tendencies are not limited to a handful of religiously motivated exclusivist minority groups and political parties. Secular forms of Islamophobia can be observed in politics, media and social media, as addressed under Section I and II as institutional and individual Islamophobia.

Analysis of media discourse and an overview of Australian criminological history in Section I shows, while media have been quick to criminalise Muslims for all manner of alleged deviance, they have been slow to notice, detect and punish anti-Muslim perpetrators. Furthermore, the potential danger of hard right-wing organisations is minimised while the government, police, media and community largely focus on violent extremist threat within the Muslim camp. In fact, the analysis of online Islamophobia in Section II reveals that 51.4% of the online harassments were found to be of a violent nature – expressing, encouraging and facilitating violence. These findings indicate that far right groups of various persuasions as well as their spread of hatred through social media need to be taken more seriously.

Another important implication is the role of the media. Analysis of how selected events reported in the mainstream Australian media over the two-year period between 2014 and 2015 – ranging from the police raids in Sydney and Brisbane in September 2014, the Sydney siege later that year, to the Parramatta shooting in October 2015 and the Paris attacks – show that media reports about Islam and Muslims increased significantly in response to terror-related incidents locally and overseas.



Grounded within a theoretical and empirical framework, this report explores the individual and institutional aspects of Islamophobia and the relationships between the two

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Extension of Islamophobia to frequently visited places deprive victims and potential targets of sense of security in their daily lives while it leads to normalisation of Islamophobia for the people from all walks of life in Australia

Associated with this increase was a corresponding rise in the number of articles that were pejorative and disparaging of Muslims and the Islamic faith, thereby exacerbating the image of a menacing 'other.'

Documentation of an observable coincidence between spikes of vilification reported to the Islamophobia Register and terror attacks, anti-terror legislation and negative media coverage of high profile Muslim leaders demonstrates the lack of a clear distinction between terrorists and ordinary Muslims in public discourse. There needs to be more accountability with regard to the media. However, not all media coverage is negative when it comes to depiction of events relating to Muslims; as described in the first section, mainstream media is not monolithic in its facilitation of the Islamophobic discourse.

...while media have been quick to criminalise Muslims for all manner of alleged deviance, they have been slow to notice, detect and punish anti-Muslim perpetrators. Furthermore, the potential danger of hard right-wing organisations is minimised while the government, police, media and community largely focus on violent extremist threat within the Muslim camp.

With regard to individual Islamophobia that targets Muslims and Islam in a real life scenario (offline) or in the online space, Section II demonstrates that many non-Muslim witnesses were active reporters. In some cases (e.g. in Part 2.2), non-Muslim witnesses tried to distract the perpetrator to support the victim (also see Part 2.3 where some segments of the wider community have assumed responsibility to address Islamophobia). However, as noted in Part 2.1, many people did not intervene at the time of the incident. This is problematic, especially given that a number of reported incidents took place in the presence of young children or when the victim was pregnant and alone. While we can understand the fear of the reporter being targeted, the result is Australian Muslims are often left to fend for themselves, specifically Muslim women. Islamophobia is a societal problem – it is up to all members of society to 'step up' to combat it. If Islamophobia is widely recognised and openly discussed as a problem, this will empower the wider society to see countering Islamophobia as an even more pertinent social and civic responsibility.

Victims' reports in Section II illustrate the profoundly destructive effect of Islamophobic incidents on the victims. That destruction limits daily routines of some victims, as Section II illustrates that Islamophobic incidents take place within indoor and outdoor areas. Indeed, more severe incidents were observed in indoor areas while the victim was amongst a crowd. The hot spots of Islamophobia included frequently visited places such as shopping centres, trains and train stations, schools and school surroundings. Extension of Islamophobia to frequently visited places deprives victims and potential targets of the sense of security in their daily lives, while it leads to normalisation of Islamophobia for people from all walks of life in Australia.

Only 11% of insults were related to terrorism, showing that anger and hatred expressed in Islamophobic attacks are not necessarily associated with terrorism and instead appear to be largely about a hatred of Islam and Muslims. Analysis of the findings leads us to conclude that Islamophobia is not necessarily associated with the public's reaction to terrorism per se, but perhaps the very existence and visibility of Muslims and Islam. Women, especially those with Islamic head covering (79.6% of the female victims), have been the main targets of Islamophobia. In 56.6% of the cases, religious clothing was mentioned by the perpetrator. The severity level increased when dishonouring those visibly Muslim women with misogynistic remarks (such as calling the victim as a "bitch," "whore," etc.), followed by 'insults targeting religion,' 'xenophobic insults' and 'association with terrorism.' In contrast, association with terrorism directed mostly at men was observed in less severe offline incidents. Likewise, content analysis of insults revealed that only 11% (N=74) of insults were related to terrorism. Intolerance to Muslims' presence constituted 23.4% (N=155) and insults targeting religion constituted 23.8% (N= 158). Even within the death threats, which are considered the most intense level of hatred, beheading related death threats constituted only half of the death threats associated with "halal killing" or "halal slaughtering." These findings highlight the consequences of targeting a religion and/or people on the basis of their religion.

This can be curbed by reinforcing the ethics of journalism, political and public discourse to preserve the human dignity and public security of Muslims.

It is rather concerning that a quite significant number of reported incidents take place in the presence of young children. In most cases, mothers were accompanied by more than one child. Even if only a single child is counted for each case, the number of children exposed to Islamophobia is still concerning as it reaches 47.7% (N=63 out of 132) within the range of offline cases. Most of the perpetrators faced no social or legal repercussions and parents remained helpless, as observed in their inability to defend themselves or their children. This was also evident in the cases of harassed teenagers in schools. The significant number of incidents that took place in the presence of children and the feeling of helplessness experienced by their parents leave minors without adequate protection.

The report similarly found, Muslim women are frequent targets of Islamophobia because of their visibility with the Islamic headscarf. They are particularly vulnerable when unaccompanied, with children or pregnant at the time of the incident. The social and psychological impact of Islamophobia, especially on women and children, needs to be acknowledged and further researched.

Islamophobia has broad and far-ranging implications and is ultimately a threat for Australian multiculturalism, Western civic liberties and universal humanistic values. It is vital, then, that all the relevant Australian bodies at governmental, societal and communal levels prioritise and develop strategies to counter Islamophobia as an international, regional and national threat.

Countering all forms of bigotry, including Islamophobia, is a collective social responsibility at the individual and institutional level. Fostering a genuinely pluralistic and inclusive culture should continue to be promoted across the whole Australian society. Valuing diversity, human dignity and acceptance of difference in faith and culture will only improve Australian liberal democracy and multicultural society.

11%

Only 11% of insults were related to terrorism showing that anger and hatred expressed in Islamophobic attacks are not necessarily associated with terrorism and instead appear to be largely about a hatred of Islam and Muslims



The number of children exposed to Islamophobia is concerning





SECTION I:

# Institutional Islamophobia

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\* The photo depicts Nada Kalam, a target of Islamophobia, delivering a speech at the Press Club in Canberra while a Greens Member of Parliament is standing aside her. This is a powerful image in terms of capturing how to counter Islamophobia institutionally.





**PART 1:**  
**Islamophobia  
and Religion**

*Assoc. Prof Clive Pearson\**

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The presence of each of the three Abrahamic faiths in Australia is a function of immigration. None of these faiths is indigenous

## Setting the scene

### PRE-HISTORY

The current prevalence of Islamophobia in Australia has a long pre-history. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are regarded as the Abrahamic faiths; they share aspects of a common history in which there have been times of co-operation as well as intense rivalry. The most obvious clash lies in the Crusades, which were waged intermittently between 1096 and 1487. The term 'crusade' is still occasionally invoked; what is more important is that the history of expansion (Islamic and Christian) led to times of fear and dread as well as to the rise of caricatures and a vocabulary that demonised the other.<sup>1</sup> The churches that took root in Australia stand largely inside this longer history, which unfolded in a distant geography. The exceptions lie with Christian refugees from Sudan, Iraq and other sites of humanitarian need.

Todd H. Green has demonstrated how the former religious rivalry between Islam and Christianity in the West has largely given way to a differently constructed form of Islamophobia; it is tied to a history of colonialism (a sense of superiority), the privileging of Western rational and critical inquiry, the response to terrorist activities and political advantage.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the term 'Islamophobia' is relatively recent. It was first coined in England in the early 1990s. Its timing lies in the religious-political revival that emerged in the Muslim world at the end of the Cold War. This particular significant historical event coincided with Muslim minorities becoming more visible in the West and more insistent with regards to their rights.<sup>3</sup>

### AUSTRALIA'S INDIGENOUS AND JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

The presence of each of the three Abrahamic faiths in Australia is a function of immigration; prior to their arrival the indigenous people lived in close harmony land through their spirituality and customary lore. They had done so for 40,000 years. It has only been in recent years that some Australian churches have recognized that its members are called to follow Christ in an 'invaded space' and that a distinction between first peoples – the Aboriginal – and second peoples (all others) has been made.

The presence of Islam in Australia is included within that designation of second peoples. Islam existed in Australia in the early 18th century through the Macassan fishermen's visit to Australia coasts from Indonesia. They were followed by the Muslim Afghan cameleers who arrived in Australia in mid-1800s. There is a documented history of interactions between the Aboriginal people and these Muslims.

Nevertheless, when compared with the dominant Judaeo-Christian heritage, the oldest Australian Indigenous spiritual traditions as well as that earlier Islamic faith tradition has been peripheral within the Australian religious landscape. Furthermore, the theological encounter of Islam with the Judaeo-Christian heritage in Australia has been reduced to the encounter of a recently arrived migrant religion with the host society's well-established Judaeo-Christian heritage informing the country's civil institutions.

### LIVING FAITHFULLY IN A GLOBALISED AGE

As non-indigenous faiths, the three Abrahamic faiths' practice and witness<sup>4</sup> continue to be informed by beliefs, events, councils and moods that originate beyond these shores. In terms of how the respective faith's relate to one another, these influences can be: (i) eirenic;<sup>5</sup> or (ii) antagonistic.

There are a number of overseas examples of national churches making a formal stand against the diffuse practice of Islamophobia; for example, the National Catholic Advocacy Organization's statement on Islamophobia.<sup>6</sup> There does not appear to be an Australian equivalent, although the Uniting Church in Australia has released a "hot election brief" on an inclusive society<sup>7</sup> and made submissions on the right to freedom of religious observance.<sup>8</sup>

## EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

The Islamophobia Register Australia, on which this report is made, only makes passing reference to verbal and online insults that have an explicit link to the Christian faith.

One of the findings of the preliminary report on *Islamophobia, Social Distance and Fear of Terrorism in Australia* (2015) indicates the level of Islamophobia within churches (except for the Anglican Church) is higher than the mean (or average) for Australia as a whole (the mean for Australia is 2.2 out of a possible 5; with higher scores being higher levels of Islamophobia). The reported means are: Presbyterian 3.0, Greek Orthodox 2.6, Baptist and Uniting Church 2.5, Lutheran and 'Other Christian' 2.4, Catholic 2.3, Anglican 2.0.<sup>9</sup> In terms of social distance, the mainstream churches (Lutheran, Anglican, Uniting Church and Catholic) were all below the national norm of 1.79.

Greek Orthodox, Baptist, and 'Other Christian' were all higher. Here, social distance refers to the level of 'closeness and intimacy people feel towards members of different groups in society and which characterise their personal and social relations.' It provides an index by which it is possible to discern how much sympathy people feel for members of a particular social group and how much prejudice they feel.<sup>10</sup> Except for Anglicans, the churches and 'other Christians' were more fearful of terrorism compared with the national norm.

There appears to have been no work done on relating the statistical evidence to the theological practice of the denominations and the more general response to the community work of the various churches.

The primary issues in Australia's secular democracy usually have little to do with overt religious 'competition.'<sup>11</sup> That claim should nevertheless be qualified in two inter-related ways. First, those people who oppose Islam for diverse reasons – and can thus inculcate fear – frequently invoke the Judeo-Christian heritage of Australia. Second, there have been significant high-profile Christian voices in this country who have spoken about the perceived threats of Islam and thus contributed to the plausibility of Islamophobia on religious grounds. The critical issue then becomes how to interpret this 'Christian' message and situate it inside a range of possible theological responses to 'other' faiths.

It should be further noted that some networks like Q Society and the Australian Liberty Alliance are able to adopt an anti-Islam agenda on the basis of "Australian values" without any reference to the foundational role of the Judaeo-Christian heritage.



The Christian response  
to other faiths is  
mixed and nuanced

# The theological case

## ISLAM IN OUR BACKYARD

The more immediate presence of Islam in the local neighbourhoods of major Australian cities, and media coverage of terrorist incidents, has led to increasing interest in what Muslims actually believe and practise.



The typology broadly identifies three stock positions: exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism



Islamophobia is liable to find a religious justification in an exclusivist position

From the perspective of the church in this country, this has led to the publication of texts such as Tony Payne's *Islam in Our Backyard: A Novel Argument* and *Can We Talk About Islam?* Some church groups have been studying *Unveiled – A Christian Study Guide to Islam* where the declared intention is one of “witnessing to Muslims” – that is, how to engage with Islam while maintaining the integrity of one's own Christian faith.<sup>12</sup> It is difficult to discern the reach and thus interpret the influence and effect of these materials; there has been no empirical research work done on such materials.

In the circumstances, it is worthwhile heeding the advice of Canadian theologian Douglas John Hall who counsels that a people's belief system will eventually work itself out in practice. Hall was writing in the wake of 9/11 and showed concern for the consequences of a triumphalist Christian “theology of glory” (as distinct from a “theology of the cross”) on Muslim self-worth.<sup>13</sup> A theology of the cross is inclined to be more humble, more willing to acknowledge fault, injury and woundedness. The best instrument for situating the possible role of the Christian faith in generating and supporting Islamophobia is a typology of other faiths.

### TYPOLOGIES OF OTHER FAITHS

The Christian response to other faiths is mixed and nuanced. Writing out of Auburn (Sydney), Keith Rowe drew upon a familiar three-fold typology developed by Alan Race to map those responses for an Australian setting.<sup>14</sup> Race's typology has subsequently been revised in various ways in the service of a Christian theology of 'other faiths.' It serves as a handy spectrum, nevertheless, to understand the relationship of the Christian faith to Islamophobia in this country.<sup>15</sup>

The typology broadly identifies three stock positions: exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. For the present purposes, the exclusivist option is of particular interest. It envisages an understanding of the Christian faith that is liable to brook no rival and may see the other as a false religion. (There are significant nuances and levels of sophistication in this position.) It is a position that, when expressed in its most rigid form, could create a substratum of opinion that is either indifferent to injustices suffered by another faith or could lend itself to overt intolerance.

It is highly likely the cumulative effect of Hall's theology of glory, and a history of overseas missions, will render the exclusivist option as the default position of a majority of Christians. Islamophobia is liable to find religious justification in an exclusivist position where certain biblical texts (for example, John 14:6) might be pressed into service. John 14:6 declares Jesus to be the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father (God) except through him.

### ECCLESIAL LEADERSHIP

It can make a large difference what theological signals leading churchmen provide for their denominations. One example of this was the call by Cardinal George Pell for his fellow Catholics to read the 'Koran'<sup>16</sup> for themselves. His “Islam and Us” was delivered in the US while Pell was still Archbishop of Sydney. It was reported widely in secular, academic and church media.<sup>17</sup>

With regards to Muslims, Pell made a distinction between “genuine friends, seekers after truth and cooperation” and those “who only appear to be friends.”<sup>18</sup> Pell sought to dispel the belief that Islam was a religion of peace. He declared the Koran to be riddled “with invocations to violence.”<sup>19</sup>

Pell further argued the revelatory status of the Koran as “coming directly from God, unmediated” did not allow for “critical analysis” and theological development. Through his rendering of the Koran as a static text, Pell was effectively calling into question the prospects of Islam’s impact on democracy and “economic and cultural development.” Pell also argued that “claims of Muslim tolerance of Christian and Jewish minorities were largely mythical.”<sup>20</sup>

## Christian political parties

The Christian faith has provided a platform for the emergence of a parliamentary lobby and two political parties. These particular entities fall within a right-wing, conservative understanding of the Christian faith. They inhabit the exclusivist end of Race’s spectrum.

### CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (CDP)

The aims and objectives of the CDP are designed to uphold and advance a “Christian Commonwealth,” “our Christian Constitutional Monarchy” and the “Christian Westminster System of Government.” The CDP seeks to “support and promote recognition of our Christian heritage by uplifting the Judeo/Christian ethic” while promoting the “true welfare of the people of Australia through all legislation being brought into conformity with the revealed will of God in the Holy Bible with special emphasis on the Ministry of Reconciliation.”<sup>21</sup> These principles lie behind the comments made by the Revd Fred Nile on behalf of the CDP on a raft of overseas incidents of terror: the Moscow theatre hostage crisis (2002), the Charlie Hebdo and Jewish kosher market attacks in Paris (2015) and various ISIS acts of atrocity.

With regards to asylum seekers, Nile has argued that priority must be given to the most vulnerable, who are then deemed to be the Christians in Libya (the Copts)<sup>22</sup> and Syria.<sup>23</sup> On occasion, Nile has called for a moratorium on Muslim immigration to Australia: “Australians deserve a breathing space so that the situation can be carefully assessed.” Nile’s undifferentiated fear of Islam (and its ‘dangers’) is masked in his conviction that Christian refugees will be those “whom can readily assimilate and embrace the Australian way of life.”<sup>24</sup> Those Muslims who were critical of this “logical” argument were subsequently dubbed “bigots” who should be “ashamed” of their failure to discern how the conflict in the Middle East is a “religiously driven war” and persecuted Christians are the most vulnerable minority.<sup>25</sup>

### RISE UP AUSTRALIA PARTY (RUAP)

This passion for the ‘Judeo-Christian heritage’ of Australia and antipathy towards Islam is even more powerfully represented in the policies of the RUAP, which has close links to the Catch the Fire Ministries. Both are currently led by Revd Danny Nalliah, who is depicted as a “major voice against Multiculturalism and the Islamisation of the West.”<sup>26</sup>

The RUAP’s intention is to “keep Australia Australian” and a place that is “multi-ethnic, one culture.” The RUAP is opposed to “dual legal systems” by which it means the establishment of *sharia* law in this country. The RUAP clarifies its position to Islam as: “we love the Muslim people but oppose their texts (Quran/Koran) and Islamic doctrine and ideology because it is oppressive and incompatible with the Australian way of life.”<sup>27</sup>

The party’s immigration policy is exclusionary on faith-based grounds: the boats must be stopped because “eight out of every ten refugees are Muslims.” The RUAP appears to be unaware of the more inclusive biblical traditions of Christian hospitality towards refugees.<sup>28</sup>



Conservative  
understanding of the  
Christian faith inhabit  
the exclusivist end  
of Race’s spectrum





The history of Christian exclusivism can provide the soil out of which episodes of Islamophobia can arise

### PAULINE HANSON'S ONE NATION PARTY

The only political party to release a specific 'Islam policy' is Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party (released, 26 April 2016).<sup>29</sup> One Nation is not a specifically Christian political party; however, its Islam policy, nevertheless, begins with the claim "Australia is a country built on Christian values."

## Conclusion

It is doubtful whether any mainstream denomination would own or use the language of Islamophobia. This claim is not the same as saying: (i) it is likely the majority of Christians are liable to view Islam through an exclusivist lens; and ii) the history of Christian exclusivism can provide the soil out of which episodes of Islamophobia can arise.

It is not uncommon for those who make Islamophobic statements to say Australia is a 'Christian country.' However, it is doubtful whether any Christian theologian would make that claim. The word 'Christian' here is sometimes used as a discriminating foil of negative intent with regards to Islam.

The antidote to Islamophobia is for the Christian faith to play its part in nurturing the capacity for all 'to live faithfully' in the midst of diversity.<sup>30</sup> There are many examples of this kind of stand and practice.<sup>31</sup> They do not often receive the same high profile as those who use the label of Christian faith to discriminate or release Islamophobic messages.



## Summary

- > People who oppose Islam frequently invoke Australia's Judeo-Christian heritage.
- > An exclusivist point of view envisages an understanding of the Christian faith that is liable to tolerate no rival and may see the other as a false religion.
- > Islamophobia plays a key role in three major political parties. Two fall into the exclusivist point of view: the Christian Democratic Party and the Rise Up Australia Party. Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party, although not a specifically Christian political party, espouses "Christian values."
- > The history of Christian exclusivism can provide the soil out of which episodes of Islamophobia can arise.

## PART 2: **Political Islamophobia**

*Linda Briskman\* & Susie Latham\*\**

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In Australia, anti-Muslim groups also moved from the fringes of society into the political mainstream with the election of four senators from Pauline Hanson's anti-Muslim One Nation Party in 2016



The danger of these groups is that they may subtly push the normative boundaries in the public and political discourse around the place of Islam and Muslims in Australia



Right-wing groups in Australia reinforce Western democracies' fear of radical Islamic terrorism and can lead to restricting Muslims' rights

"We are a nation with a high level of low level racism." *Waleed Aly*<sup>32</sup>

Waleed Aly's statement captures the influence of right-wing groups in public and political spaces. Globally and locally, Islamophobia is not idiosyncratic, but increasingly enshrined in racist ideologies and spurred on by the conflation of Islam with terrorism. Although the phenomenon is perhaps more low level in Australia than elsewhere, it is important to take heed. While 'Islamic extremism' receives significant attention, right-wing extremism is minimised. In the UK, a Searchlight report documented right-wing terror attacks to reveal that, unlike the popular perception of 'lone wolves,' in all documented cases there was clear and long-standing involvement with an organised group.<sup>33</sup> Networks that introduced them to a 'perverse ideological world' had influenced their actions.<sup>34</sup> This contradicts an unstated but apparent view in the Australian context that right-wing anti-Muslim groups are not dangerous.

Donald Trump's election as US President reveals how anti-Muslim sentiment can become normalised within the political system; for example, by his implementation of an election promise to institute travel bans on Muslims. The Bridge Initiative based at Georgetown University argues that anti-Muslim incidents ranging from verbal abuse to murder increased as candidates for the US presidency made anti-Muslim statements.<sup>35</sup> Following Trump's election in November 2016, there were reports of a surge in hate crimes.<sup>36</sup>

In Australia, anti-Muslim groups also moved from the fringes of society into the political mainstream with the election of four senators from Pauline Hanson's anti-Muslim One Nation Party in 2016. Prior to her election, populism fuelled fear and hatred in Australia in 2015. In May of that year, half of former Prime Minister Abbott's cabinet made references to terrorism (arguably 'Islamic extremism') in the context of their portfolios.<sup>37</sup>

Jeremy Hillman, a political advisor to former prime ministers Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard, argues: "When prejudiced views are articulated by those in high office, they gain a degree of social currency and legitimacy that perpetuates them further."<sup>38</sup> Throughout 2015, the group Reclaim Australia held regular rallies in dozens of cities across the country. As Peucker and Smith posit, the danger of these groups is that they may subtly push the normative boundaries in the public and political discourse around the place of Islam and Muslims in Australia.<sup>39</sup> Right-wing groups in Australia reinforce Western democracies' fear of radical Islamic terrorism<sup>40</sup> and can lead to restricting Muslims' rights.<sup>41</sup>

Another warning signal for Australian society is the European response to deterring asylum-seeker flows, with forced migration of Syrians the most visible. In the European context, Betts states "the elephant in the room is an underlying Islamophobia" and "European member states don't really want to welcome Muslim migrants."<sup>42</sup> She points to how explicit this has been in countries with vocal far-right parties and in central European countries with Christian nationalist governments, with the change in acceptance of refugees since Islam becoming "politically toxic." This phenomenon is replicated in Australia with far-right groups of all persuasions decrying Muslim immigration (illustrated below) and with the government acceding by providing preference to settling non-Muslims fleeing Syria.<sup>43</sup>

The following section refers to current anti-Islamic groups which, although some are seen as 'fringe' in Australian political and community, are growing apace.

## Right-wing groups and Islamophobia overview

Right-wing groups in Australia with Islamophobia as a major platform fall into two discrete, yet inter-connected, categories: (i) formal political alliances; and (ii) vocal organisations that publicly demonstrate. The 'Islamic terrorism' spectre is talked up by each of the groups discussed below.

### POLITICAL ALLIANCES

At least six anti-Muslim political parties contested the 2016 Federal election. Pauline Hanson's One Nation was the most successful and won four senate seats.

- > The most sophisticated emerging political party, the Australian Liberty Alliance (ALA), fielded 21 candidates, but did not win any seats, generally attracting around 3% of the vote.
- > The national vote for One Nation in the Senate was around 4%, although it won 9% of the Senate vote in Queensland. It also won around 20% of the vote in several Queensland lower house seats.<sup>44</sup> The party did worse than expected in the 2017 WA state election, but some of that can be attributed to its decision to do a preference deal with the very unpopular Liberal Government.

### Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party

Pauline Hanson was first elected to Parliament in 1996, having declared that Australia was in danger of being 'swamped by Asians' and arguing that Indigenous Australians were treated too favourably.<sup>45</sup> In the 2016 election, her One Nation party asserted that Islam is not a religion, but a political ideology and one of her primary policies was for a Royal Commission to make a determination on this issue. The party advocates bans on all Muslim immigration, Islamic face veils, new mosques and halal certification. It also insists on the installation of surveillance cameras in all mosques and Islamic schools.

### The Australian Liberty Alliance (ALA)

The ALA emerged from the Q Society, the self-described "leading Islam critical movement." Many of the leading figures in the ALA also play an active role in the Q Society, which has hosted visits by high profile international Islamophobes such as Americans Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer, and Netherlands politician Geert Wilders.<sup>46</sup> The ALA began in 2014 and was launched in Perth in 2015, with Geert Wilders as special guest.

One of its main policy platforms is to stop the 'Islamisation' of Australia. It is ALA policy to enact the proposals outlined in the white paper *Practical Steps to Stop Islamisation* published by Q Society 2014.<sup>47</sup> These include banning permanent residency for Muslim (applicants) from 57 countries and imposing severe restrictions on mosques and Islamic schools, as well as restricting multiculturalism more broadly.<sup>48</sup>



Pauline Hanson was first elected to Parliament in 1996, having declared that Australia was in danger of being 'swamped by Asians' and arguing that Indigenous Australians were treated too favourably





Australia-wide rallies are the main strategy Reclaim Australia adopts, which are frequently met with anti-racist counter-demonstrations

## PUBLIC ALLIANCES: RECLAIM AUSTRALIA AND UNITED PATRIOTS FRONT (UPF)

Although there are dozens of such groups, we have selected these two as they are the most vocal and visible in public and media spheres.

### Reclaim Australia

The Reclaim Australia movement stipulates its position as standing up to radical Islam, political correctness and the threat of home-grown terror. Included in its manifesto is: full disclosure from manufacturers to the consumer regarding halal certification, compulsory singing of the national anthem weekly in every school in Australia and revoking the citizenship of anyone who fails to uphold their pledge of allegiance.<sup>49</sup>

Australia-wide rallies are the main strategy it adopts, which are frequently met with anti-racist counter-demonstrations. The rallies have been consistent and widespread including: July 2015 in Sydney, Queensland, Perth and Hobart; November 2015 in Brisbane; and February 2016 in Canberra.

### United Patriots Front

The UPF is a breakaway group of Reclaim Australia, active since May 2015, and is forming a political party, Fortitude Australia.<sup>50</sup> Led by the outspoken Blair Cottrell, the UPF platform calls for halting Muslim migration and a cessation of the building of mosques.<sup>51</sup> Cottrell has suggested that Australian classrooms should display pictures of Adolf Hitler and has denigrated women and Jews.<sup>52</sup>

The UPF was a major opponent of planned mosques in Narre Warren North (Melbourne) and Bendigo. Its main strategy is holding public rallies and demonstrations. In February 2016, it held a protest in Bendigo against the building of a mosque in that city.

## Common goals of anti-Muslim alliances

### HALAL CERTIFICATION

Among the ALA and Q Society policies is that animals slaughtered in accordance with religious practices should be offered in specially marked sections of a butcher or supermarket. The Q Society has run an extensive campaign on halal certification led by 2016 ALA Senate Candidate Kiralee Smith. This campaign includes a video made in conjunction with Smith's website Halal Choices.<sup>53</sup> Those opposing halal certification assert that the profits from these bodies support terrorism. Legal action for defamation brought by halal certification service provider Mohamed El Mouehly was discontinued after the Q Society, its board members and Kirralie Smith made a written apology for suggesting his profits were used improperly, which they agreed to place on their websites for a year.

Reclaim Australia also has policies that challenge halal certification. Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party states halal certified food should not be provided in prisons or the armed services.

## MOSQUES

The ALA and Q Society propose that newly incorporated Islamic organisations should be prohibited from establishing new mosques and Quran-based schools for five years.

Reclaim Australia and the UPF have had a vocal presence at demonstrations at sites where mosques have been proposed, including in Bendigo, Melton and Narre Warren.

Pauline Nation's One Nation Party policy calls for cessation of building mosques until after its proposed inquiry "to determine if Islam is a religion or political ideology" is held.

## IMMIGRATION

The ALA and Q Society have called for a ten-year moratorium on resident visa applications from Organisation of Islamic Cooperation-member countries, with exceptions for members of persecuted non-Islamic minorities.

The UPF and Fortitude Australia have also made strident statements about Muslim immigration.



Connections between anti-Muslim activists can be traced from members of government to violent street thugs

# Networks and connections

Connections between anti-Muslim activists can be traced from members of government to violent street thugs.

- > ALA candidate Kirralie Smith, who addressed Reclaim Australia rallies and whose anti-halal propaganda is promoted by the UPF, also worked closely with a former far-right member of the Liberal government, Cory Bernardi, to instigate a parliamentary inquiry into food label certification focused on halal certification.
- > Pauline Hanson, ALA candidates and Federal Government Nationals MP George Christensen agreed to speak at anti-Muslim rallies in 2016 under the banner Respect Australia, which were advertised on neo-Nazi website Stormfront.<sup>54</sup>
- > Christensen also addressed a Reclaim Australia rally in Mackay in July 2015.
- > During his term in office, Prime Minister Abbott was reportedly inspired by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who was named as an anti-Muslim extremist by the respected US hate watch group the Southern Poverty Law Center.<sup>55</sup> Hirsi Ali has worked in the Netherlands with Geert Wilders.
- > The ALA President and candidate for the 2016 election Debbie Robinson, along with Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer, former leader of the English Defence League Tommy Robinson and Anders Gravers from Stop Islamisation of Europe, is on the international Stop Islamization of Nations (SION) President's Council, an organisation that professes to oppose the advance of Islamic law.<sup>56</sup>



The potential danger of right-wing organisations is currently minimised with government, police, media and community focus on extremist Muslim violence. However, far-right groups of various persuasions need to be taken seriously

## Social media

The sway of social media on extremist groups of all persuasions has only recently been understood. Now, anti-Muslim ideologies are readily available across the globe, influencing groups with extremist leanings. There has been a sharp increase in the overt expression of anti-Muslim sentiment on social media accounts, with almost 21,000 people 'liking' the Stop the Mosque in Bendigo Facebook page and dozens of other anti-Muslim pages attracting hundreds of thousands of 'likes' between them. The pattern continues with thwarted plans for a mosque in a far south-east suburb of Melbourne. A Facebook page – 'Stop the Mosque in Narre Warren' – received more than 10,000 'likes.' City of Casey councillors, including Mayor Sam Aziz (who has addressed a Q Society meeting) and Rise Up Australia Party<sup>57</sup> deputy Rosalie Crestani, unanimously voted against the proposed mosque development in April 2016.

## Conclusion

It is unlikely that anti-Muslim sentiment will vanish from the Australian landscape in the foreseeable future. The potential danger of right-wing organisations is currently minimised with government, police, media and community focus on extremist Muslim violence. However, far-right groups of various persuasions need to be taken seriously. Extreme anti-Muslim violence is possible (e.g. the case of mass murderer Anders Brevik in Norway, who it has been revealed was influenced by right-wing anti-Muslim groups and thinkers).<sup>58</sup> It is not only extremist violence that emerges from the influence of such groups, but 'everyday' racism of attacks on Australian Muslims as evidenced by Islamophobia Register reports.



## Summary

- > Islamophobia is increasingly enshrined in racist ideologies and spurred on by the conflation of Islam with terrorism.
- > Right-wing groups in Australia with Islamophobia as a major platform fall into two discrete, yet inter-connected, categories: (i) formal political alliances; and (ii) vocal organisations that publicly demonstrate.
- > There has been a sharp increase in the overt expression of anti-Muslim sentiment on social media.
- > The potential danger of far right-wing organisations of various persuasions is minimised and therefore not taken as seriously, with government, police, media and community focusing on extremist Muslim violence.

## PART 3:

# The Islamophobic Crimes of the Past and Present

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^ Jeremy Piper, "Police Watch on as People Pray During a Rally to Protest Against...", photograph, Getty Images, January 23, 2015, <http://www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/news-photo/police-watch-on-as-people-pray-during-a-rally-to-protest-news-photo/462006934#police-watch-on-as-people-pray-during-a-rally-to-protest-against-of-picture-id462006934>.



There are two main ways in which a study of Islamophobia can be informed by criminology

The first is to examine the ways in which anti-Muslim racist motivation can be an aggravating factor in a hate crime

The second is to consider the criminalisation of Muslim communities and Islam

There are two main ways in which a study of Islamophobia can be informed by criminology. The first is to examine the ways in which anti-Muslim racist motivation can be an aggravating factor in a hate crime, or the less common instances in which acts of anti-Muslim racism constitute a breach of the law. The second is to consider the criminalisation of Muslim communities and Islam; that is, to analyse the manner in which Muslims and their faith are ideologically represented as predisposed to certain forms of deviance and criminality, and as collectively responsible for it. The two are connected, since the criminalisation, othering and scapegoating of Muslims engenders hate crimes against them.

Racist crimes against Muslim immigrants to Australia took place as early as the nineteenth century in the context of the cultural politics of 'white Australia.' 'Afghan' cameleers from Central and South Asia were targets of racist attacks in the second half of the nineteenth century, occasioning assault, arson against outback mosques and even murder. While white supremacism was a factor, and competition over transport business and access to scarce water were motives, it is clear from the vilificatory rhetoric of the time that Islamophobia was also involved. The authorities of the state responded in a discriminatory manner.

Throughout the 'white Australia' period, which lasted from the late nineteenth century through to at least the late 1960s, many Muslims, from the Ottoman Empire to the Indian subcontinent to south-east Asia, were criminalised for immigration infractions as non-'white' immigrants. Being Muslim was also a factor in the lack of the requisite 'whiteness;' others of similar geographic origin were able to claim both whiteness and European-ness by virtue of their Christian faith.

Large-scale immigration to Australia from non-European origins was not permitted until the 1970s, by which time labour immigration from European sources had been depleted. Mass immigration from Turkey was encouraged, and immigrants from Lebanon at this time (of the civil war there) included a preponderance of Muslims. There were also Muslim immigrants from Yugoslavia, south Asia and south-east Asia.

By the 1980s, with the so-called 'Blainey debate' in opposition to immigration, Arab immigrants from the Middle East (predominantly Lebanese) were othered for their purported failure to 'integrate,' of which practices of halal slaughter were taken as a token. By the late 1990s, Pauline Hanson was targeting Muslims (as well as 'Asians') for being inassimilable. Around the mid-1990s, a racialised moral panic arose over 'Lebanese youth gangs' especially in Sydney; Turkish and Horn of Africa young people were criminalised as 'gangs' at much the same time in Melbourne.

Since the 1990-91 Gulf War, and Australia's participation in the US-led 'coalition of the willing,' Arab Australians have become one of the most racially vilified and victimised groups in the country. Anti-Muslim racism was a key factor. Hijab-wearing women, even those from Indonesia, were assaulted and vilified in the streets; it mattered not that Kuwait, the ally in that military intervention, was a Muslim nation. Muslims and Arabs alike were widely represented in the media and public commentary as disloyal to the Australian nation and, in a theme that would be reprised strongly in a later round of othering, antithetical towards Australian values and laws. This latter was commonly held to explain the supposed Arab-Australian criminality. By 2006, New South Wales police had a Middle Eastern Crime Squad, whose business was the so-called 'Lebanese gangs.'



The fatal stabbing of a 14-year-old Korean-Australian schoolboy in 1998 on the street during a brawl outside a children's birthday party in western Sydney led to an extended racialised moral panic over 'Lebanese gangs.' The media immediately portrayed the manslaughter as a gangland crime, which it was not. The blaming of whole Lebanese communities for supposed complicity, a conspiracy of silence in protecting the perpetrators, and indulging and breeding criminality continued for months and kept resurfacing over the next few years. Muslim community leaders were a prime target for this blame, castigated for burying their heads in the sand and not taking 'their' young men in hand.

The cycle of moral panic over Lebanese 'gangland' outrages in Sydney had barely subsided when in 2000 and 2001-2 there were two series of group sexual assaults in western Sydney. Police sources informed the popular media there was an ethnic dimension and racial motivation involved in these instances, and soon racialised moral panic was in full swing, wildly accusing Muslim communities for their supposedly endemic culture of misogyny and sexual violence that was held to have led to these crimes. All the perpetrators in the first (Bankstown, 'Skaf gang') series of gang rapes were second-generation Lebanese-immigrant Muslim young men: born, raised and schooled in Australia. Most of the offenders in the second (Ashfield, 'K Brothers') series of gang rapes were first-generation immigrant young men from Pakistan. Again, in the racialisation of the moral panic, whole Muslim communities were blamed for a supposed violent and criminogenic culture, not controlling their young men, and a lack of respect for Australian values and especially for Anglo women. Many Muslim victims of hate crime in the following months attributed their targeting to media blaming along these lines.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US, there was an upsurge of anti-Muslim hate crime in Australia similar to that during the Gulf War of 1990-1, though of greater magnitude. The Australian Arabic Council recorded an increase by a factor of 20 in reported incidents of vilification of, or discrimination against, Muslim and Arab Australians in the month following 9/11. On 13 September 2001, the Community Relations Commission of New South Wales, knowing of the hate crime incidence during the Gulf War, established a bilingual (English-Arabic) telephone hotline by which people could report experiences of abuse, insult or discrimination in the aftermath of the US terrorist attacks. Since many Sikhs were also targeted in such hate crime (as were many other non-Muslims mistaken for Muslims), a Punjabi hotline facility was added in November 2001. After the Iraq war there was an increase in such incidents, and Turkish and Indonesian hotlines were added. The hotlines recorded 320 incidents between 12 September and 11 November 2001, with 43.4% being verbal assaults, 17.5% racial discrimination or harassment, 13.2% physical assaults and 5% property damage. Some 53% of the complainants were women.<sup>59</sup> A survey conducted for the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) over 2003-4 in Sydney and Melbourne (the two cities with the highest Muslim populations) found, of the 142 Muslim respondents, some 87% had personally experienced racism, abuse or violence since 9/11 and 75% reported they experienced more racism, abuse or violence than before 9/11. Women surveyed in the HREOC study experienced racism on the street somewhat more than men, with 62% of woman compared with 50% of men reporting this experience. Over half of the respondents nominated wearing the hijab as the cause of the racist attacks they experienced. Only 6.5% of those surveyed had reported incidents of racism, abuse or violence to the police. The most frequent reason given by respondents for not reporting was that they did not think anything useful would come of it; this was indicated by one-third (33%) of respondents. This was borne out by experience; of those who did complain, 70% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the outcome.<sup>60</sup>



Muslim community leaders were a prime target for this blame, castigated for burying their heads in the sand and not taking 'their' young men in hand



In the racialisation of the moral panic, whole Muslim communities were blamed for a supposed violent and criminogenic culture, not controlling their young men, and a lack of respect for Australian values and especially for Anglo women

Islam and Muslims  
are always associated  
with crimes,  
forgetting the fact that  
Australia has many  
Muslim Australian  
crime stoppers.



\* Dean Sewell, "A group of around 20 anti-Islam protesters eventually arrived and were met with 40 pro-multicultural protesters and 75 police," photograph, *Daily Mail*, October 9, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3266107/Anti-Muslim-protest-kicks-just-one-man-DOG-dozens-police-outnumber-demonstrators-locked-street-outside-Parramatta-Mosque.html>

^ Aaron Francis, "Muslim Victoria Police officers Ahmad Abdo, left, Maha Sukkar, Albert Fatileh, Mohammed Alam and Mona El-Helwani," photograph, *The Australian*, June 27, 2015, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/community-under-siege/muslim-police-influencing-victoria-from-within-the-community/news-story/121bf53a958f6368c1dd92dc41ecff89>.

After every heavily reported incident of terrorism overseas perpetrated by Muslims (those with white, 'Western' victims) – be it the Bali bombings in 2002 and 2005, the 7/7 London transport bombings in 2005 – there was a marked spike in Islamophobic incidents in Australia.

On 11 December 2005, a racist riot of some 5,000 vigilantes around Sydney's Cronulla beach violently targeted Muslims and those of 'Middle Eastern appearance' with perpetrators and their sympathisers referring to the Sydney rapes of 2000-1, the Bali bombings, as well as (the main trigger) the uncivil behaviour of groups of young 'Lebanese' men at the beachside. Police, paramedics and reporters who were present deemed it miraculous that no-one was killed in the violence. One young man of Arab background was beaten and bottles were smashed over his back. Another was found by police bashed and lying in a pool of blood. Residents watched a group of men jump on one victim's head. By that night, at least 13 people were reported injured and 12 had been arrested. Although the crowd had been summoned by mobile phone text messages to 'Leb[anese] and wog bashing day,' and many of the crowd chanted 'F... off Lebs' and 'F... off, wogs!' Prime Minister John Howard infamously denied racism lay behind the riots. They took place in the context of a racist moral panic about the failure of Muslim immigrants to 'integrate' into Australian society, a discourse to which the then Prime Minister and his conservative coalition government had opportunistically contributed over the previous decade, especially since 9/11 and 7/7. Riot participants explained to ABC TV reporter Liz Jackson that they were motivated by outrage at the imagined asserting of *sharia* law in Australia and at supposed Muslim disrespect for women.<sup>61</sup>

After some days of public remorse and shame over the mob violence against 'Middle-Eastern' and Muslim beachgoers, the focus of media and political attention returned to the story predominating before 11 December; that is, the deviance and incivility of so-called 'gangs' of Lebanese or Muslim youths. The disproportionate bulk of media reports and political spin ever since – including around the tenth anniversary of the riot in 2015 – have concerned the revenge riots of the night of the 11<sup>th</sup> and Monday 12<sup>th</sup>, involving carloads totalling some 200 young men from the south-west suburbs around Bankstown, perpetrating property damage and violent assaults on presumed Anglos in beachside Cronulla, Brighton and Maroubra. The othering language of 'thugs' and 'grubs' from the NSW Opposition and Government alike returned to the terms of the moral panic over ethnic gangs that had circulated since the mid-1990s, criminalising the Arab, and then the Muslim other.

Since that time, overseas terrorist attacks, such as the 2013 Woolwich murder of British army fusilier Lee Rigby in London<sup>62</sup> or the 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* massacre in Paris, have seen dramatic rises in Islamophobic hate crime in Australia. However, unlike in the UK, the paucity of official statistics means anecdotal and community-based sources must largely suffice as evidence of this. (Even in the UK, where Islamophobic hate crime is officially recorded and reported by various authorities, such as the London Metropolitan Police, the extent of under-reporting means community initiatives, such as the UK-based Measuring Anti Muslims Attacks, abbreviated as TellMAMA, are invaluable.)



After every heavily reported incident of terrorism overseas perpetrated by Muslims (those with white, 'Western' victims) there was a marked spike in Islamophobic incidents in Australia



The othering language of 'thugs' and 'grubs' returned to the terms of the moral panic over ethnic gangs that had circulated since the mid-1990s, criminalising the Arab, and then the Muslim other



While the state and the media have been quick to criminalise Muslims for all manner of alleged deviance, they have been slow to notice, detect and punish anti-Muslim perpetrators

Two events in Australia that have been wrongly represented as terrorism in the media and by some irresponsible official pronouncements – the Endeavour Hills stabbing attack on counter-terrorism police in Melbourne; and the Lindt café siege in Sydney by a mentally ill gunman with domestic issues, a history of violence and a firearm licence – have given rise to increases in vilification of, and attacks on, Muslims.<sup>63</sup> The 2015 shooting death, by a minor, of police employee Curtis Cheng in Parramatta in western Sydney has yet to be tried, although it, too, has been pronounced by politicians and police spokespeople as an act of terrorism. Certainly, it has led to considerable anti-Muslim vilification by organised Islamophobic groups – something that Cheng’s son has condemned.<sup>64</sup>

August 2016 saw the first use of anti-terrorism laws against an Islamophobic extremist. Counter-terrorism officers in Victoria charged 31-year-old Phillip Galea with intentionally collecting and making documents connected with preparing for a terrorist act, and with committing acts in preparation for a terrorist act.<sup>65</sup> Galea is affiliated with the anti-Muslim organisation Reclaim Australia. He was sentenced to one month in prison in November 2015 for possessing five tasers and 360 grams of mercury – which can be used to make explosives – along with information on his computer about confecting explosives and an ‘extensive’ amount of ‘extreme’ material linked with far-right groups. All this happened after being found in possession of a knife at one public rally and a flare at another event.<sup>66</sup> This is a remarkable degree of lenience to be extended to a racist extremist with an arms cache and bomb-making material. The severity of the terrorism sentence has yet to be seen.

We can, however, conclude, while the state and the media have been quick to criminalise Muslims for all manner of alleged deviance, they have been slow to notice, detect and punish anti-Muslim perpetrators.



## Summary

- > Since the 1990-91 Gulf War and Australia’s participation in the US-led ‘coalition of the willing,’ Arab Australians have become one of the most racially vilified and victimised groups in the country with anti-Muslim racism as a key factor.
- > A series of incidents led to an extended racialised moral panic over ‘Lebanese gangs.’ Muslim community leaders were criticised for burying their heads in the sand and not taking ‘their’ young men in hand.
- > After every heavily reported incident of terrorism overseas perpetrated by Muslims, there was a marked spike in Islamophobic incidents in Australia.



# PART 4:

# The Media and Islamophobia in Australia

*Dr Zachariah Matthews\**



79%

of a random sample of Muslims living in Sydney felt the Australian media portrayed Muslims unfairly, with 83% of them feeling that media reports affected the views non-Muslims formed about Muslims



Much of the popular Australian media characterisation of Muslims, whether in regard to asylum seekers, youth gangs or the 'war on terror,' is that of a group of non-members – alien, foreign and incompatible with Australian values

A few days after the December 2014 siege in Sydney in which three people died, including the gunman, a woman wearing a hijab and long dress had to dial triple-zero because she was being abused on a train in Melbourne. A Fairfax Media report stated she had been abused on three separate occasions because of her Muslim dress. A Google search revealed this anti-Muslim incident was reported by only two major media organisations in Australia: Fairfax Media and the government-funded Australian Broadcasting Cooperation (ABC). This incident was subsequently reported to the not-for-profit Islamophobia Register.

A 2015 University of South Australia study has found that one in ten Australians are "highly Islamophobic" and have a fear or dread of Muslims.<sup>67</sup> Another study in 2015 by the Western Sydney University found that 79% of a random sample of Muslims living in Sydney felt the Australian media portrayed Muslims unfairly, with 83% of them feeling that media reports affected the views non-Muslims formed about Muslims.<sup>68</sup>

The media has evolved at a rapid pace in recent times, and the features of this 'new media ecology' in the post-broadcast era can be described as perpetual connectivity allowing constant communication between individuals and groups.<sup>69</sup> Traditional media models have been forced to evolve, with print media transitioning to digital platforms. According to the Sensis Social Media Report of May 2015, almost 50% of consumers access social media every day, with the number increasing to 79% for the 18-29 age group. Facebook continues to be the predominant social media platform with Instagram, Snapchat and LinkedIn showing strong growth. The current media in Australia differs on a number of levels with regard to ownership, format and audience reach; and ranges from the mainstream to alternative and social media.

Debate about the media's role and influence on public opinion and its association with Islamophobia is ongoing. Some argue the media plays a significant part in shaping people's ideas and attitudes, while others say the media has limited impact.<sup>70</sup> The media no doubt is a powerful tool that can be used to exert influence. In Australia, for example, News Corp Australia (formerly News Limited) reportedly subsidises losses of AUD 30 million each year for *The Australian* because of the political 'influence' it wields.<sup>71</sup>

Since the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, the media has become an important entity in the focus on terrorism. This single event, as well as technological developments with the internet and smart devices, saw the media take on a distinct role in developing the discourse around terrorism, radicalisation and counter-measures.<sup>72</sup> Since the end of the Cold War and conflict in Muslim lands taking the geo-political centre stage, Islamophobic discourse has entered not only politics and the media, but also popular entertainment like television and film.<sup>73</sup> Australian media has not been immune from this global Islamophobic trend in Western countries. Much of the popular Australian media characterisation of Muslims, whether in regard to asylum seekers, youth gangs or the 'war on terror' is that of a group of non-members – alien, foreign and incompatible with Australian values.<sup>74</sup> This trend has resulted in a concomitant increase in vilification, discrimination and anti-Muslim incidents.<sup>75</sup>

A content analysis of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and Sydney's *Daily Telegraph* for the years before and after September 11 found the percentage of articles mentioning the words 'Muslim' or 'Islam' as well as the words 'extremist', 'fundamentalist' or 'terrorist' increased by a factor of ten in the *Telegraph* and six in the *Herald* for the year after September 11.<sup>76</sup> Evidence of discursive treatment of Muslims as an antagonistic 'menacing other' by the Australian media can, however, be found as early as 1912 with the so-called "Moslem menace" threatening Australian values.<sup>77</sup>

A study of 290 newspaper articles over a ten-year period found that Australian media coverage of Muslim integration, despite being “both favourable and pejorative,” tended to be framed mostly in terms of radicalisation and terrorism.<sup>78</sup> Articles published in *The Australian*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age* and the *Courier Mail* in alternate years from 2002 to 2010 were analysed. The study found that coverage tended to focus on themes representing only a minority of Muslims, such as radicalisation and terrorism. Other themes included integration, which was narrowly framed only in terms of Australian values, citizenship and extremism. Conversely, labour market participation, which has also been shown to be an important determinant of integration, and the documented discrimination that Muslims face, only received minimal framing by the media.

This section will focus on case studies of selected incidents reported in the Australian media from 2014 to 2015. Over this two-year period, there have been a number of major media stories related to Islam and Muslims that may have exacerbated the problem of Islamophobia.

## September 2014

The month of September 2014 stands out as particularly significant with the police raids in Sydney and Brisbane, followed by Melbourne two weeks later, as well as the shooting of ‘terror suspect’ Numan Haider in Melbourne on 23 September 2014.<sup>79</sup> In response to these incidents, a number of opinion articles that could be characterised as Islamophobic were published. Janet Albrechtsen, for example, wrote “Let their warped words be heard” in *The Australian* newspaper in which she argued that because of “Muslim extremism,” multiculturalism must be condemned for its “moral relativism where all cultures are equal.” Greg Sheridan, also in *The Australian*, more subtly made the link between multiculturalism and terrorism in “a society reduced by terror’s savagery.”

The police raids in the three Australian capital cities, involving more than 600 officers, were extensively covered by mainstream media and highlight a particular aspect of the media’s role with some keenly co-operating with the law enforcement strategy of counter-intimidation.<sup>80</sup> Law enforcement has thus become an active ‘mediatised’ participant that may provide “context and a framework for the broader demonisation and marginalisation of minority groups.”<sup>81</sup>

These publicised counter-terrorism raids may also serve the priorities of those with an anti-terror agenda in terms of legislation.<sup>82</sup> Certain right-wing politicians may capitalise on the media discourse around terrorism to support their political and legislative objectives. The question about whether the raids were merely ‘theatre’ to support the government’s proposed security laws at the time was put to the justice minister, Michael Keenan, who rejected the suggestion. Shortly after the raids, however, then Prime Minister Tony Abbott warned the balance between freedom and security may have to shift, given the “troubling” and “darkening” security situation.<sup>83</sup>



Evidence of discursive treatment of Muslims as an antagonistic ‘menacing other’ by the Australian media can, however, be found as early as 1912 with the so-called “Moslem menace” threatening Australian values



These publicised counter-terrorism raids may also serve the priorities of those with an anti-terror agenda in terms of legislation. Certain right-wing politicians may capitalise on the media discourse around terrorism to support their political and legislative objectives





“The acid test:  
Australian journalists  
must ask what agenda  
they serve”

Katherine Murphy  
listed a number of  
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coverage of the  
Haider shooting

The Australian mainstream media is not monolithic in its facilitation of Islamophobic discourse. The *Guardian*, for example, published an editorial by Katherine Murphy in response to the September 2014 incidents titled: “The acid test: Australian journalists must ask what agenda they serve.” She listed a number of failings by the media over that one week’s coverage of the Haider shooting, which included the publication by Fairfax Media of the supposed image of a terror suspect that was wrong and the headline by the *Courier Mail* “Police kill Abbott jihadi” which had no basis since police could find no specific evidence of a threat to the then Prime Minister.<sup>84</sup>

## Parliament Burqa Ban October 2014

On Thursday 2 October 2014, the media reported then Prime Minister Tony Abbott said he wished the burqa (face veil) was not worn in Australia and he might support calls for it to be banned in federal parliament. Australian Human Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson agreed with Tony Abbott that the burqa was ‘confronting,’ but said there was no justification for banning it. A few days later, the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate issued a directive that any woman wearing a face veil should be segregated in the glassed-off visitors’ section. The decision caused immediate and angry backlash from the public and some government ministers, forcing the then Prime Minister to intervene and have it scrapped. The backlash seemed to have been assisted by media headlines like “The ‘burqa ban’ call only creates division.”<sup>85</sup> Ben Fordham on Sydney radio 2GB also slammed the federal parliament ban in his segment on 2 October 2014 called “Bizarre burqa ban.” The saga, however, exposed the extent of anti-Muslim hatred and the measures some were prepared to take to curb the rights of Muslim women to wear what they chose. This type of hatred has real consequences with an ABC News headline on 3 October 2014 stating: “Canberra Muslim woman stopped wearing *hijab* for fear of being attacked.”

## Sydney Siege December 2014

Another major incident that compounded the problem of Islamophobia was the Sydney Martin Place siege in December 2014. In response to the siege, columnist Andrew Bolt, writing in Melbourne’s *Herald Sun* with an article titled “Denial of Islamic fundamentalism puts us in danger,” commented that “something specific to Islam seems to license violence.” The headline for the same article in Brisbane’s the *Courier Mail* read: “Why does Islam beget violence.” This is not new for Bolt, who regularly argues that Islam is the problem and not just badly behaved Muslims. Islam and Muslims, however, are not the only targets for Bolt’s invective and bias. In 2011, he was found guilty of breaching the *Racial Discrimination Act* over two articles he wrote that were critical of indigenous Australians.<sup>86</sup> Bolt writes for News Corp papers, runs a political blog, is a radio commentator and TV host of *The Bolt Report*, and prides himself on being a conservative provocateur.

## Anti-Mosque Rallies 2015

A number of rallies in 2015 were held in cities across the country, including Victoria, to protest against the construction of a mosque in Bendigo. These anti-mosque demonstrations were organised by a number of right-wing anti-Muslim groups like the United Patriots Front, Reclaim Australia and the Party for Freedom. Although media coverage of these rallies was extensive, it also aided in promoting the protesters' message that mosques are breeding grounds for extremism and terrorism. Rebecca Weisser's article in *The Australian* on 17 October 2015 titled "Guess who's coming to Bendigo" added to the propaganda when she relied on circumstantial conjecture to imply the mosque organisers had links to terrorism. At one rally on Saturday 29 August 2015, demonstrators carried Australian flags and signs, including one that said "Say no to the Islamisation of Bendigo." *The Australian* reported that many Australian Muslims living in Bendigo at the time of the protest locked themselves in their homes for safety. This was in response to some of them being petrified to find their names and phone numbers disclosed on the "Stop the mosque in Bendigo" Facebook page.



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## Parramatta Shooting October 2015

On 2 October 2015, a 15-year-old boy shot and killed a police employee in front of Parramatta police station in Sydney. The ABC's *Media Watch* program critiqued irresponsible media coverage of the incident, including headlines by News Corp papers such as "A culture of hate" (*Daily Telegraph*), "Pack of wolves" (*Courier Mail*) and "Three days of carnage" (*Daily Telegraph*).<sup>87</sup>

According to Dr Michael Jetter, an expert on reporting terror from the University of Western Australia, "screaming headlines" and attention only encourages terrorists. Publicity is what terrorists crave and irresponsible media provides a vehicle for conveying their carnage. This then serves to intimidate audiences, which may exacerbate Islamophobia. A shared strategy of intimidation by police and terrorists becomes apparent.<sup>88</sup> This symbiotic relationship between the media and terrorists is a 'marriage of convenience,' with the media wanting shocking and dramatic news coverage, while the terrorists need propaganda for their political agendas.

## Paris Attacks 2015

Three months after the Parramatta shooting incident, on 7 January 2015, two men entered the offices of the French satirical weekly newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris and killed 11 people. This was followed ten months later on the evening of Friday 13 November 2015 with a series of coordinated terrorist attacks in Paris resulting in 130 people being killed. These attacks once again saw a significant upsurge in the vitriol levelled at Islam and specifically against the Grand Mufti of Australia. In a statement condemning the attacks, the Mufti chose to address possible causative factors for the problem of terrorism, listing Islamophobia and racism among other issues. Certain right-wing politicians and media organisations slammed the Mufti's comments as implying justification for the attacks. The



'Political rhetoric' significantly influences media framing and discourse

81%

The percentage of articles mentioning words such as 'Muslim,' 'Islamic,' 'mosque,' 'Mufti,' 'jihad,' etc., rose from 68 before the attacks to 123 after the attacks, representing a significant increase of 81%



Media reports about Islam and Muslims increased significantly in response to terror-related incidents locally and overseas

intense and relentless focus on the Mufti by the media and politicians forced him to issue a clarification. The *Daily Telegraph*, for example, published two stories critical of the Mufti and depicted him on its front page as the three "unwise" monkeys.

Josh Frydenberg, energy minister at the time, accused the Grand Mufti of a "graphic" failure of leadership and added "there is a problem within Islam." A number of liberal politicians backed the minister's position. News Corp's *Herald Sun* in Melbourne followed with the headline "Islam must change: War hero MP Andrew Hastie leads radical push." Liberal senator Cory Bernardi added that the Mufti's comments were a "disgrace." According to research, this kind of 'political rhetoric' significantly influences media framing and discourse.<sup>89</sup>

In the aftermath of the Paris terror attacks and the Australian media's condemnation of the Mufti, the ABC's *Media Watch* program conducted a review of the Mufti's response to the attack and found his first response was to condemn the attack via a Facebook post.<sup>90</sup> This fact was not reported by mainstream media, who instead chose to focus on condemning his press statement for including causative factors.

Analysis of headlines published by mainstream Australian media organisations collated via daily Google Alert email digests for the four weeks before and after the Friday 13 November 2015 Paris attacks was conducted for this report. The review found the percentage of articles mentioning words clearly indicative of the Islamic faith, such as 'Muslim,' 'Islamic,' 'mosque,' 'Mufti,' 'jihad,' etc., rose from 68 before the attacks to 123 after the attacks, representing a significant increase of 81%. In the four weeks before the attacks, the headlines of nine articles were about the activities of anti-Islam groups in Australia, while five focussed on an incident where some Muslim primary school students were permitted to opt out of singing the national anthem. Despite both these issues being framed negatively against Australian Muslims, the headlines of five articles dealt with the positive topic of the national mosque open day event.

In the four weeks after the attacks, a staggering 30% of the headlines identified the problem of terrorism, while 7% were about anti-Islam groups. Nine headlines in each of the four-week periods focussed on the activities of groups such as Reclaim Australia and the United Patriots Front. Again, despite the predominance of discursive discourse, 9% of the headlines dealt positively with the issue of Islamophobia whether in reporting incidents of anti-Muslim hate crimes or in reviewing anti-Muslim sentiment more generally. For example, News Corp's *Daily Telegraph* published an article on 20 November 2015 with the headline "Muslim Sydney woman assaulted at Gold Coast hotel." Police alleged a French-born Melbourne man shouted to the woman and her family: "We're going to bomb you all."

This information described above focussed on a number of selected events reported in the mainstream Australian media over the two-year period 2014-2015, including the police raids in Sydney and Brisbane in September 2014, the Sydney Siege later that year, the Parramatta shooting in October 2015 and the Paris attacks. It also included specific analysis of headlines during the four weeks before and after the November 13 Paris attacks. The review found media reports about Islam and Muslims increased significantly in response to terror-related incidents locally and overseas. Associated with this increase was a corresponding rise in the number of articles that were pejorative and disparaging of Muslims and the Islamic faith, thereby exacerbating the image of a 'menacing other.'



## Summary



- > Following terrorism incidents, segments of the media and commentators engage in anti-Islam rhetoric making remarks such as ‘something specific to Islam seems to license violence.’
- > Certain right-wing politicians capitalise on the media discourse around terrorism to support their political and legislative objectives.
- > However, the Australian mainstream media is not monolithic in its facilitation of Islamophobic discourse. For example, one editorial listed a number of media reporting failings with the article titled: ‘The acid test: Australian journalists must ask what agenda they serve.’
- > Media reports about Islam and Muslims increased significantly in response to terror-related incidents locally and overseas with a corresponding rise in the number of articles that were pejorative and disparaging of Muslims and the Islamic faith.

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SECTION II:

# Individual Islamophobia



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## Glossary

The following are definitions of terms used specifically in the context of this report.

### INCIDENT

*An event or occurrence of an Islamophobic nature that is either physical or online event or occurrence characterised as Islamophobia/Islamophobic including physical attacks, assault, damage to property, offensive graffiti, non-verbal harassment, intimidation and online threats.*

### ISLAMOPHOBIA/ISLAMOPHOBIC

*Islamophobia is a form of racism that includes various forms of violence, violations, discrimination and subordination that occur across multiple sites in response to the problematisation of Muslim identity.\**

### OFFLINE

*Incidents reported to the Register that take place outside of cyberspace, in the physical world, including physical attacks and assaults, damage to property and threats received in the mail.*

### ONLINE

*Incidents reported to the Register that take place on the internet, including over the various social media platforms.*

### PERPETRATOR

*A person who abuses, attacks, harasses, intimidates and/or insults another individual on the grounds of that person's actual or perceived Islamic faith.*

### PROXY/PROXIES

*Acquaintances of the victim who submit Incident reports to the Register on their behalf.*

### REPORTER

*A person who submits an incident report to the Register.*

### VICTIM

*A person who is subject to abuse, attack, harassment, intimidation and/or insults on the grounds of their actual or perceived Islamic faith irrespective of whether they identify as a Muslim.*

### WITNESS

*A person who witnesses an Islamophobic incident.*

\* "Salman Sayyid, "A Measure of Islamophobia," *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 2/1 (2014): 10-25."



\* Tracey Nearmy and AAP, "Since when was the Government Planning on Introducing Sharia Law? That's New to Us," photograph, [news.com.au](http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/real-life/news-life/the-eight-people-you-should-concentrate-on-hating-instead-of-muslims/news-story/732af052053f7a5eff27a3a73c411d04), November 26, 2015, <http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/real-life/news-life/the-eight-people-you-should-concentrate-on-hating-instead-of-muslims/news-story/732af052053f7a5eff27a3a73c411d04>.

^ "#Reclaim Australia #Melbourne: Aftermath...", photograph, [slackbastard](http://slackbastard.anarchobase.com/?p=37955), April 4, 2015, <http://slackbastard.anarchobase.com/?p=37955>.

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ISLAMOPHOBIA  
REGISTER  
AUSTRALIA

## PART 1:

# Islamophobia Register Data 2014-2015

*Dr Derya Iner<sup>\*</sup>, Ms Iman Zayied<sup>\*\*</sup>  
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Facebook was  
the most popular  
reporting channel

## Background

The Islamophobia Register Australia ('the Register') is a non-profit initiative providing a platform for victims and witnesses to report Islamophobic incidents that take place either in the physical or online world. This section of the Report is based on the quantitative and qualitative analyses of verified incidents reported to the Register from the time of its inception on 17 September 2014 until the end of 2015.

This Register does not detail the entirety of Islamophobic incidents that took place in the proposed time frame. Similar research conducted in Canada and the US, for instance, indicates that reported incidents of Islamophobia represent only the "tip of the iceberg."<sup>1</sup> A mini survey conducted with a group of Australian Muslim university students points to numerous unreported experiences of harassment and further supports this claim. Circulated as verbal narratives at the grassroots level, 77.9% (N=67) of the participants stated they were exposed to Islamophobic incidents.<sup>2</sup> The number of Islamophobic incidents averaged 2.2 cases per person.<sup>3</sup> Some 50% of the participants experienced Islamophobia in some form. Although individual experiences of Islamophobia were high, only 8.16% of cases were reported to the police. Even fewer were reported to relevant agencies like the Register even though one-third of participants were aware of the existence of these reporting mechanisms.

In most instances, the Islamophobia Register Australia has become a critical source of information for the media when covering anti-Muslim attacks.

While these findings confirm Islamophobia is far more prevalent than official statistics suggest, this report describes and analyses the data that is documented in the Register with rigorous and transparent methodology. Although the cases reported in this analysis do not represent in any statistical sense the pattern and scope of incidents across Australia, they remain a critical and valuable source for understanding the Islamophobic experience. The figures presented describe the types of incidents reported in this Register and examine the statistical relationships between the particular factors and variables of interest.

Between September 2014 and December 2015, 243 incidents were reported to the Register. Staff at the Register made contact with, and confirmed the identity of, reporters in 97% of the listed cases. Confirmation of reporters was critical to establishing authenticity and identity.

Many reporters opted to submit their incident reports via social media by sending a private direct message to the Register's Facebook page (78.2%) when compared with the other communication mediums including the reporting mechanism available via the Register's website (12.3%), via direct email to the Register (3.7%) and the collection of Islamophobic incidents reported via mainstream media (5.8%) by the Register team. In most instances, the Register has become a critical source of information for the media when covering anti-Muslim attacks.

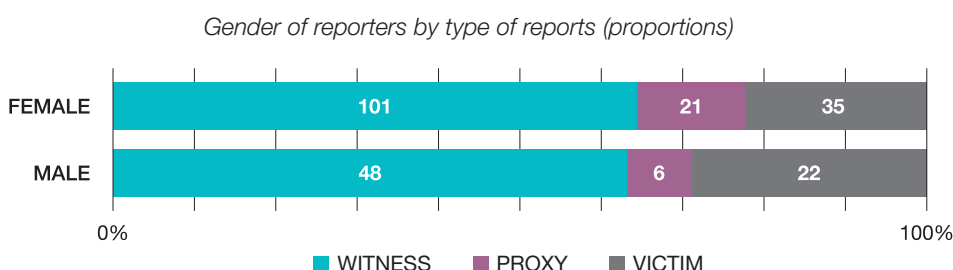
## Demographics

### REPORTERS: VICTIMS, PROXIES AND WITNESSES

Islamophobic incidents were reported to the Register directly by victims, proxies (i.e. relatives or friends) or third parties witnessing the attack. Witnesses (65%) reported more incidents than victims (24%) or proxies (11%).

#### Gender of Reporters

Females submitted approximately twice the number of incident reports (64.6%; N=157) compared with males who submitted almost one-third of the incident reports (31.3%; N=76). A small percentage of people (4.1%; N=10) did not disclose their gender. Females submitted proportionally more proxy incident reports than males, but fewer incident reports when they were victims of Islamophobic attacks.

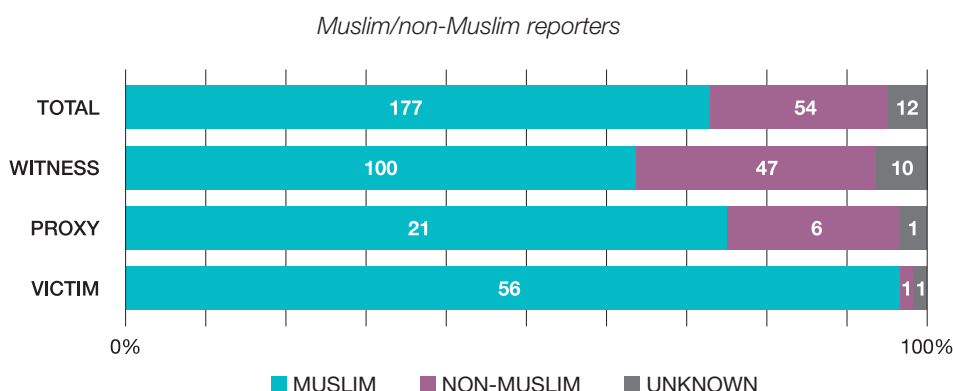


#### Online and Offline Reporters

The instantaneous nature of cyberspace means that vilification can be easily and speedily circulated. The data suggests that online Islamophobic incidents are more likely to be observed and reported by witnesses (i.e. 86% witness, 11% victim and 3% proxy reporters). When online incidents are disregarded, and only offline incidents are counted, witnesses still constitute the majority of reporters (i.e. 46.2%; N=61 witness, 34.8%; N=46 victim, 19%; N=25 proxy-reporting of offline incidents).

#### Religion: Muslim and Non-Muslim Reporters

A close examination of the data collated by the Register indicates that 22.2% (N=54) of reporters appeared to be by non-Muslims. They were largely witnesses and comprised almost one-quarter of the total number of reporters. 21.4% (N=6) of the 28 proxies were non-Muslim. They were either friends, neighbours or acquainted with the victim.



Females submitted fewer reports when they were victims



Witnesses are more attentive than victims and proxies in reporting offline anti-Muslim hate attacks

22.2%

Non-Muslims constituted about one-quarter of the witness reporters



Perpetrators and victims vary from young people to the elderly



Victims of Australian background were more likely to report their ethnicity

98%

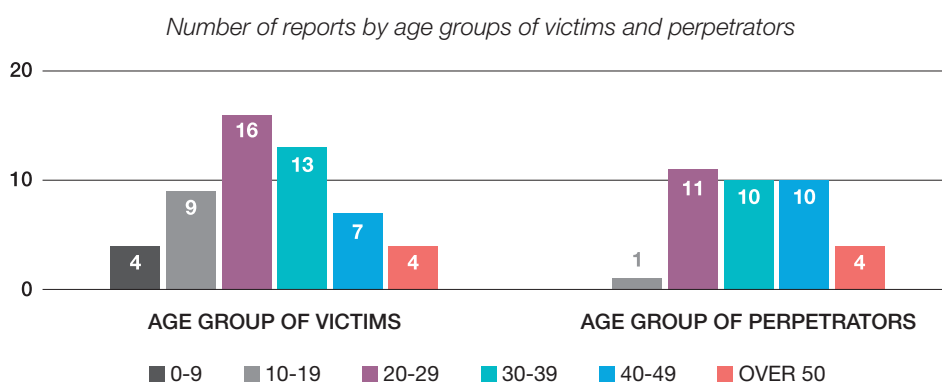
As indicated by the victim, 98% of perpetrators were identified as ethnically Anglo-Celtic

## PERPETRATORS AND VICTIMS

In 98.4% of the incidents, there was no social relationship between the victim and perpetrator.<sup>4</sup> In more than half of the reported incidents, the victim and perpetrator were alone. Of the 126 offline incidents where information about the social context could be ascertained, 61.9% (N=78) occurred when the victim and perpetrator were not accompanied by another person.

### Age Range

The age and ethnicity of victims as well as perpetrators were unknown unless they were explicitly stated by the reporter. According to the available data, the age of the victims concentrated around the 20s and 30s whereas the perpetrators had a more even distribution between the 20-50 age ranges.



### Ethnicity

Ethnicity was an additional piece of information and not indicated in 227 of the collated incident reports. The available data indicates reporters were more likely to be of an Australian background (8 Australian, 1 New Zealand and 1 European) in contrast with reporters from a traditionally Muslim background (3 Arab, 1 Afghan, 1 Indian and 1 African). Although Turks constituted the second largest Muslim population in Australia according to the 2011 census data, no reporter or victim identified themselves as Turkish in the submitted reports.

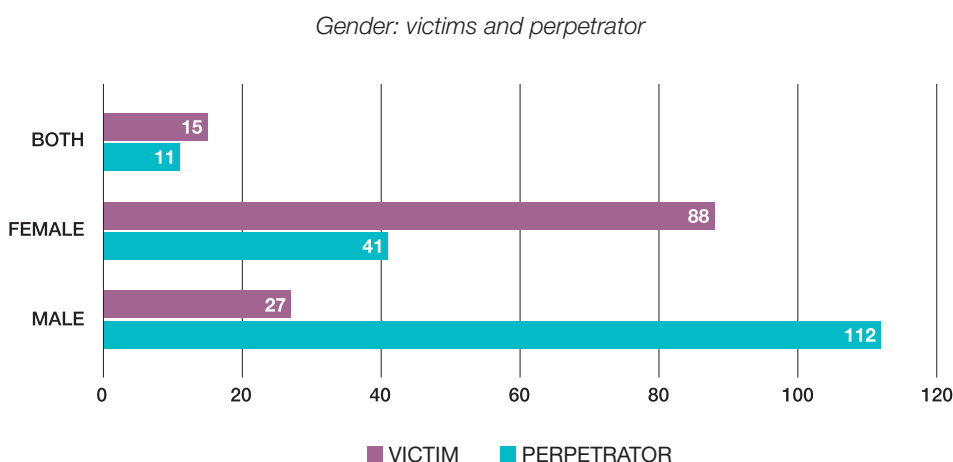
The ethnicity of the perpetrator was an additional piece of information that was captured in the data, and in 79% of the incidents, this was unknown (N=193). However, based on the perception of the reporters who did disclose this information, 98% (49 of the 50 perpetrators) were reported to be of Anglo-Celtic origin.



## Gender

The gender of the victim was given in 130 of the incidents reported. Overall, women were more likely to be victims while men were largely perpetrators. Females were victims in 67.7% of cases (N=88), males in 20.8% of cases (N=27) and in 11.5% of the cases (N=15) both genders were present. The gender of the perpetrator was known in 165 of the reported incidents. Females were perpetrators in 24.8% of cases (N=41), males in 68.5% of incidents (N=113) and people of both genders together in 6.7% of incidents (N= 11). The data clearly suggests lone men tend to be the perpetrators and lone women tend to be the victims.

The numbers of mixed gender victim and perpetrator groups are identical. However, a close reading of the data indicates that mixed-gender perpetrator groups appear to only target female victims.



When online cases were excluded, there was no meaningful difference between female and male perpetrators: 23.1% (6 out of 26 incidents) were perpetrated by females and 20.1% (14 out of 68 incidents) were perpetrated by males.



Lone men tend to be the perpetrators and lone women tend to be the victims



Females are proportionally more victimised offline and males are more victimised online



Convert Muslim women were vocal in raising awareness of their victimisation

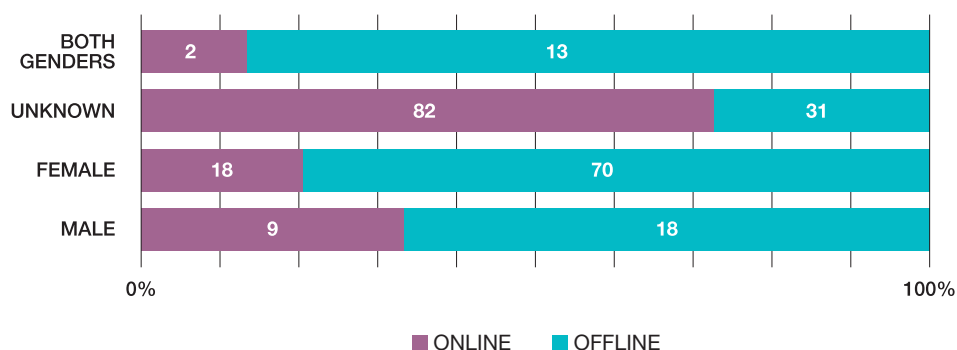
## Victims

### GENDER OF VICTIMS

In the Register, 45.7% of the incidents took place online, but for most of them (73.9%) the gender of the victim is unknown. When looking at the gender distribution across online and offline incidents, females are comparatively more victimised offline and males constitute a higher percentage when it comes to online incidents.

It may be that females are perceived to be more physically vulnerable by the perpetrators and therefore more likely to be attacked in the real world. Visually, they are generally more identifiable because of their distinct Islamic attire and this heightens their exposure to Islamophobic abuse. This perceived helplessness and direct visual identification is less relevant in the virtual world, where identities can remain hidden and physical vulnerabilities are less important.

Victims' gender by online/offline context of the incidents



### VICTIMS WHO ARE CONVERTS

A total of 11% (5 out of the 46) victimised women in the Register data had names and surnames that appeared to be of an Anglo-Celtic origin. Considering the small percentage of Muslim converts<sup>5</sup> (compared with the number of victims from traditionally Muslim communities) it can be concluded that convert Muslim Anglo-Celtic women in the Register data were over-represented.

Anglo-Celtic convert Muslim women had a tendency to highlight ethnic/racial similarities with their perpetrators when they are treated as foreigners. This was explicit in one victim's attempt to negotiate with the perpetrator, where she explains that she, too, is an 'Aussie':

*"...The whole incident occurred over approximately 20 mins. Some of the things he repeatedly said to me include: 'you Muslim pig, I'm going to kill you,' I'll cut your head off you Muslim dog, get out of this country you're not Aussie, stuff about Muslims being terrorists, a risk to the country and Muslims bombing everyone. I know he said more than this, however, the thing he kept repeating was that he was going to slit my throat as I was a Muslim dog/pig. **The only thing I said to him during the entire thing was that I was Aussie too (said twice)...**" (Case 85; emphasis added)*

In another case, the victim, an Australian Muslim convert mother expressed her concerns about being harassed in front of her non-Muslim daughter:

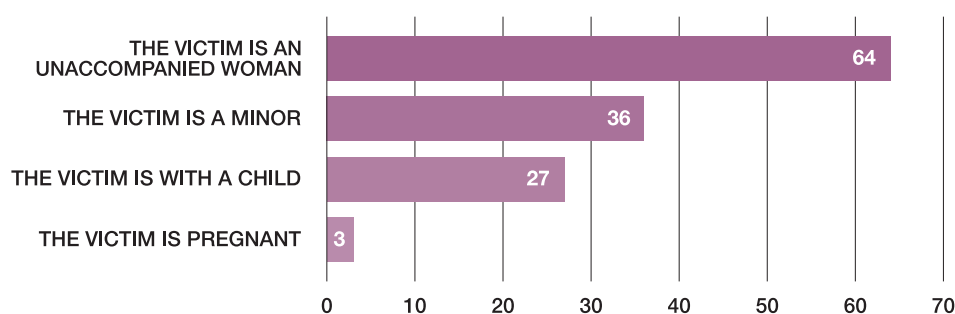
*“...This isn't the only incident I had like this...My daughter has commented on how worried she is for me and asked me not to walk anywhere...” (Case 130)*

In all the reported cases, convert women displayed active resistance by calling the police, taking a photo of the perpetrator or recording the incident. However, according to the victims' reports, they did not appear to receive the assistance they required from the police.

## VULNERABLE VICTIMS

Vulnerability was designated according to the victims' helpless and fragile position. Certain victim groups were classified as vulnerable, which included but was not limited to women who were alone or pregnant, victims with children, or youths. The wearing of a hijab (headscarf) was not taken into account as almost all of the targeted women were wearing one. Nevertheless, the available data gives an indication of victims' particular vulnerabilities that make the incidents more severe, leaving a long-lasting impact.

*Incidents involving vulnerable victims*



Going out alone (68.0%; N=64), in the presence of children (28.7%; N=27) or while pregnant (3.2%; N=3) at the time of the incident made women more vulnerable. All the incidents that occurred in the presence of children involved female victims. With the exception of cases that involved families, no men appear to have been harassed in front of their children. Instead, males appear to have been targeted by authorities (the only two victims that were reportedly harassed or discriminated by authorities were males).

## Unaccompanied Women

Despite being in a crowd and surrounded, female victims were often left alone and isolated when faced with a perpetrator:

*“...I was walking with my head down and a group of young males yelled out ‘ISIS B\*\*\*\*’ ‘go back to where you came from’ and snickered and said ‘shh or she’ll behead you.’ And followed me down the street. None of the train staff helped me out or stopped them.” (Case 26)*



If family cases are dismissed, no men appear to have been harassed in front of his children

**3x**

Women who ventured out on their own were almost three times more likely to be harassed



One pregnant victim, who was passing by some drunken perpetrators with her 2-year old daughter, referred to the attack as one of the most fearful moments in her life

This feeling of isolation was also expressed by another victim who felt she had not been defended. Instead, she was accused of being intolerant towards the perpetrator who was swearing at her:

*“... [on the bus] He [another passenger] then said ‘oh it’s only swearing, no big deal.’ I said I have children with me and this kind of language is unacceptable. He then said **‘you can’t come to our country and tell us what we can’t say.’** And ‘you need to go up to Northern Territory and go the bus, you’ll get a lot more of those words from our lot.’...” (Case 172, emphasis added)*

Undefended and left on their own, the victims who were physically present within crowds refer to the normalisation and acceptance of hate attacks directed at Australian Muslims.

### Pregnant Women

Pregnant women’s experiences with harassment, are particularly stressful as they affect both mother and child. One pregnant victim, who was passing by some drunken perpetrators with her 2-year old daughter, referred to the attack as one of the most fearful moments in her life:

*“...She [one of the perpetrators] kept asking if I could hear her, as I made out that I couldn’t, and kept walking/picked up my pace. Her voice got louder so I’m not sure if they started to follow me on foot, but once I entered the medical centre on Pitt Street, I didn’t hear or see anything else from them. **I am 19 weeks pregnant and have never felt so afraid/ vulnerable in my life.** I think because they were possibly intoxicated, it made me more afraid that they probably weren’t thinking clearly. I thought they were going to physically try harming my daughter and I. There were lots of passers-by who didn’t come to my aid...” (Case 162, emphasis added)*

In a similar incident, another pregnant woman and her young daughter were exposed to verbal abuse by a group of intoxicated young Australians:

*“As I walked past, one of the men covered his group of friends with his arms and shouted out “Be careful!! She’s going to bomb us!” I had my daughter in her pram and I’m 9 months pregnant. **I suppose I should be thankful that it was just verbal abuse, considering that they were under the influence of alcohol, and I was by myself. Words hurt, but right now, self-protection is number one on my list.**” (Case 40, emphasis added)*

The perpetrators made no distinction between the pregnant woman and her children.



### Children with Parents (Indirect Victimisation of Children)

In most cases where women were with children, mothers were accompanied by more than one child at the time of the incident. Even if the number of children is counted as one per incident

(31.5%; N=27), when it is summed up with the number of victims under 18 years of age in the collated data (42%; N=36), children's direct and indirect exposure to Islamophobia reaches 47.7% (N=63 out of 132) within the range of offline cases.

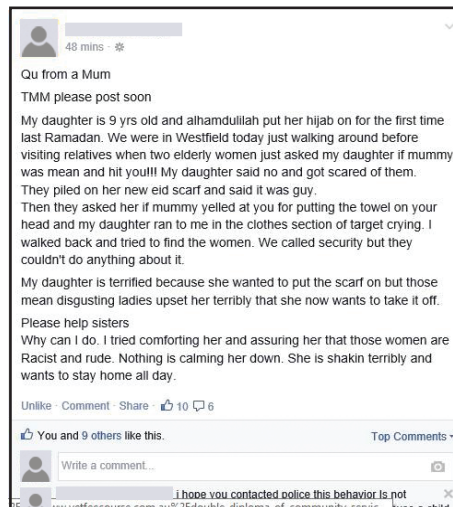
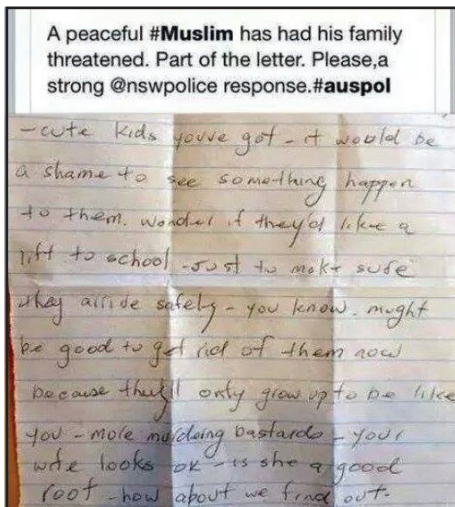
The children's ages ranged from toddlers to teenagers. In some cases, the level of abuse was intense. For instance, while filling up with petrol at Moorebank with her two children, one woman was shouted at by a truck driver:

*“Go blow yourself up in your own country and other things.’ Instead of helping or offering support, another white Anglo woman got involved and stuck up for the truck driver and began also to abuse me.” (Case 5)*

In another case, a perpetrator threatened an Australian Muslim family by threatening to harm their children and thereby “get rid of them” at an early stage.



More than 30% of the female victims had their children with them at the time of the abuse





Direct victimisation of teenagers was found to take place mainly at schools

### Direct Victimisation of Children

In addition to the indirect abuse suffered by children who witnessed their parents exposed to a range of Islamophobic incidents, some Australian Muslim children appear to be exposed to direct harassment at very early stages of their lives. In the following incident, a neighbour came to the victim's door and insulted not just the victim, but also her baby:

*"... She [the perpetrator] is saying things like, 'people like you' all the neighbours are unhappy with you; 'cave women,' **you have a stupid baby**, we know what you people are like,' 'I curse you every night,' 'why aren't you working'... (please note that I am on maternity leave because my baby is only 18 months old)... **I really feel harassed by her as she expressed so much hate especially to my baby.**" (Case 178, emphasis added)*

The aggression extended to physical attacks on young children. A witness reported to the Register that:

*"A little boy was kicked by a woman riding on a bike outside and she swore at the boy's parents and told them to go back to their country and put bombs there." (Case 247)*

More often than not, teenagers were vilified at school. For instance, a reporter's child was "told by other boys in his school that he rapes people" (Case 136). A 13 year old girl in year 9 was circled by a group of boys who said words that "sounded like Allahu akbar and mocking the Adhan" (Case 148). Another Muslim student reported a peer was verbally "attacking Muslims for no reason." Although the reporter tried to help him understand Islam and address his concerns, "he doesn't listen and repeatedly says Muslims are not Australians" (Case 72).

In another case, one student was suspended without any investigation for allegedly using the word "ISIS" (Case 245). This stands in stark contrast to other students who bullied or harassed their Australian Muslim peers on the basis of their religious beliefs but did not, according to the reporters, receive a warning from school management (Cases 136, 148, 72).

Sometimes students were exposed to harassment by senior citizens in the vicinity of an Islamic school. For instance, a woman yelled out "f\*\*\*g Muslims at al Faisal College, Minto while parents taking their kids for their annual presentation" (Case 235); an elderly man called a 17 year old Australian Muslim boy "a terrorist" (Case 25); and a customer verbally attacked a 19 year old Australian Muslim girl working at Campbellfield Coles and told her to remove her headscarf. He was confronted by security and left the young girl "shaken by the incident" (Case 73).

Regardless of whether Australian Muslim children experience Islamophobia explicitly or through implicit means, there is no doubt that exposure to such abuse raises significant concerns in regards to possible psychological and social impacts.

## Locations

### REPORT DISTRIBUTION BY STATE

The Register, whose staff are based in Sydney, received incident reports from almost every Australian state. This section focuses only on the incidents that were reported directly to the Register. Accordingly, the percentage of incidents reported to the Register from QLD was noticeably higher, whereas the reports from VIC were noticeably lower when compared with the percentages of their respective Australian Muslim populations.<sup>6</sup>



Victims of  
Islamophobia felt  
isolated even in  
crowded places

In our database, there were no meaningful differences in the distribution of verbal insults per state. Most physical assaults reported to the Register occurred in NSW (60%) and VIC (26.7%); no physical assaults were reported in QLD and WA; and only one assault in SA and TAS. Verbal abuse was over-represented in QLD, while verbal and written forms of harassment were particularly high in NSW.

### INDOOR AND OUTDOOR SPACES

For the purpose of this Report, open air public places such as parks, roads and playgrounds were categorised as 'outdoors,' whereas public spaces such as shopping centres, shops, stores, workplaces and mosques were categorised as 'indoors.' Indoor spaces are deemed safer as there are usually security and other personnel with varying levels of authority, whereas outdoor spaces are deemed less secure due to a lack thereof.

When online incidents are excluded, 31% (N= 41) of reported incidents occur indoors, which are considered to be a safer space. As expected, perpetrators are represented mostly in outdoor spaces (69%, N=90) such as roads, parks and playgrounds, which are usually less crowded and therefore more likely places for harassment to occur.



More severe incidents ranging from 5 to 7 occurred in indoor spaces, which are guarded and expected to be more secure

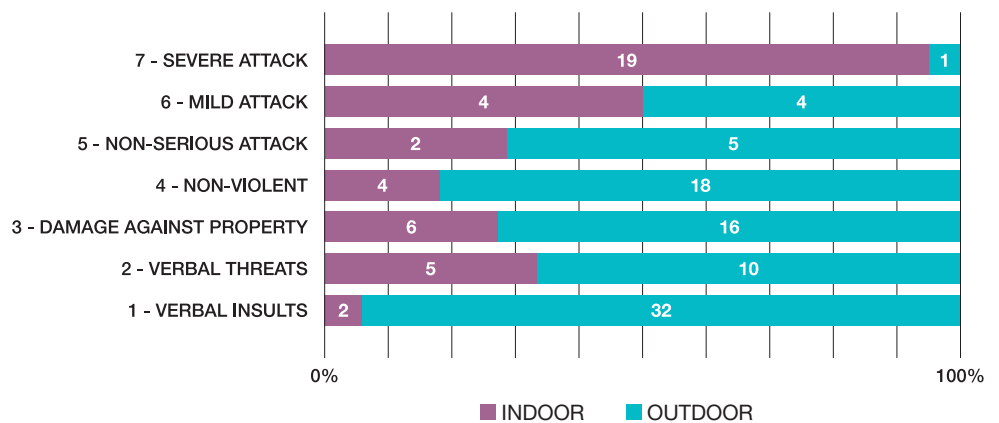
**48%**

of offline attacks occurred in crowded spaces that were frequented daily

### Severity and Indoor/Outdoor Spaces

Severity levels ranging from 1 to 7 (least to most)<sup>7</sup> were observed in both outdoor and indoor incidents despite the fact that crowded indoor spaces with security and other personnel with varying levels of authority are expected to be more secure for victims and a deterrent for perpetrators. According to the severity scale constructed through the categorisation of incidents, severity levels ranging from 1 to 4 mostly occurred in outdoor spaces. Contrary to expectation, more severe incidents ranging from 5 to 7 occurred in indoor spaces. This means perpetrators are not deterred from harassing victims even within crowds and where security guards, managers or the police force may have been present.

Severity and indoor/outdoor spaces

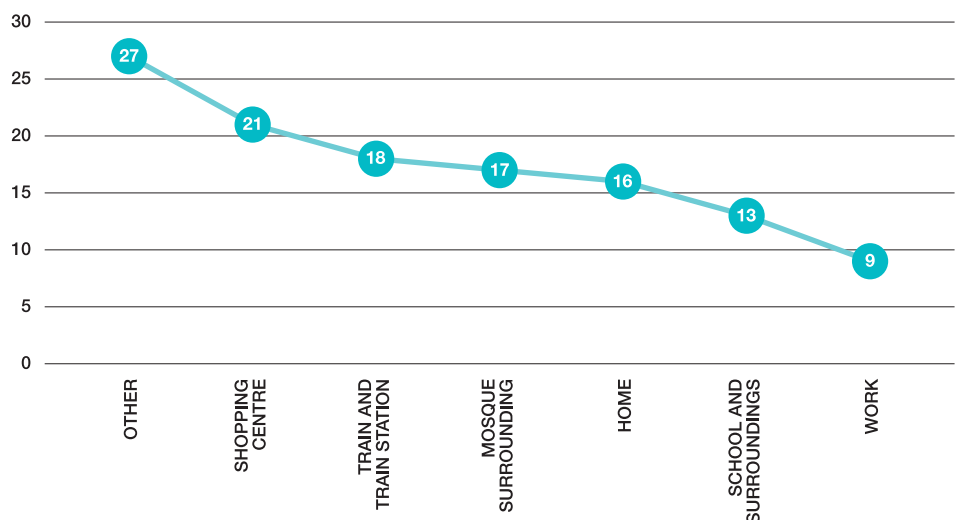


The physical assaults occurring in indoor spaces indicate, regardless of potential legal consequences and social pressure, perpetrators are reckless and bold in their attitude towards Australian Muslims. This raises a concern with regard to how much social and legal pressure exists to restrain potential perpetrators.

### HARASSMENT HOT SPOTS

Apart from indoor/outdoor spaces, incident locations were categorised according to the provided place types such as schools, trains and shopping centres.

Harassment spots





Shopping centres (17.3%; N=21), train stations (14.8%; N= 18) and mosque surroundings (14.0; N=17) were the most common harassment spots. Australian Muslims were attacked in their own homes by a neighbour, figure of authority or unidentified perpetrator (13.2%; N=16). Australian Muslim children were harassed within their schools by other students/ staff members or while walking out of the school by a passer by (10.7%; N=13). Although few Australian Muslims were harassed or discriminated against by their workplace colleagues, in most cases the perpetrator was a customer; for example, visiting the markets and grocery stores where the victims worked (7.4%; N=9). Alarming, it was found that most incidents took place when the victim and perpetrator were alone.

Although there seems to be an almost even distribution of incident ratio among the listed harassment spots, when most frequented and safeguarded spaces (such as shopping centres, train stations, schools and school surroundings, and work places) are considered together, the number increases to 48%. This indicates that almost half of the harassment spots lie in the centre of people's daily routines, making anti-Muslim attacks visible to a wide range of people including children and adults. The frequency of harassment in these commonly frequented places can ultimately lead to the normalisation of Islamophobia.

### MULTICULTURALLY DIVERSE AND LESS-DIVERSE LOCATIONS

Suburbs with a significant Muslim and immigrant population, like Auburn in NSW and Coburg in Victoria,<sup>8</sup> were perceived as areas being 'taken over' by the 'other'.<sup>19</sup> They were therefore labelled as areas with high crime rates as well as questionable and threatening residents. These suburbs stand in stark contrast with those that are less diverse with a largely Anglo-Celtic and European population. These 'model' suburbs, like those along the Northern Beaches and Sutherland Shire in NSW, were perceived to be orderly and culturally unaltered urban spaces with a low-ratio crime rate. This fictional mapping and discriminatory labelling was taken into consideration when examining the harassment of Australian Muslims by location.<sup>10</sup>

Multiculturally diverse/less-diverse suburbs were identifiable only if specific location details were provided by the reporters. This categorisation was necessary to identify the context of the locations where incidents took place. Of the 120 incidents where information about the location of the incident was available, 48.3% (N=58) of incidents occurred in multiculturally diverse areas whereas 51.6% (N=62) occurred in less diverse suburbs. These figures indicate Islamophobia is also common in the multiculturally diverse suburbs of Australia, where people are presumably more exposed to different ethno-religious backgrounds.

## Incidents (including online)

Since its launch (17 September 2014), 103 incidents were reported to the Register in 2014 (3.5 months - about 6.4 reports per week)\* and 141 incidents in 2015 (about 2.7 per week). Despite the Register's increasing publicity over time, the number of incident reports was higher when it was first launched. The heightened tensions leading up to the Register's launch, which was in the immediate aftermath of the highly publicised Sydney and Brisbane raids that involved visibly Australian Muslim families, and the continuing tension in those early days, may explain the higher number of reports received in its early days. These tensions will be explored in detail in the following section. Mariam Veiszadeh, founder of the Register, also addresses the Islamophobic tension and the increasing anti-Muslim incidents which led her to establish an Islamophobia reporting channel.<sup>11</sup>

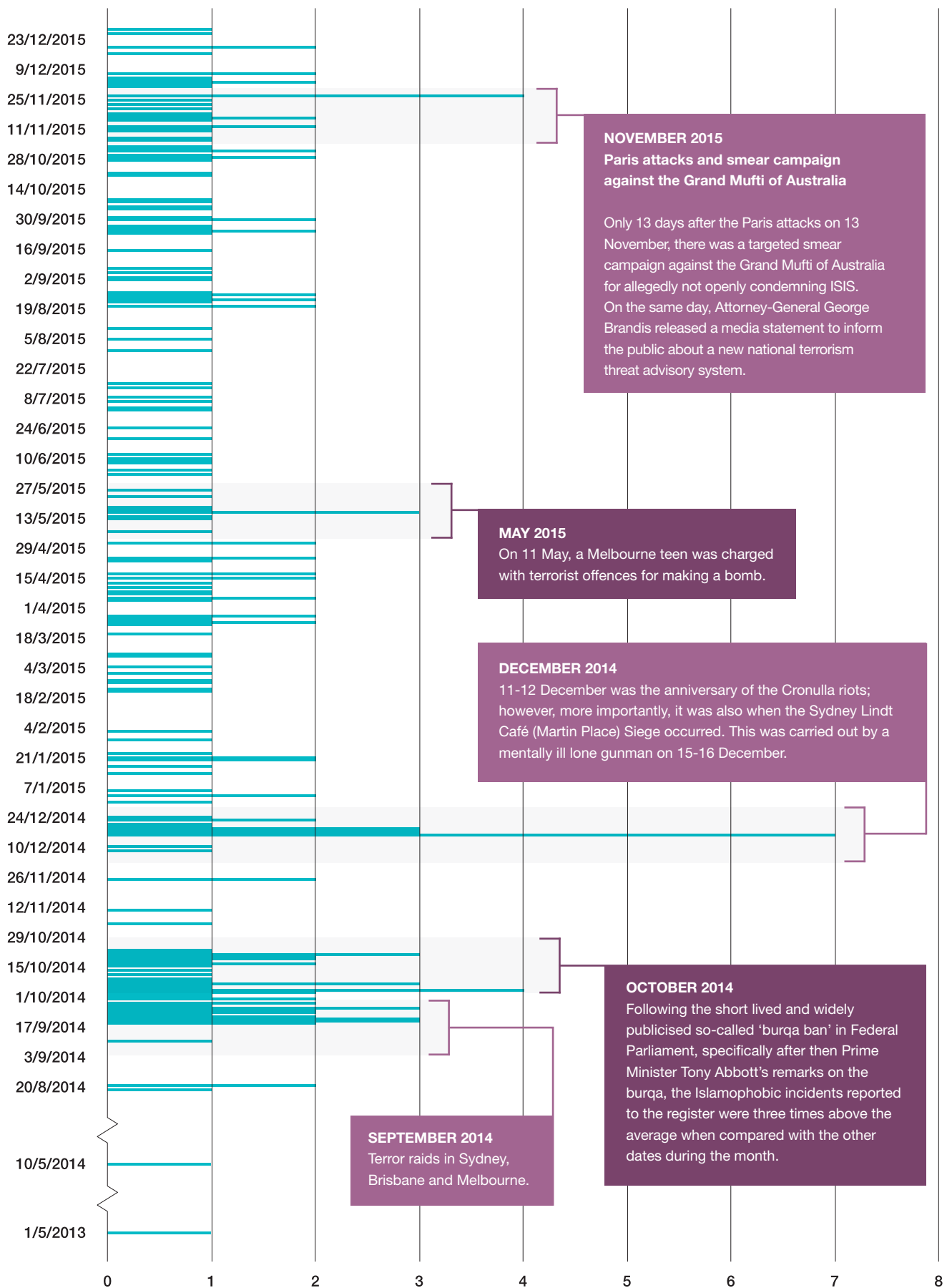


Almost half of the harassment spots lie in the centre of people's daily routines, making anti-Muslim attacks visible to a wide range of people including children and adults. The frequency of harassment in these commonly frequented places can ultimately lead to the normalisation of Islamophobia



Islamophobia can occur even in the most multicultural suburbs of Australia, where people are presumably more exposed to different ethno-religious backgrounds

\* Yet one incident was discarded in the analysis because the incident date was earlier than August 2014

*Frequency of reports over time*

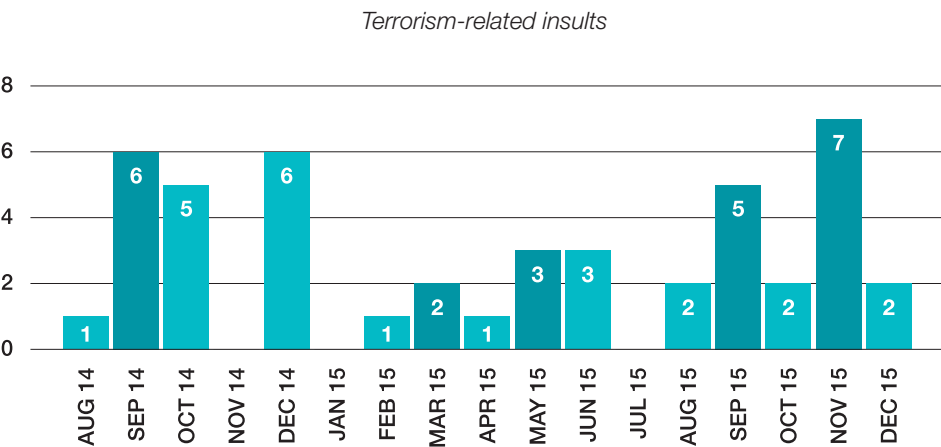
MAJOR EVENTS COINCIDING WITH THE RECORDED REPORTS

Numerous factors appear to affect the increase and decrease of incidents to the Register. When external events such as terrorist attacks, media coverage and politicians’ negative comments about Islam/Muslims are considered collectively alongside the timeline of report frequency to the Register, meaningful relationships can be observed. We acknowledge there was no statistical analysis undertaken to calculate the direct association between the two. We also acknowledge the voluntary nature of the Register. However, the relationships between the external factors and reported instances of abuse provide insightful information. The organic connection between the external events, their portrayal and the increase in reported incidents to the Register is elucidated in detail in Section I. Similar analysis and observations were also documented in the UK<sup>12</sup> and the US.<sup>13</sup>

The Islamophobia Register was founded one month after publicised beheadings by the terrorist organisation ISIS and coincidentally, the night before the Sydney and Brisbane raids (17 September 2014). The release and circulation of the videos showing the beheadings on social media, together with loaded messages and the announcement of the next victims, occupied Western media while creating social anxiety and tension in the Western world, including in Australia.

The media focused on the beheadings of the four Westerners and two Japanese nationals and thereby increased the visibility of ISIS in the West. The beheading of almost 200 other victims, two-thirds of whom were Muslims,<sup>14</sup> did not receive such extensive coverage in the media. Unbalanced reporting by the some segments of the mainstream media nurtured the idea that this conflict was between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Incidents where reference was made to ‘beheadings’ anti-Muslim assaults, harassment and insults occurred and explicit mention of “terrorists” and “ISIS” were observed in the Islamophobic incidents directed towards everyday Australian Muslims.



Of the 47 incidents categorised as including terrorism-related insults, 38.3% of incidents were reported to the Register after September 2014 (N=18) and 61.7% in 2015 (N=29). The above figure shows the distribution of terrorism-related insults over time.



External events, such as global and national terrorist attacks, sieges, legislation targeting Australian Muslims, and protests, coincided with an increase of incident reports to the Register



The beheadings of almost 200 other victims, two-thirds of whom were Muslims, did not receive extensive coverage in the media



The Register was founded in mid-September and within its first 11 days, it received 33 reports of anti-Muslim attacks

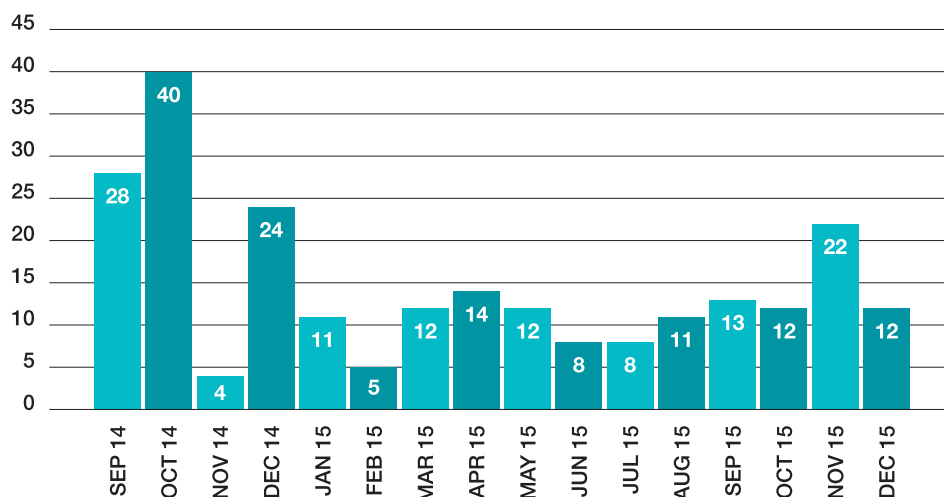
## TIMELINE OF RADICAL AND ISLAMOPHOBIC EVENTS

### August 2014

During this month, Western victims were beheaded by ISIS and some Australians became involved in terrorist activities, threatening to bring the horror to Australia.<sup>15</sup> This increased anxiety and emotional disgust among Australians.

- > There was no platform like the Islamophobia Register Australia to report Islamophobic incidents.

Monthly distribution of reports



### September 2014

Massive police raids occurred in Sydney and Brisbane on 18 September 2014.<sup>16</sup> The Islamophobia Register Australia was established by Mariam Veiszadeh in response to increasing harassment and attacks against Australian Muslims one day after the police raids. On 23 September 2014, Numan Haider, a terror suspect, was shot and killed by police in Melbourne.<sup>17</sup> Two days later, the National Security Legislation Amendments Bill (No.1) was passed by parliament.<sup>18</sup>

Within the same month, the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Foreign Fighters) Bill was introduced by George Brandis, Attorney-General for Australia.<sup>19</sup> September ended with more police raids in Melbourne.<sup>20</sup>

- > The Register was founded in mid-September and within its first 11 days, it received 33 reports of anti-Muslim attacks (5 of which happened in August but were reported in September).
- > Terrorism-related harassment cases were above the monthly average (N=6).

### October 2014

Following the short lived and widely publicised so-called ‘burqa ban’ in Federal Parliament, specifically after then Prime Minister Tony Abbott’s remarks on the burqa (“finding it confronting”),<sup>21</sup> the Islamophobic incidents reported to the Register were three times above the average when compared with the other dates during the month. The increase in “beheading”-related threats towards Australian Muslims (four out of seven incidents) in October is also noteworthy. Counter-terrorism legislation amendments were another topic on the socio-political agenda for this month. The Amendments Bill passed on 29 October 2014.<sup>22</sup>

- > In the same month, Islamophobia Register Australia received the highest number of incident reports in its history (N=40).
- > Terrorism-related harassment cases were above the monthly average of terrorism related insults (N=5).

### November 2014

November was a quiet month with few incidents being reported to the Register. No “terrorism”-related insult was reported to the Register during November 2014.

- > The Islamophobia Register Australia received only 4 reports during the entire month.
- > No terrorism related harassment was reported.

### December 2014

11-12 December was the anniversary of the Cronulla riots; however, more importantly, it was also when the Sydney Lindt Café (Martin Place) Siege occurred. This was carried out by a mentally ill lone gunman on 15-16 December.<sup>23</sup>

- > Anti-Muslim vilification reports to the Register spiked on the day of the Lindt Café siege. The Register received 7 incidents on December 15 and 9 incidents on December 16-18.
- > Terrorism related harassments were above the monthly average of terrorism related insults (N=6).

### 2015

Certain dates in May and November 2015 recorded more incident reports than the average per month.

### March and April 2015

A number of significant incidents that may have affected local perceptions during 2015 included: 3 March – a Jordanian pilot was burned alive by ISIS;<sup>24</sup> 12 March – Australian teen Jake Bilardi’s alleged suicide bombing in Iraq;<sup>25</sup> and 16 April 2015 – a full list of Australian extremists/terrorists fighting with ISIS in Syria and Iraq was released.<sup>26</sup>

- > The Register received the second largest number of incident reports of 2015 in April (N=14).



In October 2014, Islamophobia Register Australia received the highest number of incident reports in its history (N=40)





In November 2015, anti-Muslim incidents reported to the Register were above the annual average reported per day (N=4)

### May 2015

On 15 May, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, head of ISIS, released an audio message after a six-month silence presumably to stop rumours about his 'death.' Baghdadi called on all Muslims to move to his so-called 'caliphate.'<sup>27</sup> A week before his call, a Melbourne teen was charged with terrorist offences for making a bomb.<sup>28</sup>

- > On 15 May 2015, the Register received 3 incident reports; this was above the average for those recorded per day.

### November 2015

Only 13 days after the Paris attacks that occurred on 13 November,<sup>29</sup> there was a targeted smear campaign against the Grand Mufti of Australia for allegedly<sup>30</sup> not openly condemning ISIS.<sup>31</sup> On the same day, Attorney-General George Brandis released a media statement to inform the public about a new national terrorism threat advisory system, which was designed to inform the public about the likelihood of an act of terrorism occurring in Australia.<sup>32</sup> The tone of the press release emphasised the 'current threat environment':

*"We face one of the most significant threats from terrorism in our nation's history and the Government has acted to ensure people have the information they need to protect themselves, their friends and communities."*<sup>33</sup>

- > Anti-Muslim incidents reported to the Register on 26 November 2015 were above the annual average reported per day (N=4).
- > The Islamophobia Register Australia recorded in 2015 the highest number of the incidents in November (N=22).
- > Terrorism related insults recorded by the Register spiked (N=7) in November 2015.

### Impact of Ongoing Islamophobic Protests during 2014 and 2015

Rallies protesting against halal food and/or building new mosques took place,<sup>34</sup> especially in the last three months of the year, which affected the threat rhetoric of the perpetrators.<sup>35</sup> Anti-halal protests, which were vigorous, regular and nationwide, were well organised alongside massive social media campaigns during 2014 and 2015.

- > In accordance with the visibility of anti-halal protests and online campaigns, there was significant anti-halal hate rhetoric among Australian Islamophobes. Halal death, slaughtering and slitting throat related death threats increased to a total of 21, while beheading and slaughtering combined death threats were the most prevalent of all (N=32).<sup>36</sup>

Such observable ‘coincidences’ suggest the public directly associated ordinary Australian Muslims with violent extremists and terrorists due to a lack of clear distinction between the two by the mass media and influential public figures. The tendency to use racial and religious labels when identifying criminals and alleged suspects has been prevalent (these labels do not appear to apply if the criminal in question is of an Anglo-Celtic origin and/or Christian). This trend has increased, especially in the portrayal of Australian Muslim criminals, and the impact it has had on the broader social psyche is significant. It has strengthened the influence of Islamophobes who have a tendency to see all Muslims as potential terrorists and the main culprits behind social disasters. Islamophobes’ massive anti-halal campaigns in 2014 and 2015 also influenced and increased the hate rhetoric directed at ordinary Muslims.

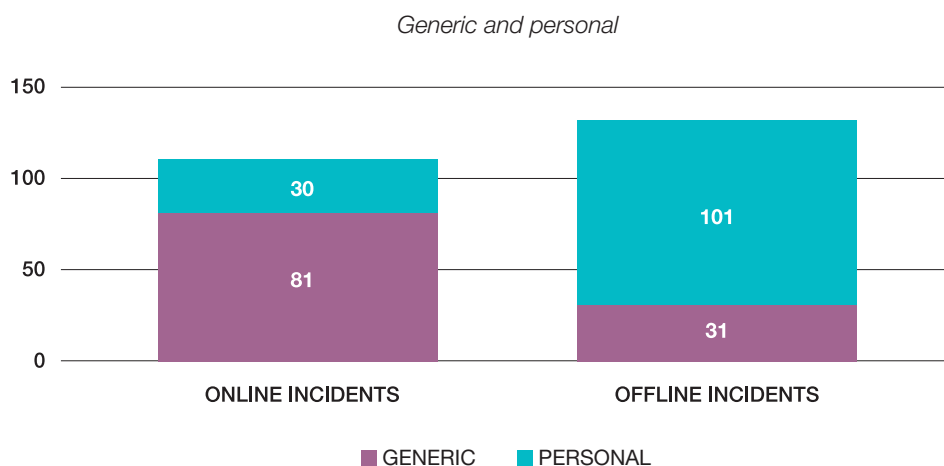
### Comparison between Online and Offline Incidents

Cyber abuse is easy to perpetrate as there are fewer social and legal ramifications. It is also widespread due to its quick and effortless dissemination. Bully Zero Australia Foundation states that Australia is one of the most electronically connected countries where each household has at least three devices.<sup>37</sup> Cyber bullying is the second most common form of bullying in Australia.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, online Islamophobic incidents reported to the Register were expected to be higher than offline attacks. Nevertheless, the Register data illustrates more offline incidents (54.3%; N = 132) than online incidents (45.7%; N = 111). It is possible that face-to-face incidents, which are taken more personally than online incidents, mobilise victims, witnesses and proxies to report to the Register. The high proportion of offline incidents is alarming due to the longer and deeper effects of the face-to-face incidents that included verbal insults, threats to property and physical attacks.

### GENERIC AND PERSONAL INCIDENTS

Generic incidents do not target specific individuals, but are directed at all people; for example, cursing all Muslims on Facebook (Case 108). Personal incidents are addressed or directed at individuals, such as a young girl in high school bullied because of her religion (Case 148) or hate mail sent to an individual’s inbox (Case 149).

Individuals were targeted in 54% of cases, whereas 46% targeted all Muslims and/or Islam in a generic sense. While the majority of incidents that targeted individuals occurred offline, the majority of cases generically targeting Muslims and/or Islam occurred online.



Islamophobes’ massive anti-halal campaigns in 2014 and 2015 also influenced and increased the hate rhetoric directed at ordinary Muslims

## INCIDENT TYPES AND CASE STUDIES

The incident types were listed using a deductive method (i.e. first identifying relevant harassment and crime types), but later refined according to the inductive method (i.e. by examining reported incidents case-by-case and grouping them under incident types). The following section explains nine incident types (offline and online) according to the way the Register data was classified.



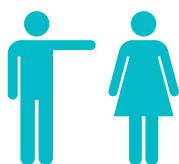
### 1. **Physical assault:** *Any form of physical transgression against persons or their properties.*

**Example:** Throwing eggs, abuse, screaming (Case 230), grabbing the breast of a young Australian Muslim woman and repeatedly saying “we are going to bomb you all” (Case 226) and grabbing the victim by the neck and hair, forcing her head into the wall of the train carriage several times (Case 199).



### 2. **Verbal abuse/threats:** *Direct or indirect insults, offensive or intimidating speech.*

**Example:** Calling the victim “evil and violent” for wearing the hijab and ranting vitriol for 13 minutes (Case 151) and threats like “we bury you in pig bits to match your gutless yellow spines. Your 72 virgins won’t touch you then” (Case 22).



### 3. **Non-verbal abuse:** *Mocking gestures, stalking, negative stares and use of inappropriate images. This differs to physical assault as there is no direct physical contact or transgression to one’s person or property.*

**Example:** Placing an innocent woman under scrutiny by making a false report to the police (Case 232), and intimidating a young Australian Muslim woman by lingering around and following her in between the aisles and having “his fist clenched and looking rather irritable” (Case 213).

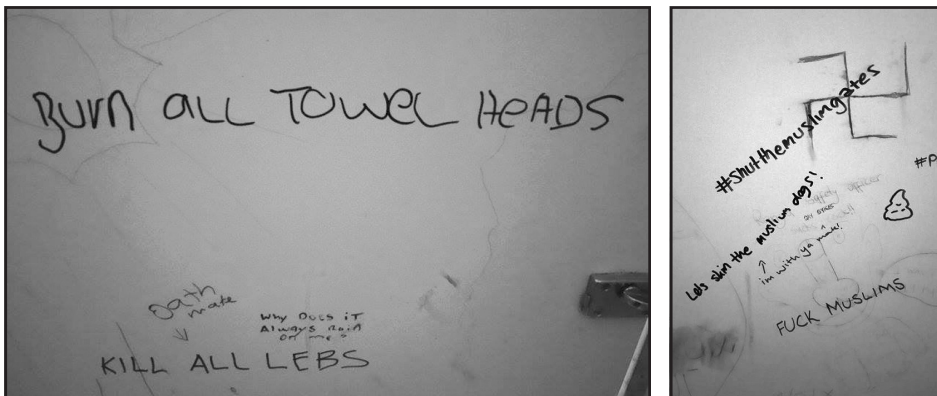


### 4. **Written abuse:** *Letters and messages including pamphlets and advertisements with Islamophobic content that is not necessarily graffiti.*

**Example:** Hate propaganda material distributed in mailboxes in a local area (Case 141) or a threatening letter left at the victim’s door (Case 110).

- 5. Damage/graffiti:** Vandalism of Muslim places of worship or public/private spaces frequented by Australian Muslims. This also includes public spaces such as the beach or public transport that has Islamophobic graffiti.

**Example:** Graffiti found on a toilet door at a construction site in Mascot “Burn all towelheads,” “Kill all Lebs” (Case 182). Leaving a mutilated pig outside mosque (Case 82) is also counted as vandalism and graffiti.<sup>39</sup>



- 6. Offensive media content:** Any form of media, excluding social media, that publishes articles or posts that are against Australian Muslims – television, newspaper and/or online. They were taken into account mostly when they were reported to the Register by third party reporters.

**Example:** A reporter posted the Register a newspaper article noting that “it is horrible...(and) obviously done deliberately” (Case 240).



- 7. Hate mail posted to the Register:** Defaming and attacking the Register is another explicit form of Islamophobia.

**Example:** A “greeting email” to the Register: “Hi, f\*\*\* sand nigger Muslims. Bye. Aye what do you think of the recent events you terrorist kebab” (Case 224) and blaming the Register for “crying wolf” and explaining her frustration for “having to be tolerant of the intolerant” (Case 10).





**8. Social exclusion and discrimination:** *The victim is excluded from work, school and/or social events.*

**Example:** Suspension of a student without investigation because he allegedly “said the word ISIS” (Case 245).

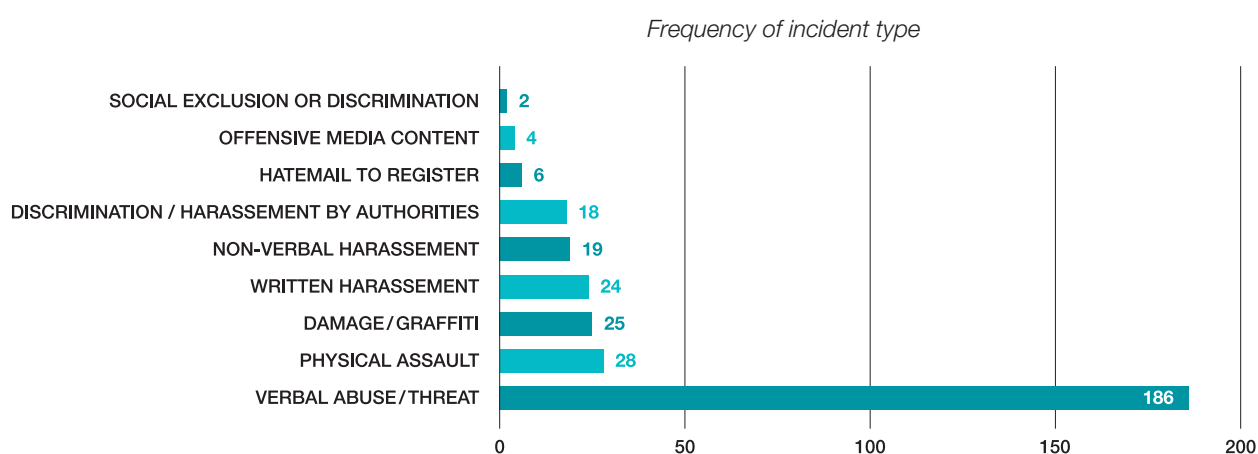


**9. Discrimination/harassment by authorities (and government agencies):**

*Unfair treatment by public and private sector bodies and authorities who can be any person or organisation that has political, legal or administrative power and control. This also includes discrimination when applying for jobs and seeking help from institutions.*

**Example:** A solicitor visiting her client at a correctional facility and being told by the officer “we don’t know if you’re a terrorist” (Case 105) and a local councillor stirring up hatred of Australian Muslims and thereby legitimising individual vilification in that suburb (Case 138).

According to the incident types, verbal abuse accounted for the majority of cases (59.6%; N=186). This is mainly because online and offline assaults are considered together and all online incidents by default fall in the verbal abuse and threats categories. The 23.0% of physical incidents (N=72) – including physical assault, damage and graffiti and non-verbal harassment – constitute the second chunk, while social discrimination constitutes the third (6.4%; N=20).



Although the incident categories are helpful for understanding the general nature of harassment, they are still far from estimating the true impact of such abuse. Some verbal abuse, such as death threats directed at individuals, can be extremely damaging. Likewise, incidents that have a social component, such as social exclusion and discrimination by authorities, may also be psychologically damaging. Because each category includes different levels of severity within itself, one incident type cannot be deemed less or more damaging.

### Incident Types and Gender

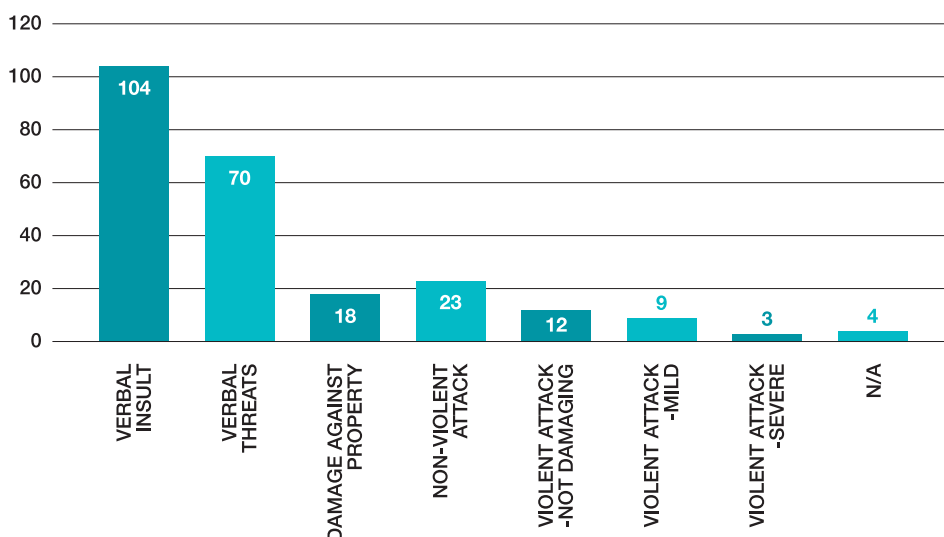
There were three times more male perpetrators (73.4%; N=113) than female perpetrators (26.6%; N=41). Therefore, males were expected to be the perpetrators three times more than females on all indicators. Yet, males were twice as likely to be perpetrators compared with females with regard to verbal insults.



## SEVERITY SCALE FOR ALL INCIDENTS<sup>40</sup>

The severity of incidents is different to the incident type. While incident type gives information about the nature of the incident, incident scale gives information about the levels of damage. The severity levels of all incidents were categorised using the deductive method (i.e. first listing general severity levels), but later they were refined according to the inductive method (i.e. by examining reported incidents case-by-case and grouping under severity levels). The least severe level was defined as verbal insults (level 1), followed by verbal threats (level 2). Due to their nature, online incidents were recorded under either of these categories.<sup>41</sup> After verbal insult, the gradual increase in severity ranged from damage against property (level 3) and attacks against a person that did not involve violence (level 4). The most severe level was classified as an attack against a person that involved violence. Violence is also sub-categorised as non-serious (level 5), mild (level 6), or severe (level 7). Non-serious attacks included physical attacks and throwing items with intent to harm. For instance, “a group of teens launched a full bottle of Boost juice at” the victim (Case 145). Mild attacks causes bleeding and temporary bruising (Cases 80, 62), while severe attacks cause permanent damage or hospitalisation (Cases 78, 199).

Severity levels



The number of incidents gradually decreased as the severity level increased, yet non-violent attacks (such as intimidation and spitting) was an exception.



There were three times more male perpetrators (73.4%; N=113) than female perpetrators (26.6%; N=41)



After verbal threats and assaults, physical harassment constituted the second largest category (N=72)



Females, proportionally, engage more in verbal insults than males



In the contemporary socio-political context of Australia, Islamophobia continues to be haunted by the cycle of moral panics around the Muslim "Other"

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\* Bianca Elmir is an Australian Muslim boxer.

^ Posted to the Islamophobia Register Australia by a reporter.

# Kevin M. Dunn, Rosalie Atie, Virginia Mapedzahama, Mehmet Ozalp and Adem F. Aydogan, *The Resilience and Ordinarity of Australian Muslims: Attitudes and Experiences of Muslims Report* (Penrith, N.S.W.: Western Sydney University, 2015), [http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/990129/Sydney\\_Muslims\\_report.pdf](http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/990129/Sydney_Muslims_report.pdf).

## Online Islamophobia

This section offers a more detailed analysis of online Islamophobia.

### INCIDENT TYPES

Cyber incidents occur through social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs and email) and online media (such as news, websites and webpages). In most cases, these generated more Islamophobic attacks through the exchange of posts and comments on social media. For instance, a Facebook group entitled 'Stop Islamisation of Australia' was discussing an Australian Muslim woman in a hijab working for the police force. People on the page were outraged over this. One user said: "I am going to get me gun! I am not putting up with this shit!" (Case 6)

Some online incidents had an offline component, such as posting a recording of an incident and the trigger of offline incidents like protests and rallies through online means. Of the 132 online incidents, 61.3% (N=81) of them were solely online, while 22.7% (N=30) had an offline component. For instance, a physical assault recording was disseminated online by an Islamophobe who filmed himself "harassing a Muslim woman and her child in a disabled parking space" (Case 2).

A total of 37% (30 out of 81 online incidents) targeted individuals. Some of these were as damaging as offline harassment; for example, disclosing details about an Australian Muslim person or their family to make them a target of offline attacks (Case 77) or circulating a photo-shopped beheaded picture of a publicly known Australian Muslim woman (Case 67).

Some online posts threatening to harm Australian Muslims and their property by giving a specific address also gave the sense that it was likely to happen. The following example invites Islamophobes to take violent action in some parts of NSW: "Everyone grab a gun and shoot every one of these c\*\*\*s! Going to go Lakemba for revenge after Martin Place shooting" (Case 86).



61.3% (N=81) of incidents are solely online, while 22.7% (N=30) have an offline component

## SEVERITY SCALE

Although online incidents were categorised under ‘verbal insults’ and ‘threats’ as incident types, they were taken into consideration here separately in order to be able to assess the severity level of cyberattacks by incorporating a scale applicable to online cases only.

Although the harm does not involve immediate physical damage,<sup>42</sup> cyber-attacks can still be damaging. Therefore, online attacks were taken into consideration separately and scaled according to the intensity of emotions that could range from dislike to a feeling of wanting to cause harm.

Studies on the psychology of violent extremism point to similar emotional pathways that start with anger and gradually intensify as feelings of contempt,<sup>43</sup> dehumanisation, disgust,<sup>44</sup> and a desire to harm.<sup>45</sup> Contempt and dehumanisation reinforce an ‘us/them’ or ‘superiority/inferiority’ dichotomy that has no room for tolerance. Contempt and dehumanisation are “a stepping stone to legitimise extreme actions.”<sup>46</sup>

### Severity levels of incidents<sup>47</sup>



1. **Anger:** *A strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure or hostility by the perpetrator.*

**Example:** “Muslims have put Australia on high alert because of the barbaric practises of your Islam.” (Case 10)



2. **Contempt:** *A feeling of disdain to a person or thing perceived as beneath one’s dignity and unworthy of one’s respect.*

**Example:** “Dear so called Muslim Leaders — I am sorry you feel alienated in Australia. Perhaps you would be far more comfortable leaving Australia (with its liberties and welfare system) and go back to somewhere in the desert in Arabia, where you can engage in oppression, violence and any other 7th century activity that does not belong in a civilised country in our time.” (Case 31)



3. **Dehumanisation:** *The desire to deprive a human of any positive human qualities and see them as subhuman.*

**Example:** After insulting the holy figures of Islam and Muslims, the Islamophobe described Muslims as even lower than animals: “...Low-life vermin doesn’t go far enough in describing Muslim.” (Case 214)



4. **Disgust:** *A feeling of revulsion or strong disapproval aroused by something unpleasant or offensive. To no longer have any tolerance or willingness to accept views, beliefs or behaviour that differs from one’s own.*

**Example:** “Take back Australia” has been sharing details of the locations of mosques around Australia and then encouraging its members to “throw body parts of dead pigs into the yards and grounds of places where these people live.” (Case 39)



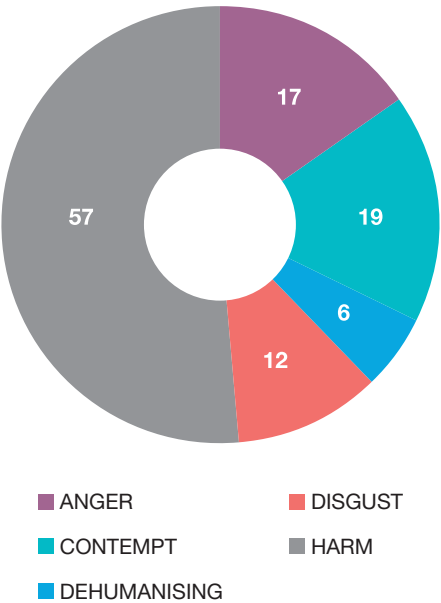
5. **Violence:** *Feeling it is a necessity to cause harm.*

**Example:** Screenshot of a Facebook profile with a police badge as their profile photo and a comment that encourages others to kill (shoot) Muslims. (Case 17)



**Severity of Online Incidents**

It is alarming to see that more than half of the online incident's (51.4%) intensity level corresponded with a feeling of necessity to harm the target. In other words, the emotional intensity level was sufficient to lead perpetrators to a level of violent extremism. (The distribution of the other feelings was found to be 15.3% anger, 17.1% contempt, 5.4% dehumanisation and 10.8% disgust.)



*Wanting to harm Muslims is a common theme of online Islamophobic conversations.*

# 51.4%

Half of the online incidents (51.4%) intensity level corresponds to feeling a need to harm the target

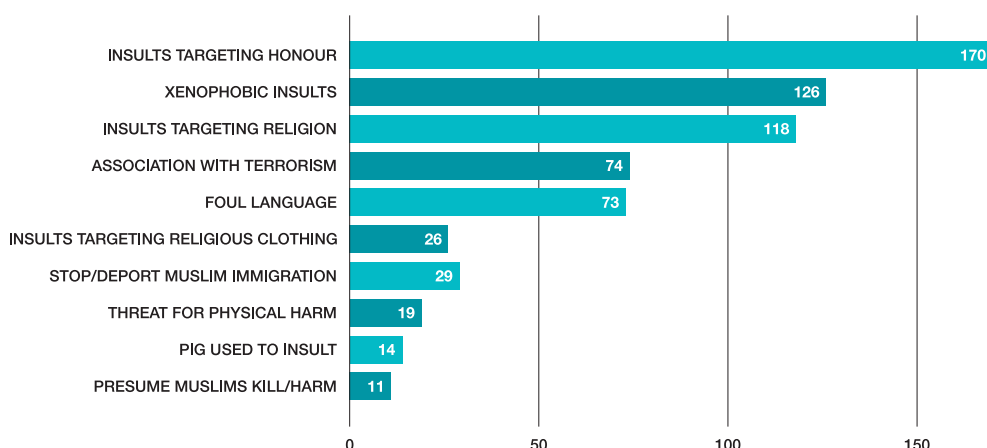


Females were largely humiliated through insults that targeted their honour, whereas the defamation of males focused on terrorism

## Content of insults

With the exception of non-verbal intimidation offline, or circulating images without words and comments, all other types and levels of harassment included verbal attack. This section analyses the verbal component of attacks and investigates which types of harassment were used under which circumstances and cases.

### INSULT TYPES



Xenophobic insults such as 'go back to your country' constituted 23.4% (N=155) of the insult types when stopping/deporting Muslims was added. Insults targeting religion (such as attacking the Qur'an, Islamic principles and the Prophet) constituted 23.8% (N= 158), when target of religious clothing and 'pig' were added to the insult. The association with terrorism constituted 12.8% (N= 85) of the insult types when the presumption that Muslims would harm and kill others was added. Nevertheless, the ordering remains almost similar with 'insults targeting the victim's honour' (such as calling the victim as a "bitch," "whore," etc.) coming first, followed by 'insults targeting religion,' 'xenophobic insults' and 'association with terrorism.'

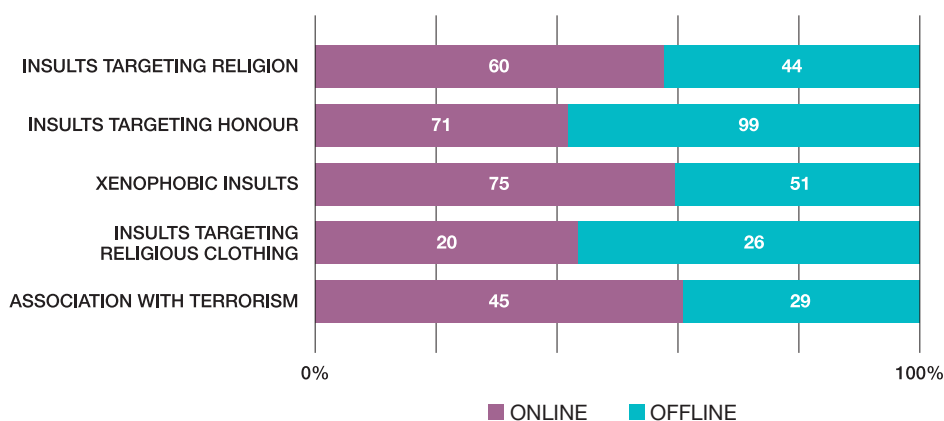
### INSULTS AND GENDER

When looking at the content of the insults reported to the Register, females were mainly subjected to insults that targeted their honour, such as being called a "bitch" or "whore." Of the 170 cases referring to honour, 44% (N=74) targeted female victims, 11.2% (N=19) were levelled at males, and the remainder were unidentified. Males were proportionally more likely to be defamed through terrorist rhetoric. References to terrorism appeared in 43.5% of cases (N=74), and according to available gender details, 5.8% (N=10) targeted males whereas 12.9% (N=22) targeted females. There were about three times more female victims than male victims in the Register; however, about half of the terrorism-related insults targeted males.

Of the 88 incidents in which a female was victimised, she was wearing a hijab 79.5% of the time (N=70). This suggests females tend to be targeted because they wear identifiable symbols of their faith (i.e. the hijab). This is supported by the fact that females are proportionally less targeted than males online, but are more likely to be harassed than males in public spaces, such as on trains and at train stations, streets or car parks. Moreover, females are victims in 56.5% (N=26) of the instances when religious clothing is mentioned by the perpetrator (N=46).

## ONLINE AND OFFLINE INSULTS

Content of the insults: online vs offline

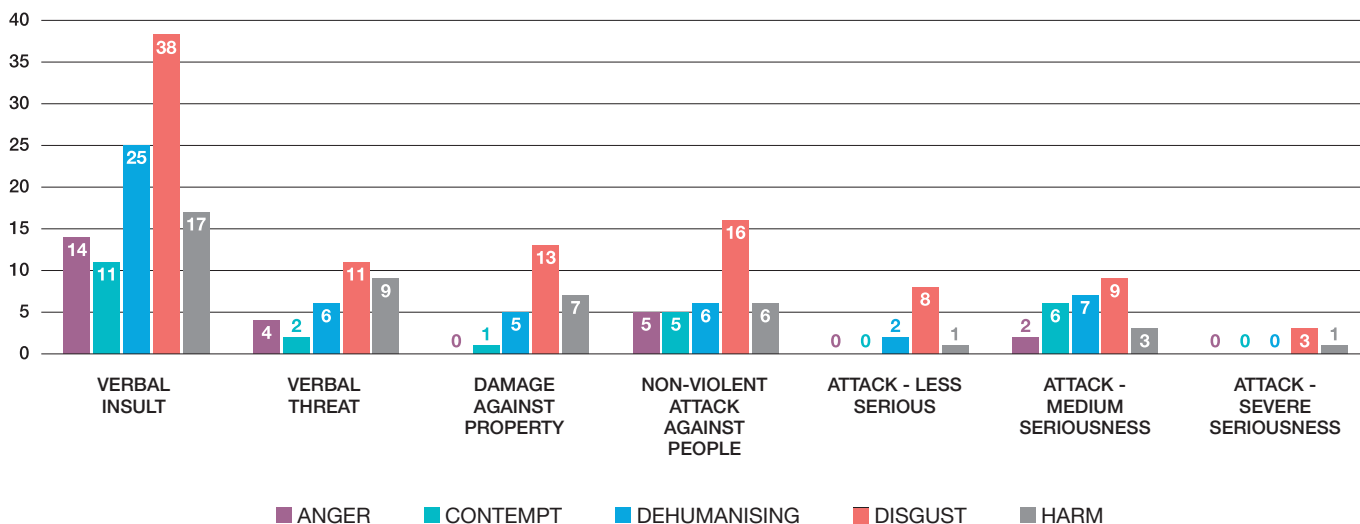


Insults targeting honour (75.9% offline; 24.1% online) and religious clothing (56.6% offline; 42.4% online) are addressed mostly in real life cases. Xenophobic insults, such as telling the victim to leave the country (71.1% online; 28.9% offline), targeting religion (57.6% online; 42.4% offline) and associating the victim with terrorism (60.8% online; 39.2% offline), tended to target individuals mostly in online incidents.

## INSULT TYPES AND SEVERITY LEVEL

### Offline Insults and Severity Level

Offline severity by type of insult



Muslim women's headscarves made them a target of Islamophobia

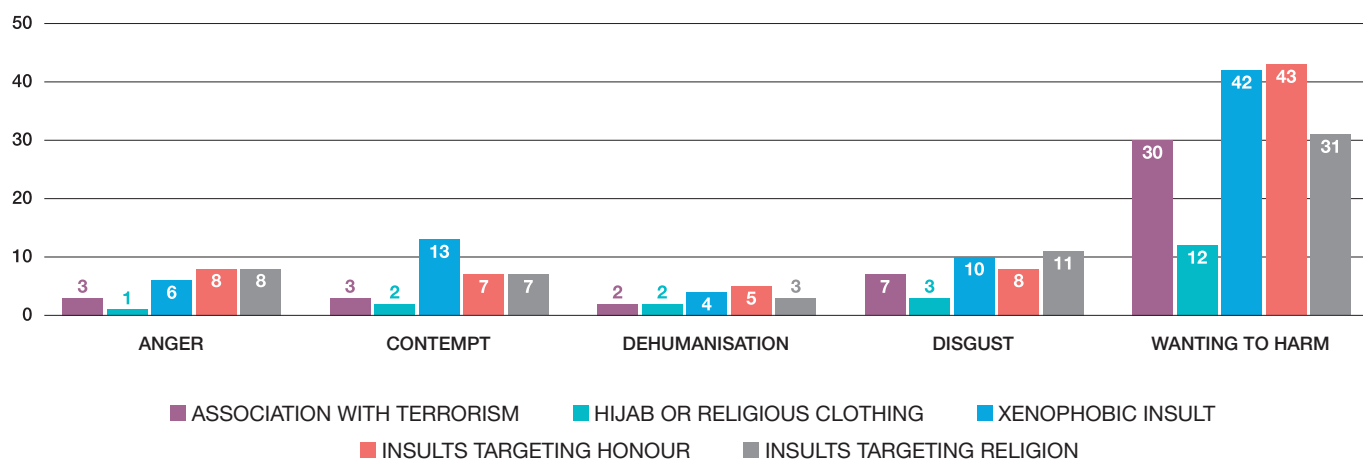
Of the 88 incidents in which a female was victimised, she was wearing a hijab 79.5% of the time (N=70)

When looking at offline harassment, insults targeting honour dominated all types of attacks ranging from verbal insult to severe level physical attacks. Xenophobic insults ranked second in verbal insults and medium level in the physical attacks. Insults attacking religion ranked second in verbal threats and damage against property. Xenophobic insults and degrading religion were equal in number (N=6), while non-violent physical attacks (such as intimidating and spitting) were directed at individuals.

An association with terrorism was observed mainly in less severe incidents. As the severity level increased, there was a decline in links to terrorism. The frequency and distribution of specific insult types indicated that anti-Muslim offenders could not tolerate Islam or Muslims, and accordingly disparaged both their religious appearance and their faith. While doing so, they preferred immoral and sexist language when targeting mostly modest Australian Muslim women and their honour rather than associating them with terrorism. The data suggest that Islamophobic rhetoric often develops independently from terrorism-related attacks. However, external events, such as terrorist attacks, anti-terror raids and their wide coverage in mainstream and social media, affected the rhetoric of hatred during particular times of the year (for details see Major Events Coinciding with the Recorded Reports under the INCIDENTS section).

### Online Insults and Severity Level

*Online severity by type of insult*

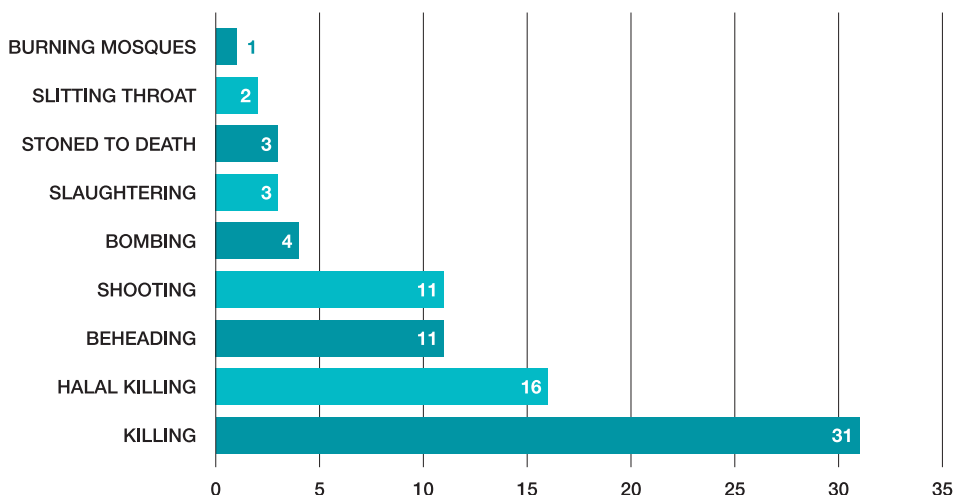


When the level of severity is explored in the most commonly used online insults, wanting to harm (the most intense feeling listed) was observed in all types of insults. This urge to harm spiked with attacks that targeted honour (27.2%; N=43) and during xenophobic insults (such as no room for Muslims in Australia (26.5%; N=42)). It was followed by associations with terrorism and insulting religion (18.9%; N=31). Another strong reaction evident in the reported incidents is 'disgust.' Disgust is seen mostly when degrading religion (28.2%; N=11) and through xenophobic insults (25.6%; N=10).

## DEATH THREATS

The threat types appear to be influenced by the rhetoric of the day. Death threats relating to halal killing, slaughtering and slitting throats were strongly linked to the anti-halal campaigns that were actively in force during 2014 and 2015 (25.6%; N=21). Beheadings by ISIS terrorists, which were widely covered in the media and through social media especially in 2014, influenced Islamophobic death-threat rhetoric. Apart from 11 direct references to beheadings, the idea of killing by chopping off the head was replicated in halal-slaughtering related threats (25.6%; N=21). So was killing in different ways (37.8%; N=31) including burying Muslims, wiping them out, Muslim hunting, genocide and the desire to kill Muslims before they spread. Articulating and encouraging Muslim genocide stimulated neither public attention nor any legal enforcement. Stoning to death, halal slaughtering/slitting the throat and beheadings were perceived as revenge in the same way. The other types of killings (50%; N=41) apparently remained as one way of dealing with the 'enemy.' Regardless of the anti-mosque campaigns in the same time period, the Register data did not capture significant numbers of mosque-related threats apparently because most of the death threats were directed at individual Muslims.

Death threat types



The frequency and distribution of specific insult types indicated that anti-Muslim offenders could not tolerate Islam or Muslims, and accordingly disparaged both their religious appearance and their faith

*Upon a smiley face emoji of a Muslim in response to a halal certification being spread, another Facebook user expressed his desire of a holocaust for Muslims by sending them to the gas chambers.*





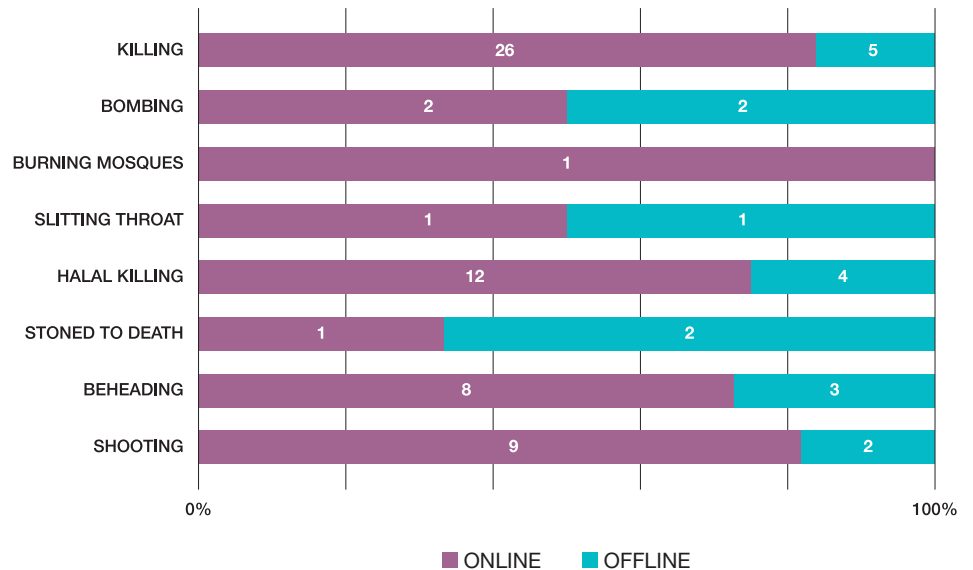


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### Death Threats: Online and Offline

Online death threats were more common when compared with death threats directed at individuals in real life. The visibility of ISIS terrorism and the white supremacist groups' activism on social media might have affected the abundance of online death threats.

*Frequencies of threats by online vs offline*

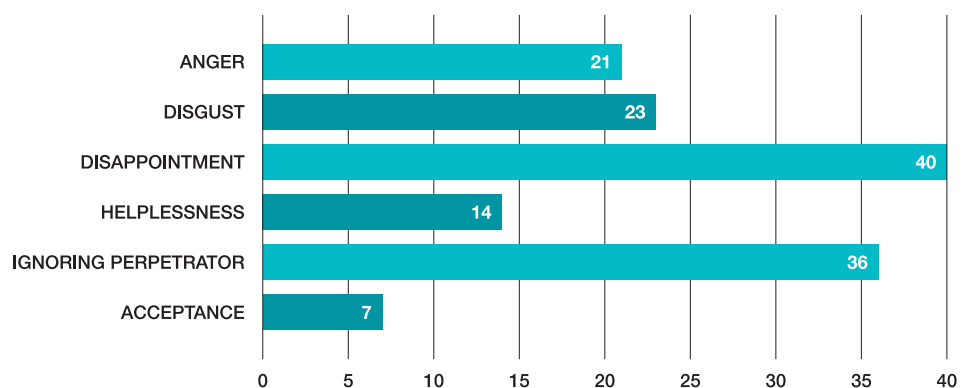


## Impact of the harassment

### FEELINGS AND REACTIONS

The data indicated many ways in which Islamophobic attacks affected the lives of people who reported to the Register. These can be feelings experienced at the time or following the harassment. They were identifiable only if the victim expressed them at the time of reporting. Therefore, the following findings do not capture all experienced feelings and consequences relating to Islamophobia.

*Feelings and reactions*



Many single reports indicate more than one negative emotion. The emotional reaction ranges from acceptance of the situation being commonplace to anger and hatred where individuals reported intense negative feelings as a result of the incident.

- 
- 1. Anger:** *Anger refers to displeasing feelings/reactions varying from dissatisfaction to intense annoyance. Symptoms that fall within this category include temper, animosity, fury, frustration, annoyance, irritation, offence and impatience.*

**Example:** A Muslim woman reported an incident where she was in a public park for work purposes and police arrived to question and search her car on the basis of a report made by someone who “decided to call the police and say she saw me put something under my shirt or seat!” (Case 232). Another victim reports an incident where a passer-by spat at her and she said “I got so angry and I did nothing to provoke this guy” (Case 217). Another writes, in response to being verbally abused and pelted with eggs, “I’m shocked, saddened, angry and just heartbroken right now” (Case 135).



- 
- 2. Disgust:** *This emotion occurs when the victim is significantly upset about something they do not approve of or the feeling of disapproval and dislike at a situation due to the perpetrator's behaviour or when witnessing obscenities. This feeling is synonymous with words such as sickened, abhorred, appalled, displeased, 'had enough,' or repulsed. Despite some cases that can be coupled with disgust and anger, this category differs as it refers to displeasure of a more disturbing nature.*

**Example:** “I just got spat on by some random freak in the tunnel at Central. The only thing that quashed the anger was an overwhelming need to vomit. Nothing cures OCD like a 40 minute train trip covered in the remnants of somebody else’s saliva. Humans suck.” (Case 53)



- 
- 3. Disappointment:** *These comments indicate that victims felt a multitude of reactions to incidents with the most common feeling expressed being that of disappointment. victims articulated their disbelief at the situation that had occurred, or the response of authorities or others around them, as it were not what they had expected.*

**Example:** One victim says “It’s disheartening to know there are so many people with hate in their heart for our religion they don’t understand and aren’t willing to listen” (Case 99). Intense disappointment was observed in another alleged attack characterised by abuse, vandalism and provocation. The victim states the most disturbing aspect of the incident “was the police called me by 23:30 hours to inform me that he was in fact a neighbour of mine, he was also under the influence of synthetic cannabis during the event and was psychotic and that he was released home. As you can imagine my whole family were shocked...” (Case 160)

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- 4. Helplessness:** *Feelings of helplessness were apparent when the victim felt they could not defend themselves due to fear or weakness, they were unaware of how to respond, or they felt defenceless, unprotected and needed help, but did not know where to seek it.*

**Example:** One victim stated after an attack “None of the train staff helped me out or stopped them” (Case 26). Other cases reflected the helplessness of victims as they were often left without recompense or a solution. One reporter “called the police who attended the site but did not take a witness statement. Said they will call her back but haven’t been in contact” (Case 65). Waiting to see whether anything similar will happen again can also indicate helplessness: “[A] group of young males returned and the same male who opened the mosque front gate and yelled racial abuse did that again and also he violently kicked the front door of the mosque... They felt very scared and thought these offenders would come inside to hurt them” (Case 35).



- 5. Ignoring the perpetrator:** *Various recorded incidents occurred when the victim ignored the attacker by either walking away or not responding.*

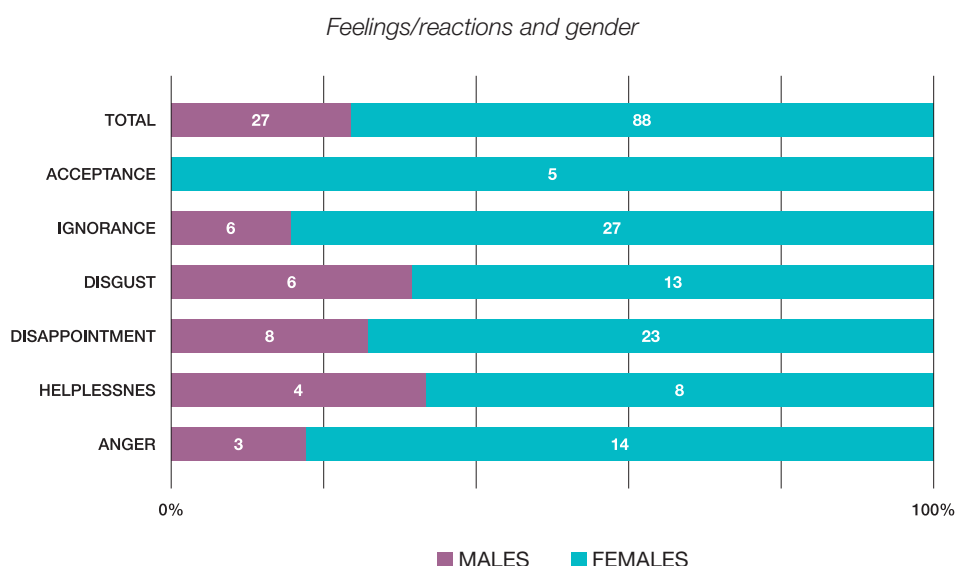
**Example:** “...I was terrified he was going to jump out and hit me with it... I was too distraught to take a picture of the number plate” (Case 154). A man being harassed while praying in the park anticipated an attack on himself and his family stated “I ignored them as best I could and carried on in my prayer...” (Case 138). This suggests that ignoring tends to arise from fear or to perhaps ensure safety and not provoke the attackers further.




- 6. Acceptance:** *Acceptance was another response by victims, where the victim accepted the incident as commonplace or did not express surprise.*

**Example:** One onlooker reported that a male aggressively yelled at a Muslim woman at a train station and violently banged on the glass of the train carriage. When the reporter offered to call the police, the victim “laughed and basically said don’t bother...” (Case 29). Sometimes, acceptance was perceived as a peaceful and prophetic response (Case 40). Some reporters accepted the harassment believing, mainly from previous experience, that if they reported it to the police nothing will be done.

It appears that male victims appeared to react to Islamophobic attacks with more negative feelings: males expressed comparatively more helplessness, disappointment and disgust than females. Females victims were more likely to ignore the perpetrator or accept their behaviour at the time of harassment. However, they expressed more anger than males at the time of reporting.



  
 Women display  
 greater resilience  
 than men in their  
 reactions to incidents

These results could indicate that females show less emotional reaction, without giving too much importance to the event and perpetrator. For example, the following incident illustrates the reaction of some women showing implicit resilience in response to an attack.

*“Today I witnessed two males around late 40s or so verbally abusing a group of around six ladies wearing headscarves, with their children... one of the men was yelling at them ‘it’s your own f\*\*\*ing fault, you’re not wanted here’ ... I asked the women if they were OK, a couple of them nodded at me and smiled shyly.” (Case 64)*

These results possibly indicate that, within our sample and from the wording of the reports, males had more emotive reactions to incidents of Islamophobia. Some males expressed helplessness in incidents where the victims asked for help: “Please help? I don’t know how or who to report this to” (Case 149). Another male spoke about the incitement to cause violence against the Australian Muslim community and stated “Are there any Islamic leaders or groups letting the authorities know about this? Where is the condemnation?” (Case 204). After one male victim visited his local Bunnings store and was told his tools would not be refunded as they were stolen, he felt “she stereotyped me because I was wearing Islamic clothing. I feel extremely victimised and upset I wish that she is reprimanded for her behaviour” (Case 152).



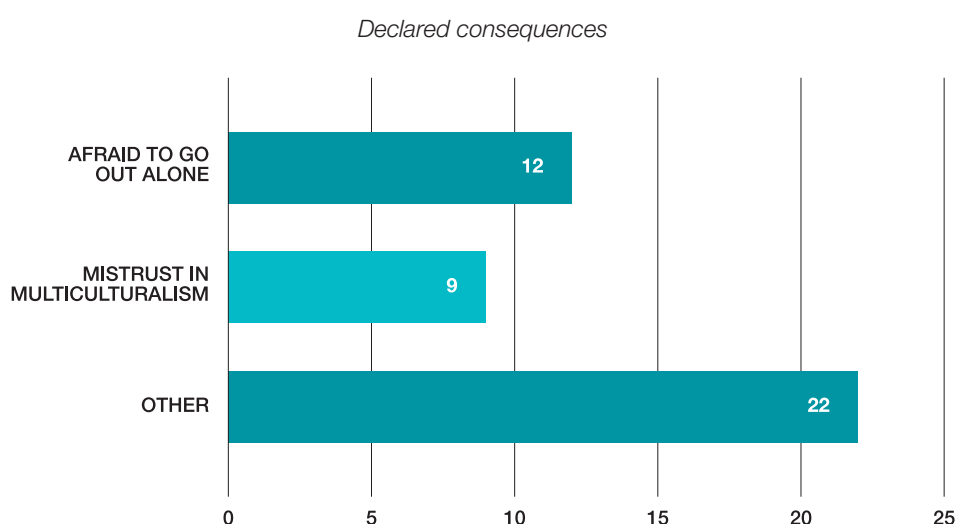
The report found higher emotional responses from male victims in the incidents reported to the Register

Men displayed emotion to both offline and online incidents. For example, a male reporter stated: “Look at this guy...The idiot is saying they will kill Muslims...I know it’s disheartening to know there are so many people with hate in their heart for our religion they don’t understand and aren’t willing to listen” (Case 99). One individual reacted to an online post by stating: “I was particularly disturbed by this post...” (Case 57). Another person reporting hate on an online trading forum stated: “... the Jewish board would definitely jump down the throats of the people responsible for this, we should do the same” (Case 111). A male reporter who was on holiday when he was pointed at by the perpetrator yelling “terrorist alert” confided: “...and to be honest with you, I felt humiliated...” (Case 95).

These reported cases do not mean female victims did not experience similar responses. However, they illustrate higher emotional responses than male victims in the incidents reported to the Register.

### DECLARED CONSEQUENCES

Because there was no specific question about consequences, only the reported impacts of the harassment were taken into account and grouped under the broad categories listed below.



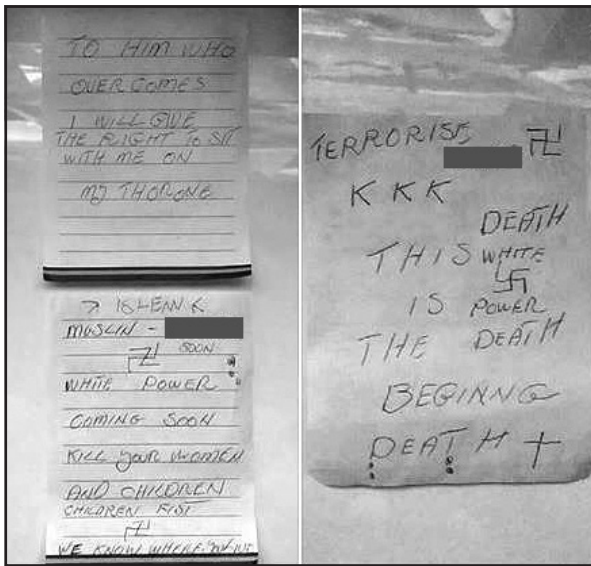


- 1. Afraid to go out alone:** *This feeling arose as a consequence of attacks and referred to a fear of leaving the home alone. The ongoing impact of fear resulting from harassment was evident in the following incidents.*

**Example:** A mother proclaimed: “May Allah swt protect all the Muslim girls that walk down H\*\*\* St to go the station after school. I know for a fact my daughter will no longer catch a bus or train home” (Case 118).



Upon finding the below notes left at their home the victim stated: “I am terrified. I stay awake waiting for something to happen. My kids aren’t allowed outside as I’m worried something might happen or someone could throw objects over our fence and so on...” (Case 110).



- 2. Mistrust in multiculturalism:** *Another reported consequence was the victims losing faith in multiculturalism and disappointment with Australian values. This included a lack of fairness and a fair go, evident discrimination or racism, and a lack of support from the Australian public.*

**Example:** A victim who was denied a full-time position twice mentioned: “to continue working [I] had to change my name...Simply ‘the average Aussie perceives you as a threat’ because of my beard and name.” (Case 168). Another reported after witnessing online Islamophobia: “This is absolutely shocking and has potential to undermine any trust in our community” (Case 32). Double standards caused mistrust in Australian values: “...It’s so frustrating because if it was 3 -4 Muslim men that did it to a Australian family it would be front page edition I am so sick of the double standards...” (Case 118). Other forms of loss in Australian values can be seen as a consequence of bias in the media. One mother stated: “My 17 year old son was called a terrorist by an old man. This is what the media turned Australia into” (Case 25).



Some victims/reporters expressed disappointment with multiculturalism and Australian values, particularly the lack of knowledge, sympathy and uncaring attitude of the Australian public towards Muslims. Statistics expressing this mistrust in multiculturalism recorded 11.11% for both males and females. This could indicate that, despite Islamophobic attacks, Muslims still had faith in Australian multiculturalism.

- 3. Other:** *The following impacts are the 'other' declared consequences by the victims as a response to Islamophobic attacks and included fear of attackers, fear for one's life, children or family, feeling humiliated, or feeling that privacy had been violated in their own home.*



**Example 1:** Upon the AFP/ASIO entering the reporter's home without permission, asking blunt questions and recording the entire conversation without permission, the reporter felt violated: "I feel so violated in my own home, in full view of my neighbours (I can only imagine what they were thinking). I'm terrified for what will come next!" (Case 58).

Victims faced other consequences that had a significant impact on their day-to-day life.



**Example 2:** After being verbally abused, threatened and physically intimidated while "everyone else who was walking kept their heads down and moved away," the victim expressed the ongoing impact of the attack: "Since the incident I have had trouble sleeping, had trouble with mood regulation, been hypervigilant and have had to take extra safety precautions that I shouldn't have to take" (Case 85). In another incident where a daughter was concerned about her mother whose complaints were not taken seriously by the police, she asked the victim "not to walk anywhere..." (Case 130).



**Example 3:** On another occasion, a woman wearing hijab sitting alone at a bus stop was intimidated by "a big man." He said: "why are you staring at me." "Don't stare at me...repeating 'I will call the f\*\*\*ing police'...Don't you stare at me." The victim left the bus stop as she was afraid of riding on the same bus with that man: "His eyes were so angry and I thought he might physically harm me if I still stay on that bus stop...I walked away and went to another bus stop...I got afraid of the thought I will be riding on the same bus with him and kept on being harassed..." (Case 234).

Although the impact was not part of the reporting questions, additional details reflected how victims suffered during and after the Islamophobic attacks. The impact was sometimes high enough to cause significant disruption to their general wellbeing and daily routine. The following semi-structured follow-up interviews express how, and to what extent, one Islamophobic attack can influence and ruin one's wellbeing. The cases studies draw our attention from the numerical facts to the depth of real-life experiences of individual victims.

## People

### THIRD PARTIES

Although the majority of offline incidents occurred in crowds, victims were still considered alone if nobody intervened. 75% (N=90) of the incidents involved no third party, whereas 25% involved third parties such as the police (16%), security managers (2%), perpetrators' or victims' companions (0.4%), or others such as a member of the public (5.3%).

Only 17.3% (N=42) of the attacks were reported to the police, and in 35.4% of the cases (N=86), it is unknown whether there was a police report. Among the reported cases, the police sided with the victims on 57.7% (N=23) of the occasions, while staying silent or inactive in 33.3% (N=14) of the cases by not taking a report. A similar response was given by two security guards (or store managers), while on two other occasions security guards (or store managers) sided with the victims. Only in one case did the guard take the side of the perpetrator. Other third parties, i.e. mainly surrounding people, showed different attitudes (six of them supported the victim, four supported the perpetrators, while three remained silent).

# 75%

Nobody intervened  
in 75% of the  
reported incidents

### RESPONSES FROM THE OFFICIALS AND CITIZENS TO THE ANTI-MUSLIM HARASSMENT

#### Inattentive Police Officers

Sometimes, after reporting the issue to the police, no response (or action) was taken (Case 4 and Case 22). Sometimes the police were "quite (seemingly) respectful and nice" yet, when reporters followed up, they found nothing had been done (Case 65) or they were "not being taken seriously" (Case 110). Witnesses reporting to the police were told nothing could be done unless the victim reports the incident (Case 64). However, some witnesses were determined to have the matter resolved by the police and undertook numerous follow-up calls and actions. A non-Muslim witness explains her experience with reporting to the police:

*"When I called the police station closest to \*\*\*\*\*, the police officer told me that there is nothing that he could do to help unless the victim came forward themselves. I called that station hoping that they could get in touch with the \*\*\*\*\* PSOs to go and check out the incoming train with the attacker in it. It wasn't until Friday that I called back to complain about the response I got the previous day that I found there was no record of my call despite him taking all my details and giving all appearances of making a record. Since taking the complaint to Twitter, \*\*\* of Victoria Police and the Superintendent of the police station that I called have been following this up - not only chasing up metro train footage of the incident but also investigating the police officer who told me that they couldn't help. They have said that they will keep me updated with progress." (Case 29)*



Reporters found it  
hard to cope with the  
police's negligence

When the victim reported an incident, the police's response did not change much:

*"...I called the police and they told me they're on their way. An hour later, police call me saying are u still there and I said I wasn't going wait around I've got kids. So they came past my place and asked if I wanted to make a report. They also told me we would have had forensics come past to take a sample of the spit but it was sprinkling. I showed them the pic I took of him and they asked me was there any witness. I said no. They said to me it's pretty much how u said. Anyway, I said here's the pic of him if u want to post it up. I'm pretty sure he's from the \*\*\*\*\* park area." (Case 217)*

Despite the fact the victim followed the police's instructions, her report was not taken into account. Sometimes reporters, following information provided by the police, believed that nothing could be done because of legislative limitations. For instance, no action was taken when it was reported to police that Boycott Halal Australia had harassed supermarket staff over the phone and vandalised the same shop the following day (Case 84).

Reporters found it hard to cope with the negligence. For instance, three adult men went to the local police station with the perpetrator's number plate after being verbally abused and spat at. Yet "they [the police] basically told him [the victim's husband] to go away they can't do anything for him." The victim was frustrated with the double standards shown to Australian Muslims:

*"No they [the police] didn't give him [the victim's father and the reporter's husband] nothing, they didn't even take it seriously, they said the owner of the car was female and it was men in the car there is no proof or witnesses and it was \*\*\*\*\* police station. They didn't even take my husband's name or details either. Shocking!" (Case 118)*

Frustration sometimes turned to shock when the victim was treated as a criminal. When a passenger was called a terrorist by City Rail staff at the time of the Lindt café siege in Sydney, the passenger immediately reported it to the police. The victim's proxy arrived where the incident took place and called the police again.

*"When he [the victim] called me he was nervous and panicky and wanted me to be there because he wanted witnesses when police spoke to him. I arrived there after he spoke to police. I spoke to police and they confirmed that he was called a terrorist but they did nothing about it. I have it on audio. They asked Imran to walk to the next train station instead. He was the victim and was treated like the perpetrator. I contacted the City Rail complaints line but did not get a proper feedback on what happened. My city rail reference number is \*\*\*\*\*. The CSM is still working in \*\*\*\*\* station." (Case 132)*

In one case, the reporter refers to two women, an Anglo-Irish and Anglo-Australian, who could not endure watching their Muslim friend being harassed “by a big Aussie red neck” in front of them at a café in Canberra. An ambulance driver also stood up and attempted to stop the perpetrator in another case. They eventually called the police but the police put forth an unusual excuse to the reports made by two different people within 30 minutes: No one is on duty because it was a public holiday.

*“...They got between us three women and the guy and drew him [perpetrator] out to the path where he continued his rant and they threatened to call the police if he didn’t leave. A woman at the cafe got his number plate. The ambulance guy spoke to the police and so did I about 30 mins later. We spoke to \*\*\*\*\* NSW police who told us that no one was on duty at \*\*\*\*\* it being a public holiday! I rang again yesterday with a promise of a return phone call – nothing as yet.” (Case 167, emphasis added)*

### Attentive Police Officers

Nevertheless, some police officers were found to be attentive. For instance, upon the victim and his father’s assault, which included stoning and screaming profanities in Mt Druitt, the police attended the victim’s house 5-10 minutes after the call:

*“They [the police] took a statement and told us there isn’t much that they could do to find them but they will keep a look out. Yesterday two policemen from a special unit came to my house to let me know they will be looking into the incident and that they will treat this case specially, etc. I got an E number yesterday texted to me.” (Case 62)*

A man, who was shouting offensive comments and throwing around cement bags that were inside Auburn Mosque was arrested and taken to Auburn Police Station. He was charged with common assault, intimidation and behaving in an offensive manner in a public place. The man was granted strict conditional bail to appear before Burwood Local Court on 28 October 2014 (Case 63).

### Attentive Citizens

As mentioned in section 3, non-Muslims took a role in the Register mostly as witnesses and thereby contributed to the recording of one-quarter of incidents. Some of the witnesses were more than just reports. Some of them intervened to help (Case 199), attempted to stop the perpetrator (Case 147), defended the victim (Case 157), called the police (Cases 29, 76, 77) or checked if the victims were alright (Case 64). For instance, a non-Muslim witness reporter referring to herself as the one who “stood up to the abusing men” told the police about an incident at work where the perpetrator spoke about a desire to use his gun on Muslims. Accordingly, the police talked to him. On another occasion, two Muslim ladies were abused at a supermarket by two Caucasian men and the witness reported the incident to the police. Another witness took a photo of the perpetrators’ car licence plate and reported it to police. The police were attentive enough to go to the perpetrators’ house to speak to them (Case 201).



Some of the witnesses intervened to help, attempted to stop the perpetrator, defended the victim, called the police or checked if the victims were alright





In his letter to the Register, a devout Christian man expressed his concern for anti-Muslim hate attacks and desire for mutual love

Some witnesses warned offenders about their disrespectful behaviour:

*"[When] a man refused to take his shoes off while attending a lecture inside the mosque on 'National Mosque Open Day' 2014...a non-Muslim lady intervened and confronted him. She told him off, but in return, he stated that he has no respect to Muslims and the like." (Case 147)*

Some witnesses defended victims against the offensive insults of the perpetrators:

*"...The young lady replied to the perpetrator: 'She wears it for herself, OK...She wears it because she wants to be modest with her body, not because of people like you who are going to sit there and disrespect her.'" (Case 157)*

When some non-Muslim fellow citizens were overwhelmed by the anti-Muslim attacks, they felt obliged to take positive action. The following letter expressed a devout Christian man's concern for anti-Muslim hate attacks and "desire for mutual love":

*"Speaking as I can, only for myself, apologise for the distress and trauma this has had on students, parents and staff of the school. I am praying for you all in coping with this situation and more broadly for myself, our nation and world to be truly loving, tolerant and respectful for those whose beliefs are different. I wasn't going to mention I am a committed Christian but want you to know that I don't stand against Islam but desire mutual love to be shown to all peoples regardless of their faith (or lack thereof)" (Case 27)*

A non-Muslim lady greeted a Muslim lady with salam (peace) to convey her sympathy for the vilified Muslims:

*"Dearest friends. You've recently been receiving some awful reports regarding experiences with racism. I just wanted to quietly say not all of us are hateful rednecks. With all of this hatred flowing, I always greet Muslim brothers and sisters with an "Assalam" out of respect, but today, I was at the Royal Easter show and I saw a niqabi sister with her family. I thought about what sort of comments she might have heard that day. I looked into her beautiful eyes and said "Assalam." It must have been a shock to her. I'm very obviously not Muslim. Her eyes smiled at me and she said "Assalam" back. It might sound trite, but there are so many of us out there that want the brothers and sisters to know, you are respected and loved. Assalamu alikum, my darling friends." (Case 160)*

## POSITIVE RESPONSES FROM VICTIMS

The following cases suggest the responses of Muslim victims could also be constructive.

A 37-year-old perpetrator, who is also a Reclaim Australia supporter, threatened to slit the throat of Mariam Veiszadeh, the founder of the Islamophobia Register Australia:

*“Watch as we come for you in your sleep [and] cut your throat as you do [to] the animals you torment” and “[we will also] kill your family for you to see [and] kill your uncle which is now your husband.”*

While reporting these severe threats to Fairfax Media, Mariam asked not to publish the woman’s name because she was concerned about vilifying the perpetrator’s children (Case 175).

Although being treated as if she were a suicide bomber, a nine-month pregnant victim responded with patience:

*“I know that now is the time when we need to exercise the lessons of the Seerah, particularly the time when our Prophet (pbuh) was in Mecca (the early years) when the fledgling Muslim community was subject to much verbal abuse and torture. The number one lesson was to respond with patience. Insha’Allah we here, in Australia, now, can put those lessons to action.” (Case 40)*

Similarly, some victims ignored the assaults in order not to provoke the perpetrator further (Cases 8 and 13), or spoke to the perpetrator politely (Case 62). Some of them called police, while one decided to write a letter to the council and the Minister of Multiculturalism (Case 141).



Although being treated as if she were a suicide bomber, a nine-month pregnant victim responded with patience



## Summary

### Anti-Muslim hate incident reports

- > Islamophobic incidents occurred either in a real-life scenario (offline, N=132) or in the online space (N=111). 54.5% of the offline incidents were of a physical nature (including physical assault, damage and offensive graffiti and non-verbal harassment), while 15.1% constituted social discrimination (i.e. being excluded from work, school and/or social events).
- > Only 31.8% of the offline attacks were reported to the police. Of the ones reported to police, 33.3% of the cases were not recorded. Although 54.7% of the police officers sided the victims, in most cases, nothing else was done. Those who reported the incidents expressed a sense of discouragement about the idea of reporting future incidents.

### Anti-Muslim hate incident reporters

- > Anti-Muslim hate attacks were reported to the Register directly by victims, proxies (i.e. relatives or friends), or witnesses who are third parties. Witnesses (65%) reported more incidents than victims (24%) or proxies (11%) and almost one-quarter (22.2%) of the witness reporters were apparently non-Muslims.
- > 46.2% of the offline incidents were reported by witnesses, only 5.3% of cases were intervened by a third party. Thus, the vast majority of them did not try to intervene at the time of the incident.

### Islam and terrorism

- > Only 11% of insults were related to terrorism, showing that Islamophobic attacks are not necessarily associated with terrorism.
- > Insults appear to be largely about hatred of Muslims' presence (i.e. 49.2% consisting of insults targeting honour, xenophobic insults and anti-Muslim immigration) and Islam (i.e. 24.6% consists insults targeting religion, targeting religious clothing and using the word pig to insult religious sentiments).

### Islam and everyday racism

- > Death threats constituted the severest number of verbal harassments (44% of the verbal insults). About one-quarter of death threats were associated with "halal killing" or "halal slaughtering" (i.e. twice as many as "beheading" related death threats).
- > Spikes of vilification reported to the Islamophobia Register Australia coincided with terror attacks, anti-terror legislation and negative media coverage of high profile Muslim leaders.

## Summary (cont'd)



### Gendered Islamophobia

- > Women were more likely to be victims while men were largely perpetrators. In 79% of the reports, the perpetrators' ethnicity was not reported. Of the 21% reported cases, 98% of the perpetrators were observed to be men of Anglo-Saxon origin.
- > 79.6% of the female victims were wearing headscarves at the time of the reported incidents. In 56.6% of the cases, religious clothing was specifically mentioned by the perpetrator. Since it is easier to visually identify Muslim women with Islamic head-covering, they were more prone to victimisation and harassment.

### Locations of Islamophobia

- > Almost half of offline incidents (48%) took place in central everyday locations, including shopping centres, on trains, train stations and at schools. High severity level physical assaults mostly occurred indoors.
- > Muslims were harassed even in culturally mixed suburbs (48.3%), which have a relatively high Muslim population.
- > The percentage of incidents reported to the Register from QLD was noticeably higher, when compared with the percentages of states' respective Australian Muslim populations.

### Destructive effect of Islamophobia on individuals

- > Islamophobia affected Muslim victims' daily routines to such an extent that some women were afraid to leave their homes, use public transport or go out in public on their own.
- > Follow-up interviews with victims who reported incidents to the Islamophobia Register Australia provided more details, including the psychological and social implications and dilemmas that Islamophobia causes. Some of the victims suffer from ongoing psychological disorders, such as insomnia and varying levels of depression and anxiety.



The image above was posted to the Islamophobia Register Australia with a note:

"The next person who tells me Muslims are unwilling to integrate into Australian society I will slap in the face."

\* Tony Sernack, "Ms. Laalaa and Mr. Damouny, both 20, are Muslims Taking Part in an Outreach Program Called On the Same Wave, which Started a Year Ago," photograph, New York Times, March 9, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/09/world/asia/09australia.html>.

^ Ahiida, "Young Muslims Explore Religion and Nationality," photograph, December 7, 2013, SBS Radio, <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2013/12/04/young-muslims-explore-religion-and-nationality>.

# Posted to the Islamophobia Register Australia by a reporter





## PART 2:

# Case Studies

*Dr Ghena Krayem\**

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This discussion has demonstrated there are many ways in which Islamophobic incidents affect Australian Muslims. The following two case studies were reported to the Register and have been followed up by members of the research team with a confidential recorded interview (names have been changed to respect the individuals' privacy).

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## Case Study I

Sandra is a social worker in her early thirties living and working in south-west Sydney. She is of Australian and Irish background and converted/reverted to Islam about six years ago. She reports that one day in late 2014, while walking from her office to her car - a 15 minute walk, she experienced a frightening instance of Islamophobia. It was about 4:30 in the afternoon and it was still daylight when a man approached her holding a glass beer bottle and began threatening her. He was hostile, aggressive and appeared to threaten her with the glass bottle. She recalls his words as he was yelling things like "I am going to kill you," "You are ISIS," "You are not Australian," "I am going to cut your head off," "You are a terrorist" and "You are an Aussie traitor." The latter remark was apparently because Sandra clearly looked Anglo-Celtic with fair skin and blue eyes, yet was obviously identifiable as a Muslim wearing a hijab.

"I work with violent people every day and am not easily intimidated, but he was honestly the first time in my life that I was scared."

Sandra continued to walk to her car while the man pursued and made threats against her. She walked along a busy main road and through a park, encountering many people on the way, and at one point stopped alongside a group of people because she thought it was a safer thing to do. No one stopped to help. Sandra made it to her car, which was parked on a busy main road. Despite the abuse, Sandra avoided making eye contact with the man and got in the car, while he continued walking down the road, still yelling abuse at her. She called the Police Assistance line and, because he had walked off, Sandra was told there was nothing that could be done but a car would be sent out. Sandra waited 10 minutes but no police came. There was also no follow-up by the police.

This incident has had a lasting impact on Sandra as she recalls she was terrified. She said "I work with violent people every day and am not easily intimidated, but he was honestly the first time in my life that I was scared." Sandra says it has now made her very safety conscious about where and when she travels, particularly when there has been negative media coverage of Muslims – she will either take the day off work or get dropped off and picked up from her office for fear of another incident. Sandra reports that now, more than a year after the incident, she is perhaps feeling the impact even more as she understands the seriousness of the situation and the danger she was in on that day.

## Case Study II

Aysha is a lawyer in her late twenties living and working in south-west Sydney. She was born in Australia and identifies as coming from a Lebanese cultural background. Aysha reported two incidents to the Register. The first incident occurred while she was in a queue waiting to use an ATM at her local shop, which was situated on a busy street. While in the queue she was approached by a woman who started yelling abuse at her saying “Do you want your head chopped off?” and yelling about events in the Middle East. Aysha understood this in the context of media portrayal at the time of this event that had occurred overseas involving beheadings of Western journalists. Aysha recalls another lady in the queue in front of her started to engage Aysha in general conversation, obviously to distract her from the tirade of abuse she was receiving from the other woman. The perpetrator walked off continuing to yell abuse at Aysha. Aysha reported this to the local police station, specifically asking this be recorded as an incident of Islamophobia. The police said it would be recorded, but she was not given an incident or report number and there was no follow-up. Aysha reported feeling very intimidated and unsafe in the neighbourhood she had lived in her whole life. She stated: “Up until that time, I could confidently walk around my neighbourhood, it was home and I felt it was simply not OK to make me feel so unsafe in the place that I grew up in.”

“Why should my safety be compromised or why should I be forced to conceal an important part of my identity?”

The second incident occurred in the Sydney CBD, in the tunnel that leads to Central Station. Aysha reports walking through the tunnel and then noticing a man making his way towards her. Before she realised what was happening, and without saying a word to her, he spat at her. She continued walking and did not stop to say or do anything. Aysha reports that the accumulation of multiple everyday incidents of Islamophobia has “made me feel that being visibly Muslim is a very big chore. The only way to avoid this is to compromise my choice; that is, take off my hijab, and that is simply not fair. Why should my safety be compromised or why should I be forced to conceal an important part of my identity?”

These two cases further illustrate the human face of the numerically highlighted incidents in this report. Follow-up interviews with the victims provide a more detailed picture of the incident while disclosing in-depth and long-lasting effects of Islamophobic attacks on victims. These two specific cases underline that being an Australian Muslim, whether Anglo-Celtic or not, puts a burden onto Muslims as they are subject to an Islamophobic attack anytime, anywhere and at any level. Losing a sense of security, being discriminated against in social life and feeling disappointment can cause internal and external challenges and dilemmas. Although briefly provided, the incident reports outlined above enable us to broadly see through repetitive patterns how Islamophobia operates and leaves imprints. It is equally important to research personal stories as they flesh out the real face of Islamophobia and its impact on the individual victim and society as a whole.







## **PART 3:**

# **Countering Islamophobia**

*Prof Samina Yasmeen\**

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Australian leadership,  
reflecting the liberal  
democratic nature  
of our society,  
shoulders the primary  
responsibility to create  
the conditions that  
counter Islamophobia

Islamophobia as an act of dehumanising Muslims and placing them in the category of the 'other' – and hence not a part of the Australian polity – is slowly gaining ground in this country. The earlier descriptions of creeping Islamophobia, even if valid, need to acknowledge the sudden increase in the intensity of negative attitudes towards Muslims. Pauline Hanson tailored her election campaign in terms of her opposition to Muslim immigration to Australia. Some societal groups have also become more vocal and actively promote anti-Muslim messages. The question of how to contain and reverse this trend cannot be answered without reference to the notion of responsibility.

## Governmental responsibility

In liberal democracies, governments are entrusted with a responsibility to ensure all citizens, irrespective of their race, religion or ethnic origin, are extended the same protections and opportunities. A failure to fulfil this responsibility, or even do it in a less than satisfactory manner, sets the stage for continued discrimination and denial of citizenship rights to select members of society. In the modern globalised world, such failures also have international repercussions. For example, the responses to US president Donald Trump indicate it could lead to reputational costs and, if allowed to continue, may have economic costs.

Australian leadership, reflecting the liberal democratic nature of our society, shoulders the primary responsibility to create the conditions that counter Islamophobia. This is necessary to ensure communal harmony is not affected by dividing the communities along Islamic–non-Islamic lines. Such a division, even if primarily targeting those who subscribe to traditional Islamic dress code and, therefore, are obviously Muslim, would also affect other members of the Muslim community who do not opt for orthopraxy. A sense of being relegated to the periphery of the Australian community and excluded from the benefits of being citizens could endanger Australian security. As research on radicalisation suggests,<sup>48</sup> a sense of exclusion could cause some young Muslims — no matter how small their number — to entertain support for, or even venture into, the militant terrain. However, there are other reasons to counter and contain Islamophobia who account for only 2.2% of the country's total population.

Australian leadership needs to ensure Australia's credentials of being a good international citizen that has marked its global identity are not compromised. It cannot afford to let Islamophobia fester while the United Nations increasingly draws attention to the need to "stand up for rights and dignity for all, and for diversity and pluralism" and to speak out "against anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim bigotry and other forms of hate."<sup>49</sup> There is also a regional dimension: with the largest Muslim state, Indonesia, as our neighbour the failure to stem Islamophobia runs the risk of tarnishing our image at a stage when Indonesia is emerging as a significant regional actor with whom we need to broaden and deepen our engagement.

The focus on responsible leadership in countering Islamophobia is not unique or applicable only to the Australian government. European organisations, such as the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance and the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, have all labelled political will and leadership as "vital to countering racism, discrimination and hate crime."<sup>50</sup> In March 2014, the heads of these organisations emphasised the need for leaders to be outspoken and provide effective responses to acts of intolerance.

The sheer act of speaking out against incidents was identified as sending "a strong message of reassurance to affected communities."<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, Australian leaders have not always taken this responsibility seriously, especially as the threat of Muslim radicalisation has increased globally and regionally. In the post 9/11 years, then Prime Minister John Howard implied Muslim differences vis-à-vis the wider community with his focus on "Australian values."<sup>52</sup> However, then Prime Minister Tony Abbott was more explicit when he expressed the wish that more Muslim leaders would say Islam is a religion of peace and "mean it".<sup>53</sup> By suggesting that Muslim leadership did not speak out enough against terrorism, nor mean it, he was supporting a negative view of Muslims in Australia and 'othering' them. Prime Minister Turnbull has adopted a more nuanced approach. Instead of blaming all Muslims, he distinguishes between the majority of Muslims and the minority who engage in terrorism and is keen to recognise Muslim partnerships in countering militancy. This was apparent in the wake of the Parramatta police station shooting when the prime minister refused to "vilify or blame the entire Muslim community with the actions of what is, in truth, a very, very small percentage of violent extremist individuals."<sup>54</sup> However, there is still a need to go beyond such statements in response to acts of terrorism, and adopt a consistent policy of speaking out against acts of intolerance and negativity towards Muslims when they happen. Instead of the Prime Minister solely shouldering the responsibility of speaking out against Islamophobic acts, it needs to be shared by others in the cabinet. This is particularly necessary as Pauline Hanson openly declared her opposition to Islam (though not Muslims) and had vowed to use her election to the Senate in 2016 to pursue this agenda. Keeping this promise, she called for a ban on Muslim immigration and raised alarm about Australians living "under sharia, if something did not change."<sup>55</sup>

The declared support for Australian Muslims in the face of growing Islamophobia needs to be supplemented by government policies aimed at supporting Australian Muslim communities. The process has already started; however, these policies implicitly reinforce the image of Muslims posing a threat to Australian security. While the project of countering radicalisation needs all the attention and funding the government can provide, a parallel need exists for engaging Muslims as equal citizens in community development projects.

The act of working together and collaborating to meet the needs of the community inculcates a sense of mutual trust and counters fears of the 'other.' Government funding, therefore, needs to consciously encourage the wider community to work with Muslims in community development projects.



There is still a need to go beyond such statements differentiating Muslim from terrorists in response to acts of terrorism. A consistent policy should be adopted to speak out against acts of intolerance and negativity towards Muslims when they happen



While the project of countering radicalisation needs all the attention and funding the government can provide, a parallel need exists for engaging Muslims as equal citizens in community development projects



The enjoyment and experiential dimension of citizenship relies on the spaces created for all citizens to operate in political, social and economic spheres on the basis of equality



While governments can legislate to create such spaces, their true impact only becomes visible when the wider community willingly creates the space for minorities to enjoy the benefits of these laws

The project of building communal harmony, however, would remain hostage to the ideas, if unchecked, that circulate on social media about the ‘Muslim threat.’ The Australian government, along with a host of other states, has been actively targeting the cyber space for its capacity to facilitate radicalisation of Australian Muslim youth. A similar focus, unfortunately, has eluded the use of cyber space and social media as the locale for inciting hatred against Australian Muslims. That these ideas do not always originate from within Australia, and reflect the globalised nature of identity constructions via cyber space, is not in question. However, this does not absolve authorities of the responsibility to ensure cyber space is not used by Australians to foment Islamophobic attitudes. A conscious effort to shut down sites that promote hatred towards Australian Muslims and others would reassure those at the receiving end of these hate messages that the Australian government treats all of its citizens equally. It would communicate a message that, while focused on anti-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation policies, the Australian government also protects its citizens from cyber-based vitriol targeting their religion and identities.

## Societal responsibility: The wider community

The responsibility of countering Islamophobia, however, does not rest solely with the government. The wider community shares an equal responsibility to engage in this project. The need for activism is linked to the essence of citizenship; it is not merely a legal concept that endows an individual with rights and responsibilities. The enjoyment and experiential dimension of citizenship relies on the spaces created for all citizens to operate in political, social and economic spheres on the basis of equality. This constitutes the essence of citizenship. While governments can legislate to create such spaces, their true impact only becomes visible when the wider community willingly creates the space for minorities to enjoy the benefits of these laws. Such an opening, and the ability of minorities to operate in multiple spheres directly, contributes to a sense of belonging to their country. The responsibility of the wider community in this context directly relates to power differentials between the majority and minority. The majority communities, despite the intra-sectional inequalities, occupy a position of power from which they can open or deny access to resources and opportunities for the minority, and in the process contribute or undermine the minority community’s sense of belonging to the country.

With the growing incidence of Islamophobia in Australia, sections of the wider community have assumed this responsibility. Evidence of such responsible activism has been apparent in a number of cases. During the Sydney Siege (December 2014) at Martin Place, for instance, Rachael Jacobs noticed a woman quietly removing her hijab on a train. According to her Facebook entry, she ran after the Muslim woman and asked her to put the hijab back on and offered to walk with her. Soon another Twitter user, Tessa Kum (@sirtessa), suggested starting the hashtag #IllrideWithYou. The hashtag went viral and had more than 120,000 tweets within hours. The hashtag has continued to attract attention with Muslims and non-Muslims around the world expressing their support for Muslims.<sup>56</sup> It also inspired non-Muslims in the US after Imam Akorjee and his assistant were gunned down while returning from a mosque in Queens, New York. Keen to support Muslims and show that not all Americans were Islamophobic, some started the hashtag #IllWalkWithYou.<sup>57</sup>

The support offered to Mariam Veiszadeh through social media is another example that parts of the wider community are taking on this responsibility. Following her tweet that was critical of Woolworths selling t-shirts that contained racist references, she was exposed to attacks on social media. This was not restricted to Australia. The US-based site Daily Stormer urged others to “be as hurtful as possible when abusing her [Veiszadeh], and...to offend her Moslem sensibilities too”.<sup>58</sup> Combined with suggestions of violence against her, this manifestation of Islamophobia attracted those opposed to targeting Australian Muslims. The hashtag #IStandWithMariam attracted a number of tweets with some stating “#IStandWithMariam because her gender, religion and politics are irrelevant. #IStandWithMariam because she is a good & decent Australian.”<sup>59</sup> This hashtag continued to attract messages long after the controversy died down, indicating support for Muslims. Mariam Veiszadeh was acknowledged for her struggle against bigotry and was named Fairfax Daily Life Woman of the Year in 2016.

The Register founded by Mariam Veiszadeh to record incidences of Islamophobia has also emerged as a site where the non-Muslim wider community members have actively provided information on how Muslims have been bullied or subjected to hatred. That non-Muslim women and men have opted to counter Islamophobia online, and actively get involved in raising awareness of anti-Muslim acts, indicates that sections of the wider community take their responsibility to counter Islamophobia seriously.

The activism among non-Muslims to combat Islamophobia is also apparent in their support for Muslims in an environment marked by creeping bigotry against Muslims. A significant example of this support was the statement issued by Alpha Cheng (son of NSW police accountant Curtis Cheng who was murdered by a Muslim youth in Parramatta) who asked Pauline Hanson to stop using his father's murder as justification for a ban on Muslim immigration to Australia.<sup>60</sup>

The website entitled Voices Against Bigotry also calls on all Australians to “stand up, speak out, stop Islamophobia”. Started by Susie Latham and Linda Briskman, the site provides a space for Muslim and non-Muslim voices to express concern against Islamophobia. To substantiate that not all Australians are against Muslims, the site provides regular coverage of news that supports its objective of countering Islamophobia.<sup>61</sup>



The website entitled ‘Voices Against Bigotry’ provides a space for Muslim and non-Muslim voices to express concern against Islamophobia



This responsibility extends beyond raising awareness of anti-Muslim actions to actively engaging with members of the wider community as Muslims and Australian citizens. By more actively engaging with members of the wider community, Muslims can help more accurately shape their views about their faith.

## Australian Muslim community's responsibility

Members of the Muslim community also share some responsibility in countering Islamophobia (although Muslims are victims of Islamophobia and at the receiving end of Islamophobic acts). This responsibility extends beyond raising awareness of anti-Muslim actions to actively engaging with members of the wider community as Muslims and Australian citizens. Given that Islamophobia reflects not just an illogical bias against Muslims, but also a lack of knowledge of what Islam stands for, engagement plays a role in shaping the wider community's views about the faith practised by Muslims in Australia.

Evidence of engagement is visible at a number of levels. At the local government level, for example, the Shepparton Interfaith Network brings together people from diverse religious backgrounds. The network enables members of the wider community to visit places of worship and organises multi-faith prayers and the Picnic for Peace for members of religious communities. Australian Muslims have been active participants in this network and opened mosques' doors to help others learn about Islam and Muslims. The Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) has also joined the Jewish Community Council of Victoria and Victorian Council of Churches to form the Jewish Christian Muslim Association of Australia. Through this platform, the ICV has joined other faith communities in condemning acts of terrorism and violence committed by Muslims in the name of Islam. In response to the killing of Father Jacques Hamel in France in July 2016, for example, the association issued a statement that identified it as an "affront to all people of religion" and stated "we join together as Jews, Christians and Muslims to condemn this violent attack in a place of peace and prayer."<sup>62</sup>

At a national level, the Lebanese Muslim Association organises an annual Australia-wide open day when the doors to mosques are simultaneously opened to the public. In 2015, the event enabled mosques in Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales and Queensland to demystify Islam and help others appreciate the value of mosques as places of worship and not terrorism. This has contributed to other mosques joining the effort to reach out to non-Muslim community members. The 2016 National Mosque Open Day, co-sponsored by the Department of Social Services, was touted as featuring even more mosques "in capital cities as well as in regional towns, giving more Australians than ever the chance to visit and be welcomed into their local mosques."<sup>63</sup>

The task of countering Islamophobia, however, requires a shift in the approaches adopted by the Muslim communities to represent themselves vis-à-vis the wider community.



The task of countering Islamophobia, however, requires a shift in the approaches adopted by the Muslim communities to represent themselves vis-à-vis the wider community. As a minority community, it is understandable that Muslims generally portray themselves as a united community that speaks with one voice on issues related to them, with Muslim organisations issuing statements on issues relevant to Australian Muslims and few voices condoning or providing alternative views. However, such portrayal can be detrimental when viewed by those who already entertain notions of Islam as a monolithic religion. Any act of terrorism committed by a Muslim is thus easily viewed as a reflection of a violent religious ideology. While issuing statements of condemnation against terrorist acts, therefore, Australian Muslim leaders need to admit and highlight that a diversity of views exists among Australian Muslims on a range of issues. They also need to highlight the contributions made by Muslims in Australia and other predominantly non-Muslim societies.

Such a celebration of intra-religious diversity and its manifestation across national boundaries, in turn necessitates the right to 'represent' and speak for Australian Muslims not just by religious scholars and imams, but also by other Muslims in different sections of the society. Such a shift could draw attention to Muslims as citizens and not just as religious beings who could be targeted by those ignorant of the reality of Islam.

## Summary



- > Australian leadership shoulders the primary responsibility to create the conditions that counter Islamophobia. Yet, Australian leaders have not always taken responsibility for countering Islamophobia. Politicians need to adopt a consistent policy of speaking out against acts of intolerance and negativity towards Australian Muslims when they happen.
- > While the project of countering radicalisation needs all the attention and funding the government can provide, a parallel need exists for engaging Muslims as equal citizens in community development projects.
- > With the growing incidence of Islamophobia in Australia, sections of the wider community have assumed this responsibility; for example, the #illridewithyou movement.
- > Members of the Muslim community share an equal responsibility in countering Islamophobia. This responsibility extends beyond raising awareness of anti-Muslim actions to actively engaging with members of the wider community to help shape their views about the faith practiced by Muslims in Australia.

## Section II Endnotes

- 1 For instance, police reports in Canada disclose that hate crimes against Canadian Muslims more than doubled between 2010 and 2014. For details, see "Police-reported data on hate crime and cybercrime, 2014," Statistics Canada, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/160412/dq160412b-cansim-eng.htm>. Hate crimes against Muslims in the US increased by 78% over the course of 2015, according to a report by the California State University, Brian Levin, Special Status Report: Hate Crime in the United States (California: California State University Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism, 2016), <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3110202-SPECIAL-STATUS-REPORT-v5-9-16-16.html>; FBI hate crime statistics note this rate as 67% for 2015, see "About Hate Crime Statistics, 2015," FBI:UCR, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2015>. Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks (Tell MAMA) noted a 200% increase in hate crimes against Muslims in the UK, Tell MAMA, *The Geography of Anti-Muslim Hatred: Tell MAMA Annual Report 2015* (London, UK: Faith Matters, 2016), [https://www.tellmama.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/pdf/tell\\_mama\\_2015\\_annual\\_report.pdf](https://www.tellmama.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/pdf/tell_mama_2015_annual_report.pdf). Because religious hate crimes are not listed under a crime category in Australia, there are no official figures on anti-Muslim hate crime in Australia.
- The increase of anti-Muslim hate crimes in the West is not independent from the increase of negative perceptions of Islam and Muslims in the West. 56% of Americans expressed "Sharply negative perception of Islam." See Betsy Cooper, Daniel Cox, Rachel Lienesch and Robert P. Jones, *Anxiety, Nostalgia and Mistrust: Findings from the 2015 American Values Survey* (Washington DC: Public Religion Research Institute, 2015), <http://www.prii.org/research/survey-anxiety-nostalgia-and-mistrust-findings-from-the-2015-american-values-survey/>. Another study found that 68% of Americans perceive Muslims violent. Likewise, the negative perception of Islam and Muslims in Europe is quite widespread (Hungary 72%, Italy 69%, Poland 66%, Greece 65%, Spain 50%, Netherlands and Sweden 50%). See Michael Lipka, "Muslims and Islam: Key Findings in the US and around the World," Facttank, February 27, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/22/muslims-and-islam-key-findings-in-the-u-s-and-around-the-world/>.
- Similar sentiments can be traced in Australia. A social cohesion report in 2016 found that a negative view of Muslims is five times higher in comparison to the negative perception of the people of other faiths. See Andrew Markus, *Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation Surveys 2016* (Australia: Monash University, 2016), <http://scanlonfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2016-Mapping-Social-Cohesion-Report-FINAL-with-covers.pdf>. The negative view of was echoed in another report according to which 49% of Australians support banning Muslim immigration. See "Ban on Muslim Immigration," Essential Report, September 21, 2016, <http://www.essentialvision.com.au/ban-on-muslim-immigration>. Another study found that 57% of Australians are concerned about intermarriages with Muslims. See Joseph Butler, "Most Aussies Would be 'Concerned' if Family Married a Muslim," *Huffington Post*, September 28, 2016, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2016/09/28/most-aussies-would-be-concerned-if-family-married-a-muslim/>. Such negative sentiments were found alarmingly high in the Australian Defence Force. According to a study, 80% of the Australian Army expressed a negative view of Islam. See Michael Safi, "Anti-Muslim Sentiment Strong and Widespread in Australian Army, Study Shows," *The Guardian*, June 9, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/jun/09/anti-muslim-sentiment-strong-and-widespread-in-australian-army-study-shows>.
- 2 Less than 1% of students reported no personal experience of Islamophobia.
- 3 33 reported Islamophobia through personal experience, 18 witnessed it through someone they knew, 20 were third party witnesses to an incident, 36 heard narratives of incidents through a friend or relative, and 39 heard of stories outside of their personal and social circles. Total N=146 expressed by 66 people.
- 4 There was a work relationship in only two cases and a social relationship (i.e. one acquaintance and one neighbour) in two other cases.
- 5 The ethnicities that have not historically contained large number of Muslims (such as Anglo-Saxon and Celtic) became Muslim through conversion. Rachel Woodlock, "Praying Where They Don't Belong: Female Muslim Converts and Access to Mosques in Melbourne, Australia," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 30, no. 2 (2010): 265–278.
- 6 VIC (Muslim population 152,779, N=33 incidents); NSW (Muslim population 219,378, N=81 incidents), QLD (Muslim population 34,048, N=18 incidents), SA (Muslim population 19,511, N=9 incidents), WA (Muslim population 39,117, N=8 incidents), TAS (Muslim population 1,708, N=1 incident). The Register also recorded 13 (5.3%) unknown and 80 N/A (32.9%) incidents. Muslim population was retrieved from ABS 2011 Census data by using Table Builder.
- 7 For elaboration of these levels, refer to Severity Scale for All Incidents.
- 8 Websites informing about local demographics of Australia such as <http://localstats.com.au/> were used to identify diverse and less-diverse suburbs.
- 9 Ryan J. Al-Natour, "The Constructions of Sydney's 'Muslim Ghettos,'" *Contemporary Islam* 9 (2015): 131–147.
- 10 For spatial mapping of Sydney based on race and ethnicity based on 2011 ABS Census see "Map of Race and Ethnicity in Sydney," VoomMaps, [http://voommaps.com/race-ethnicity-maps/map\\_of\\_race\\_and\\_ethnicity\\_in\\_sydney/](http://voommaps.com/race-ethnicity-maps/map_of_race_and_ethnicity_in_sydney/).
- 11 She explains this on the front page of the Islamophobia Register Australia website, <http://www.Islamophobia.com.au/>.
- 12 Tell MAMA, *The Geography of Anti-Muslim Hatred: Tell MAMA Annual Report 2015*.
- 13 Bridge Initiative Team, "When Islamophobia Turns Violent: The 2016 U.S. Presidential Elections," Bridge, May 2, 2016, <http://bridge.georgetown.edu/when-islamophobia-turns-violent-the-2016-u-s-presidential-elections/>. The Southern Poverty Law Centre documented 867 bias-related incidents in the ten days following the US presidential election. Southern Poverty Law Center, "New SPLC Reports Reveal alarming Pattern of hate Incidents and Bullying across Country since Election," November 29, 2016, <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2016/11/29/new-splc-reports-reveal-alarming-pattern-hate-incidents-and-bullying-across-country>.
- 14 The other third were Egyptian Copts and Ethiopian Christians.
- 15 Geoff Chambers and Daniel Meers, "Homegrown Terrorist Mohamed Elomar Pledges to Bring the Horror Here: Australians Should be Worried, he says," *The Daily Telegraph*, July 30, 2014, <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/homegrown-terrorist-mohamed-elomar-pledges-to-bring-the-horror-here-australians-should-be-worried-he-says/news-story/fcbab61b6818e1220e30b5555b1a697d>.

- Elomar explained what he meant the next month when he posted pictures of his children holding severed heads: Kelmeny Fraser, "The Photo that will Shock the World: Jihadist Khaled Sharrouf's Son, 7, holds Severed Head," *Daily Telegraph*, August 10, 2014, <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/the-photo-that-will-shock-the-world-jihadist-khaled-sharroufs-son-7-holds-severed-head/news-story/ea5201d8e7f6fac960022548f51e3b4f>; "The Act of a Lunatic: Islamic State Jihadist Khaled Sharrouf's Photograph of Son Holding Severed Head in Syria Condemned by Muslim Leader, Federal Government," *ABC News*, August 12, 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-08-11/photo-of-boy-holding-severed-head-the-act-of-a-lunatic/5662202>.
- 16 Paul Maley and Dan Box, "Police Swoop on Sydney, Brisbane homes in Terror Raids," *The Australian*, September 18, 2014, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/police-swoop-on-sydney-brisbane-homes-in-terror-raids/news-story/3180030e52c71328a3321481a46c222f>; Nick Ralston and Megan Levy, "Terrorism Raids Carried out across Sydney, Brisbane," *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 18, 2014, <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/terrorism-raids-carried-out-across-sydney-brisbane-20140917-10igft.html>.
  - 17 Cameron Houston et al., "Terror Suspect Shot Dead after Two Police Officers Stabbed in Endeavour Hills," *The Age*, September 24, 2014, <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/terror-suspect-shot-dead-after-two-police-officers-stabbed-in-endeavour-hills-20140923-10l5d4.html>; "Melbourne Shooting: Officials Name Abdul Numan Haider as Man Shot Dead by Anti-Terrorist Officers," *ABC News*, September 24, 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-24/police-name-man-shot-dead-outside-melbourne-police-station/5765364>.
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