



26th April 2024

## **Australian Muslim Community calls for transparency and accountability of Law Enforcement Action**

On behalf of the Australian Muslim community, including peak organisations such as the Australian National Imams Council, the Alliance of Australian Muslims and the Australian Muslim Advocacy Network, we address the deeply troubling recent incidents and the subsequent responses by authorities.

The differing treatments of two recent violent incidents—the senseless stabbing deaths at Bondi Junction and the tragic event at Wakeley Church—are stark. The Bondi incident was quickly deemed a mental health issue, while the Wakeley Church attack was classified as a terrorist act almost immediately. This inconsistency is further exacerbated by the handling of a recent case where an individual left a suspected bomb with a political message outside a home, yet this has not been labelled terrorism. Such disparities in response create a perception of a double standard in law enforcement and judicial processes.

We must also address the problematic and longstanding issue of racial and religious profiling, which has been part of the societal fabric for decades. The presumption that terrorism is inherently tied to religion is not only inaccurate but harmful. This misconception persists despite extensive scholarly work demonstrating that terrorism is driven by political and ideological motives, not religious faith.

The use of charged language such as “Religiously motivated Sunni Violent Extremism” by the Director-General of ASIO Mike Burgess, particularly during sensitive times, is not only reckless but also fuels Islamophobia and further marginalises the Muslim community. This approach undermines social cohesion and perpetuates the stigmatisation of an entire religious group based on the actions of a few.

Furthermore, the recent raids resulting in the arrest of seven minors, coupled with advance media notifications, underscore a concerning pattern of questionable law enforcement tactics. Despite reports to the contrary, there was no consultation with the community prior to these operations. The lack of evidence pointing to a concrete threat or plan among these youths, as noted by senior police officials, calls into question both the necessity and the manner of these operations. This lack of transparency exacerbates the distress within our community.

We demand the Government and Law Enforcement agencies commit to an immediate and thorough inquiry into the processes leading up to these raids, ensuring transparency and accountability. There must be a commitment to meaningful engagement regarding this process with the community and to avoid sensationalism that can cause undue panic and a breakdown in social cohesion.

To address these systemic issues, we urge a revision of Australian Terrorism Laws to eliminate the classification of “religiously motivated” terrorism. It is imperative that our legal frameworks reflect the complexity of these acts and avoid simplistic attributions that target specific communities.

Our community seeks justice and equitable treatment. We stand for a society where all individuals, irrespective of their faith or background, are treated with fairness and dignity.

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