

Statement

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Minister for Ageing

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STATEMENT FROM THE MINISTER FOR MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

Today, on International Day to Combat Islamophobia, the Allan Labor Government reaffirms our steadfast commitment to standing up against hate, discrimination and racism in all their forms.

Sadly, Victorian Muslims have experienced an alarming increase in hateful, Islamophobic incidents. Hate which goes against the fibre of the proudly diverse and multicultural state that we are.

There is no place in Victoria for racism or discrimination of any kind.

It's why we are helping to support victims and bystanders of Islamophobia by partnering with Muslim communities to develop a guide on Combatting Islamophobia.

The guide will aim to build awareness of the impacts of Islamophobia within the broader Victorian community and highlight safe referral and support pathways for those who experience Islamophobia. This guide will help ensure that Islamophobia is understood, addressed, and called out wherever it occurs.

As part of Victoria's five-year *Anti-Racism Strategy*, the Labor Government adopted a new definition of Islamophobia as '*A fear, prejudice or hatred of Muslim people (or those perceived to be Muslim) and the religion of Islam. This can manifest in hostility, violence, intimidation, harassment and abuse.*'

We are also developing a whole of Government framework and working group for the coordinated escalation of issues impacting Muslim communities, ensuring we can respond to challenges as they arise in a community-informed, timely and meaningful way.

At the same time, we are continuing to support Islamic community organisations through \$3 million in funding for community activities to strengthen wellbeing and connection and combat Islamophobia.

Underpinning these efforts is Victoria's first *Anti-Racism Strategy*, which is working to ensure Victoria is a place where everyone can thrive irrespective of cultural background or faith.

Victoria has come a long way, but we have more to do. Every Victorian has a role to play in rejecting Islamophobia, racism and hate – which is why our *Anti-Vilification and Social Cohesion Bill* is so important.

No Muslim should fear attending mosque. And no Muslim woman should be fearful walking down the street wearing their hijab. But we know that they are.

This reform is for them, as multicultural Victorians who deserve to live without the fear of vilification and harm.

Today, as many Victorians continue to observe the holy month of Ramadan, we reaffirm our commitment to building a safer and more secure Victoria for everyone.

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