



Australian Federation
of Islamic Councils

General Angus J. Campbell, AO, DSC

Chief of Defence

PO Box 7900,

Canberra BC, ACT 2610

2 August 2021

Dear General Campbell

Re “Commemoration for Australians involved in the Middle East Area of Operations”

We write concerning the proposal to nominate a day for the “Commemoration for Australians involved in the Middle East Area of Operations”.

We do respect the sacrifice of our Australian troops who are ever ready to risk their lives under orders. However, the issue of the commemoration goes above and beyond simple sacrifice and service to country.

Our concerns are not to detract in any way from the courage and sacrifice of our armed services. Our concerns are aimed to help create a mechanism to protect our armed services from being dragged into life-risking conflicts on the basis of utterly false premises.

We are Australian Muslims, our aim in this letter is to protect Australia’s reputation and the reputation of our Australian troops against any external attack including avoidable criticism.

I am sure you can appreciate that people in the region and other peace-loving people in Australia and around the world believe that our involvement was not a generic fight against terrorism at all for the following reasons:

- 1 – This participation resulted in large scale killings, destabilisations, destruction, horrific regime change outcomes, displacement of tens of millions of people and the creation of tens of millions of refugees.
- 2 – It fuelled widespread anti-Muslim sentiments and Islamophobia.
- 3 – The Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force Afghanistan Inquiry’s report of 2020 into the actions of some of our own troops in Afghanistan cannot be met with a celebration of this disastrous invasion, such action would undermine our international credibility. Report: <https://afghanistandinquiry.defence.gov.au/>

Australian Federation of Islamic Councils

*The peak body for Australian Muslims representing
State and Territory Islamic Councils and Societies*



Sydney (Head Office): 932 Bourke Street, Zetland, NSW 2017

Melbourne: 66-68 Jeffcott Street, West Melbourne VIC 3003

Canberra: 21/41 Liardet Street, Weston ACT 2611

Perth: 17 Mercantile Way, Malaga WA 6090

W: afic.com.au **E:** admin@afic.com.au **PH:** (02) 9319 6733



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For these reasons, we urge the Department of Defence to take out all references to the Middle East or Afghanistan. Our armed services should be acknowledged for their sacrifices for their country. The tragedies resulting from sending them and other allied forces to Afghanistan and the Middle East should prevent us from turning this looming anniversary into anything resembling a celebration.

Kind regards,

Dr Rateb Jneid
President, AFIC

Endorsed by:

Islamic Council of Western Australia
Islamic Council of Queensland
Islamic Council of the Northern Territory
Islamic Council of Victoria
Islamic Council of South Australia
Islamic Council of the Australian Capital Territory
Islamic Council of Tasmania

Cc:

The Hon Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister of Australia
The Hon Peter Dutton MP, Minister of Defence