



Australian Federation
of Islamic Councils

AFIC Urges Comprehensive Review of Proposed Victorian Hate Speech Legislation

Thursday, 20th February, 2025

The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) has voiced significant concerns regarding the proposed hate speech legislation in Victoria. AFIC supports measures that effectively curb hate speech and safeguard community protections. However, the current draft raises critical issues, particularly around the suppression of legitimate political discourse and the potential consequences for free speech.

Dr. Rateb Jneid, President of AFIC, emphasised the need for careful consideration of the legislation's impact on free expression. "While we recognise the Victorian government's commitment to combatting hate speech, it is crucial that the legislation does not curtail free speech or disproportionately target specific communities. The proposed removal of the 'political interest' defence is concerning, as it risks criminalising valid criticism of government policies, including those concerning the state of Israel amidst the ongoing crises in Palestine."

AFIC is particularly worried that the legislation, in its current form, may inhibit the ability to critique and discuss international human rights issues openly. Such discussions are essential for the democratic process and the advocacy work many community organisations engage in, particularly regarding global human rights abuses and international conflicts.

"The potential for this legislation to silence necessary dialogue on international injustices, such as those being committed in Palestine, is alarming," Dr. Jneid stated. "In its attempt to shield communities from hate speech, the government must ensure it does not stifle critical voices that advocate for justice and human rights worldwide."

AFIC strongly recommends that the Victorian government engage in broader consultations with diverse community groups, including the Muslim community. This approach will ensure that any anti-hate speech legislation is balanced, effective, and does not unintentionally impede on the rights to free expression and political participation.

"We call upon the Victorian government to not only revisit the proposed legislation but also to ensure its alignment with both protecting communities from hate speech and upholding the rights to free and political speech," added Dr. Jneid.

AFIC stands ready to work with the government to achieve legislation that truly reflects the values of justice and inclusivity, respecting the delicate balance between protection from hate and the preservation of fundamental democratic freedoms.

Authorised by
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