



Monday, 10 October 2022

To:
Dr. Jane Thomson
Committee Secretary
Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

By email: parliamentary.standards.sen.aph.gov.au

Dear Dr.Thomson,

Inquiry into Codes of Conduct for Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces (Inquiry)

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to this inquiry.

Who we are

The Australian Muslim Advocacy Network (AMAN) is a national law and research-based advocacy organisation working to secure the safety and welfare of Australian Muslims by reducing misinformation about Muslims and Islam in the public sphere.

Over the past several years, we have engaged with Parliament, policymakers, national media, the Christchurch Call and Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism. We have strived to understand the drivers of the Christchurch massacre. Sadly, anti-Islam movements in Australia fueled white supremacist violent extremism (CARR and Hedayah Institute, 2021).

Executive Summary

We support the observations and recommendations of the **Governance Institute of Australia**¹, in particular:

¹ Governance Institute of Australia, Submission No 13 to Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards, *Inquiry into Codes of Conduct for Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces (Inquiry)* (9 September 2022).

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- The setting of clear standards of conduct through a uniform Code of Conduct for Parliamentarians in the Standing Orders of both Houses of Parliament, a Code of Conduct for Parliamentarians' Staff included in the *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (Cth) (MOPS Act) and the establishment of standards of conduct that apply to all activity within the parliamentary precincts. Any codes of conduct should address building safe and respectful workplaces, bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault and integrity matters.
- We support the establishment of an independent Commission (Commission) to receive disclosures and handle formal and informal complaints, make findings about misconduct, and apply sanctions for breaches of codes of conduct. Appointments to the Commission should be made by a non-partisan joint Committee, for a fixed term, on a transparent, merits-based basis and be independent of the political process. The Commission should have adequate funding to perform its functions and transparency around its funding and resourcing.
- It is fundamental that there are consequences for breaches of CPW codes of conduct. For a code of conduct to be more than words on a page, it must be independently enforced. In the private sector, positive duties with consequences for failure are vital to accountability. There should be appropriate consequences that would also have a deterrent effect. The independent Commission should be key in enforcing CPW codes of conduct.
- The Public Interest Disclosure Act, 2013 (Cth) should be amended to include disclosures by MOPS Act employees.

We support the observations and recommendations of the **Hon. Dr. Anne Aly MP²**, in particular:

- racism, racial harassment, and racialized sexual harassment be included in the proposed codes of conduct and any proposed training programs for staff, members, and senators.
- any mechanisms for findings made under any proposed code consider subtle racism and include explicit definitions and guidelines about what constitutes subtle racism.
- a reasonable expectation is that respectful and professional behaviour should also include behaviour free from racism, racial harassment, or racialized sexual harassment.

We support the observations of **Working Women's Centres³** on training,

² Submission No 27 to Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards.

³ Maria Maley & Dr Val Barrett, Submission No 5 to Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards, *Submission to the Inquiry by the Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards*



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- Training works to challenge the politics of ignorance about the causes and conditions of bullying, harassment, and sexual assault in the workplace. It challenges the systematic discrimination exercised by those in power and their claims to not know about gender, race, class, and disability disempowerment.
- The adoption of best practice training is the first step in confronting the culture of discrimination and the politics of ignorance that enable such abuse. Best practice training is required for all leaders, managers, and all workers to achieve effective outcomes.
- The proposed training will be more effective if undertaken by independent third parties to avoid the obstacles in the inherent inequalities of power in these workplaces.

We submit that the definitions of bullying and racial discrimination include religious discrimination of communities subject to racism (“negatively racialised communities”). This is an **important distinction** as, otherwise, the Muslim community and other communities are denied equal protection from racism.

Culture and Consequences

Internationally, research demonstrates how impactful racist political speech is, not only on the parliamentary workplace and the accessibility of a parliamentary career to diverse candidates but on public discourse and even the rise of hate crime and violent ideological extremism.

Unfortunately, Australian politicians have gone through periods of normalising anti-Muslim speech.

In 2006, then-Deputy Prime Minister Costello heavily singled out Muslims, proclaiming:

‘Before entering a mosque, visitors are asked to take off their shoes. This is a sign of respect. If you have a strong objection to walking in your socks don't enter the mosque. Before becoming an Australian you will be asked to subscribe to certain values. If you have strong objections to those values don't come to Australia’ (Costello 2006).

The same year, Prime Minister Howard asserted that elements of the Australian Islamic community held extremist views and ‘it is not a problem that we have ever faced with other immigrant communities who become easily absorbed by Australia's mainstream’ (Cole 2017).

[I]n February 2015 [Tony Abbott] attracted wide criticism for his statement suggesting that the Islamic community did not do enough to stamp out

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extremism (Medhora & Safi 2015). These statements received significant coverage and support from mainstream media

(Sky News Australia 2016).

ON leader Pauline Hanson, re-elected to the Senate in 2016, wore a burqa into Parliament and queried whether the government would work with her to 'ban the burqa in Australia considering there have been 13 foiled national threats against us with terrorism' (Murphy 2017).

ON had also promoted a ban on Muslim immigration and sought a royal commission into Islam. In his maiden speech, Senator Fraser Anning (Katter's Australia Party) called for a 'final solution' and implementation of a ban on Muslim immigration – this terminology was widely criticised due to its association with the Holocaust, describing the Nazi regime's genocidal policy of exterminating Jewish people (Senator Fraser Anning 2018).

Senator George Christensen warned of a 'slow spread of a Sharia-style dispensation of justice which is quietly executed in Australian mosques on a daily basis' (Cole 2017: 46). Former Senator Jacqui Lambie, from her self-founded Jacqui Lambie Network Party, claimed people who follow Sharia law are 'maniacs and depraved humans' and anyone 'supporting' Sharia should leave the country (Jennet 2014). She has also been vocal about the wearing of the burqa, stating followers of Islam would continue committing 'cold blooded butchery and rapes until every woman in Australia wears a burqa and is subservient to men' (Jennet 2014).⁴

Pauline Hanson said, "Islam is a disease; we need to vaccinate ourselves against that." While it was very positive that the Prime Minister and Deputy Minister criticised her remarks, their response was to emphasise the risk of encouraging more terrorism or triggering backlashes from major export partners – not to highlight how dehumanising her remark was to the Muslim community.⁵ It has been demonstrated repeatedly that other **politicians are not a quality safeguard against racist political speech** – they cannot be relied upon to hold racist politicians to account or to explain why a comment is denigrating or dehumanising.

Comparisons of Islam to diseases is a common dehumanising conception used in far-right conspiracy theories and narratives about Muslims, ranging from the Great Replacement Theory (espoused by Australian terrorist Brenton Tarrant)), to Eurabian conspiracy theory (similar to Great Replacement, espoused by Oslo terrorist, Anders Breivik). It is dehumanising

⁴ Iner, Derya and Sean McManus. (Forthcoming). "Islamophobia in Australia." In *The Rise of Global Islamophobia in the War on Terror*, edited by Naved Bakali and Farid Hafiz. UK: Manchester University Press.

⁵ Amy Remeikis, 'Pauline Hanson says Islam is a disease Australia needs to vaccinate', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (24 March 2017)



because it suggests that Islam infects, corrupts, pollutes, despoils and debilitates the ingroup. Implied in this idea is the premise that Muslims are the carriers of this disease, who are acting in concert with a single mind to carry out this harm. It renders Muslims outside the human family, thereby reducing the obligations owed to them by potential future perpetrators of violence.⁶

A Queensland Tribunal found that Senator Fraser Anning had vilified Muslims 140 times. The process was achieving this ruling was onerous for our organisation and volunteers.⁷ The action was made more accessible because Anning had absconded to the U.S and therefore was not interested in trying to benefit from the proceedings, as Senator Hanson has done about the complaint by Senator Faruqi. Greens Senator Mehreen Faruqi made the complaint following a tweet from Senator Hanson, which said she should "p--- off back to Pakistan."⁸ It is true that in this day and age, you would be hard-pressed to find a workplace that would allow someone to racially vilify a colleague without consequence. Sadly, Senator Hanson has not been held to account by the Senate.

These comments have offline consequences. Recent research into Twitter shows the global coincidence of political hate speech with offline violence and social discord.⁹

In the Islamophobia in Australia Report, Dr. Derya Iner states,

Moreover, beginning from the first hours of the Christchurch Mosque attacks and for the next two weeks, online hate platforms were exuberantly active on social media. The thematic grouping of those early posts consisted of justifying the Christchurch attacks by blaming Muslims or seeing them as deserving it and blaming the government for accepting Muslim immigration. These arguments were initially endorsed by far-right politicians like Fraser Anning and spread by his followers on social media. Some far-right groups went further by applauding the Christchurch terrorist for his bloodshed. Some used insensitive language by making jokes about the Christchurch attacks. For instance, one expressed the joy of watching the Christchurch attacks repeatedly and calling it "the best movie ever" and hoping "another 10,000 Christchurch shootings [to] happen". Concerningly though, some teenagers interpreted the live broadcast of the

⁶ Maynard JL, Benesch S (2016) Dangerous speech and dangerous ideology: an integrated model for monitoring and prevention. *Genocide Stud Prev* 9(3):70, 80.

⁷ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-08-03/tribunal-orders-fraser-anning-to-remove-posts-vilifying-muslims/100337536>

⁸ Jessica Bahr, 'Mehreen Faruqi says Human Rights Commission has accepted her racism complaint against Pauline Hanson', *SBS News* (7 October 2022)

⁹ Umar Butler, *Islamophobia in the digital age: a study of anti-Muslim tweets*, (2022, Islamic Council of Victoria) <https://apo.org.au/node/318935>; CJ Werleman, 'Twitter hate: 86 percent of anti-Muslim content comes from US, UK, India' <https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/twitter-hate-86-percent-of-anti-muslim-content-comes-from-us-uk-india-60801>



Christchurch attacks as a computer game: “If y’all saw the video of him killing everyone, it looked like he was playing black opps4 [laughing emoji]”. Such comments were supported by laugh emojis and thumbs up.

Fraser Anning’s anti-Muslim posts and statements in the aftermath of Christchurch similarly made the grieving Muslim community targets of far-right extremists and Islamophobes. The displayed post in an anti-Muslim far-right group in the aftermath of the Christchurch attack attempted to mobilise Australian Islamophobes to support Fraser Anning’s statements about Muslims on the day of the Christchurch attacks.

The use of foul language about Muslims was not limited to ordinary people. Senator Fraser Anning, as an Australian representative in parliament, used extremely indecent language when asked why he does not like Muslim: “Because they are f...ing pieces of sh...t who should of stayed in their own country instead of coming over here and f...ing ours up trying to change our laws to their liking post op is that what you want to hear, you little f...?”.¹⁰

Fraser Anning’s election time video outside the Holland Park Mosque preceded hateful vandalism of the same mosque, the graffiti referring to Brenton Tarrant as a Saint.¹¹

Sadly, anti-Islam movements in Australia have been the predominant actor fueling white supremacist violent extremism.¹²

As the Governance Institute of Australia states,

Ministers, Members of Parliament, and other leaders must model the culture they wish to see. Values need to be lived and actions must support codes of conduct. They must lead on this issue, not only by supporting practical and systemic reforms, but personally as well, by setting the right example for their staff.

We urge your Committee to consider the link between Parliamentary workplace culture and the effect on the public square more broadly.

¹⁰ Dr Derya Iner, *Islamophobia in Australia* (Report, 2018-2019)

¹¹ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-09-11/brisbane-mosque-vandalised-with-christchurch-references/11501684>; <https://www.9news.com.au/national/vandals-graffiti-brisbane-holland-park-mosque-swastikas-christchurch-shooting-crime-news-australia/e01afea4-ccf5-45a8-bf36-d9ded7091ead>; <https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/queensland/christchurch-shooter-s-name-swastika-sprayed-onto-brisbane-mosque-20190911-p52qb8.html>

¹² https://hedayah.com/resources/australia_radical_right_cve_narratives/



If you wish to discuss any of the issues raised in this letter, please contact the AMAN team at:
advocacy@aman.net.au.

We thank the Committee for consideration of our submission.

Yours faithfully,

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