

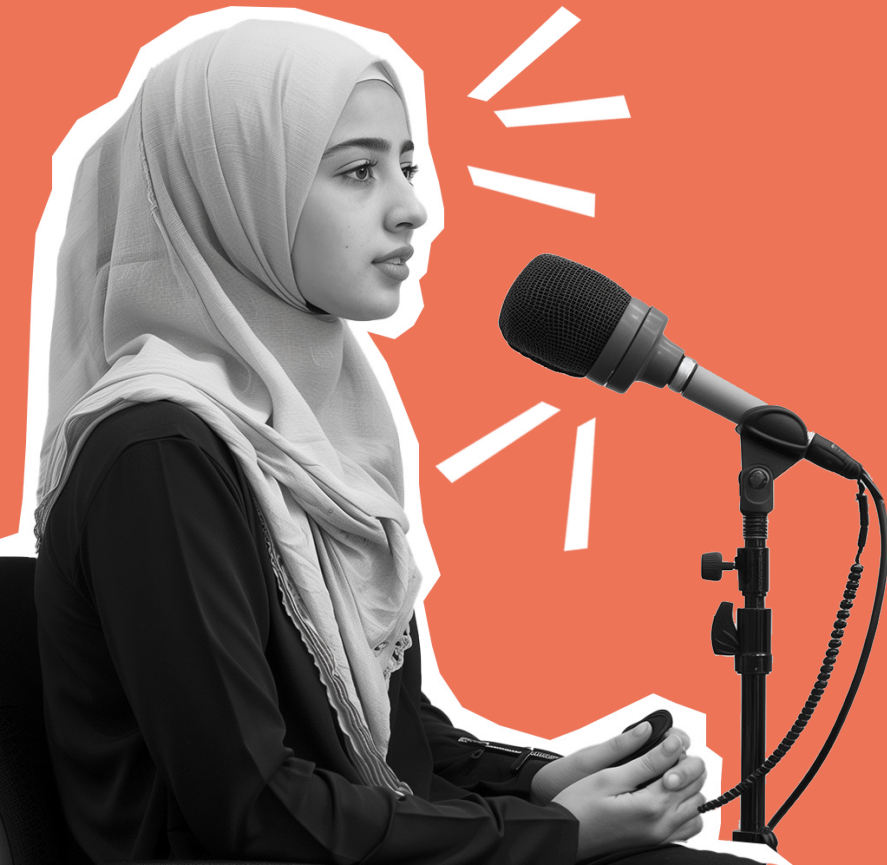
# Fighting Islamophobia Schools/Education Facilities

Islamophobia has no place in schools and other institutions of education.



# Acts of Islamophobia manifest at both individual and institutional levels, taking various forms.

These acts may involve physical assaults against individuals perceived to be Muslim or the vandalism of mosques and Islamic centres. Additionally, they encompass law enforcement profiling, employment discrimination, and denial of services. Anti-Islam legislation, political rhetoric and policy measures also contribute to Islamophobic acts.



# Islamophobia in Schools/Education Facilities

In Australian schools, Islamophobia manifests itself most strongly in the form of discriminatory bullying against Muslim students. The reasons why Muslims students are common targets of discriminatory bullying in Australian primary schools and high schools, can be attributed to the following:

- Physical appearance,
- Ethnic and linguistic background,
- Political rhetoric
- Media representation
- Cultural traditions, and
- Religious practices.

In addition, Muslim students suffer discrimination emanating from societal prejudice that has been fostered by the past two decades of negative media publicity, which continues to be propagated by mainstream media outlets.

Discrimination of Muslim students within the education system can take shape through direct and indirect discrimination.

## Direct Islamophobia

An example of direct Islamophobia would be the bullying and targeting of Muslim students through many forms, including but not limited to:



### Physical bullying:

fighting, shoving, punching, kicking, or pulling off a headscarf.



### Verbal bullying:

threats, name-calling, insulting/derogatory comments about Islam (specifically or generally), degrading insults/comments about Muslim people (specifically or generally).



### Cyber Bullying:

Sending hurtful messages via mobile text message or via social media platforms to Muslim Students, spreading rumours or lies online about Muslim students, or creating fake social media profiles to ridicule Muslim students.

# Indirect Islamophobia

An example of direct Islamophobia would be the bullying and targeting of Muslim students through many forms, including but not limited to:



## Uniform Policies:

Implementing uniform policies that disproportionately affect Muslim students. This would be the banning of headwear at school which would discriminate against a Muslim female student, or imposing a certain dresscode on a Muslim student that goes against their religious principles.



## Stereotyping:

Some teachers may hold stereotypes about Muslims based on media narratives and political drivers.



## Exclusionary Practices:

Discrimination can occur through exclusionary practices- by specifically excluding or isolating a Muslim student from certain activities or opportunities.



## Lack of cooperation:

Discrimination can occur by intentionally or unintentionally failing to cooperate with reasonable requests made by Muslim students such as offering a space for prayer on school grounds.



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Justice  
Empowerment  
Advocacy

# For School Staff Members

## How to recognise Islamophobic discrimination:

- shifts in friendships which seem to leave one or more Muslim students upset.
- negative interactions between students.
- negative comments made about a certain Muslim student.
- a Muslim student is being ignored or excluded.
- a Muslim student is avoiding certain parts of the school grounds, arriving, or leaving school late or very early.
- a Muslim student seeming tired, daydreamy, fearful, or anxious, particularly around specific peers.
- a Muslim student appearing dishevelled, with torn or dirty clothing.
- a Muslim student having injuries such as bruises or cuts.

## Muslim students who are targeted and bullied are more likely to:

- Disconnect and disengage: Some students may disconnect from the learning community and disengage from students and staff as a result.
- Friendship Challenges: Others might lack quality friendships.
- Emotional Vulnerability: High levels of emotionality can indicate vulnerability and low resilience.
- Social Acceptance: Some students may be less well accepted by peers, avoiding conflict and withdrawing socially.
- Self-Esteem: Low self-esteem can also be a concern.

## Steps to include:

- Asking the Muslim student privately, if they'd like to have a conversation to let them know about your observations and concerns.
- Asking the Muslim student about any concerns they have in the school, peer circles, or at home.
- Discussing your concerns with your school's leadership, or student wellbeing staff member to share concerns and what you've observed.

## Tips for Teachers:

- Model Inclusivity: Lead by example—avoid making racist slurs or jokes about other cultures, religions or backgrounds. Show zero tolerance for racist and discriminatory behaviour.
- Foster a Welcoming Environment: Create a classroom and school that feels welcoming to all students.
- Encourage Self-Expression: Allow students to express themselves freely.
- Be Open: Be approachable and open-minded.
- Engage in Dialogue: Don't shy away from difficult conversations; create opportunities for discussion.
- Address Islamophobia, Discrimination and Racial Equity: Discuss the types of discrimination and promote equity in your teaching.

## For School Students who experience Islamophobia. Safety Tips:

- Tell a trusted adult
- Tell a teacher or heads of school departments
- Ignore the bully and walk away.
- Walk tall and hold your head high.
- Don't get physical.
- Practice confidence.
- Talk about it with trusted friends and school staff or youth/social workers.
- Find your (true) friends and support circle.
- Let caretakers or parents know where you are always.
- Stay in public places.
- Report the matter to Action Against Islamophobia (AAI)
- If the matter escalates, seek legal advice and report the matter to the Police.

In an emergency always dial 000

Be sure to use these tips if you are in any given situation.



# Know the Law!

## Know the Law!

The Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW) and the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) make racial discrimination and vilification illegal in NSW. This would extend to all forms of bullying and discrimination against Muslim students in schools including Islamophobia.

A case study published by Anti-Discrimination NSW regarding [Religious headwear doesn't comply with school uniform policy](#).

Mandeep\* is Sikh.

Mandeep attended the open day for a Catholic high school with his son. While there, Mandeep was told by a staff member that his son could not attend the school because his head-covering and long hair did not comply with the school's uniform policy.

Mandeep lodged a complaint of race discrimination with ADNSW.

Mandeep's complaint was resolved when the school agreed that students could apply to be exempt from the uniform policy if the policy conflicted with the student's religious or cultural practices.

This right also extends to Muslims who wear Hijabs.

## Channels of Reporting

### Action Against Islamophobia (AAI)

It is highly recommended that all incidents of Islamophobia (however big or small), be reported to the "Report Islamophobia" page of the website. Reporting the matter also allows experts in the field to collate the relevant data when presenting the seriousness of Islamophobia to policy makers and law enforcement agencies, which will impact on legislative changes in creating greater protections against Islamophobia.

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### NSW Department of Education

You can make a complaint:

- Directly to the NSW Department of Education via its complaint forms; or
  - To an Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO), who is a teacher or executive member of a school's staff appointed to address issues of racism at schools.
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### Anti-Discrimination NSW

You can make a complaint to Anti-Discrimination NSW through Service NSW. Before lodging and complaint, it is recommended that you:

1. Contact Anti-Discrimination NSW on 1800 670 812 to ensure you understand the complaints process and the information required so that your complaint is processed as quickly as possible.
2. You can make a complaint if you're an individual or group who has been discriminated against, sexually harassed, vilified or victimised.
3. Complaints can be made on your behalf by a parent, guardian or carer, or organisations such as unions and other representative bodies. Your representative must name you and make it clear that you agree to them lodging the complaint.

## States outside of NSW

If the complaint involves public schools in states outside of New South Wales, the complaints should be directed to the following departments:

- ACT** - ACT Department of Education and Training
  - NT** - Northern Territory Department of Education and Training
  - QLD** - Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment
  - SA** - South Australian Department for Education and Child Development
  - VIC** - Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
  - TAS** - Tasmanian Department of Education
  - WA** - Western Australian Department of Education
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## Private Schools

Private Schools may be subject to different complaints procedures. As such, you may need to report complaints to:

- The school principal
  - Trusted teachers or staff at the school, or
  - Persons who are on the board of directors of the school
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## Australian Human Rights Commission

Complaints under the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) may also be submitted to the Australian Human Rights Commission

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## Legal Advice

It may also be best to seek legal advice from an experienced lawyer should the matter not be resolved through the above means.

[actionagainstislamophobia.org.au](http://actionagainstislamophobia.org.au)

[support@actionagainstislamophobia.org.au](mailto:support@actionagainstislamophobia.org.au)

(02) 8377 4199

Sources used for this Guide:

1. <https://antidiscrimination.nsw.gov.au/>
  - How to make a complaint
2. <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/>
  - Lodge a complaint with Anti-Discrimination NSW
3. <https://humanrights.gov.au/>
  - Factsheet: Guide to the protections for freedom of religion (2019)
4. <https://education.nsw.gov.au/>
  - Making a complaint about NSW public schools - guide for parents & carers
  - Reports of racism
  - Information for parents and carers: Anti-Racism Policy
  - Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO)