



MUSLIM WOMEN'S WELFARE OF AUSTRALIA

Submission by the Muslim Women's Welfare of Australia (MWWA)

In response to the NSW Law Reform Commission Review of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW) August 2025

Introduction:

The Muslim Women's Welfare of Australia (MWWA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the NSW Law Reform Commission's review of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW) (ADA). MWWA is a grassroots organisation representing the needs and interests of Muslim women across New South Wales. We work to support, empower, and protect women and their families through education, advocacy, and community engagement.

This submission reflects the lived experiences of our members and aims to contribute constructively to strengthening anti-discrimination laws in NSW. We respectfully highlight specific areas of concern and propose legislative reforms that reflect the principles of diversity, inclusiveness, and dignity.

1. Vilification of Muslims: A Legal Gap that Must Be Closed

There is an urgent need for the ADA to explicitly prohibit the vilification of Muslims. Despite the rising levels of Islamophobia in Australia, current anti-discrimination protections do not adequately safeguard Muslim individuals or communities from public hate, harassment, or abuse.

Vilification, whether through speech, actions, media commentary, or online platforms, reinforces harmful stereotypes, fuels fear and division, and often escalates into acts of violence. It contributes to a hostile social climate that marginalises and dehumanises Australian Muslims.

Notable Incidents:

Early 2025: Serious threats were made against two Sydney mosques, accompanied by reported Islamophobic attacks on Muslim women who were targeted because of their visibility and vulnerability.

These are not isolated incidents. They reveal a troubling pattern: hate speech and vilification act as precursors to real-world violence. MWWA urges the NSW Government to recognise this link and legislate accordingly by:

- Including explicit protection against religious vilification for anti-Muslim hate speech.
- Extending coverage to online and media environments.
- Providing clear avenues for complaint, redress, and penalties.

Such reforms would send a clear message that communities deserve safety against discrimination and racism, and that hate has no place in our society.



MWWA
MUSLIM WOMEN'S WELFARE OF AUSTRALIA

MUSLIM WOMEN'S WELFARE OF AUSTRALIA

2. Support for Single-Gender Facilities

Inclusion in public services is vital to achieving genuine equality. Muslim women require some women-only spaces, such as swimming pools or gyms, to maintain religious modesty and comfort. These preferences are not exclusionary but are grounded in religious practice and personal dignity.

MWWA supports:

- The provision and promotion of women-only swimming programs, which encourage participation in physical activity without compromising religious values and ensuring the comfort of participants.
- Recognising the public health benefits of culturally sensitive programs (e.g. earlier partnerships with the Department of Sport and Recreation to reduce drowning risks among children through swim classes for mothers who are usually the primary carers of their children).

These programs have proven inclusive and successful, attracting Muslim and non-Muslim women alike. We encourage continued support and legislative protection for single-gender facilities that enable broader community participation.

3. Protection from Discrimination in Daily Life

Muslim women continue to face systemic discrimination in public life. MWWA strongly advocates for:

- Legal protections for wearing religious attire, such as the hijab or niqab, especially in employment, education, and public spaces.
- Anti-discrimination protections in housing, especially from landlords or agents who may act on prejudice based on names, appearance, or faith.
- Clear guidelines for workplaces and educational institutions on religious accommodations, including prayer times, dietary needs, and modesty in uniforms.
- Inclusion of Islamophobia and religious vilification in the ADA, particularly to combat online hate and media bias.
- Devising community consultation mechanisms to ensure Muslim women's voices are heard in law reform and policy development.
- Implementation of monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to ensure anti-discrimination protections are not just theoretical but operational in practice.

4. Improved Complaints Process

Existing complaint procedures under the ADA are often complex, culturally unaware, and inaccessible. Muslim women may face trauma, language barriers, or institutional distrust that discourages them from seeking justice.

We recommend:

- Simplifying the complaint process.



MUSLIM WOMEN'S WELFARE OF AUSTRALIA

- Embedding trauma-informed and culturally competent practices in handling discrimination reports.
- Resourcing anti-discrimination bodies to build trust with underrepresented communities.

- We call for the ADA to include provisions that hold public figures and institutions accountable when their speech incites hate.

Racism must be rejected. Tolerating it, especially when it comes from individuals in positions of power, sends the wrong message to the community and undermines social cohesion.

Conclusion:

MWWA firmly believes that this review of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW) presents an opportunity for meaningful reform that addresses current social realities and advances inclusivity.

We urge the Commission to ensure that the updated Act:

- Recognises and explicitly protects against religious vilification towards Muslims.
- Safeguards the rights of Muslim women in employment, housing, education, and public life.
- Establishes a legal framework that reflects the diversity of New South Wales.

We look forward to the outcomes of this important review and remain committed to supporting efforts that promote justice, dignity, and inclusion across our society.

Submitted by:

Muslim Women's Welfare of Australia (MWWA)



MUSLIM WOMEN'S WELFARE OF AUSTRALIA