

NOVEMBER 2024



ADDRESSING MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

AN ANIC INITIATIVE

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ADDRESSING THE GAPS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

The increasing levels of hatred and bias in the media, particularly towards Muslim communities, have highlighted significant gaps in our community's engagement with the broader media landscape. For years, there has been a **lack of proactive efforts** to correct or reshape the narrative surrounding Muslims in society.

This absence of action has allowed unchecked anti-Muslim sentiment to set dangerous precedents for what is considered acceptable discourse. As a result, **harmful stereotypes have thrived**, and Muslim voices have been consistently marginalised in public conversations. To address these gaps, it is essential that active engagement in media spaces begin, and ownership taken of the narrative that shapes public perceptions of our community.

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KEY CHALLENGES

INCREASED SCRUTINY AND NEGATIVE PORTRAYAL

Recent global events, including conflicts such as the war in Gaza, have intensified the scrutiny on Muslim communities. Negative portrayals in the media have become more prevalent, reinforcing harmful stereotypes and perpetuating fear within society. This focus often overlooks the lived experiences of Muslims and neglects crucial issues, leaving the community sidelined in discussions about social and political matters.

LACK OF REPRESENTATION AND MISINFORMATION

The absence of Muslim voices in media conversations results in a one-dimensional narrative, shaped by those who may not fully understand our community's values or experiences. This lack of accurate representation allows misinformation to spread unchecked, and Muslim concerns remain marginalised. As a result, it is essential to actively engage in media spaces to ensure that our perspectives are accurately represented.

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KEY CHALLENGES

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The rise of social media has both **amplified** and **exacerbated** Islamophobia and anti-Arab and Palestinian racism. While these platforms provide an opportunity for Muslims to share their voices, they also enable the **rapid spread of extremist** and **racist viewpoints** and **disinformation**.

Unchecked hate speech and the distortion of facts on social media platforms pose significant challenges to combating these negative narratives.

ISOLATION AND FEAR OF MISREPRESENTATION

The pervasive Islamophobia and ongoing bias in the media can lead to feelings of isolation within the Muslim community. Many individuals are hesitant to engage with the media or share their experiences due to the fear of misrepresentation or having their words twisted to reinforce negative stereotypes.

OUR RESPONSE

*In response to these challenges, particularly following the recent escalation of violence in Gaza, ANIC has adopted a **more vocal** and **proactive** stance in the media landscape.*

Our commitment is to challenge and reshape the media narrative surrounding Muslims and Islam. By ensuring that our voices are heard, we seek to prevent the media from imposing its own interpretations of our community.

The ongoing indifference in Western media to the pain and suffering experienced by Muslims underscores how deeply entrenched Islamophobia is within society. We reject this and are dedicated to changing the way the media represents our community and issues.

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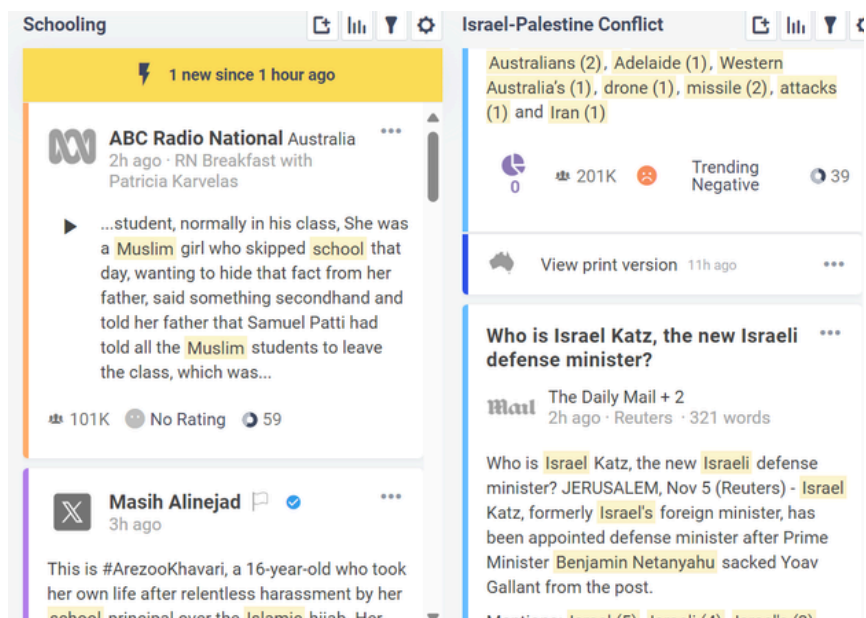
KEY INITIATIVES:

MEDIA MONITORING AND ACTION

ANIC has subscribed to a media monitoring platform called ‘**Stream**,’ which allows us to track key terms such as **"ANIC," "Muslims in Australia," "extremism,"** and **"Israel-Palestine"** across online media outlets. By monitoring these terms, we are able to identify instances of policy violations, misinformation, and negative portrayals, enabling us to challenge and amend or remove problematic content.

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED:

- Conflation of Islam, Muslims, and Arabs with terrorism, especially in the context of events like the Gaza conflict. The media often uses terms such as **"Palestinian terrorists"** or **"Muslim extremists"** interchangeably, which reinforces the stereotype of Muslims as inherently violent. We aim to reduce the use of these terms and challenge their uncritical application.



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KEY INITIATIVES:

MEDIA MONITORING AND ACTION

Despite challenges in reaching an agreement with privately owned media organisations, ANIC has made significant strides in encouraging more responsible language use. Since August, ANIC has submitted **six complaints** to outlets like Sky News, The Australian, and Australian Associated Press (AAP). As a result of our intervention, the AAP revised their use of imagery and language that linked pro-Palestinian protests with antisemitism.

3	Quadrant	Must Australia Submit	Article is Islamophobic and implies Islam is trying to control the west.	21.08.2024	Yes 16.09.	anything. The editor has replied and said they are a small organisation and will get back to us. Follow up next week.	ongoing
4	Quadrant	Ruffican Dick's Pilgrimage to Mecca	Article makes inaccurate statement on Islam and uses false narratives to justify their racist and Islamophobic POV	21.08.2024	Yes 16.09.	Have submitted to APC, unfortunatley they cannot do anything. The editor has replied and said they are a small organisation and will get back to us. Follow up next week.	ongoing
5	Sky News	Hamas cruelly taunts slain hostages' kin with haunting new video of captives before death, promises 'last messages	Article writes 'Palestinian Terrorists' when describing Hamas, assuming all Palestinians are a part of the group.	05.09.2024	Yes 16.09.	Have respinded back saying they have not violated anything. A letter is drafted to reply back, awaiting feedback from third party.	Unresolved Ended - Sky News is unwilling to cooperate and has defended its actions.
6	The Australia	"Islamist barbarism exposes failure of West to tackle evi	Vilifies Islam in the headline and makes an assumption that Islam allows barbarism.	07.09.2924	No respons	We have given 3 weeks and since no response, a complaint has been made to the APC.	Unresolved Ended - APC found no breach of conduct
7	AAP	'Unis oppose anti-Semitism inquiry despite safety fears'.	Article included a caption that talks about anti-semitism alongside an image of Palestinian solidarity. The two are not synonymous with one another	19.09.2024	19.09.2024	Editor is willing to work with us, we are in communication on how to best resolve the matter.	Resolved - AAP have changed their photos

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KEY INITIATIVES:

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

To address these issues at a structural level, ANIC has engaged with a range of stakeholders:

- **Government Engagement:** We have met with departments such as the **Australian Human Rights Commission** (AHRC) and **Anti-Discrimination NSW** to raise concerns about Islamophobia in the media and discuss potential applications of vilification laws. This includes exploring ways to address hate speech in the media and to protect Muslim communities through stronger legislative safeguards.
- **Networking with Muslim Journalists:** ANIC has organised a dinner with Muslim journalists in December to foster relationships with media professionals within the industry. This event will serve as an opportunity to pitch stories that humanise the Muslim community and offer accurate portrayals to the broader public.
- **Collaboration with Media Regulatory Bodies:** ANIC has reached out to influential organisations such as the **Australian Press Council** (APC) and the **Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance** (MEAA) to advocate for the implementation of our community's concerns regarding media representation. These collaborations aim to ensure that ethical media practices are upheld in a way that accurately represents our community.

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KEY INITIATIVES

MEDIA STRATEGY AND CAPACITY BUILDING

ANIC has contracted media strategists to enhance our media presence and outreach. Their efforts will include:

- **Media Training:** Providing media training to selected ANIC representatives to improve their ability to engage with the media and effectively communicate our community's perspectives.
- **Social Media Strengthening:** Increasing our presence on social media platforms to counter misinformation and provide accurate, timely information on issues impacting the Muslim community.
- **Collaboration with Journalists:** Working closely with journalists to ensure that stories about the Muslim community are accurate, respectful, and well-informed.

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FUTURE GOALS

Looking forward, ANIC's strategy includes the continued strengthening of relationships with media outlets and the expansion of our community outreach efforts. We are also committed to empowering individuals within the community to share their stories and experiences more widely.

Our long-term goals include the development of a media monitoring website akin to the **Centre for Media Monitoring** (CfMM) in the UK, which provides updates on successful complaints and a platform for reporting problematic media articles.

Additionally, we aim to produce a media toolkit tailored to the Australian context that provides clear guidelines for journalists and media organisations on how to report on Muslims and Islam responsibly. We hope to have this toolkit endorsed by both government bodies and media regulators.

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CONCLUSION

Through these efforts, ANIC is working to create a more inclusive, informed, and accurate representation of the Muslim community in the media. Our goal is to shift the narrative, challenge Islamophobic portrayals, and ensure that our voices are heard in both mainstream media and social media platforms. By continuing to advocate for fair representation and collaboration with key stakeholders, we can create a more just and respectful media landscape for Muslims in Australia.

Inshallah, through these initiatives, we hope to build a future where the media no longer vilifies our community, but instead presents us as the vibrant, diverse, and essential part of society that we truly are.



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