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The Honourable John Sackar AM KC
PRL Independent Review Secretariat



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Dear Hon. John Sackar,

Submission to the Review of Criminal Law Protections Against the Incitement of Hatred

Executive Summary

The Lebanese Muslim Association (LMA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Honourable John Sackar AM KC's review of criminal law protections against the incitement of hatred. Our community has experienced significant impacts from hate speech and incitement, particularly in the current social climate. While we acknowledge the recent introduction of section 93ZAA of the Crimes Act 1900, we submit that the current criminal law framework requires expansion to adequately protect all vulnerable groups, including Muslim communities who face hate speech based on religion, ethnicity, and cultural identity.

In 2022 alone, Islamophobia Register Australia recorded 247 verified incidents of anti-Muslim hate, with 84% targeting women, particularly those wearing hijab. One in five of these incidents occurred in schools, and 48% occurred in public spaces such as shopping centres, transport hubs, and streets. Online hate accounted for 35% of reported cases, highlighting the growing need for effective digital enforcement mechanisms. These incidents are not isolated but reflect broader patterns of hate that degrade social cohesion and undermine the safety and belonging of communities like ours.

This submission addresses the focus questions outlined in the Issues Paper and provides recommendations for strengthening protections while maintaining appropriate safeguards for freedom of expression and religion.

About the Lebanese Muslim Association

The Lebanese Muslim Association has served the Lebanese Muslim community in NSW for 60 years, representing thousands of families across metropolitan Sydney and regional areas. Our members include both established Australian families and recent arrivals, united by shared Lebanese heritage and Islamic faith. We provide religious services, educational programs, youth mentoring, family support, interfaith dialogue, and advocacy aimed at enhancing social cohesion and civic engagement.

The LMA is one of the largest and oldest Muslim organisations in Australia. Our long-standing presence has enabled us to witness and respond to evolving community needs, particularly in times of heightened public hostility or divisive political discourse. We regularly engage with local, state and federal governments, law enforcement agencies, faith institutions, and civil society to promote respectful dialogue and ensure that the voices of our community are heard. Over the years, we have provided frontline support during crises, including mediating in cases of hate-based harassment, supporting victims of racial and religious vilification, and delivering community-led education programs on countering extremism and promoting mutual respect.

1. Extent and Impact of Hatred Towards Vulnerable Groups

Nature of Hate Speech Against Our Community

The Lebanese Muslim community in New South Wales is subjected to multifaceted and intersectional forms of hate speech and incitement. These include:

- Religious-based hatred, such as the targeting of Islamic practices, beliefs, dress (particularly the hijab and niqab), halal dietary practices, and Ramadan observances. This hostility often manifests in public rhetoric questioning the compatibility of Islam with “Australian values,” a narrative that marginalizes observant Muslims.
- Ethnic and racial hatred, including vilification based on Lebanese heritage, Arabic language use, and Middle Eastern appearance. Racial profiling and stereotyping persist in both media portrayals and public discourse, reinforcing stigma.
- Cultural hatred, expressed through attacks on traditional family values, extended kinship structures, and community customs. Lebanese Muslim communities are often depicted as culturally incompatible or “backwards,” reinforcing exclusion.
- Intersectional targeting, particularly of women who wear the hijab or niqab, who face compounded discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, and ethnicity. These women regularly report verbal abuse, physical intimidation, and workplace discrimination.

Manifestations of Hatred

These forms of hatred manifest across various social and institutional contexts:

- Online Platforms: There has been a marked rise in Islamophobic content across social media, often amplified by coordinated campaigns. For instance, during heightened periods of geopolitical tension in the Middle East, social media platforms see spikes in anti-Muslim memes, conspiracy theories, and violent rhetoric. According to the Islamophobia Register Australia’s 2023 report, 82% of reported online incidents targeted visibly Muslim women, with 63% involving threats of violence.
- Public Spaces: Incidents of verbal abuse on public transport, in shopping centres, and other everyday settings are common. For example, multiple Muslim women reported being threatened at local parks and on public transport during periods of media focus on Muslim communities, such as during the COVID-19 lockdowns and following terror-related news coverage.
- Workplaces: Muslim employees frequently encounter discrimination ranging from exclusion and ridicule to open hostility. A 2022 Diversity Council Australia study found that 48% of Muslim workers surveyed had experienced or witnessed workplace discrimination within the previous year.
- Educational Institutions: Muslim schoolchildren face bullying, stereotyping, and alienation. In some cases, Muslim students have been discouraged from practicing their faith openly. Islamic schools have been targeted with threatening graffiti, online abuse, and even physical vandalism.
- Community and Religious Events: There have been attempts to disrupt religious gatherings, particularly during Friday prayers and Eid celebrations. In recent years, some mosques and Islamic centres have received threats or been vandalised with offensive imagery.

Impact on Community Wellbeing

The impacts of hate speech and incitement extend far beyond the immediate victims and have deep repercussions for community wellbeing:

- Psychological harm is widespread. Victims report increased levels of anxiety, fear, depression, and trauma. For young Muslims, internalising public hostility can lead to identity conflict, low self-worth, and feelings of alienation. Mental health professionals in Western Sydney have noted rising cases of trauma-related symptoms among Muslim youth stemming from hate incidents.
- Reduced participation in public life: Many community members withdraw from civic engagement, avoid public spaces, and hesitate to participate in politics or local community events for fear of harassment. Women who wear the hijab, in particular, frequently change their routines or travel routes to avoid potential abuse.
- Self-censorship in religious expression is increasing. Some community members refrain from wearing religious symbols, speaking Arabic in public, or expressing support for Muslim-related causes out of concern for safety and social exclusion.
- Intergenerational effects are emerging, with children internalising a sense of otherness and questioning their belonging. Teachers and parents report children as young as 10 expressing fears about their identity and safety.
- Community cohesion is eroding, both internally and externally. As hostility intensifies, trust in institutions and law enforcement diminishes. It also weakens interfaith cooperation and makes multicultural dialogue more difficult.

In short, the scale, frequency, and intensity of these experiences have created a climate where many in our community feel unsafe, unheard, and unprotected by current legal frameworks. These harms are cumulative and systemic, and require a strong legislative response.

2. Adequacy of Current Criminal Law Protections

The Lebanese Muslim Association acknowledges the introduction of section 93ZAA of the *Crimes Act 1900 (NSW)* as a step toward protecting communities from public acts that incite hatred. However, our lived experience and that of many culturally and religiously diverse communities indicate that the current criminal law framework remains inadequate in both scope and practical effect.

One of the primary limitations lies in the narrow scope of protected attributes. Section 93ZAA applies only to hatred incited on the grounds of race, while other common bases for vilification—such as religion and disability—are not covered. This is a significant gap, particularly for Muslim communities, who often experience incitement to hatred specifically in relation to their religious identity, rather than their race or ethnicity. While section 93Z's reference to "ethno-religious origin" offers some ambiguity-based coverage, this has created confusion about whether speech targeting Islamic beliefs, practices, or dress is clearly captured under the law. This ambiguity undermines the law's deterrent and symbolic effect, leaving many community members feeling unprotected and excluded.

The undefined nature of "hatred" also creates enforcement and interpretive challenges. Many forms of vilifying expression—including mockery, inflammatory media commentary, and dog-whistle rhetoric—may not meet a high legal threshold for "hatred" but still cause profound harm, particularly when repeated or disseminated widely. For example, while statements like

“ban the burqa” or “Muslim immigration is a threat to Australia” may not explicitly incite violence, they help normalize hostility and reduce social tolerance. Without clear legislative guidance or case law clarification, victims have little recourse, and prosecutors face high thresholds to pursue justice.

Additionally, the harm threshold in section 93ZAA(1)(d), which requires that a public act must make a person or group “fear harassment, intimidation or violence,” fails to capture the broader spectrum of emotional, psychological, and social harm inflicted by persistent vilification. In reality, hate speech often causes individuals to feel shame, isolation, and internalised distress long before it escalates to fear of physical danger. This legal threshold does not reflect the real-world impact of hate-based rhetoric or the lived experiences of communities targeted by such acts.

A major and growing challenge lies in the enforcement of online hate speech. While the legislation rightly includes electronic communication within the definition of “public act,” there are serious limitations in practice. Online hate speech is often anonymous, fast-moving, and platform-dependent. Harmful content—such as doctored videos of Muslims praying, memes associating Islam with terrorism, or calls for “de-Islamification”—can be widely circulated before authorities are even made aware. The Islamophobia Register has documented numerous online campaigns where hundreds of coordinated comments and messages target individuals, mosques, or events. Yet, in most cases, this activity escapes legal sanction because of difficulties in attribution, platform non-cooperation, or the high threshold of proof.

Moreover, the current framework lacks the ability to respond to cumulative or patterned incitement. Many incidents of incitement are subtle or ambiguous in isolation but, over time, form a clear and targeted campaign of hostility. This is especially common online, where algorithms promote divisive content and communities become echo chambers for hate. There is a pressing need for the law to acknowledge and address the aggregated harm of such repeated acts, particularly when they stem from ideologically motivated groups.

In summary, while section 93ZAA signals an important recognition of the need to address hate speech, its current formulation is too narrow, inflexible, and difficult to enforce. The law does not reflect the complexity or intensity of the threats faced by many vulnerable communities, including Muslim Australians. Without reforms that expand the attributes protected, clarify the definition of hatred, lower the harm threshold to reflect psychological and community-level impacts, and enable better online enforcement, the criminal law will continue to fall short of its protective and symbolic functions.

3. Balancing Rights and Freedoms

The Lebanese Muslim Association acknowledges the vital importance of protecting freedom of expression and freedom of religion within a democratic society. These rights are foundational to our pluralistic identity and must be safeguarded. However, they are not absolute and must be balanced against the equally important right of all individuals to live free from vilification, intimidation, and fear—particularly when these harms are inflicted on the basis of identity.

In our experience, the most effective legal frameworks are those that draw clear distinctions between legitimate public discourse and harmful incitement. We strongly support preserving the space for robust discussion, including critique of religion, cultural norms, or social policy.

Public discussion of contentious issues is a hallmark of democracy. However, laws must draw a firm line when commentary crosses into systematic vilification of people based on inherent characteristics, such as their faith or ethnicity. For example, criticisms of religious doctrine or

cultural practice may be protected speech, but referring to a group as “vermin” or “a disease” clearly crosses into language that dehumanizes and incites hatred.

We submit that laws should differentiate between:

- Legitimate criticism of religious or cultural beliefs, which must remain protected.
- Personal attacks or stereotypes targeting individuals or groups based on identity (such as “Muslims are violent” or “Lebanese are criminals”), which may be subject to scrutiny.
- Incitement to hatred, which involves speech calculated to provoke fear, hostility, or exclusion of an entire group and should attract criminal sanction when it poses a genuine risk of harm.

Importantly, the existing religious exemptions in section 93ZAA(2) are appropriate and should remain. These ensure that religious teachings or discussions conducted in good faith are not criminalized. However, the exemption must not be so broad as to enable preachers, influencers, or ideologues to disguise hate speech as theological debate. For example, claiming a group is “evil” or destined for divine punishment may not, in a religious context, be mere doctrine if it incites hatred or contributes to real-world harm.

With respect to political communication, we believe the current protections for freedom of political expression must not be misused to shield bigotry. Hate speech that purports to be “political” in nature but lacks genuine policy substance and instead dehumanizes vulnerable groups—such as “Islam is a cancer” or “Send the Muslims back”—serves no democratic purpose and risks undermining public confidence in free expression. Criminal prohibitions should be narrowly focused on:

- Speech that is devoid of policy content and is designed to inflame emotion and division.
- Statements using language that equates communities with threats, violence, or subhuman status.
- Expressions that create a real and tangible risk of harassment or violence against targeted groups.

Courts must be equipped with the tools to assess such speech in context. Factors such as the platform (e.g. mass media or fringe forum), the intended and likely audience, the vulnerability of the targeted group, and the speaker’s public influence or intent should be considered. For example, statements made by political candidates, media figures, or public officials carry greater weight and potential for harm than those of private individuals.

Finally, we must be careful not to permit bad faith exploitation of free speech principles by extremist groups. There have been instances where neo-Nazi, white supremacist, or anti-Islamic actors have cloaked hate speech in the language of satire, debate, or religious inquiry, while clearly aiming to incite division and fear. A properly calibrated legal framework must be capable of discerning and addressing this manipulation.

In conclusion, an effective legal balance is not one that weakens freedom of speech, but one that protects it for all Australians, including those whose voices are too often drowned out by fear and hatred. Communities must be able to speak, assemble, worship, and live with dignity—free from the threat of being demonized simply for who they are. A more precise and context-sensitive application of the law can preserve open debate while ensuring that incitement to hatred is addressed swiftly and justly.

4. Promoting Social Cohesion Through Legal Reform

The Lebanese Muslim Association strongly believes that criminal law reform—when appropriately targeted—can contribute meaningfully to social cohesion in New South Wales. While criminal sanctions alone cannot eliminate hate or prejudice, they play a critical role in setting societal norms, protecting vulnerable communities, and reinforcing the values of equality, dignity, and mutual respect.

Firstly, laws against the incitement of hatred serve an important symbolic function. They communicate the State's clear condemnation of vilification based on religion, ethnicity, and other protected attributes. In doing so, they validate the lived experiences of affected communities and provide reassurance that their place in society is not conditional. When a government enacts legal protections that say “you should not be hated for who you are,” it reinforces the inclusive vision of a multicultural democracy.

Secondly, such laws offer a deterrent effect. While not all perpetrators of hate speech are dissuaded by the threat of prosecution, many actors—particularly those with public platforms—will moderate their language when there are clear legal consequences for incitement. We have observed that some of the most egregious public statements targeting Muslims and Arabs in Australia occur in spaces where perpetrators feel insulated from accountability—such as social media or fringe political discourse. Expanding the scope of the law and ensuring its effective enforcement will shift the risk calculus for would-be inciters.

Third, criminal law offers a vital protective function for communities. Members of the Lebanese Muslim community—especially women wearing hijab, young people, and elders—have reported withdrawing from public life due to fear of abuse. This includes avoiding public transport, concealing religious identity, and disengaging from social or civic activity. When vulnerable groups are left unprotected from hate speech, it undermines their full participation in society. Effective legal safeguards help to restore confidence in public institutions and signal that all communities are entitled to safety and respect.

Fourth, criminal prohibitions against hate speech can have a wider educational impact. They provide clarity on what types of discourse cross the line from protected opinion to unlawful incitement. Well-drafted laws, supported by public education and judicial reasoning, can help shape public understanding of respectful dialogue and ethical expression. This is particularly important for younger generations navigating an increasingly polarised and online discourse environment.

To promote social cohesion through law, we recommend:

- Comprehensive attribute coverage: Section 93ZAA should be amended to include all attributes currently protected under section 93Z, including religion and disability. This ensures no community is left less protected simply because the source of vilification is not technically “race.”
- Graduated legislative responses: Different thresholds of harm should attract proportionate legal responses. Section 93Z should remain focused on incitement to violence, while section 93ZAA should cover incitement to hatred that may fall short of violence but still causes significant social and psychological harm. This layered approach preserves legal clarity while offering a fuller continuum of protection.
- Restorative justice options: For certain offences, particularly first-time or lower-scale incidents, non-custodial options such as community conferencing, educational programs, or formal apologies should be available. This allows the law to repair harm

and foster understanding without relying solely on punitive measures. Such approaches are especially useful where the offence stems from ignorance or misinformation rather than malice.

- Clear and accessible complaint pathways: Communities often face uncertainty about how to report hate speech, particularly when it occurs online. Reform should be accompanied by investment in culturally sensitive reporting platforms, multilingual outreach, and collaboration with community organisations.
- Victim support: Legal redress must be paired with robust support for victims, including counselling, legal assistance, and community safety measures. This is especially important for communities who have experienced trauma from repeated exposure to hate.

In short, criminal law should not be seen as a blunt instrument, but as one part of a comprehensive social strategy that fosters mutual respect and unity. By modernising our legal protections against incitement to hatred, NSW can strengthen its commitment to a cohesive, inclusive, and democratic society.

5. Potential Negative Consequences and Safeguards

The Lebanese Muslim Association recognises that reforms to criminal law involving hate speech and incitement must be carefully calibrated to avoid unintended consequences. While our community has called for stronger protections against hate, we are equally mindful of the need to safeguard fundamental freedoms and to ensure laws are applied fairly and consistently.

One concern raised in public discourse is the potential for a chilling effect on legitimate speech. If hate speech laws are too broad or vague, individuals may feel discouraged from expressing controversial opinions, engaging in political critique, or participating in religious debate. This is particularly important in multicultural and democratic societies, where difficult conversations about religion, race, identity, and social policy must be possible. The law must draw a clear line between incitement to hatred and robust, good-faith discourse.

Another concern is the risk of selective or uneven enforcement. Marginalised communities have historically been both the targets of hate speech and, at times, disproportionately subject to scrutiny under public order laws. There is a legitimate fear that enhanced criminal provisions could be used in ways that reinforce existing power imbalances or suppress dissent—especially for communities already mistrustful of law enforcement or judicial institutions.

To ensure reforms do not undermine the very principles they seek to protect, we propose a series of safeguards:

First, prosecutorial discretion must be retained, with a requirement that prosecutions under section 93ZAA be approved by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) or a senior police officer. This ensures that frivolous or politically motivated cases do not proceed and that there is consistent application of the law across jurisdictions.

Second, clear statutory guidance should be provided on key terms such as “hatred,” “incitement,” and “public act.” Courts and the public must be able to distinguish between protected expression and criminal conduct. This is especially critical given the growing influence of online speech, where satire, irony, and coded language can obscure intent. Definitions should be supported by examples, jurisprudence, and community-informed explanatory materials.

Third, cultural and religious competency training should be mandatory for law enforcement, prosecutors, and judicial officers handling incitement cases. Understanding the context in which hate speech occurs, including how different communities interpret and experience harm, is essential to fair and informed decision-making. For example, anti-Muslim slurs that invoke terrorism or question loyalty to Australia carry specific and cumulative harms, particularly when repeated over time or amplified in public discourse.

Fourth, regular review mechanisms should be built into any reform. A parliamentary or independent oversight body should evaluate the impact of section 93ZAA on free speech, social cohesion, and community confidence in the law. This review should include disaggregated data collection on prosecutions, complaints, and outcomes, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Fifth, robust public education and outreach are critical. The introduction or amendment of hate speech laws must be accompanied by public information campaigns to explain the law's purpose, scope, and limits. This not only supports compliance but also builds trust in the fairness of the legal system.

Finally, strong defences must be preserved for genuine political communication, academic debate, artistic expression, and religious teaching. Section 93ZAA(2) currently provides for a religious exemption, and we support retaining this clause, provided it is not used as a shield for hate disguised as doctrine. Courts must be empowered to examine whether a statement was made in good faith, for genuine religious purposes, and without intent to incite hatred.

In summary, laws that prohibit incitement to hatred can coexist with robust protections for freedom of speech, religion, and association—provided they are clearly drafted, properly applied, and subject to oversight. The Lebanese Muslim Association supports a legal framework that targets conduct, not belief; harm, not dissent. We believe that with the right safeguards in place, reforms to section 93ZAA can protect vulnerable communities while upholding the values of a free and democratic NSW.

6. Other Measures to Promote Social Cohesion

While criminal law reform is necessary to protect communities from hate and incitement, the Lebanese Muslim Association strongly emphasises that legislation alone is insufficient to address the root causes of division and hostility. A holistic approach to social cohesion must include proactive, non-legislative measures that promote understanding, empathy, and solidarity across diverse communities.

Education remains the most effective long-term strategy for reducing prejudice and fostering inclusion. We recommend comprehensive anti-racism and intercultural understanding programs be embedded in school curricula across NSW, with a focus on lived experiences of marginalised communities. Educational content should explore Australia's multicultural history, the contributions of various faith and ethnic groups, and the harms caused by racism and vilification. This must go beyond tokenistic recognition to include the voices of Muslim, Indigenous, and culturally diverse Australians.

For example, organisations like the Islamophobia Register Australia and the Community Relations Commission have produced valuable materials for schools and youth programs. Such resources should be integrated into formal education, along with training for teachers on managing incidents of bias and fostering respectful dialogue in the classroom.

Community dialogue initiatives must also be supported and expanded. Interfaith and intercultural forums allow people from different backgrounds to build trust, challenge stereotypes, and find common ground. The LMA has participated in such programs for years, including open mosque days, interfaith Iftar dinners, and panel discussions on religion and

democracy. Government funding and logistical support for these initiatives are crucial to their continuation and broader impact.

Victim support services must be adequately funded, culturally competent, and easy to access. Victims of hate speech often suffer in silence due to fear, shame, or lack of knowledge about their rights. Support services should offer multilingual counselling, legal assistance, and referral pathways. They should also engage in outreach to ensure communities are aware of available protections and remedies.

Counter-narrative programs are another vital tool. These programs empower community leaders, young people, and creatives to challenge extremist messaging—whether racial, religious, or political—and replace it with stories of inclusion and resilience. The LMA has seen success in youth-led initiatives that use video, social media, and theatre to promote empathy and highlight the shared values of Australian society.

Digital literacy education is increasingly essential. In an age of social media algorithms and misinformation, communities must be equipped to recognise and respond to online hate. This includes understanding how disinformation spreads, how to report harmful content, and how to protect oneself and others in digital spaces. Collaborations with tech companies, civil society, and media organisations can support the delivery of these programs.

Within the criminal law framework itself, additional reform measures can further promote cohesion:

- Hate crime sentencing provisions under section 21A(2)(h) of the *Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999* should be more rigorously applied and clearly understood by the judiciary. Courts should treat bias motivation as a serious aggravating factor that justifies higher penalties where appropriate.
- The establishment of specialised procedures or lists for hate crime cases, akin to domestic violence lists, could improve outcomes. These would ensure consistent, culturally informed handling of cases and appropriate support for victims throughout the legal process.
- Improved data collection and reporting is also essential. NSW Police and judicial agencies should record hate-related incidents using standardised categories, including religion, ethnicity, and disability. This would provide an evidence base for policymaking and allow communities to monitor enforcement trends and advocate effectively.

In summary, building a cohesive and inclusive NSW requires a whole-of-society effort. Legislation must be complemented by programs that educate, empower, and unite. The LMA stands ready to partner with government, educators, and civil society in advancing this mission, grounded in the shared belief that every person in NSW should feel safe, respected, and heard.

Final Recommendations

In light of the issues outlined in this submission and the lived experiences of the Lebanese Muslim community, the LMA makes the following key recommendations for criminal law reform and broader policy implementation to address incitement of hatred:

Legislative Recommendations:

- Expand section 93ZAA to explicitly include religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status, and disability among the protected attributes. Currently, communities

facing hate based on these attributes are afforded inadequate protection, despite consistent evidence of serious harm. This legislative gap undermines the law's integrity and leaves significant portions of society vulnerable.

- Clarify definitions of “hatred” and “public act” to provide clear legal standards while maintaining flexibility for courts to interpret contextually. Definitions should acknowledge that harm can result not only from explicit threats of violence but also from dehumanising, vilifying, or inciting content that promotes hostility, fear, or exclusion.
- Strengthen online hate provisions by requiring digital platforms to remove hate-inciting content promptly, establishing faster take-down mechanisms, and enhancing cross-jurisdictional cooperation with platform providers. The rise of digital platforms as primary vehicles for incitement demands legal reform that keeps pace with technological realities.
- Preserve key safeguards, such as prosecutorial discretion and religious exemptions, while ensuring they are not misused to avoid accountability for hate speech. Religious teachings must never be criminalised, but neither should religious pretexts be used to incite hatred or division.

Implementation Recommendations:

- Cultural competency training for police, prosecutors, and judicial officers should be mandated and regularly updated to ensure they understand the cultural and religious contexts in which hate crimes occur. Bias, even when unconscious, can hinder justice and reinforce mistrust in legal institutions.
- Ongoing community engagement mechanisms should be established, enabling government agencies to consult directly with affected communities in shaping enforcement priorities and assessing the law's impacts. The LMA believes that marginalised voices must not only be heard during consultation periods, but embedded in the implementation process.
- Systematic monitoring and regular review should be introduced to assess how well the expanded laws are functioning. This includes collecting disaggregated data on prosecutions, trends in incitement, and victim impacts, which can guide evidence-based refinements over time.
- Public education campaigns should be launched to communicate the scope and purpose of the revised laws. This is essential to counter disinformation, reduce fear of speaking up, and empower communities to seek protection when targeted by hate.

Conclusion

The Lebanese Muslim Association urges the Honourable Reviewer to recommend comprehensive and inclusive criminal law protections against incitement to hatred. We believe that the expansion of section 93ZAA to include religion and other currently unprotected attributes is both necessary and overdue. Our community's experience—of being targeted not just for our race or ethnicity, but for our faith, language, culture, and visibility—reflects the real and multifaceted nature of hate in NSW today.

Hate speech is not just a matter of words—it damages lives, silences voices, and corrodes the very fabric of a democratic and pluralistic society. It pushes communities to the margins

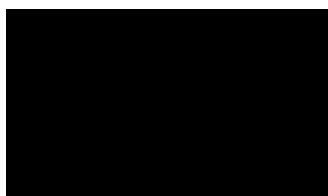
and discourages full participation in public life. It seeds division, fear, and mistrust that can linger for generations.

By enacting clear, fair, and enforceable laws that protect all vulnerable groups, NSW can demonstrate its commitment to genuine multiculturalism and equal dignity for all its residents. Such reforms will not silence legitimate debate, but will safeguard against the exploitation of free speech to attack the humanity of others.

The LMA stands ready to partner with the NSW Government, law enforcement, civil society, and fellow community organisations in promoting a future where incitement has no place, and every person—regardless of background—can live free from fear and full of belonging.

We thank the Reviewer for this opportunity to contribute to such an important and timely review and trust that these recommendations will help deliver lasting, meaningful protections for all.

Yours sincerely



Hafez Alameddine
President
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