Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights

Equality without exception

Women's Safety Demands Accountability

22 October, 2026

As Muslim women, community leaders and organisations committed to advancing women's rights and safety, we are deeply concerned by recent media coverage and political commentary about comments made by a Melbourne Imam in 2003. These comments were and remain unacceptable and fundamentally incompatible with the principles of women's equality, freedom and safety. Islam does not condone or endorse violence against women, and views that undermine women's rights and place limits on their freedom cannot be excused or treated as a matter of interpretation. Community leaders have a responsibility to unequivocally uphold women's equality and challenge attitudes that contribute to violence against women.

Additionally, the timing and framing of this coverage raises serious questions about whether the focus is genuinely on women's safety, or whether the selective resurfacing of these comments is intended to stoke fear, division, and perpetuate racist narratives about Muslim communities. Political and media commentary that exploits these issues risks weaponising women's safety to reinforce existing prejudices rather than advancing meaningful change.

Family violence is not confined to any one community, it is a systemic, structural and social failure that affects us all. Women from all communities, professions and cultures have a right to safety and to live free from violence. The horrific attack on Federal MP Helen Haines and the murder of Jayda Allen Bonner highlight the pervasive nature of violence against women and the need to recognise that community attitudes, political rhetoric and media narratives can shape the conditions in which violence against women is normalised and perpetuated.

Proactive steps to promote equality and community accountability in preventing violence against women must be the starting point, and the standard to which we hold all leaders in community, society, media and government. Genuine prevention must go beyond selective public outrage, scrutiny and media shaming. It requires sustained investment and resourcing, especially for women-led organisations with the expertise, community trust and experience to advance women's rights and safety. Politicising such a critical safety issue is reckless and undermines women's and community safety.

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Inaz Janif
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