

Active

bystander toolkit

What can you do if you witness Islamophobia?

It is everyone's responsibility to stand up to racism. Staying silent when you witness Islamophobia means that racism goes unchallenged and unchanged. One way to help is to be an active bystander.

There are many ways to stand up to Islamophobia. Your response will depend on what has happened, how safe you feel and where you are when it occurs.

As an active bystander, the most important things to keep in mind are offering support to the people impacted and making sure you feel safe.

What is an active bystander?

A bystander is someone who witnesses verbal abuse, discrimination, bullying, violence, harassment or any other form of Islamophobia or racism but is not directly involved in it¹.

An **active bystander** is someone who steps in and takes action. Active bystanders play an important role in addressing Islamophobia and all other forms of discrimination, hate, bias and racism.

How can I be an active bystander?

1 IDENTIFY ISLAMOPHOBIA



Understanding what Islamophobia is and the different forms it can take can help you feel confident to call it out and provide support, if it is safe to do so.

Examples of Islamophobia include:

- insults, intimidation and threats targeted at Muslims
- mocking Islamic religious practices
- physical violence – which includes pulling a woman's hijab or other religious attire
- negative stereotypes, including in the media
- structural Islamophobia such as profiling by security based on how a person dresses or looks.

2 OFFER SUPPORT

One of the most important roles you can play is supporting the person who has experienced Islamophobia. This could include asking:

Are you ok?

Do you feel safe?

What can I do to help?

It could be useful to offer suggestions such as moving to a safer location together, offering to go over what you witnessed and/or offering to support them to report the incident.

3 INTERVENE



If you feel safe, you could intervene by:

- calmly calling the behaviour out. You could ask the perpetrator to stop, ask open-ended questions such as:

Why did you say that?

Or disagree with their statements and behaviour². This can be challenging so assess the situation, the perpetrator's behaviour and how comfortable and safe you feel calling it out.

- engaging other people to support you and/or the person who has experienced Islamophobia
- alerting police or security in the surrounding area
- if you're on public transport, alerting transport staff or drivers.



4 RECORD THE INCIDENT



If it is safe, record the incident on a phone or take pictures. Let the person who has experienced Islamophobia know that you have a recording or pictures and check if they would like a copy or help making a report.

If you do not feel safe recording the incident, you could note key details including:

- the date and time
- location (if on public transport, include the bus or train carriage number)
- perpetrator's appearance; and
- what they did or said.

If other witnesses are present, you could ask them to provide their contact details – these could be useful to an investigation.



5 REPORT THE INCIDENT

000 For emergencies

Call **Triple Zero (000)**

📞 Not an emergency

If it is not an emergency but you need Victoria Police, you can call the Police Assistance Line on **131 444**

👥 Need an interpreter

Call the **Translating and Interpreting Service National hotline 131 450**

Other reporting options

You can also report the incident to:

📍 **Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC)**
<humanrights.vic.gov.au>

📍 **Islamophobia Register Australia**
<islamophobia.com.au>

📍 **Islamophobia Support Service**
<icv.org.au/islamophobia-support>

📍 **Action Against Islamophobia**
<actionagainstislamophobia.org.au>

References

- 1 Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, Guide: Bystanders of Racism in the workplace. Accessed here: www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/resources/workplace-anti-racism-resources/
- 2 Australian Human Rights Commission, Guide to Bystander Intervention. Accessed here: humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-11/ahrc_sr_2021_6_bystander_intervention_a4_r3.pdf

What can I do if I see Islamophobia online?

Online spaces, such as social media, are common places where Islamophobia occurs. There are a range of actions you can take to tackle Islamophobia online. These include:



Using the 'report' function available on most social media platforms to report the Islamophobic incident



Reporting it to a community organisation such as Islamophobia Support Service, Islamophobia Register Australia or Action Against Islamophobia, including screenshots of the incident



Reporting online abuse to the **eSafety Commissioner** <esafety.gov.au>

Sharing your experience helps to track rates of Islamophobia in Victoria.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pay our respect to them, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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