



مجلس الأمة الفدرالى الأسترالى

Australian National Imams Council (ANIC)

PRESS STATEMENT.

Friday, 24 June 2011

Re: *Niqab**

In Australia, we know what it means to give people a fair go. We pride ourselves on strong family values, ensuring that courtesy and civility are alive and practiced. Our rich traditions of cultures and religious practices provide the greatest opportunity in the world to apply those values we cherish most. Within our land Australia, Muslims like the followers of other religions enjoy the choice to practice their faith.

In Muslim history, there has never been an absence of the *Niqab**. Islam provides the freedom to Muslim woman to choose to wear the *Niqab**. Whether she is a mother, daughter, sister, wife or a member of the workforce, she has the choice. Covering the face is not the act of servitude.

To put this issue up for debate in multicultural Australia ignites a dilemma which is unnecessary as it involves one group of people telling another what to wear. This is not only hurtful and controlling, it is also denial of basic human rights. Those who engage in such a discussion must be responsible and accountable for their comments and the associated vilification, as hysteria mounts when one section of society is targeted for scrutiny and harassment.

Greater education and awareness is required. A woman who chooses to wear *Niqab** and enters a courthouse, airport terminal, or any official premises for example, should have the right to have an officer of the same gender perform any necessary security checks upon her. In a situation where there is no officer of the same gender to perform security and identification checks then the *Shariah* (Islamic Law) allows a Muslim woman to remove her face veil as needed in order to have her identity verified. For instance, if an officer has to verify the identity of a woman who wears the *Niqab** whilst she is travelling in the street and there is no female officer(s) present then she may remove the face covering for the purpose and duration of identification. However, fixed points where identity checks are required, such as airports and so on, there should be female officers employed to perform the necessary checks.

When it comes to giving evidence in a court proceeding, a woman may remove her face covering and her face may be observable by the judge and jury regardless of their gender for the duration of her evidence in the witness box. When it's completed she should be entitled to make the choice to cover her face.

In the eyes of the world Australia is renowned for its civil liberties, personal freedom and tolerance, the place where everyone gets a fair go. Let's keep it that way.

Sheikh Mohamadu Saleem
(Secretary / PRO)

Contact Person: Sheikh Mohamadu Saleem (Public Relations officer – 0413 487367)

Approved by: Sheikh Fehmi Naji Imam (Grand Mufti of Australia) Sheikh Abdel Aziem Afifi. (President – ANIC)

*Is a veil for the face that leaves the area around the eyes clear.