

My name is James/Yaqub Phillips and I am submitting this statement to help the QLD parliament understand some of the experiences of being a part of the Muslim community in QLD and the role of racial vilification laws.

I grew up in Sunnybank Hills on the southside of Brisbane and went to local schools with a large proportion of my friends being of ethnic minority background (Chinese, Taiwanese, Korean, Indian, Pakistani, Persian). I am extremely proud of how multicultural our patch of Brisbane is and how everyone mixes and grows up together in harmony. I studied at Griffith University and during my time there, I reverted to Islam. This is when I started to notice the other side of the southside. The ethnic tension that is often there, the snide comments about being a terrorist when wearing openly Islamic clothing. I am lucky in that because I am white Australian background people generally don't make comments to me, but I have been in situations where shop assistants have called my friends who are Fijian-Indian background terrorists and you need to get out of this area. While the racial abuse happens, it is minimal compared to where I now live in the Burdekin, in North Queensland.

I was hesitant when I moved to NQ, and kept the fact that I was Muslim; secret. One experience I remember was, my colleagues saw a Sikh man in a turban; they then started on an anti-Muslim rant about how there is probably a bomb in his turban and he's "dirty". On the drive to and from the closest mosque, an hour away, there was a slogan spray painted on a concrete box on the side of the highway "█████ Islam" with a picture of a swastika. Another experience when a colleague moved up from Sydney who was Egyptian background with an accent; the jokes and comments about him being Osama bin Laden and probably going to drive into the police station. These jokes were not made about me because I was white but my colleagues felt comfortable enough to make them about my colleague because he's Arab.

These experiences are all in general society however the vilification of Muslims and Islam online is horrific. I've been told to "████████████████████", "go kill yourself" (these comments are tame compared to other comments). The worst thing about the online vilification is that it's made by (generally) men who have their full name, including pictures of their wife and kids which just shows how accepted the comments are online and how they know that there won't be any consequences. I've reported comments to Facebook where a man said, "give me a gun and I'll sort the Muslims out"...well Facebook said it didn't go against their community standards. Surely, encouraging violence against a minority group should be illegal and not encouraged by online social media companies. In certain areas of Australia, there is an acceptance that islamophobia and bigotry is a valid political opinion and that "you can't stop them, that's their opinion". I, and many people in the QLD community think that we can and should stop those people from expressing their opinion especially if it is vilifying or encouraging violence against a group of people. It harms the vibrant multicultural society that many of us have worked hard for, and people of ethnic minority background should be able to move anywhere in QLD whether it is Cloncurry, the Burdekin, St George or Brisbane; all residents of QLD are welcome.

Thankyou for allowing ordinary QLD residents to express their experiences, and work with the parliament.

James/Yaqub Phillips

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