



- Send to: [lasc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:lasc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

## My personal experience of vilification and hate crime

Within a year of moving to Australia from Canada to study medicine, I was physically assaulted by a group of teenagers while studying in a café in a public area of a shopping centre. The group of teens crowded around me on a booth style table, which blocked my exit routes. They made verbal remarks about my appearance (I am a baptized Sikh who wears a turban). They called me a terrorist, asked me if I had a bomb under my turban and yelled at me to leave the country. My wife was also present, and we both asked them to leave. The teens then threw a full can of energy drink at me, which bounced off of me and ended up hitting my laptop and breaking it. The teens then ran off, meanwhile we contacted security and later on reported the incident to the local police station. This incident resulted in myself having anxiety when in public places due to the fear of being assaulted again due to my appearance. I avoided busy places and was hypervigilant about my surroundings as a result of this incident. After the incident, the police reporting was a lengthy process which took several hours, and in the end we were told that even though the teens had been identified, they would not be charged due to their age. Several months later, we were invited to a victims conference where I would be able to read out a victims statement to the teens. This was very emotionally taxing for me to prepare. The day of the conference, we were told the teens were not able to attend and it would be cancelled, without getting any further information. We were advised to contact victims assist in an attempt to get compensation for my laptop which damaged, this also has not resulted in any outcome for us and the process has been lengthy and troublesome.

## My opinion on vilification and hate crime laws

*Do you think there should be stronger criminal laws about vilification and hate crime? If so, what?*

Absolutely! There needs to be more accountability for hate crimes. The public needs to know that it is not okay to verbally or physically assault, and as a result traumatize a person because of their faith or appearance. Since moving to Australia from Canada, I have seen a huge increase in inappropriate racial comments and intolerance for different faiths. Australia has a long way to go to make changes in making this a safe place for everyone, and this is just the first step and a very important one!

*How do you think laws should deal with online vilification and hate crimes?*

Considering what a huge part the internet and online mediums play in our society today, hate crimes online should be treated the same as in person. People need to be accountable and can't hide behind a keyboard.

*What do you think would help combat vilification and hate crimes?*

By making them punishable by law. People need to know that there will be consequences and should have fear about doing hate crimes. But now, it seems its all too easy to get away with it and so it creates a higher risk for others everytime an act like this goes unpunished. In my case, the hate crime was done by teenagers. There needs to be more education in schools about other cultures and religions in an attempt to normalize this, as I believe ignorance is the main reason for this. Also, media plays a huge role in sensationalizing racial profiling. They must also be held accountable for this.

*Do you think other people should be protected from vilification and hate crimes under the law? If so, on what grounds (e.g. because of disability, sex, age, etc)?*

There needs to be a separate law on racial hate crimes. Everything else can be categorised in other laws, but racial hate crimes need their own category, considering how engrained into our society it has become.