



## AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL IMAMS COUNCIL



2 February 2024

### Alleged Anti-Semitic Chant Which Has Now Been Debunked Has Caused Immense Damage to Social Cohesion

The NSW Police has confirmed that it found "**no evidence**" to support an alleged anti-Semitic chant said to have been used by pro-Palestinian protesters on the steps of the Sydney Opera House last October. The video was first posted online by the Australian Jewish Association (AJA) with the misleading and now disproven subtitles attributed to the chant.

NSW Police established Strike Force Mealing to investigate the protest at the Sydney Opera House on October 9. It has now concluded with "**overwhelming certainty**" that the phrase alleged was **not** said. The Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) welcomes the findings of the investigation of NSW Police.

Sadly, the slanderous video and wrongful attribution of words has caused significant damage and distress to Arab and Muslim communities in Australia. This is particularly the case in NSW where the NSW Premier, Chris Minns, acted in a rushed and ill-considered manner to amend criminal laws to make easier the prosecution process and invoke special powers to disrupt repeated demonstrations by pro-Palestinian groups.

The video, and the subsequent actions by the NSW Government, have detrimentally affected social cohesion in NSW. They have ruptured relationships between communities and undermined trust and confidence in the NSW Government.

Regrettably, the video was also shared globally and has tarnished Muslim and Arab communities in NSW and the legitimate cause and concerns of the people protesting to bring attention to the unfolding catastrophe, injustice and genocidal violence in Gaza.

ANIC is deeply troubled about the manner in which the NSW Government reacted to the video. The approach of the NSW Government reveals a partiality and willingness to take significant steps on the basis of mere allegations (which, in the present case, have been **debunked**). Such an approach has also belittled and disregarded the grief of the community about the confronting numbers of Palestinians killed, injured and displaced every day at the hands of the Israeli Defence Forces.

In contrast to the swift responses of the NSW Premier to the allegations of anti-Semitic chants, there has been little to no response when incidents of concern have occurred, as a matter of fact, involving people who have raised their voice for the cause of Palestinians.



For instance, there has been minimal reaction from the NSW Premier when a fake bomb was placed on the car of a Palestinian supporter in Botany last month.

ANIC has expressed many times over the past few months its concerns and disappointment about the NSW Premier and his Government's approach, in particular their partial response and lack of support for the Muslim and Arab communities. Those communities have felt targeted and alienated.

In a recent letter sent by the President of ANIC to the Premier of NSW, Imam Shadi Alsuleiman said *"Regrettably, there appears to be little sympathy and support from you as Premier of NSW for the above position. Instead, there appears to be an urgency in acting only at the request of one community. This perceived lack of balance has added to our community's grief, distress, and disappointment."*

As a consequence, *"the community feels marginalised and targeted by the approach and decisions of your Government. Such approach is hardly conducive to inclusiveness and social cohesion. To the contrary, it has been polarising."*

ANIC commends the NSW Police for its investigation and courage in stating the truth of the matter.

ANIC calls upon the NSW Premier and his Government to take a robust approach to identifying the perpetrators of the video and slanderous subtitles. Given the detrimental impact the video has had on social cohesion, it is imperative that steps be taken to prosecute those who disseminated the video and used it as a basis to foment and pursue false allegations.

It is also incumbent on the NSW Government to take steps to address the harm caused to social cohesion in NSW and manifest, in a demonstrative manner, support and empathy for the distress and grief being experienced by the Muslim and Arab communities.

**For any media inquiries, please contact ANIC's Spokesperson, Bilal Rauf, on 1300 765 940 or [spokesperson@anic.org.au](mailto:spokesperson@anic.org.au)**