

**April 8, 2009**

**Media Statement**

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## Vilification laws needed to tackle racists

The Equal Opportunity Commission has again called on State Parliament to urgently pass racial vilification laws following a racist graffiti attack on a Rockingham mosque on the weekend.

Acting Commissioner Allan Macdonald joined the State Government and Ethnic Communities Councils in condemning the attack and said once racial vilification laws are in place anyone subjected to racially offensive behaviour will be able to lodge a complaint with the Equal Opportunity Commission.

Mr Macdonald said he hoped Parliament would urgently amend Part III of the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*, which deals with discrimination on the ground of race. The Bill inserts a new division into part III entitled 'Racially Offensive Behaviour.'

"Once the Bill is passed, people will be able to make a complaint of racially offensive behaviour with the Commission and the matter can also be determined by the State Administrative Tribunal which can award compensation of up to \$40,000 per complaint," he said.

"Racially offensive behaviour is any public act that is reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person on the basis of their race.

"It will be unlawful for a person to do any act, otherwise in private that is reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person on the ground of race, or on the ground of a characteristic appertaining or imputed to persons of that race."

The Bill passed through the Legislative Assembly in March 2007 but only reached the second reading stage in the Legislative Council and will need to be passed again by the Assembly following the recent State election.

Mr Macdonald also supported Citizenship and Multicultural Interests Minister John Castrilli's push to increase the emphasis on the prosecution of acts of racial vilification and racially offensive behaviour.

"The Commission continues to receive reports of racially offensive behaviour which it is currently unable to investigate and this Bill would be a positive step towards protecting all members of Western Australia's diverse ethnic, cultural and racial community."

**FOR ADDITIONAL COMMENT: Acting Commissioner Allan MacDonald (08) 9216 3900**

Level 2, 141 St Georges Terrace, Western Australia 6000 - Tel: (08) 9216 3900 - Fax: (08) 9216 3960  
Email: [eoc@eoc.wa.gov.au](mailto:eoc@eoc.wa.gov.au) Website [www.eoc.wa.gov.au](http://www.eoc.wa.gov.au)

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