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MEDIA STATEMENT:

ANIC REJECTS ISIS CLAIMS AND VIOLENCE

The Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) wishes to reassure all Australians that they have nothing to fear from their true Muslim neighbours who want peace and security for everyone regardless of religion. The safety of Australia is a shared aspiration of all citizens.

ANIC would like to remind people that the phrase "Islamic State" refers to an era when Muslims were at their peak in civilisation during which everyone - Muslims, Christians and Jews - lived together harmoniously. The phrase therefore resonates with Muslims around the world. Sadly a group of criminals have misappropriated the terminology for their own political and violent goals. They have also usurped important Islamic symbols such as the creedal statement that "There is no god but God" and the Prophetic Seal "Muhammad is his Messenger." There is nothing Islamic about their murderous actions.

"Since the ISIS group was established we have been very clear about denouncing their lies and betrayal of our faith," said His Eminence, the Grand Mufti of Australia, Dr Ibrahim Abu Mohammad.

While Muslims have suffered disproportionate violence in the Middle East over the last few decades, non-Muslims sadly have now come under attack in Iraq and Syria. "These criminals are committing crimes against humanity and sins against God. Forced eviction, threats of execution and burning of places of worship including Churches have no place in any faith," said the Grand Mufti.

ANIC warns all Muslim Australians not to trust the internet and social media as some material may have dangerous influences on vulnerable minds. Instead Muslims must get proper religious advice from knowledgeable, respected and qualified Imams. ANIC believes that wrong behaviour usually stems from an incorrect understanding. It is therefore imperative in countering extremism that the correct principles of Islam are taught. Imams around Australia have been working tirelessly to educate their respective communities.

ANIC calls on politicians and the media to refrain from using the term "Islamic" when referring to IS or ISIS since it only serves to give credence to their illegitimate claims of religious authority. Similarly, terms such as Islamist, jihadi and jihadist must also be avoided.

ANIC wishes to reiterate its opposition to the current military involvement in the Middle East. There is a clear link between foreign wars and radicalisation back home. The Australian government must reconsider its support for the military offensive in Iraq. The obvious lessons from previous misadventures in Iraq and Afghanistan have not been learnt. The people of this region must be allowed to sort out their problems without Western military interference.

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