

## **ASVET PD Workshop: Islamophobia Breakout sessions summary**

There were four breakout sessions to discuss case studies depicting examples of Islamophobia. Each room had a specific case-study to reflect on. Please find the summary of the discussions below:

### ***Room 1 (Case study 1)***

***Iman witnessed a video promoting fear posted on a social media platform. The video, posted by a community member, was aimed at the Muslim community within her local area. She felt anxious and scared about going out in public with her family and worried that they may be targeted or harmed. She stopped taking her children to school and limited going outdoors, including shopping for home.***

#### **Discussion outcomes:**

- Explore what happened – what the site was, understanding how she was exposed to the site,
- Inquire if previous experiences were fuelling her concerns,
- Offer support relevant to how she is being affected:  
Refer her to counselling (e.g. campus counselling or Islamic Council of Victoria)  
Find community support services and link her to relevant services.
- Follow up to see how she has managed.
- Address the issue of how to get the children back to school:  
Counsellor
- Communicate with the teacher or the principal at school
- Possibility of and avenues to making a complaint

### ***Room 2 (Case-study 2)***

***Leila is a student at TAFE. In one of the classes, Islamophobic incidents were presented in a PowerPoint slide which was of the learning resources. The slides contained inappropriate and misrepresenting details that portrayed Muslims as radicals and extremists. Leila raised her concerns about the inappropriate content to the lecturer and reported the matter to the relevant AFE department, including the course coordinator. Unfortunately, Leila felt unsupported as she was told the resources were a part of the course content and therefore resulted in no resolution of the issue. Leila felt distressed, isolated, fearful and did not want to return to her course at TAFE.***

### **Discussion Outcomes:**

- Remove and replace resources that are causing distress to students
- Ensure current/new resources are validated and appropriate replacement learning materials to avoid future distress.
- Even if there were no support from upper management, the teacher should still have removed the offensive content
- Investigate whether the learning material has been used in other classes and remove it from the syllabus
- During enrolment, students have access to policy and procedural resources if they encounter issues or want to raise any matter within TAFE. However, there may be some limitations for students with low level English skills or some students may not thoroughly read all information sent with their enrolment package,
- Students should be supported to ensure they understand policy/procedures during orientation and directed to where the information on grievance procedures can be obtained if needed.
- Provide additional support for students with English as an Additional language to ensure they understand their rights and responsibilities when enrolled in a class,
- Educate students on rights and also train the staff to adhere to Human Rights charter
- Emphasize the importance of the organisations Occupation, Health and Safety (OHS) policy address any unacceptable behaviour (including bullying, harassment, discrimination )
- Inform students about available support services (e.g. student support officer or social worker at TAFE) and where to find them.
- To include the affected student in the process of the investigation to build confidence to assist in re-writing resources, if they are comfortable

### **Room 3 (Case-study 3)**

*Ahmed experienced Islamophobic bullying at his workplace from the supervisor, which included religious discrimination and vilification. This occurred in front of other co-workers on several occasions. Ahmed was not confident to report the bullying to upper management as he felt sad, disappointed, shocked and was not sure what to do. Ahmed's work performance was impacted and unable to focus on workload and as a result, he had to take leave due to stress.*

### **Discussion outcomes:**

- Invite everyone to sign the code of conduct to ensure that they understand their role
- At the start of work placement, some training organisations mentioned that they always keep in touch with their students to know how they are travelling along in the new workplace environment
- Approach the work placement supervisors and inform them that the behaviour is not acceptable
- If there is not an acceptable outcome after talking to the supervisors (e.g. change of staff or procedures), remove the student from the work placement and find him another one,
- Encourage the students going on placement to speak up and build trust between them and the TAFEs
- Raise awareness among students about different cultural backgrounds in a workplace and invite them to be exposed diverse groups

- Grievance policy should be developed in all institutions to help students in practical placement as well as the training organisations. All practitioners should read it and turned into practice

#### **Room 4 (Case Study 4)**

*Omar experienced Islamophobic bullying at TAFE from another student during class, which included comments directed at him based on his religious background. This occurred in front of his peers during class discussion; those who witnessed the bullying comforted Omar as he was feeling humiliated, confused and upset. Omar was not confident to speak up to the teacher during class and was rather upset at home. He then informed his parents of what had happened as he did not want to return to class. Omar's parents were very concerned for his wellbeing.*

#### **Discussion outcomes:**

- As the person directly affected by the abuse, Omar needs to be given support and reassurance by the teacher and the college, and advised of various options for assistance that are available, whether in the college or through other agencies (e.g. Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission , Islamic Council of Victoria).
- If the teacher heard the comments, he should have made it clear to everyone in the class that such comments are not consistent with the values of the College, and are not tolerated or supported in any way. It is the duty of the College and the teacher to ensure a safe environment for all.
- There should be a sensitive discussion between the teacher (or other appropriate person in the College) and the person who made the offensive comments - to check whether there might have been some misunderstanding, and to reinforce the importance of respect.
- The supportive behaviour of Omar's friends and peers should be acknowledged and appreciated by the College.
- As indicated above, schools and colleges need to have policies and procedures in place, and teachers need to be aware of their duties for managing any such incidents. These must be fully communicated to students, parents and the wider community, in multiple languages as appropriate, to ensure there is widespread awareness of the College's stance, of the people / positions to be contacted if there is an incident, and the availability of services in the College or elsewhere in the community.
- Create an environment where bullying is not tolerated, and where bullying incidents (including comments that contain racial or religious vilification or discrimination) are dealt with satisfactorily and sensitively. Clearly, this should be integral to teacher training.

### ***Suggestion and Recommendations from breakout Participants:***

#### ***Case-study 1:***

- The I.C.V. should be better publicised and promoted community, health and welfare services. Their website should be linked to various organisations (e.g.: ASRC) that provide support.

#### ***Case-study 2:***

- TAFEs and other training organisations should work with multicultural communities to create relevant resources in order to prevent discrimination
- Run regular education awareness training sessions against islamophobia and other forms of discrimination for practitioners and students in schools
- Give an opportunity for the education department to step up and actively engage with service providers to provide relevant resources.

#### ***Case-study 3:***

- Create and promote a safe environment for students on work placements and other staff  
(e.g. display posters against bullying and harassment)
- Train the staff who have agreement to provide work placement about student wellbeing at work

#### ***Case-study 4:***

- Parents need to be advised of the College's policies and systems, of services available within the College, and relevant agencies in the wider community that may be able to assist. This information should be provided in advance and not just when there is a particular incident. When conveying messages to parents, the College should take into account differences in language and cultural backgrounds.