

# Media Release

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**A** 71-75 Wangee Rd,  
Lakemba NSW 2195  
**P** (02) 9750 6833  
**E** info@lma.org.au  
**W** lma.org.au

## Tanning in Peace, Grieving in Turmoil

The Lebanese Muslim Association has sought urgent meetings with health, police officials and executives of Rookwood Cemetery to ensure that we do not see the reoccurring of the incidents that took place while Muslim families were burying their loved ones.

People who are grieving the deaths of their relatives should not be placed in the position they were placed into yesterday. It is a complete disgrace that just last weekend, the police did not arrest a single person at Bondi who were clearly in breach of public health orders while they arrested four people at Rookwood cemetery for daring to observe the rites of a loved one.

The complete cultural and religious ignorance of local police officers reinforces the division that have plagued minorities in Southwest and Western Sydney. These mourners were not indoors, they were outdoors in an area that more than double the size of Bondi beach, how is it that now “being outdoors is the safest place to be at the present” was not applied?

We cannot continue to be treated like everything we do is suspicious or a breach of public health order or a crime. Our politicians must take an active role in countering these behaviours, and in not feeding a narrative of division and in ensuring that a fair go is given to everyone.

Samier Dandan, the President of the LMA stated “Our community members were not sunbaking without masks on the sand, they were observing social distancing and wearing masks while burying their loved ones. If our health minister stated that being outdoors is the best place to be for beachgoers, then why not outdoor funeral attendees?”

Our communities have taken up the responsibility to get vaccinated and we are at over 80% first dose rates and we are yet to see the easing of restrictions. We have yet to see a sense of goodwill created to showcase care for the wellbeing and appreciation to a community that has been continually blamed for an outbreak it did not start.

We urge the Government to lift the limitation on funeral numbers in outdoor areas to allow people to bury their loved ones without risk of humiliation or arrest. Additionally, we call for the removal of the 5km zone or at the very least, increase the perimeter to 10km in the LGAs of concern. We urge the Government to give consideration for outdoor and indoor worship for religious communities so that we can start to feel a sense of community and support those most severely impacted by the harshest lockdown restrictions.

For media enquiries, please contact 0415 282 855.

*Our Community, Our Future*