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# Campaign to fight bigotry and stake political claims

## Stand up, Muslims urged

**John Masanauskas**

VICTORIAN Muslims have been urged to stage protests and to contact their local mosque if they are attacked by bigots.

They also have been encouraged to identify as Muslims in the coming Census so the data can help secure the community's political rights.

The advice comes from the Victorian Muslim Legal Network, which was co-founded by Islamic Council of Victoria president Hyder Gulam.

The *Herald Sun* revealed this week that Mr Gulam's submission to a federal inquiry said that many Muslims congregated in suburbs like Broadmeadows because they feared racism.

According to its website, the Muslim legal network aims to protect the civil liberties and human rights of Muslims and promote better

understanding of Islam in the wider community.

It gives advice on how to react to anti-Muslim hate and bigotry, such as reporting incidents to police and insisting they be treated as religious or racial vilification and hatred.

"Consider issuing a statement from community leaders, holding a news conference, organising a protest ... or starting a letter-writing campaign," the website says.

"Successful results will empower other Muslims to stand up for justice."

The network also says many Muslims feel their numbers are significantly under-represented in the Census and it urges Muslims to declare their religion so the Federal Government can plan services and distribute resources.

"This information is vital for us to demand our rights in this country, which also includes political rights as a community," it says.

In the 2006 Census 2.2 per cent of Victorians identified as Muslims.

The next Census will be conducted in August.

Dozens of mosques and Muslim schools have sprung up in Melbourne in recent decades amid rising immigration from Islamic countries.

The city has more than 30 mosques and seven Islamic schools.

The last school opened was Al Siraat primary in Epping two years ago.

An Iraqi group has applied to Whittlesea Council to open a school in Memda.

masanauskasj@heraldsun.com.au