

Unrepentant Hanson hopes burqa stunt will create debate

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra



Senators were shocked when Pauline Hanson appeared in the chamber shrouded in the voluminous black garment. Lukas Coch/AAP

Pauline Hanson's stunt of wearing a burqa into the Senate on Thursday drew a swingeing attack from Attorney-General George Brandis, amid widespread condemnation.

But an unrepentant Hanson – who admitted her action, which she's been considering for months, was "extreme" – [told 2GB](#) she hoped it was "creating debate".

Brandis' [denunciation](#), delivered with emotion, was greeted with a standing ovation from Labor and the Greens, and more limited and hesitant clapping on his own side.

Education Minister Simon Birmingham tweeted:

Senators were shocked when Hanson – who has called for a ban on Muslim immigration – appeared in the chamber shrouded in the voluminous black garment. She removed it as she rose to ask Brandis whether he would work to ban the burqa, citing foiled and actual terrorist incidents. "There has been a large majority of Australians [who] wish to see the banning of the burqa," she said.

"Senator Hanson, no, we will not be banning the burqa," Brandis said. He said he was not going to pretend to ignore her stunt – and warned of the damage such behaviour could do.

"I would caution you and counsel you, senator Hanson, with respect, to be very, very careful of the offence you may do to the religious sensibilities of other Australians.

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"We have about half-a-million Australians in this country of the Islamic faith, and the vast majority of them are law-abiding, good Australians. Senator Hanson, it is absolutely consistent being a good, law-abiding Australian and being a strict-adherent Muslim."

He said the advice of each director-general of security and each commissioner of the Australian Federal Police with whom he had worked was "that it is vital for their intelligence and law enforcement work that they work co-operatively with the Muslim community."

"To ridicule that community, to drive it into a corner, to mock its religious garments is an appalling thing to do, and I would ask you to reflect on what you have done."

Hanson then asked whether the government would "ban the burqa in this house ... as a security risk" and "also, the fact is the people of Australia have the right to see the face of a person that they elect to this parliament".

Senate President Stephen Parry said this came within the purview of parliament's presiding officers, not the attorney-general.

"The Speaker and I have made arrangements that anyone who enters these premises with their face covered by whatever means is clearly identified prior to entering the building." He said he had ascertained when she entered who she was.

Shadow Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus tweeted praise for Brandis:

Later Hanson moved a motion calling on "the government to ban full face coverings in public places on the grounds of social cohesion, the need to identify people seeking community support and for public safety". It was defeated on the voices.

"Muslims determine the electoral outcomes in up to 15 lower house seats," she told the Senate in her speech on the motion.

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“The Muslim vote will continue to increase in importance because of the high birth rates in Australian Muslim communities. The number of Muslims in Australia doubled in the decade from 2006 to 2016 through immigration and high numbers of children born to Muslim families.

“If we do not draw a line in the sand against immigration from Islamic countries the influence of Muslims in this country will continue to grow and Australia will continue down the path of Islamisation.”

She told 2GB that just outside the Senate chamber she had passed Greens senator Peter Whish-Wilson. “He actually put out his hand to shake my hand. Now I shook it. He has never done that to me as Pauline Hanson. He did it to shake hands with a person completely covered up. It was a tokenism that he was shaking the hand of Islam.”

Crossbencher Jacqui Lambie said Hanson had diminished the chamber and was dividing the nation.

Anne Aly, a Labor member of the House of Representatives, said Hanson had made a mockery of the parliament and her behaviour needed to be called out.

Crossbench senator Nick Xenophon said her action was offensive, “demeaning to people of other faiths”.

“I wouldn’t even call this a stunt, this was just toxic,” Xenophon said.

Australian Conservatives’ Cory Bernard, who supports a ban on the burqa, said it had been “a shock when Pauline Hanson walked past me in the flag of fundamentalism”.

“She made a particularly blunt point, but I’m not sure it is a point that should be made in the Senate chamber. I’m just as concerned about the dignity of our parliamentary system as I am about preserving our culture, and I don’t like stunts of this nature to take place in our

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Parliament,” Bernardi said.

Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond the academic appointment above.

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