Rights to cultural expression and ideas about national identity are major discursive terrains of public opinion on hijab in Australia. Public sentiment against the hijab was driven largely by discourses about nationalism, specifically assimilationist impulses. A mostly unstated aim of this assimilationism was a Christian-Australia or secular Australia, invoking certain narrow gendered constructions of Australian-ness. There is also a minor strain of concern that headscarf wearing is emblematic of inappropriate gender relations. However, there is an impressive level of public support for hijab wearing. Tolerance of hijab draws upon normative statements about the nature of Australian society, including references to freedom of religion, individual liberty, and democracy. These assertions about Australian-ness are largely un-contested, they possess a political robustness, and are political resources that could be deployed more widely in contemporary debates about cultural diversity and national identity. The hijab-wearing Australian woman is a performance of nationalism that is facilitated by these political resources.

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