Moonsighting Australia Policy and Procedures

Policy and Procedures for the Observation of the Hilāl and the Determination of Lunar Months in Australia

Approved by:
Moonsighting Australia

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"Fast for its sighting and end the fast for its sighting."
(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī & Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim)

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1. INTRODUCTION

All praise is due to Allāh, our Creator and Sustainer. Peace and blessings be upon His final Messenger, Muḥammad ﷺ, his family, companions, and all those who follow them in righteousness until the Day of Judgement.

1.1 Purpose of the Document

The purpose of this document is to outline the policies and procedures governing the sighting of the crescent moon (hilāl) and the determination of the commencement of lunar months for Muslim communities throughout Australia and its territories. It provides the framework through which Moonsighting Australia assesses moonsighting reports, verifies testimonies, and determines the beginning of lunar months, including Ramaḍān, Shawwāl and Dhul-Ḥijjah.

1.2 Background

This policy was originally developed following a special meeting held on 30 June 2018 at Darul Ulum College of Victoria (Melbourne) under the auspices of Moonsighting Australia and Jamiatul Ulama of Victoria. More than twenty scholars representing various Islamic organisations from across Australia participated in the discussions. During the meeting, the scholars reviewed the history of moonsighting in Australia, examined local experiences spanning several decades, and considered the experiences of scholars and moonsighting bodies in other countries, including the United Kingdom, Canada and South Africa. Following extensive discussion, a framework and set of guidelines were adopted to regulate the collection, verification and assessment of hilāl sighting reports within Australia.

The policy was subsequently reviewed at the National Moonsighting Australia ʿUlamāʾ Meeting held on 21 June 2026 at Masjid Qubaa, Sydney, attended by scholars from across Australia both in person and online. The discussions reaffirmed the importance of maintaining a transparent, consistent and locally focused moonsighting framework. Recommendations and resolutions arising from that meeting have been incorporated into this revised policy where applicable.

1.3 Main Components

This document consists of the following key components:

1.3.1 Definitions of key terms used throughout the policy.

1.3.2 Key considerations underpinning the development of this policy and its procedures.

1.3.3 The administrative and organisational structure of Moonsighting Australia, including:

a) Members.
b) State Representatives.
c) The Executive Committee.
d) The National Amīr.

1.3.4 An overview of the moonsighting process, including:

a) Intake of reports.
b) Verification of reports and witness testimonies.
c) Collation of reports from across Australia and its territories.
d) Consultation and decision-making.
e) Public announcements.

1.3.5 Detailed policies and procedures governing:

a) The geographical scope of accepted sightings within Australia.
b) The range of accepted sightings.
c) The requirements for witnesses.
d) The commencement of lunar months.
e) The use of scientific and astronomical data.
f) The use of approved optical aids.
g) The collection and verification of hilāl sighting reports.
h) The responsibilities of State Representatives.
i) The final decision-making process.
j) The communication of official announcements.

1.3.6 The principles and criteria applied in determining the commencement of lunar months.

2. DEFINITIONS

Unless the context otherwise requires, the following terms shall have the meanings assigned to them below:

Affiliated Observation Group

An organised hilāl observation group that conducts regular moonsighting activities in coordination with Moonsighting Australia.

Approved Optical Aid

A conventional optical instrument approved by Moonsighting Australia that assists or magnifies direct visual observation of the hilāl, including binoculars and approved telescopes permitted under Section 6.7 – Optical Aids of this Policy.

Australian Territory

Any part of the Commonwealth of Australia recognised under this policy for the purpose of moonsighting, including the Australian mainland, Tasmania and approved external territories under Australian sovereignty or governance, as provided in Section 6.1 of this Policy.

Executive Committee

The appointed committee responsible for assisting in the administration of Moonsighting Australia, reviewing verified moonsighting reports, and providing recommendations to the National Amīr.

Hilāl

The first visible crescent moon of a new lunar month observed after conjunction.

Member

A qualified ʿālim or recognised graduate of an Islamic institution who has been accepted as a member of Moonsighting Australia.

Moonsighting Report

A report submitted by a witness claiming to have observed the hilāl, together with any supporting information required under this policy.

National Amīr

The appointed head of Moonsighting Australia who is responsible for making the final decision regarding the commencement of lunar months in accordance with this policy.

Naked-Eye Sighting

A direct visual observation of the hilāl made without the assistance of any optical instrument.

Observer

A person recognised by Moonsighting Australia who participates in organised hilāl observation activities in their respective state or territory on the 29th of each lunar month.

Optical-Aided Sighting

A direct visual observation of the hilāl made through an approved optical aid permitted under Section 6.7 – Optical Aids of this Policy.

State Representative

The appointed representative responsible for coordinating moonsighting activities, receiving and verifying reports, and liaising with the Executive Committee within their state or territory.

Testimony

The verbal statement given by a witness regarding their observation of the hilāl, together with any written information (if required).

Verified Report

A moonsighting report, whether communicated verbally, electronically or in writing, that has been assessed by the relevant State Representative or the National Amīr and determined to satisfy the procedural requirements outlined in this policy.

Witness

A sane adult Muslim who personally observed the hilāl and provides testimony in accordance with this policy.

3. KEY CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Islamic jurisprudence provides clear guidance regarding the acceptance of testimonies forthe sighting of the new crescent (hilāl). In principle, the responsibility of receiving moonsighting testimonies and announcing the commencement of lunar months rests with a qāḍī or recognised judicial authority. In countries where such an authority does not exist, such as Australia, Muslims may adopt alternative mechanisms to fulfil this function, including:

a) The appointment of an Amīr or recognised leader;

b) The establishment of a hilāl committee;

c) The appointment of a qualified ʿālim or body of scholars to act as the recognised authority in such matters.

3.2 Once testimonies have been received, assessed and a decision has been reached by the recognised authority, that decision is binding upon those who accept its jurisdiction.

3.3 This policy is based on the agreed position of the four Sunni schools of Islamic jurisprudence that the commencement of a lunar month is established through a valid sighting of the crescent moon (hilāl). The primary objective of this policy is to facilitate the implementation of this principle within Australia through a transparent, consistent and organised framework.

3.4 This policy has been developed and reviewed through consultation with scholars representing the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence. Its guidelines are therefore based upon collectively agreed principles and procedures derived from the recognised schools of Islamic law.

3.5 The unique geographical circumstances of Australia are given special consideration within this policy. The vast distances between population centres, differing sunset times, varying climatic conditions and the existence of Australian external territories require a framework specifically tailored to the Australian context.

3.6 Moonsighting Australia operates within an Australian framework. Accordingly, the assessment of moonsighting reports and the determination of the commencement of lunar months are based upon valid sightings originating from within Australian territory, as defined in this Policy.

3.7 Scientific and astronomical data play an important supporting role within the moonsighting process. Such information assists in evaluating the plausibility of reported sightings, identifying observation opportunities and facilitating organised

moonsighting efforts. However, the commencement of lunar months remains dependent upon a valid sighting in accordance with the principles outlined in this policy.

3.8 The use of approved optical aids is recognised as a valid means of assisting in the observation of the crescent moon, subject to the conditions, standards and procedures outlined in this policy.

4. STRUCTURE OF MOONSIGHTING AUSTRALIA

The organisational structure of Moonsighting Australia consists of the following components:

4.1 Members

4.1.1 Membership of Moonsighting Australia is open to qualified ʿUlamāʾ and recognised graduates of Islamic institutions who support the objectives and methodology of the organisation.

4.1.2 Members may participate in moonsighting activities, consultations, and educational initiatives conducted by Moonsighting Australia. Members are also encouraged to assist in promoting organised moonsighting efforts within their local communities.

4.2 State Representatives

4.2.1 Each state and territory shall have an appointed representative responsible for coordinating moonsighting activities within their jurisdiction.

4.2.2 The responsibilities of the State Representative include:

a) Receiving moonsighting reports from observers within their state or territory.
b) Conducting preliminary verification and assessment of reports.
c) Liaising with observers and local members where necessary.
d) Submitting verified reports and recommendations to the Executive Committee.

4.3 Executive Committee

4.3.1 The Executive Committee shall consist of appointed members from across Australia.

4.3.2 The responsibilities of the Executive Committee include:

a) Assisting in the administration and operation of Moonsighting Australia.
b) Reviewing and assessing verified moonsighting reports submitted by State Representatives.
c) Advising the National Amīr regarding matters related to moonsighting and policy implementation.
d) Reviewing and updating policies and procedures when required.
e) Promoting education, training and awareness regarding moonsighting within Australia.

4.4 National Amīr

4.4.1 The National Amīr shall serve as the head of Moonsighting Australia and shall be responsible for issuing the final decision regarding the commencement of lunar months.

4.4.2 In reaching a decision, the National Amīr shall consider:

a) Verified moonsighting reports received from across Australia.

b) Recommendations and advice provided by the Executive Committee.

c) Relevant astronomical and scientific information.

d) The principles and procedures contained within this policy.

4.4.3 The decision of the National Amīr, issued in accordance with this policy, shall constitute the official position of Moonsighting Australia.

5. OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

5.1 Intake of Reports

5.1.1 Moonsighting Australia conducts organised hilāl observation activities on the 29th of every lunar month through its observers and affiliated observation groups across Australia and recognised Australian territories.

5.1.2 Where the crescent is sighted during one of these organised observation activities, the sighting report shall be communicated directly to the National Amīr for verification and assessment.

5.1.3 Where the crescent is sighted independently by a member of the public, the witness shall report the sighting to their local Moonsighting Australia member or recognised local scholar. Where this is not practicable, or where the witness has direct contact with the National Amīr, the report may be communicated directly to the National Amīr.

5.2 Verification

5.2.1 The National Amīr shall verify the claimed sighting and assess the credibility of the witness or witnesses in accordance with this policy.

5.2.2 Where notification of a claimed sighting is initially received by a State Representative, the State Representative may verify the sighting, assess the witness or witnesses in accordance with this policy, and communicate the outcome of the verification to the National Amīr.

5.2.3 Where possible, testimony shall be taken directly from the witness. Where this is not practicable, testimony may be taken through approved communication methods, including telephone or video conferencing.

5.3 Decision

5.3.1 Following the verification process, the National Amīr shall consult with the Executive Committee and, after considering all relevant information, determine the commencement of the lunar month in accordance with this policy.

5.4 Announcement

5.4.1 Upon the National Amīr reaching a final decision, an official written announcement shall be prepared using the approved Moonsighting Australia announcement template and disseminated through the official communication

channels of Moonsighting Australia, including its official website, social media platforms and authorised messaging groups.

5.4.2 The written announcement shall constitute the official position of Moonsighting Australia regarding the commencement of the relevant lunar month.

6. POLICY AND PROCEDURES

6.1 Geographical Scope of Accepted Sightings

6.1.1 Australian Moonsighting Framework

6.1.1.1 Moonsighting Australia operates within an Australian framework. Accordingly, only moonsighting reports originating from locations that form part of the Commonwealth of Australia, or are otherwise under Australian sovereignty or governance in accordance with this policy, shall be considered for the purpose of determining the commencement of lunar months.

6.1.1.2 For the purposes of this policy, the Australian framework comprises mainland Australia, Tasmania, Christmas Island, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Norfolk Island, and any other Australian territory subsequently incorporated into this policy following approval by the Executive Committee and the National Amīr.

6.1.1.3 The inclusion of Australia's external territories reflects the longstanding practice of Moonsighting Australia and forms part of the policy originally adopted in 2018.

6.1.1.4 Reports originating from the territories listed above shall be treated as Australian reports and not as foreign reports. Their inclusion is based upon their status within the Australian moonsighting framework and is not dependent upon geographical proximity or time zone.

6.1.1.5 Moonsighting reports received from outside the Australian framework shall not be considered for the purpose of establishing the commencement of lunar months under this policy.

6.1.1.6 The inclusion of Australia's external territories is intended to facilitate the acceptance of authenticated sightings where appropriate and shall not ordinarily delay the timely announcement of decisions based upon verified sightings from mainland Australia.

6.1.1.7 Reports from remote territories and locations with limited observation activity may be accepted only from recognised, trained and known hilāl observers approved by Moonsighting Australia.

6.2 Range of Sighting

6.2.1 A valid moonsighting report established anywhere within the geographical scope of this policy shall be considered applicable throughout Australia.

6.2.2 Once a sighting has been verified and accepted in accordance with this policy, the commencement of the lunar month shall apply to all communities following the decisions of Moonsighting Australia.

6.3 Quota of Witnesses

6.3.1 Two reliable male witnesses shall be required to establish the commencement of any lunar month.

6.3.2 In place of one male witness, the testimony of two reliable female witnesses may be accepted.

6.3.3 Accordingly, the minimum requirement shall be either:

a) Two reliable male witnesses; or

b) One reliable male witness and two reliable female witnesses.

6.4 Commencement of Lunar Months

6.4.1 A lunar month shall not be deemed complete at twenty-nine days unless there is sufficient evidence indicating that the new month has commenced in accordance with the guidelines contained within this policy.

6.4.2 If the criteria outlined in this policy are not fulfilled, the current month shall be completed at thirty days.

6.4.3 The witness requirements outlined above shall apply to all lunar months, including Ramaḍān, Shawwāl and Dhul-Ḥijjah.

6.5 Primary Basis of Decisions

6.5.1 A verified sighting of the crescent moon shall be the primary basis for determining the commencement of lunar months.

6.5.2 A verified sighting may be established either through naked-eye observation or through approved optical aids in accordance with the provisions of this policy.

6.5.3 Only reports originating from within the geographical scope defined in Section 6.1 shall be considered.

6.5.4 Moonsighting Australia shall only announce the commencement of a new lunar month at twenty-nine days through reports that have been received, assessed and verified through the channels, procedures and authorised personnel outlined in this policy.

6.6 Usage of Scientific Data

6.6.1 Scientific and astronomical data may be utilised in the following capacities:

a) As a reference for assessing the possibility, visibility and extent of crescent observation within a particular time frame and geographical region.

b) As an aid in planning and organising moonsighting activities and observation efforts.

c) As a means of assessing the plausibility and legal (sharʿī) status of reported sightings.

d) In evaluating reports received from different locations and determining whether further verification is required.

6.6.2 In assessing astronomical information, Moonsighting Australia shall consult reliable and recognised astronomical sources.

6.6.3 Scientific and astronomical data may not be utilised in the following capacities:

a) As the sole basis for determining the commencement of a lunar month.

b) As a replacement for the moonsighting process.

c) To reject or overrule sightings that have been verified beyond reasonable doubt due to the existence of multiple verified witnesses, multiple verified locations, or other corroborating evidence accepted under this policy.

6.7 Optical Aids

The standard witness requirements outlined elsewhere in this policy shall continue to apply.

6.7.1 Accepted Optical Aids

6.7.1.1 Conventional optical aids, including binoculars and telescopes, may be used for direct hilāl observation.

6.7.2 Conditions of Acceptance

6.7.2.1 The observer directly observes the crescent through the eyepiece. The use of camera is limited to recording the testimony only.

6.7.2.2 The observer records the observation details, including location, time, equipment used, and relevant conditions.

6.7.2.3 The sighting is consistent with astronomical data, including Moon-Sun elongation, Moon altitude, and atmospheric conditions.

6.7.3 Non-Accepted Methods

6.7.3.1 Detection systems operating outside the visible light spectrum, including radio, infrared, ultraviolet, radar, or satellite-based systems.

6.7.3.2 Any form of image creation/enhancement, stacking, artificial intelligence processing, or post-processing used to reveal or identify the crescent moon.

6.8 State Representatives: Functions and Procedures

6.8.1 The State Representative shall organise and coordinate monthly moonsighting activities within their respective state or territory.

6.8.2 Where a positive sighting is received within their jurisdiction, the State Representative shall communicate the sighting and any relevant information directly to the National Amīr.

6.9 Final Decision Process

6.9.1 Review and Consultation

6.9.1.1 Upon receiving the verified reports and recommendations of the Executive Committee, the National Amīr shall review all relevant information before reaching a decision.

6.9.1.2 The National Amīr may consult with the Executive Committee and any other persons he considers appropriate prior to making a decision.

6.9.2 Assessment of Reports

6.9.2.1 The National Amīr may accept or reject any moonsighting report based upon its compliance with the requirements of sharīʿah and the provisions of this policy.

6.9.2.2 The acceptance or rejection of any report shall be based upon the reliability of the testimony, the verification process undertaken, the supporting evidence available and any other relevant considerations, such as inconsistencies in the observation details provided.

6.9.3 Decision

6.9.3.1 The National Amīr shall determine the commencement of the lunar month in accordance with this policy.

6.9.3.2 The decision of the National Amīr shall constitute the official position of

Moonsighting Australia and shall be binding upon its members.

6.9.3.3 Once a verified moonsighting report is sufficient to establish the commencement of the lunar month in accordance with this policy, the National Amīr should issue a decision without unnecessary delay and without awaiting reports from other states or territories.

6.9.3.3.1 The purpose of conducting moonsighting activities throughout Australia is to maximise observation opportunities and facilitate the verification of reports. It is not a requirement that reports be received from every state or territory before a decision is made.

6.9.3.3.2 Additional reports received after a valid and verified sighting has been established may be recorded for documentation purposes but shall not delay the announcement of the commencement of the new lunar month.

6.9.3.4 Where further verification or consultation is considered necessary, the National Amīr may defer a decision for a reasonable period until the required information has been obtained.

6.9.4 Absence of the National Amīr

6.9.4.1 In the event that the National Amīr is unavailable or unable to fulfil his responsibilities, he may appoint a suitably qualified member of the Executive Committee to act on his behalf for the purpose of the decision-making process.

6.10 Announcement of Decisions

6.10.1 An official announcement shall be issued as soon as reasonably practicable after the National Amīr has reached a decision.

6.10.2 The official announcement shall be issued in writing using the approved Moonsighting Australia announcement template.

6.10.3 The written announcement shall be issued on behalf of Moonsighting Australia and authorised by the National Amīr.

6.10.4 Official announcements shall be disseminated through the official communication channels of Moonsighting Australia.

6.10.5 No member, representative or authorised person shall publicly announce or disclose the decision of Moonsighting Australia prior to the issuance of the official announcement.