



FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the Ramadan 2003 edition of the ICNSW Newslink.

The last three months of the Islamic calendar (Rajab, Sha'ban and Ramadan) are very significant in the hearts and minds of Muslims in Australia and around the globe. It was during these months that the journey of Israa and Miraj, the ascension to Heaven by the Prophet Mohammad Peace Be upon Him and the migration of Muslims from Mecca to Abyssinia occurred.

These events allow us to reflect on the past, apply learning to the present and explore opportunities for the future. We remember how faith and determination in spreading love, understanding and goodwill ultimately triumphs over evil.

The observance of the fast of Ramadan (the 9th lunar month of the Islamic calendar) is a clear reminder of the purpose of our existence. This blessed month provides Muslims with many opportunities to spread understanding and compassion among family, friends, neighbours and members of the community.

In this time of misunderstanding and fear, it is even more important to be patient and see these difficult times as opportunities to build bridges through greater engagement, interaction and dialogue.

The journey of building understanding is not an easy one and requires constant action and dedication. The Council has been steadfast in its efforts to create and enhance initiatives that foster respect for humanity regardless of its cultural or religious affiliations.

The Council's recent work has included interaction and training with many diverse community, government and business sectors. The Council has been working closely with Telstra on a number of activities that foster goodwill, harmony and understanding between Australians of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds.

Telstra has taken the lead in hosting an annual Iftar dinner in Ramadan for members of the Australian Muslim community. The relationship fostered over the years has been a very productive one and we would like to thank Telstra for its ongoing support of the Australian Muslim community.

The blessed month of Ramadan teaches us the need for compassion and mercy in order to reach the highest level of purity, peace and tranquility. Let us embrace these important religious values by continuing to do what is good and forbid what is evil.

May this blessed month bring you and your family love, peace and prosperity.

Wassalam
Ali Roude, OAM



Islamic Council tours visit Gallipoli Mosque in Auburn

WHO ARE AUSTRALIAN MUSLIMS?

Recent media coverage of world events has painted an inaccurate picture of Muslims and the Islamic faith. We must remember that diversity is one of the strengths of modern Australia – differences between cultures must be celebrated and enjoyed - not feared. True understanding can only be achieved through dialog and friendship.

The Council has been working to address these inaccuracies with the truth at every opportunity but if we are to be truly successful then it is the responsibility of every Australian Muslim to do the same. In order to do this, we must be proud of our religious heritage and Islamic identity and remember the positive contributions Muslims have made throughout history and currently make to the Australian community.

MUSLIM CONTRIBUTIONS TO WORLD CIVILISATIONS

- Muhammad Ibn Musa invented the zero and decimal point and his work in trigonometry was Europe's main textbook on the subject until the 16th Century.
- 'In Decline and fall of the Roman Empire', Gibbons attributes the origin of Chemistry to the Muslims.
- Omar Khayyam invented second-degree geometric and algebraic equations.
- Kamaluddin was the first to use physics to explain the genesis of primary and secondary rainbows.
- Qadi Abu Bakr developed the theory of relativity in the Eighth Century.
- Muslim scientists established in the ninth century that the world was round and under the Caliphate of Mamun, the first map of the globe was

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MUSLIMS IN AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

- Muslim fisherman of Makassar visited Aboriginal tribes on the north coast of Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland as early as the 1600s and 1700. By 1875, there were 1800 Malays working as pearl divers off the coast of Western Australia
- Between 1867 and 1910, Afghan cameleers were brought to Australia to assist in the exploration of the continent's vast interior
- In the 1960s a large number of Turkish Muslims arrived as migrants following a bilateral trade deal
- By the 1980s there was an increase in number of Arabic speaking Muslim migrants coming mainly from Lebanon
- The 1990s saw the arrival of Muslims from Iraq, Palestine, Kuwait, Somalia, Bosnia, and Afghanistan

AUSTRALIAN MUSLIMS TODAY

- There are approximately 281,578 Muslims living in Australia (around 1.5% of the Australian population)
- The Australian Muslim population almost doubled between 1991 and 2001 and has grown 157% since 1986
- Almost 50% of Australian Muslims are aged 24 and under
- Just over a third are Australian-born, 28% were born in the Middle East or North Africa, 16% were born in Asia, 9% were born in Europe, 4% were born in Africa (excluding North Africa), 3% were born in Oceania (excluding Australia)
- Overseas-born Australian Muslims hail from Lebanon, Turkey, Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Pakistan, Indonesia, Iraq, Bangladesh, Iran and Fiji.
- The majority live in NSW (50%) and Victoria (33%).
HREOC- (2001 Census)

IN BRIEF

ISLAMIC TOUR

On Thursday 25th September, the Council invited 25 members of the Chain Reaction Foundation on a tour of Australia's Muslim community. The aim of the tour was to give non-Muslims an understanding of Islam's contribution to the Australian mosaic.

Beginning at 9am, the tour visited the Gallipoli Mosque at Auburn, The Al Zahra College in Arncliffe, the United Muslim Women's Association, The Risalah College in Lakemba, and the Islamic Council of NSW.

Guests included Senator Andrew Bartlett, Leader of the Australian Democrats; Professor Donald Horne, Sydney University; Ms Margaret Bell, CEO Chainreaction Foundation, Helen Thurtell, Guides NSW, Bill Lawton, Mission Australia; Geoff Prenter, ING; Peter Rock, Centrelink; and Dina Volacic, Compass ABC TV.

The reaction to the tour was very positive. All guests commented that they had not fully realised the significant contribution that Muslim Australians have made to the community. Most commented that the tour was a very informative way of understanding Australian Muslims and the Islamic faith.

The Council is planning future tours. Those interested in attending can contact the ICNSW directly. More information about the Chain Reaction Foundation can be found at www.chainreaction.org.au.



Senator Andrew Bartlett and members of the Chain Reaction Foundation at Islamic Council Lunch



Members of the Chain Reaction Foundation & Islamic Council members at Lunch

VOICE OF ISLAM RADIO STATION

The ICNSW radio station began as a service for the NSW Muslim community in 1996. Today, the Voice of Islam radio station (AM 1620) is being streamed live via the Internet. The website address is www.sydneyislamicradio.com. The Council hopes the service is enjoyable and welcomes listener feedback – either by email or phone.

The Council would like to thank Telstra for their financial assistance and technical support allowing those Australian Muslims who do not have radio reception to be able to listen to the Voice of Islam via the Internet.

WORK FOR THE DOLE PROGRAM

As part of its program to help long-term unemployed Muslims, the Council has initiated the Make-it-Work project. The project arranges for participants in the Federal Government's "Work for the Dole" program to be involved in the activities and services of willing organizations in the community. So far ten Muslim organizations and schools are involved in the project and this is expected to increase.

For more information about the ICNSW's program or to become a participating organization, please contact the Community Employment Project Officer on (02) 9742 5752.

ALCOHOL SUMMIT 2003

Between the 24th-28th August, the NSW Government hosted a Summit on Alcohol Abuse in NSW. Over 150 representatives from industry, Government and the general community attended including a representative from the ICNSW.

In a passionate speech to delegates, the ICNSW representative presented the historical context of alcohol and what it meant to Muslims in Australia. In Islamic terminology, alcohol or intoxicants are referred to as khamr or 'to cover up'. In context, this means 'to cloud the approach to prayers'. For this reason, the followers of Islam have abstained from its use for over 1400 years.

The dangers of alcohol are very evident. In 1997 there were 3600 alcohol related deaths in Australia. In 1998, 60 percent of Australians aged 20-24 suffered some form of alcohol related personal abuse. Every year 400 people die on our roads from excessive alcohol consumption and 7700 more are seriously injured. This equates to an annual cost to the community of over \$1.34bn.

The ICNSW representative left delegates with the powerful message that it is cool and socially acceptable NOT to drink. The Council received very positive feedback from other delegates.

The Summit then broke up into ten working groups of 15 members. These working groups were tasked with developing recommendations on key topic areas. The ICNSW representative was involved in the anti-social behaviour and alcohol-related crime group chaired by Police Commissioner, Ken Moroney. One of the 50 recommendations put forward by the group related to the responsibility of all in supplying alcohol to intoxicated friends. This has since been passed as legislation in NSW. It is now illegal to provide drinks to intoxicated friends.

The major outcome of the Summit was the opportunity for community groups to engage in dialog on the issue. For it is through dialog that solutions present themselves.

We must all remember that alcohol is the prime ingredient in numerous cases of domestic violence, crime and road fatalities in Australia. Raising prices or imposing taxes do not address the true problem - drinker behaviour. Awareness of the dangers and a changed perception is needed.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

ISMA'Ë

In March 2003, the Acting Race Discrimination Commissioner, Dr Bill Jonas, launched Isma'ë, a project aimed at eliminating prejudice against Arab and Muslim Australians. Meaning 'listen' in Arabic, the title of the project reflects its main goal, which is to listen to Arab and Muslim Australians' experiences of prejudice and discrimination.

Over the last 6 months, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) has been consulting with members of Arab and Muslim communities across Australia to find out more about the nature and extent of the prejudice and discrimination they experience. To date, HREOC has participated in some 58 consultations in all States and Territories. A summary of the consultations and associated research will be published in March 2004.

On June 10, the Islamic Council of NSW hosted an Isma'ë consultation. The meeting was chaired by Ali Roude and attended by 16 invited participants and HREOC representatives, including Dr Jonas. Participants described the kinds of discrimination Australian Muslims have been experiencing and engaged in lively discussion about future strategies to overcome prejudice and discrimination. A complete summary of this meeting (and other Isma'ë consultations) can be found on the Isma'ë website at: www.humanrights.gov.au.



Mr Tony Negus presents Ali Roude with an award of appreciation on behalf of police commissioner Mick Kealty for training provided to the Australian Federal Police

CROSS CULTURAL TRAINING SESSIONS

The Council has been actively involved in designing and delivering information and training sessions designed to raise awareness of Islam and the Muslim culture among non-Muslims. These sessions have gone a long way to promoting understanding and harmony through the dissemination of facts, interaction and dialog.

In the past 12 months, over 200 sessions have been run by the ICNSW for community organizations, the public and private sectors. These groups have included St George Hospital, the Maura Fay Group, Centrelink, Menai High School, Kogarah High School and the Australian Federal Police. The Council will be conducting training in the future with senior business managers at Telstra Corporation.

To become involved in the training or to make a booking please contact the ICNSW.



Justice John Doud of the NSW Supreme Court and Ali Roude at the Annual Judges Conference where a presentation was given by representatives of the ICNSW

YOUTH PARTNERSHIP WITH ARABIC SPEAKING COMMUNITIES

In July 2001, the Premier of NSW, the Hon Bob Carr, announced the Youth Partnership with Arabic Speaking Communities as a strategy to promote the well being of young people. Over \$3.4 million has been approved by the NSW Government to fund this program.

The partnership has developed a comprehensive package of programs aimed at improving education outcomes, parent support, and participation in sport and recreation as well as community relations.

The Islamic Council of NSW is heavily involved in the program. In particular, the Council has been involved in the Education and Parent Support reference groups providing valuable advice on community needs and strategies for working with the community. Last year, the Council hosted a major community forum where the Partnership reported to the community about its work with young people.

Less than two years since its announcement, the Youth Partnership with Arabic Speaking communities was recognised as a model of good practice with a gold award in the Social Justice category of the NSW Premier's Public Sector Awards.

The Premier made mention of the level of Muslim youth and community involvement as a key reason for the success of the program.

ISLAMIC SCRIPTURE PROGRAM

Since its establishment, the ICNSW has been involved in the development and coordination of an Islamic religious education program for students at NSW public schools.

The program involves 160 teachers who provide one class a week for an estimated 15,000 Muslim students. The Council supports the program through travel expenses for teachers, printing of children's books, hosting an award ceremony for outstanding volunteer teachers. The Program is currently under review to ensure effective administration and resources, Islamic curriculum and teacher training development are addressed.

For more information about the program or to become involved please contact the ICNSW on (02) 9742 5752.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING & PRESENTATION SKILLS

The ICNSW recently ran its first leadership training and presentation skills course for 18 young people (20 years +).

During the free two-day session each trainee received personal coaching, support and training from presentation experts. The training was designed to improve the confidence and clarity of expression of each person. The Council expects the training course to become a regular event.

For those interested in enrolling please contact the ICNSW.

ISLAMIC CALENDAR

(October 2003 – February 2004)

- First Day of Ramadan Monday 27 October 2003
- Nuzul Qura'n Wednesday 12 November 2003 (Lailat ul Qadr)
- Eid ul Fitr Tuesday 25 November 2003
- Eid ul Adha Sunday 1 February 2004

ICNSW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chairman: Ali Roude
Vice Chairman: Mughtar Sadien
Secretary: Ergun Genel
Vice Secretary: Samith Zreika
Treasurer: Ridwan Toefy
Assistant Treasurer: Kemal Ismen
Members: S.M Ali, Yasmin Bekric, Omar Chehate

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Scripture Coordinator: Sheikh Rafi Ahmad
Community Services/ Training and Education Consultant: Ms Nada Roude
Employment Projects: Ms Zeina Harris
Chaplaincy Services: Mulayim Iskendar
Sydney University Chaplaincy: Sheikh Abdulrahman Asaroglu
Hospital Chaplaincy: Khalil Chami/ Jihad Ismail
Police Chaplaincy: Khalil Chami
TAFE Chaplaincy: Ms Jenan Dadoun/ Mr El Samman
Riverstone Muslim Cemetery: Dr Kazi Ali
Voice Of Islam Radio: Mr Abraham Zoabi



Islamic Council tour visit to Al Zahra College

We speak your language

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