

MUSLIMS AUSTRALIA

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AUGUST EDITION

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NEW AFIC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

As most would be aware, The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Inc (AFIC) has been under Administration since September 2006 after the suspension of the then Executive Committee of AFIC. The Administrator appointed by the Court was empowered to call a Special Congress on 25 February 2007 to hold fresh elections for the leadership of AFIC.

The following were elected:

President

Vice President

Secretary

Treasurer

Assistant Secretary

Assistant Treasurer

Executive Members

The Special Congress was held on Sunday 25 February 2007. The main item of the agenda was to elect AFIC's office bearers. The election processes was conducted by and under the supervision of the Australian Electoral Commission. A large number of delegates attended the day long meeting held at AFIC Headquarters in Sydney.

Mr Ikebal Patel of Australian Capital Territory

Mrs Mariam Siti Kawai of Christmas Island

Mr Ashraf Ali of New South Wales

Mr Adnan Sert of South Australia

Mr Mohammed Harun Abdullah of Tasmania

Mr Hafez Malas of New South Wales

Mr Abbas Ahmed of Queensland

Mr Mohamed Masood of Victoria

Mr Hafez Kassem of New South Wales

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Please ensure to include your contact telephone number.

Note: Due to space constraints, your contributions should be concise to be considered for publishing.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

AssalaamuAlaikum

First and foremost, I thank Allah SWT for this opportunity to be elected to be of service to the Muslim community. The position of President, in any organisation at any given time bears tremendously responsibility. At this juncture bearing the responsibility as the President of AFIC comes with increased demands and critical scrutiny. We have emerged, Alhamdulillah, from past several months of dispute and disruption into a new beginning, full of faith in Allah SWT, seeking Allah's guidance that the new Executive Committee of AFIC undertakes this mammoth task with enthusiasm and confidence to serve the Muslims of Australia to the best of its ability, with sincerity and Taqwa.

I take this opportunity to invite all our readers to make recommendation, suggestion and I also invite your input and comments on any issues affecting the Muslim community that you think requires AFIC's consideration and urgent attention.

I ask you all for your support, cooperation and insightful contribution to AFIC's initiatives and projects that we intend to undertake, Inshallah, for the benefit of Muslims and the Australian community as an entirety.

AssalaamuAlaikum,

Ikebal Patel

AFIC President

Email: president@afic.com.au

MEET THE AFIC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR 2007-2009



President
Mr. Ikebal Patel of ACT

Contact: president@afic.com.au

Mobile: 0420 366 539

Education: BE (NZ), CP Eng., MIE Aust., MIEE, MBA, JP.

Occupation: Senior Project Manager Country Energy

Background

Ikebal Patel migrated from Fiji to Australia with his young family in December 1992 after having secured employment in Albury as an Electrical Engineer. He owns a motel in Queanbeyan, Parkway Motel which is operated by the family.

Community Work

- President of the Islamic Society of Albury Wodonga.
- Championed settlement of refugee's families from war torn Bosnia as well as the refugees fleeing Iraq after the gulf war.
- Assisted local universities with the settlement of overseas students and their particular needs.

Continued...

Ikebal moved to Queanbeyan in 1999 for work reasons. In the same year he was elected onto the Board of Narrabundah College, a position he held for 4 years. In 2004 he was elected to the position of President of the P&C Association of Narrabundah College. Ikebal also was Vice President of Telopea Park School in 2001 as well as the Chairman of the fundraising committee that year.

In 2000 he was elected as Secretary of the Islamic Society of ACT, and two years later in 2002 was appointed as an Executive Member of AFIC. Subsequently he became the Treasurer of AFIC for two consecutive terms.

In 2005, Ikebal was appointed as the Chairman of the ACT Muslim Advisory Council by the ACT Chief Minister. He is the Chairman of the Canberra Islamic School Board, and has been a Board Member of Malek Fahd Islamic School in Greenacre Sydney, a Board Member of Langford Islamic College in Perth, and a Board Member of Victoria University AFIC College, a joint venture between AFIC and Victoria University in Melbourne.

He is a Justice of Peace in NSW.

Ikebal was recently elected as the Secretary of the Migrant Resource Centre of ACT and Queanbeyan.

Initiated ground work which resulted in a Islamic school.

He is also a keen gardener as can be seen within the gardens surrounding his family motel.



Vice President

Mrs. Mariam Siti Kawi
of Christmas Island

Contact: vpresident@afic.com.au

Mobile: 0420 366 539

Occupation: Secondary School Teacher

Background: Born in Malaysia, married with children.

Community Work

Siti Maraim Abdullah Kawi has been actively involved in the community at all levels, for many years. Siti Mariam's actions originate from a stance of justice and compassion and has had primary focus on woman's issues.

Experience

- Member of Christmas Island District High School Board Committee (1980-1987)
- Teacher of Home Economics and LOTE at Christmas Island High School (1982 until present)
- Vice President of Christmas Island Woman's Association (1990-until present)
- President of Muslim Woman's Welfare Association (1993-1996)
- President of the Muslim UMMAH CIIC (1997-2000)
- Represented Muslim Woman's Association and the Christmas Island Woman's Association at the Beijing Non Government Organisation Woman's conference "Through Woman's Eyes" at the 4th World's Woman Conference Beijing (1989-1990)
- Advisory Council of Christmas Island (1993 until present)
- Elected Councillor for the Shire of Christmas Island 1993 until present
- First female representative of Christmas Island for the AFIC Federal Council (1993)
- Justice of Peace (1996 until present)
- Bachelor of Education Murdoch University (1994-2000)
- Dawa'ah dialogue UNSW (2000)
- Recipient of the Bicentennial Medal awarded by the Honorable Sir William Deane (2003)



Secretary
Mr. Ashraf Ali of NSW

Contact: secretary@afic.com.au
Mobile: 0420 366 529

Occupation: Electronics Engineer

Background

Migrated to Australia from Fiji after graduating in Electronics Engineering some sixteen years ago. He then furthered his education in his field here in Australia. He has a strong family background of leadership and extensive Islamic involvement in setting up many Islamic Education institutions in Fiji and New Zealand.

Ashraf has followed the footsteps of his elders with the backing of good Islamic and Secular education.

Experience

Prior to his migration and when he was a student, Ashraf was the President of the "Muslim Students Association" in Fiji and was a member of Mau'antul Islam Association who was actively involved in projects that the association took up.

He has been the President of the Ahle-Sunnat Federation of Australia Inc for almost eight years in total before he took up the office of the AFIC State body in NSW, The Muslim Council of New South Wales Inc. as the General Secretary. He has been very actively involved with AFIC and The Muslim Council NSW Inc. for almost seven years.

Ashraf has been involved with initiatives that the Inter Faith Organisation has taken up.

Islamic & Community Work

Ashraf is one of the founders of Ahle-Sunnat Federation of Australia Inc that is located to the west of Liverpool City. Their organisation mostly services the rural community as well as the general community.

Ashraf is known for his voluntary services to a lot of Islamic Organisations.



Treasurer
Mr. Adnan Sert

Contact: treasurer@afic.com.au
Mobile: 0420 366 530

Occupation: Management Accountant

Background

Born in Turkey migrated to Australia in 1970 with parents. Obtained Bachelor of Commerce from Flinders Uni in SA.

Experience

I have been working in an Aboriginal Community organisation for the last 12 years as an Admin & Finance Manager.

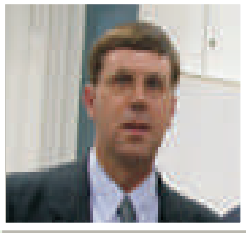
Islamic & Community work

I have been involved in the Muslim Community of South Australia for almost 20 years. I have been involved in the establishment of several Islamic Centre's and Masjids in SA.

Current treasurer of the AFIC.

Chairperson of the newly formed, AFIC Youth subcommittee.

Chairperson of the Islamic College of South Australia.



Assistant Secretary
Mr. Mohammed Harun
Abdullah of Tasmania

Contact: asecretary@afic.com.au
Mobile: 0420 366 531

Occupation: Employee of Centrelink

Education: B.A. (Hons) University of Tasmania 1976

Experience

- Member of Tasmanian Muslim Association since 1984
- Secretary Islamic Centre of Tasmania Trust Inc (1994 to Present)
- Member of AFIC EXCO (1998 to Present). Positions held include Treasurer, Secretary, Assistant Secretary
- Member Board of Malek Fahd Islamic School
- Member Board Islamic School of Canberra

Community Interests

Concerned for welfare of newly arrived refugees. Member of Board of Migrant Resource Centre (Southern Tasmania) for 12 years and served as Chairman.

Interested in homeless issues, mental health and drug addiction problems. Worked as a Welfare Officer with the St Vincent de Paul Society for 11 years.

Interested in strengthening relationships between Muslims and other faith communities.

Priorities for the Future

To take action to counter the vilification of the Muslim community.

To promote a policy of access and equity in AFIC Schools so that young people of all abilities can develop as Muslims and have the skills to meet the challenges of life in Australia.

Contact: atreasurer@afic.com.au
Mobile: 0417 240 331

Occupation: Semi Retired

Background

Born in Lebanon, migrated to Australia in 1969. Married, with 8 children (6 boys, 2 girls and 6 grandchildren).

Qualifications

1956 Diploma of Wireless Operator, Beirut Technical College, Lebanon

Experience

- Wireless Operator & Radio Communication- Lebanon (1956-1958)
- Public Relations Officer - Iraq Petroleum Company and Refinery, Lebanon (1958-1962)
- Arabic-English Interpreter, Iraq Petroleum Company
- General Contractor and Maintenance Supervisor (1962-1968: - Iraq Petroleum Company)
- Company Director in Qatar (1968-1969)
- Involved in various jobs and businesses in Australia as labourer, milk run, fruit shop, exporting, property developer, landscaping and property management, water bottling (1969-2006)
- Exporter to Middle East many business trips to the Middle East especially Saudi Arabia and the Gulf.

Islamic Community and Social Work

1975 Involved in starting first after-hours school for Arabic and Islamic education program for children (with the assistance of a local Member of Parliament.

1981-1983 Joined Alminiah Charitable Association as Secretary and then as Vice President.



Assistant Treasurer
Mr. Hafez Malas of NSW

Continued...

- 1983-2007 Joined the Lebanese Moslem Association (LMA). LMA Representative in the State Council, AFIC and other state bodies.
- Secretary of LMA. Member of Shura Committee
- 1999-2006 Entered Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Executive Committee as Assistant Treasurer and Executive Member.
- Represented AFIC in various forums in Australia and the Middle East.
- Attended WAMY and Muslim World League Conferences as AFIC Representative.
- 2004-2006: AFIC School Board Member at Malek Fahd Islamic-School (Treasurer).
- Board Member, Islamic School of Brisbane.
- Board Member, Islamic School of Canberra.
- 2007: Assistant Treasurer, AFIC.
- Chairman and Board Member, Malek Fahd Islamic School, Sydney.



Executive Member
Mr. Abbas Ahmed
of Queensland

Contact: aahmed@afic.com.au

Mobile: 0420 366 532

Occupation: Legal Practitioner in Brisbane

Background: Born in Fiji, long time resident of Queensland, married with children.

Experience

- Advocate for reform and progress on issues impacting the lives of Muslims, locally and nationally.
- President of the Islamic Council of Queensland (1994-1998)
- Pioneer of AFIC's first Islamic School in Queensland - Islamic School of Brisbane
- Interim President of AFIC in 1997.
- Vice President of AFIC (2002-2006)
- President of AFIC for two consecutive terms from 1998 to 2002
- Pioneered the first National Imam's Conference in Melbourne in 1998 as AFIC President
- Executive Member of AFIC (2007)
- Chairman of Islamic College of Brisbane School Board (1999-present time)
- Board Member of Malek Fahd Islamic School in Sydney (1998-2006)
- Board member of AFIC Victoria University (Melbourne) project from year 2002-2006
- Board member of Langford Islamic School in Perth inception of school to 2006
- Board member of Islamic College of SA from 2002-2006.
- Currently deputy chairman of Islamic College of SA



Executive Member
Mr. Mohamed Masood
of Victoria

Contact: mmasood@afic.com.au

Mobile: 0420 366 534

Occupation: Retired Business Administrator/ Business Development

Background

Born in Sri Lanka migrated to Australia in 1989. Married with children.

Lived in different parts of Australia, including Western Australia, ACT and currently residing in Melbourne.

Experience

Worked as a Company director for over 30 years for many leading companies in Australia, United Kingdom and Sri Lanka.

Community Work

- Extensive community work done during residency in Sri Lanka
- One of the founding members of Canberra Islamic Centre, paved the way for the first stage of land lease of Canberra Islamic Centre.
- President of Werribee Islamic Centre. Actively assisted in the establishment of Virgin Mary Mosque, the project completed in record time, it took four months from the start of the project to the Mosque completed, ready and open for prayers.
- Assist with fund raising for various humanitarian causes including, Human Appeal International, Royal Children's Hospital Auxiliary, Australian Islamic Mission.
- Experienced and well developed networking abilities. Good working relationship with local government, State and National parliamentarians, local, interstate and overseas business communities.



Executive Member
Mr. Hafez Kassem of NSW

Contact: hkassem@afic.com.au

Mobile: 0420 366 533

Occupation: Managing Director Palm Childcare

Background

Born in Lebanon, migrated to Australia in 1973. Married with seven children, 5 boys, 2 girls and 4 grandchildren.

Experience:

1973-1982: Foreman at James Kirby (Sydney).

1983-1997: Self-employed.

1997-2007: Managing Director, Palm Childcare (2 campuses).

Islamic Community and Social Work

1975 Joined Alminiah Charitable Association

1976 Joined the Lebanese Moslem Association (LMA).

2000 Established El-Minia Islamic Youth Centre Association and elected as President.

2001 Joined Muslim Council of NSW Inc and one of the pioneers of this umbrella body.

2002 Elected as Treasurer of Muslim Council of NSW Inc. Represented MCNSW Inc in various conferences, meetings and Congresses.

2007 Entered Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Inc as Executive Member.

EDITORIAL

AUSTRALIA IS SECULAR



The proposal by Mr Kevin Andrews, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, to introduce a Citizenship Quiz for applicants for Australian Citizenship demonstrates that he has lost touch with mainstream Australian opinion.

The Minister has failed to demonstrate the need for such a test. Australia has strict immigration laws and all applications to migrate to Australia are closely scrutinized. Applications for Citizenship can be rejected if the applicant has engaged in criminal activity.

The real motive behind this test is wedge politics. We are in an election year and it is to the government's advantage to demonstrate that it is getting tough on Muslims. It is convenient to demonize the Muslim community.

The proposed questions were designed by a group of highly paid public servants who were anxious to please their political master. This group has a poor understanding of Australian history, politics, culture and values. A better job could have been done by the members of a suburban bowls club on a Saturday night.

The questions are contentious, opinionated, value laden and based on a complete lack of understanding of Australian history, culture and values.

The best example is question 15 which states:

"Australia's values are based on the ...

- a. Teachings of the Koran
- b. The Judaeo-Christian tradition
- c. Catholicism
- d. Secularism"

Mr Andrews states that the correct answer is "The Judaeo-Christian Tradition" and regards this as an indisputable historical fact.

The Minister is wrong. Australia is a Secular State. A secular state is a state or country that is officially neutral in matters of religion, neither supporting nor opposing any particular religious beliefs or practices, and has no state religion or equivalent. A secular state also treats all its citizens equally regardless of religion, and does not give preferential treatment for a citizen from a particular religion over other religions.

Australia has a long and proud tradition of Secularism in its public life. The settlers in nineteenth century Australia were predominantly Anglo-Celtic in origin and came from societies that had an established religion. Ireland had an established Church until 1869, Wales until 1920 and there are still established Churches in England and Scotland. At present there are 26 Bishops of the Church of England in the House of Lords.

The Australian Colonies were different to the United Kingdom because no one religion had the support of a majority of the population and there were strong religious divisions between Anglicans, Protestants and Roman Catholics. In order to maintain religious peace, and promote unity, a policy of secularism was introduced.

Secularism has been implemented in different ways in each State. In 1856, the South Australian Parliament took the most extreme step by banning prayers in the opening of Parliamentary sessions. This remained in place until the First World War. The Tasmanian Parliament prohibited the establishment of a Chair of Christian Theology when the University of Tasmania was established in 1890. All States developed public education systems during the 1870s; the slogan that was used was "Free, Compulsory and Secular". Religious instruction was prohibited in all government schools.

The founders of the Commonwealth of Australia were predominantly practicing Christians but they were also committed to the concept of the religiously neutral secular state. The Federal Constitution prohibits the establishment of any one religion by the Commonwealth Parliament and also prohibits any religious test for holding public office.

This tradition of secularism has made Australia an inclusive society where people of all faiths have been able to participate in public life. For example, Australia has had Anglican, Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish Governors General.

It is fortunate for Australia that not all Federal Cabinet Ministers reject the secular tradition of Australian society. High profile Roman Catholic Tony Abbot, who is Minister for Health, understands the importance of our secular tradition. ►

In a recent interview on the ABC program Religion Report he stated:

“Ladies and gentlemen, I think it is good to draw a subtle but necessary distinction between faith and public life. I think it's important to maintain a certain separation between faith and public life much as in our political culture, we have drawn a distinction traditionally between church and state. Faith is a very personal thing, either you have it, or you don't. I take faith to mean belief in things which can't be demonstrated in the temporal world, or proven by reason.

Faith should not dictate the politics of any politician in a secular society. Reason should drive the politics of a secular society. Faith, as I said, is intensely personal. My faith is not necessarily the faith of any other person, and yet reason is potentially universalisable in a way that faith can never quite be.”

The credibility of the Citizenship Quiz must be called into question when two members of the Government cannot agree on something as important as the basis of Australian values.

We are in the middle of a long drawn out election campaign. Muslim voters must exercise their political rights and make the question of a Citizenship Quiz an election issue. ■

ABOUT AFIC

History

In 1963 the Muslim community adopted an organisational structure for the cause of Islam in Australia. At the grass root level local Muslims formed Islamic Societies to serve their basic needs in terms of education and prayer facilities. The building Mosques and providing religious education became the primary objective. The Islamic Councils of each State and Territory united to form State Islamic Councils representing their respective Muslim communities at a peak State level. At the national level the State and Territory Islamic Councils formed the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Inc (AFIC), as the national umbrella organisation for Australian Muslims representing Islam and Muslims at a national and international level. AFIC has its head office in Sydney with branch offices in Melbourne.

As a democratic organisation, AFIC holds Federal Council Meetings with all State and Territory affiliates quarterly and an Annual Congress with all State, Territory Councils and Societies participating. The AFIC Committee of Management is elected every two years by the Annual Congress.

Mission

The mission of AFIC is to provide service to the community in a manner that is in accordance with the teachings of Islam and within the framework of Australian law.

To advocate on behalf of the Muslim community on all such matters that will affect the community's relevance, settlement and integration within Australian society.

Religion and Dawah

As the national Islamic umbrella organisation of Australian Muslims, the AFIC is committed to promote the work of Dawah and other Islamic activities including education and welfare services for Muslims in Australia. AFIC assists with building Mosques projects in remote areas of Australia and assists in the expenses for running these Mosques and Islamic Centres including assistance with salaries of Imams.

Islamic Schools and Colleges

As part of AFIC's vision of excelling in the provision of educational facilities, AFIC successfully runs and operates: Malek Fadh Islamic School in New South Wales, Langford Islamic College in Western Australia, Brisbane Islamic School in Queensland, Islamic College of South Australia in Adelaide and the Islamic School of Canberra in the ACT. The Schools adhere to Australian Schools Curriculum standards with emphasis on religious and Arabic language studies. AFIC Schools are the first choice for most Muslim parents as these Schools provide excellence in education in an Islamic environment.





MALEK FAHD ISLAMIC SCHOOL

405 Waterloo Road, Greenacre NSW 2190

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SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

In 2006 The AFIC's Malek Fahd Islamic School has again maintained its first position in the High School Certificate (HSC) in the Bankstown Education District of Sydney.

The School was placed 15th out of about 650 schools in New South Wales.

"I would like to thank our students, parents and teachers for the excellent results" said Dr Intaj Ali, the principal of the School.

All the fifty-seven students have qualified for university admission. The students have gained admission in a wide range of courses such as medicine, pharmacy, law, engineering, advanced science, accounting, business, teaching, nursing and many more.

About 50% of the students had a University Admission Index (UAI) of over 90. Aisha Ferkh had the top ranking of 99.9. Another student Jinan Daher will receive the Premier's Award in February.

We congratulate the staff and students of Malek Fahd Islamic School.

HARMONY DAY at MALEK FAHD ISLAMIC SCHOOL

On Wednesday 21st March 2007 our school celebrated Harmony Day. Although Harmony Day is every day, once a year we put one day aside to commemorate harmony in our communities. This is a day to reflect on what we have personally done to contribute to harmony and goodwill in our community. Harmony Day is all about embracing our differences and learning from those differences. In the multicultural society that Australia is, harmony day is about being united in diversity.

On this day the school brought together all the people who had been preparing for Harmony Day. We had the choir beautifully sing the Australian National Anthem and what is becoming the anthem of multicultural Australia, "I Am Australian". The Hon. Barbara Perry, the Minister for Juvenile Justice, Minister for Western Sydney, Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship and the Member for Auburn, which our school is in, joined us on the day and also joined in with the singing.

“ *I would like to thank our students, parents and teachers for the excellent results* ”

The students had also made a harmony patch quilt cover. It demonstrates harmony and unity in diversity because three schools with whom we are collaborating made something beautiful. We would like to thank Callaghan College from Newcastle and Cronulla South Public School from the Sutherland Shire for contributing patches to our first ever patch quilt.

The highlight of the day was the performance put on by our junior girls who performed a wonderful piece depicting the negatives of war.

Barbara Perry thoroughly enjoyed herself and complimented the staff and students on their work. She said some beautiful words to the students, namely that they should be proud and confident of who they are, and that if they stood strong in the face of adversity, they would become stronger and overcome all difficulties. We thank her for her words and we will strive to apply them.

Next year we are already planning an even bigger Harmony Day.

Ms. P. El Ahmad.



The Hon. Barbara Perry, the Member for Auburn, together with Dr Intaj Ali, Principal of Malek Fahd Islamic School and Sheikh Fawaz Kamaz, MFIS Islamic Studies Coordinator



The school choir singing the Australian National Anthem



Our students showing the harmony patch quilt cover, which was made by three schools