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President's Message

PRECIOUS GIFT *by Ikebal Patel*

All praise and thanks to Allah *swt* Who has blessed and guides us all the way. It is with profound gratitude to Allah that we are able to share some good news with you. AFIC has worked tirelessly for a very long time to regain halal certification rights for Saudi Arabia; we are pleased to advise you that AFIC had been granted certification rights to be a member of the organizations to supervise Halal meat and other Halal products for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Indonesia.

Since I was elected as the President of AFIC, I have been in discussions with all the overseas authorities to recognize AFIC as the main certifying body, as we feel it is our right and responsibility as the peak national body representing the Muslim Ummah and the religion of Islam in Australia. Our Halal Services Manager, Br Mohamed Adil Rahman had also worked hard to bring back AFIC to its past glory as the National Certifier, recognized by most of the importing countries in all parts of the world. May Allah *swt* reward him for his efforts.

Alhamdulillah, this is another good outcome for AFIC and our team. With the most recent academic achievements and successes at AFIC's Malek Fadh Islamic School, Islamic College of Brisbane, Islamic College of South Australia and the promise of Langford and Canberra Schools, I would also like to draw your attention to yet another important objective of AFIC education.

The pursuit of knowledge is a sacred duty; it is obligatory on every Muslim, male and female. The first word revealed in the Qur'an was "*Iqra*": READ. Seek knowledge. Educate yourselves. Be educated. These are profound words. The quest and pursuit of knowledge should be an ongoing goal in all our lives. Allah *swt* reminds us numerous times in the Holy Quran, as displayed in the excerpts below:

Surah Al-Zumr, verse 9 reveals: "*Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know?*"

Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 269 reveals: "*Allah grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and to whom wisdom is granted, indeed he receives an overflowing benefit.*"

Ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: "*The position of only two persons is enviable; the person whom Allah bestowed wealth empowering him to spend it in the way of righteousness, and the person whom Allah gave wisdom with which he adjudges and which he teaches to others.*"

According to Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah, Ibn Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: "*A single scholar of religion is more formidable against shaytaan than a thousand devout persons.*"

Islam is our greatest gift, and one for which we must be grateful.

As Muslims, our foremost obligation is to acquire knowledge and secondly to practice and preach this knowledge. No one truly becomes a Muslim without knowing the meaning of Islam, as it is through knowledge that one becomes a Muslim, not through birth or tradition. Unless we come to know the basic and necessary teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) how can we believe in him, have faith in him, or act according to what he taught? It is impossible for us to be Muslims, and at the same time live in a state of ignorance. Every one of us, young or old, man or woman, should at least acquire sufficient knowledge to enable ourselves to understand the essence of the teachings of the Quran and the purpose for which it has been sent down; we should also be able to understand clearly the mission, which our beloved Prophet (pbuh) came into this world to fulfil; we should recognize the corrupt order and system which he came to destroy; we should acquaint ourselves with the way of life which Allah has ordained for us.

In Islam to seek knowledge is a form of worship. Reading the Quran and pondering upon it is worship, just as travelling to gain knowledge is worship. The practice of knowledge is connected with ethics and morality, most strongly in regards to promoting virtue and combating vice, enjoining right and forbidding wrong. Knowledge is pursued and practiced with modesty and humility and leads to beauty and dignity, freedom and justice. Let us remind our selves that the main purpose of acquiring knowledge is to bring us closer to Allah *swt*. It is not simply for the gratification of the mind or the senses. It is not knowledge for the sake of knowledge or science for the value of sake. Knowledge accordingly must be linked with principles and goals.

One of the purposes of acquiring knowledge is to gain the good of this world, not to destroy it through wastage, arrogance and in the reckless pursuit of higher standards of material comfort. Knowledge should be employed with the intention of promoting equality between every human being, not to gain power and dominance for its own sake. Let us consider our situation; do we have ready access to acquire knowledge and learn about this tremendous gift of Allah? The answer is an overwhelming, yes!

It is our duty as parents, teachers, leaders of communities to emphasis the importance and great value attached to acquiring knowledge about Islam and also education through schooling and university. All educational facilities are at our doorstep, we have a responsibility to equip our young and old alike to reach their full potential, to be active, valued and productive members of our locality and in due course of time, our beautiful country, Australia.

Dear Sirs,

My name is Anthony Thurn and I am a solicitor in Western Sydney. I was very distressed to hear of the ignorant opposition of Fred Nile to the construction of a Muslim School in Western NSW. I am a Roman Catholic and I know how essential it is that all communities enjoy full religious freedom.

On behalf of all right-thinking Christians, please accept my apologies for the attack on Muslim religious freedom by Fred Nile. His attack on Islam is utterly indefensible. It is essential that all Muslims have beautiful places of worship so they may worship Almighty God in accordance with the Faith of Islam. It is also essential that all Muslim families have access to Islamic schools so they may educate their children in their Faith.

My own community, the Irish Catholics, made such efforts at building schools and places of worship that there is now a Catholic school and church in every suburb of every large city and nearly every country town. But the Irish community made these efforts at a time when materials and land were much cheaper than they are today. It would not be fair to expect the Muslim community to replicate such an effort without Government assistance. Even so, the Islamic Community has already made enormous efforts, establishing beautiful Mosques in many parts of Australia, including Lakemba, Auburn and Chullora in Sydney alone.

There must be a Mosque and Islamic School wherever there is a Muslim community. It is the best thing for the entire community that all people of Faith should have places to worship Almighty God according to their Faith and places to educate their children in their Faith.

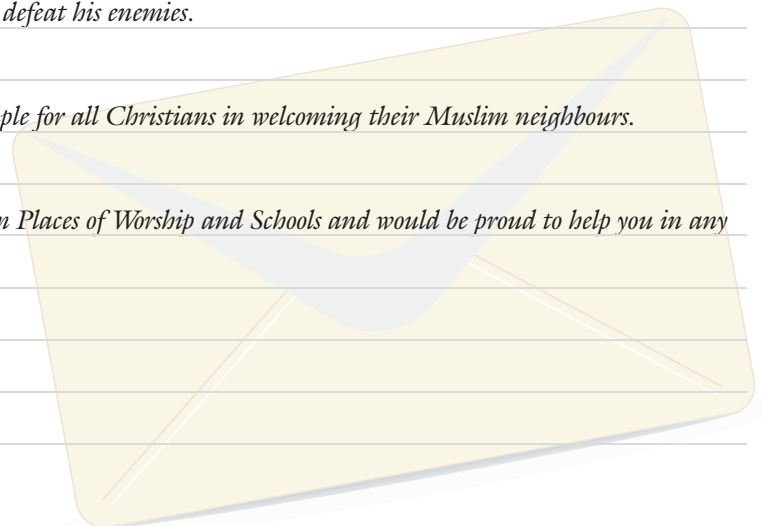
Fred Nile seems to be entirely ignorant that Muslims, Christians and Jews all share the tradition of Abraham and the Law of Moses. He seems entirely unaware that, to all Muslims, the Name of God is Mercy. He seems entirely unaware that Jesus is a Prophet of Islam, second only to the Prophet Mohammed.

There is a wonderful pious tradition that the Prophet Mohammed was forced at one stage in his struggle with his enemies to take shelter in Ethiopia. The Prophet was received by the Christian King of Ethiopia, Prester John. Kind Prester John asked the Prophet what he believed and the Prophet told him that he believed in the One Almighty God who made the Heavens and the Earth, and in Submission to His Will. Prester John saw that the Prophet was a holy man and gave him shelter in Ethiopia until the Prophet could return to Arabia and defeat his enemies.

The hospitality of King Prester John is the correct example for all Christians in welcoming their Muslim neighbours.

I wish you all the best in your efforts to establish Muslim Places of Worship and Schools and would be proud to help you in any way I can.

Kind Regards,
Anthony Thurn



Catholic Uni Sets up Chair of Islam

Harriet Alexander, Higher Education Reporter SMH
November 3, 2007

THE Australian Catholic University has broken free of its conservative beginnings and appointed a chair devoted to the study of Islam and Muslim-Catholic relations.

An associate professor in divinity from Turkey's Sakarya University, Ismail Albayrak, has been appointed to the Fethullah Gulen chair, named after the Turkish-born scholar who was granted a private audience with Pope John Paul II in 1998 to advance communication between religions.

It is hoped that the chair, funded by the Australian Intercultural Society at a cost of \$500,000 in the first year, will smooth relationships between the faiths, which the university acknowledges have been fraught since September 11, 2001, and the Cronulla riots.

The pro-vice chancellor for academic affairs, Gabrielle McMullen, said the university had always been open-minded about the different denominations of the Christian church.

"This is a natural extension of that, to interface into religious dialogue and this, I think, is very important in the current situation in Australia," Professor McMullen said.

"In the 17 years that the university's been going, I think there's been a substantive change in the Australian community." The university recognises that the best way to appreciate the faith on which it was founded is to learn about other religions as well, said Professor McMullen, who oversees the Asia-Pacific Centre for Inter-religious Dialogue, which was established at the Melbourne campus last year.

Dr Albayrak was born in Ankara, Turkey, and holds a doctorate in Quranic narrative from the University of Leeds.



Assalamu alaikum wa Rahmatullah wa Barakaatuhu

A new year and a new beginning for Langford Islamic College. In Perth we are a success story an AFIC initiative we are growing. In 2004 we commenced our humble beginnings with only 40 students. We were a new Islamic College competing against five other Islamic schools. We have had to prove ourselves worthy of the responsibility given to us to provide, with the guidance of Allah (SWT), a secular and religious education of the highest quality.

Langford Islamic College is located 16km South of Perth City. The College is developed around three teaching blocks. Each block has a number of teaching areas, separate toilets and multi-purpose areas for art and enterprise activities. The College is well resourced with a large open playing field, which includes football, soccer and cricket facilities. There is also a basketball and a netball court. The junior primary students enjoy the use of three playground areas specifically designed for their use.

The College provides extensive hands-on teaching materials, computing facilities and the students have access to a school library. The college is fortunate to be situated amongst shady trees and grassed areas. The College's learning programme is based on the values as prescribed in the Curriculum Framework and the eight learning areas: English, Mathematics, Society and Environment, Science, Arabic, The Arts, Health and Physical Education, Technology and Enterprise. All students will be exposed to each aspect of the curriculum throughout their time at school.

Islamic Studies plays an important role in the college curriculum. The comprehensive and systematic programme aims to nurture the young Muslim mind with sound ethics and moral values espoused in an Islamic ethos. Our main objective is to instil into the hearts of the students the truth of The Holy Quran, the message of Islam and the sincerity of Iman and Taqwa. We endeavour to support the students in their integration into a western society and the preservation of their identity as Australian Muslims.

We are a caring school with a commitment to our students. Our staff are dedicated and professional and meet the requirements to teach in Western Australia schools and are registered with the Western Australian College of Teaching.

Our current enrolment is 350 which includes students from Kindergarten to Year 10. With Ministerial approval we will extend our enrolment to Year 11 and 12 in 2009.

(Please visit our new website which has been developed by some of our high school students)
www.afic-lic.com.au

Kevin King
Principal

Phone (08) 9458 5206
Fax (08) 9258 5661
Email admin@afic-lic.com.au



OPENING KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Pat Dodson: Former Chair, Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation



MUSLIM STUDENTS ACCESS, INCLUSION AND SUCCESS CONFERENCE

Hosted by the University Western Sydney - www.uws.edu.au/muslimconference

3rd September 2007

Delegates to the Conference.

Often when I am asked to give an address to a conference or an event it is usually in the context of a particular issue confronting Indigenous people and their encounter with the wider community. To enlighten or inform, to assert a position or to seek justice for an injustice imposed. So when Dr Ozdowski kindly invited me to address this conference here in Western Sydney on the participation by Muslim people in the tertiary education system I was somewhat surprised but equally intrigued as to how as a Yawuru man from Broome I might bring some worth to the discussion that began last night with Tom Zubrzycki's film "Temple of Dreams" and will be followed this morning by presentations and commentary from so many gifted and knowledgeable presenters and conference delegates. As is often the case the answer to a part of the dilemma of understanding the task ahead lay in the streets of the town where I was born and where I live - in Broome in Western Australia. Some of the first Muslims who came to Australia in the late nineteenth century were Malays who were indentured by their then colonial masters the Dutch to work in the Pearl Industry that was in its infancy on the North West Coast of Australia. These young Muslim men left their homes in the Dutch East Indies colonies and came as indentured workers subject to the whim and discretion of the European Pearl Masters who controlled the pearl industry at that time. They were set to work among the Aboriginal people who had been black birded by the same Pearl Masters and forced to free dive from the luggers to the bottom of the ocean so as to retrieve the highly valued pearl shells.

Muslim indentured labour and Aboriginal slave labour representatives of two ancient cultures the visitor and the land owner subordinated to the money making needs of yet another culture. This unequal, master/worker experience between Muslims and the colonial Australian society stands in contrast to the first encounter between Muslim people and the Aboriginal Australians an engagement that had occurred 300 years before the arrival of the first pearl lugger off the North West Coast of Australia and established a relationship that was to last for three centuries. It was the encounter between the Macassan people of what are now known as the islands of Indonesia and the Aboriginal people along the length of the Northern Australian coastline in Arnhemland. It has arguably been the most successful encounter ever between any two cultures on this continent. Two cultures who met to trade and exchange commerce, two cultures that showed mutual respect and understanding of each others values, language, customs and laws. Two cultures that sustained a co equal relationship for three centuries without ever having fought a war, they never sought to establish government over the other, they traded and engaged in commerce as business partners and never felt so insecure in their own culture that they needed to destroy or diminish the cultural symbols of the other. By the end of the 19th century the colonial authorities in Northern Australia were so worried about the relationship between the Macassans and the Arnhemlanders (Yolgnu) and its strength that the Macassans were banned from northern waters and the trade between the two cultures was deemed illegal. Perhaps if the model of engagement established by the Muslims of Macassa and the Aboriginal people of Northern Australia had been adopted by the English when they decided to invade in 1788 then the history between us all over the past 220 years may have been a very different story. The early experiences of encounter for Muslims in Australia from:

- the Macassans in the 16th century,
- the 19th century Malay pearl workers of the Northern pearling grounds and
- the Afghan camel drivers and merchants of the 19th century or
- the Albanian Muslims in the 1930s who were allowed into an Australia underpinned by the White Australia Policy because they looked quite fair, were all encounters that required engagement with the Aboriginal people of this country.

The descendants of the Malays indentured workers still live with us in Broome. The language of the Macassans and the beautiful trees that they planted over three centuries are part of the lives of the Aboriginal people of Arnhemland to this day and the descendants of the Afghan merchants and camel train drivers are represented in our parliaments and in commerce and industry throughout Australia. But in each case these Muslim communities and the Aboriginal people have sustained their relationship. The nature of engagement by different Muslims groups in this country has varied a great deal. By and large the experience has enriched all who chose to engage. In this country, in recent years our capacity for engaging and embracing the best aspects of the cultures and values of different societies has been sorely tested. Our multi cultural society built on the back of tolerance, patience and a capacity to see the worth of our fellow human being has become a point of mockery and derision for some in our society. They are so insecure in their own culture and values that they cannot abide others who value diversity and difference. Racism and intolerance, vilification and public derision are the tools of the bigot. Violence and hatred are the outcomes when racism and intolerance are ignored and rejected by those targeted by the racism. The bigot will find comfort in his isolation but the loneliness of his bigotry demands that he ridicule the symbols of those who stand above his cultural poverty. But the bigot is susceptible to being led, susceptible to the lure of the mob. In recent times, the mob has gained some temporary ascendancy in this country. It has manifested itself in the gown of Hansonism .A gown that uses the stolen colours of liberty, fraternity and equality and set out to besmirch the integrity of many Australians who do not subscribe to the hatred and intolerance of the bigot. But this is a temporary ascendancy of the bigot. We have had cycles of this disease many times before in this country. At different times it has been aimed at the Aboriginals or the Chinese or whatever migrant group happened to be the most recent arrivals at any given time in our history. It should never be a necessary rite of passage for each new group of arrivals in any country to be subject to racism, abuse and vilification but it tends to be that the least understood or most vulnerable become the target of the racist elements of our society. Racists, whom we seem destined to have crawling over our national body politic like lice on the back of a sheep. They are there and will inevitably

remain despite our best democratic efforts. So long as there are people in our society who are prepared to countenance their existence or who are prepared to use this bigotry as an opportunist political tool whenever the circumstance presents itself they will remain.

The Universities and Tertiary Institutions of this country do have a very good record in many instances of accommodating difference and have shown a great capacity to accommodate diversity. But building inclusive structures and providing a welcoming environment for diversity and the nurturing of knowledge are ongoing tasks. Our institutions of learning must be active in challenging racism and looking at ways of enhancing the capacity for minority groups to participate in the critical endeavour of learning and civilizing our communities. They must create symbols of tolerance, promote experiences of diversity and accept the need to accommodate difference as an asset not a barrier to greater participation. The Muslim Community of this country has a long and proud history which is simply an extension of a much longer and greater history going back to a time when Christian civilizations were on the verge of collapse and entering a period of their own naming - the Dark Ages. The greatness of the Muslim societies was underpinned by the skill of your architects and engineers, the wisdom of your philosophers, the words of your great poets, the bravery of your soldiers and the acumen of your businessmen and women. Muslims did not differentiate between their responsibility to their faith and their worldly profession. To behave ethically and honestly in your trade is a religious responsibility as well as commercial good practice. So for young Muslims in this country you have come with some very serious responsibilities to carry on the traditions of a society and a faith that has set some very high benchmarks. Benchmarks established centuries ago but as relevant to your lives today as they were to your forebears. These are benchmarks that have seen Muslims as leaders in every sphere of the arts, the sciences, law and the humanities for centuries. A failure by young Muslims in this country today to defeat intolerance and racism and so become an underclass excluded for a generation is an unacceptable outcome for yourselves as individuals but also for our community. If you choose the path of assimilation into the Australian society at the price of your Muslim

identity you will perhaps secure your personal elevation but then be simply an Australian of Muslim descent. On the other hand if you are able to take the path that aligns the values of your society and your faith with your responsibilities as a citizen then you have an opportunity to establish yourself as an Australian Muslim citizen with an amalgam of the best that these two elements represent.

The opportunity to achieve great things as a Muslim and an Australian citizen are in abundance. The contribution that you will bring as members of a vibrant community with a rich culture and faith will enhance the nation's universities and colleges. The medical schools and law faculties will be enhanced by your presence and your contributions and when you go forth from them you will enrich our professions, our society, our nation and your community. Stand in solidarity with others when they are oppressed because their security is your responsibility. Treat intolerance with disdain, cast the slurs of bigots into the abyss, assert the values of your faith in an instructive manner but do all of these things using the powers of your intellect, the strength of your faith and the understanding acquired from your search for knowledge. Defend your right to exhibit your faith, demand the opportunity to share your values and have them accepted. Put forward the symbols of your community and have them recognised along with the other symbols of the nation. Seek your place in the political life of the country - not for the sake of power but for the sake of creating a better more tolerant society. The prophet was a man who understood the power of books and he understood that there was knowledge beyond the circle of his own society. Following the Battle of Badr He decreed that all the prisoners of war could be released on the condition that each prisoner was required to teach 10 Muslim children to read and write. A man of justice to release the defeated, a man of business to get a return on the release; and a man so secure in his faith that he could entrust the teaching of his children to those not of his faith. And in that is a lesson for us all.