

“O ye who believe! Eat of the good things wherewith We have provided you, and render thanks to Allah if it is (indeed) He whom ye worship” (2:172).



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AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF ISLAMIC COUNCILS INC.
الاتحاد الأسترالي للمجالس الإسلامية

FLAMES - Multicultural Fire Safety



Flames for English Language Schools and Centres

Flames for English Language Schools and Centres (ELS / ELC) is a fire safety education program for secondary aged students newly arrived in Australia.

These students are often relied on by their families for information regarding a new environment.

They have not attended primary school in Australia and therefore missed out on receiving fire safety education through the Fire Ed program which is delivered to primary schools in the MFD.

FLAMES for ELS /ELC was written specifically for these students. They are taught English through fire safety education.

Key program messages:

- Firefighters role in the community
- Home fire safety information
- Emergency procedures information
- 000 emergency phone number.

Practical work includes:

- Use of smoke alarms / testing / replacing battery
- Flammability test on different fabrics.

Program Delivery:

- Manuals are provided to all participating schools
- The program is designed to be delivered each term to participating ELS
- Prior to Firefighter involvement, teachers prepare the students from lesson plans in teachers' manual
- Firefighters specifically trained for this task visit the school and deliver a 100 minutes session containing hands on activities
- Teaching staff continue to reinforce the key messages of the program with follow up activities also contained in the teachers manual.

Flames for Adult Migrants

Flames for Adult Migrants was a partnership program between the MFB and the Adult multicultural Education Services (AMES) Victoria.

Adult migrant students are taught English skills through the study of fire safety and fire safe behaviors. Programs can be delivered in any centre providing English Language programs.

Key lessons:

- Smoke alarm information
- Home fire escape information
- Accessing the emergency services (000)
- Common fire hazards around the home.

Practical work includes:

- Use of smoke alarms / testing / replacing battery
- Use of fire blankets and portable extinguishers.

Program Delivery:

- Firefighters specially trained to deliver FLAMES, present the program to adult students at AMES centres
- Teaching staff continue to reinforce the key messages of the program with follow up activities contained in the Teachers Manual
- For centres using 'A Safe Start' presentations are designed to meet individual needs.

Further enquiries please contact the Multicultural Liaison Officer on 9665 4464 or via email commed@mfb.vic.gov.au.

Just say NO

Being a teenager isn't easy. What with school work, family commitments, part time jobs and a whole host of other activities that take up our time, having a social life is practically impossible. As a Muslim teenager, however, there are even more issues to consider when going out with friends than finding a few spare hours, and figuring out what to wear.

Living in Australia, as many of us have done our whole lives, we are often confronted with conflicting opinions: those of our religion and cultures, and those of our Australian friends and colleagues. One of the strongest points of contention, especially amongst younger generations, is alcohol.

Booze, grog, hooch: so many names for a substance that not only is forbidden by Islam, but is also just a slow-working poison that can destroy not only our bodies, but our relationships and lives as well. As with everything in the Quran, that which is forbidden is forbidden for a good reason. But in a society where alcohol is prominent at every social event and is considered a mark of a fulfilling lifestyle, abstaining can be difficult and often awkward, especially after reaching the legal drinking age.

Explaining to friends that you don't drink, especially for religious reasons can frequently elicit remarks of wonder, and sometimes even outrage. For some reason, young people can't seem to comprehend that fun can be had without ingesting vast amounts of beer or vodka. The pressure to drink is particularly strong at university, where practically every social event is centered on cheap drinks, or 'pub crawls'.

I recently attended o-week at a university in Sydney, where almost every single event run by students (with the exception of the library tours) involved alcohol. Not only does this make it difficult to make friends (and keep them), it also can lead to feelings of self doubt, and also peer pressure. No one really wants to be the odd one out, and it can be difficult to come up with excuses every day that sound believable. I found myself having to constantly justify my lifestyle, and eventually found myself spending a lot of time in my room watching reality television while everyone else partied. All of these hours spent alone made me think, and I realized that I was sick of having to defend myself for my religion and my choices.

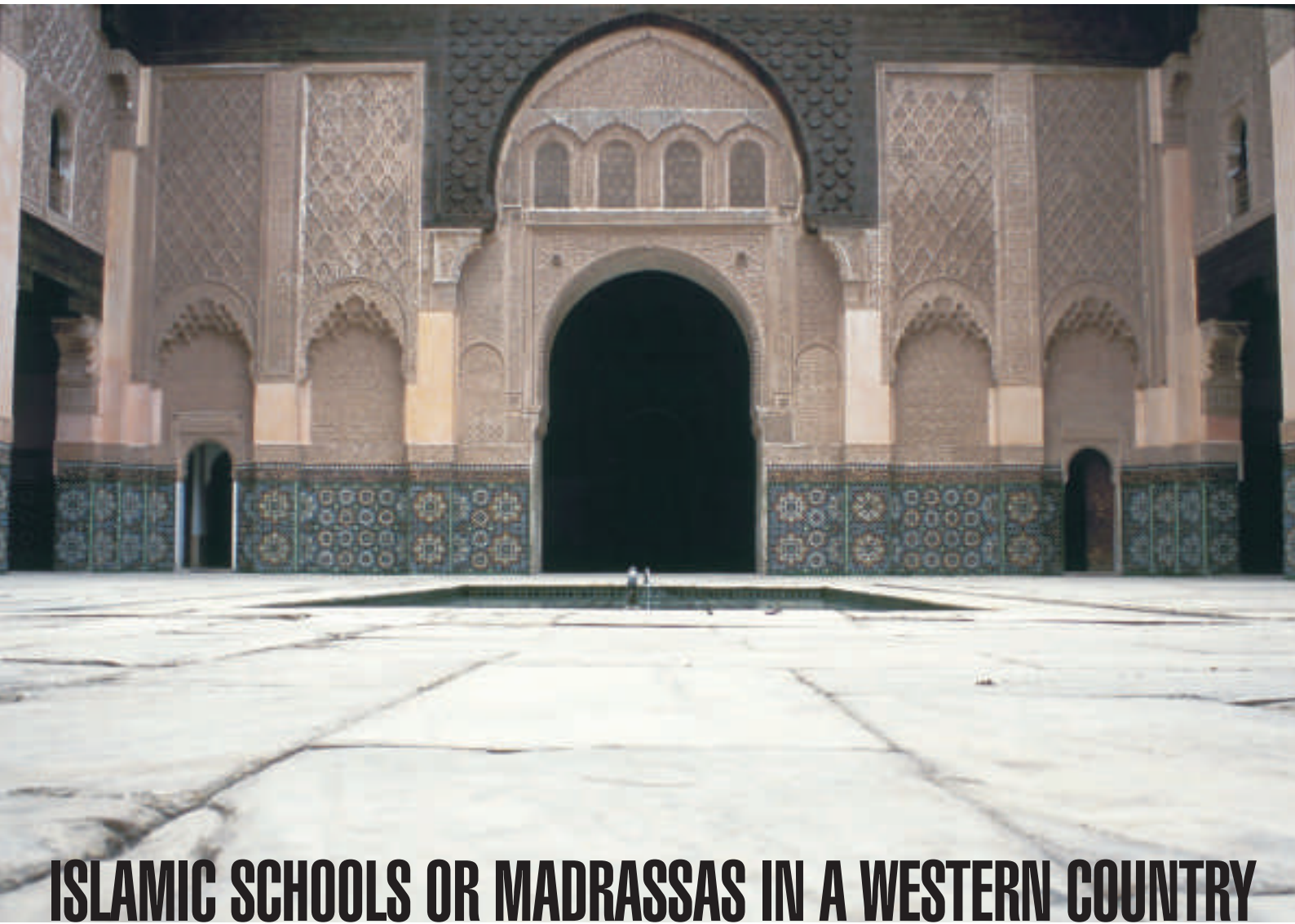
Clichéd though it may seem, the time has come to JUST SAY NO.

Not drinking is a lifestyle choice, just as our religion and culture is a choice, and all of these should be respected. There are many ways to have a satisfying social life without having to drink, such as inviting friends over for dinner, meeting to talk in a café, or organizing events that allow conversation to flow in place of alcohol.

Always remember that what our friends think of us doesn't matter even an ounce as much what Allah thinks of us.

Zoya Patel





ISLAMIC SCHOOLS OR MADRASSAS IN A WESTERN COUNTRY

International terrorism carried out in cities around the world in the name of Islam is creating a dangerous perception of Muslims as bloodthirsty criminals, even in Australia. The mere mention of the word Muslim or Islamic creates in the mind of the audience an irrational and stereotypical notion of barbaric and backward individuals, to be feared, spreading doom and gloom in their wake.

Sadly, this is the perception in certain parts of the community. And unfortunately it is this perception that is so evident in community reactions recently.

Or is it a case of emotional over-reaction, as is the case in point in Camden, Sydney's south west, where a recent application to setup an Islamic School is enraging the 'locals' at an unprecedented level.

Are they really the locals or are they in fact imported from other areas by interested parties and one particular member of the NSW parliament.

Why is the opposition so adamant?

If we were to remove the term Islamic from the equation and offer to suggest that A School, is proposed at the site, would be the reaction of the local community still be as adamant?

Let us apply one of the most common, Australian values of - fair-go, to this or any other application for that matter, will be decided by the Camden Council shortly.

There is a legal and administrative process in relation to every application that is tendered to Council. Whatever the nature of the application before Council, of course it is up to the Council to measure the application against Council rules and regulations ensuring all relevant legal permits and administrative paraphernalia is properly adhered to, including that of community responses.

Each application that comes before the Council should be considered OBJECTIVELY according to the merits

of the proposal. It is also well within the bounds of the Council and relevant State bodies to consider population trends and the environment and then to review infrastructure requirements and other priorities within that locality and address them accordingly, ensuring the current and future needs of the community are adequately met.

Let me say, to the local Camden population, neither Islam nor Muslims are a threat to you or anyone else for that matter. We are talking about an educational establishment that will produce intelligent, caring, balanced, productive members of Society.

The ethics of Islam are clear peace, kindness, compassion, humility to name a few, are qualities expressed in one's dealing with EVERY HUMAN BEING, NO EXCEPTIONS.

The Australian Federation of Islamic Council's view on education and the setting up of Schools, is quite simply, that the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils is committed to providing

educational facilities to all Australian Muslims that will enable these Australian Muslim children to be schooled at the highest level in an Islamic environment which would then enable them to take their rightful, productive place in the Australian society.

I'd like now to focus on the role and choice of education in Australia.

When we look at our options, there is public versus private schooling in the main with a very small percentage of home-schooling. Education and schooling isn't something parents think about on the day their child is due to enroll in school. The planning starts years ahead with all parents wanting the best for their children and education in the majority of cases is a high priority.

It is usually the parent's financial circumstances and the number of children which determines the selection of education type public or private. There are of course merits in both systems.

In the public education system the non-core subjects offered are obviously limited by resources and demand. It is not that Government Schools produce less intelligent or less adaptable students.

On the contrary, public schooling has produced many successful and productive members of the community.

The variation in government and private schooling comes into play when it comes to choice of non core or extra curricula activities that may not be an option at the local Government School as opposed to a private, independent school. The case for the independent schools is slightly different, because they are independent, they obviously have the capacity to provide particular types of curricula, services and facilities that are different from government schools.

At the end of the day, it's parents and children who are the focus of schooling. Parents are looking for an environment that will best bring out the particular talents and skills of their children and provide a learning environment that is suited to their child's particular needs.

We have to recognize that it's about what parents consider to be most appropriate for their children. Many of them are looking for particular types of curriculum - it might be languages, it might be music. You have to look at the range of programs that schools are developing that really challenge students in terms of their physical, spiritual and emotional development.

There is a range of programs, particularly in the middle years and in year nine, where we're seeing schools providing different environments. I think that's one of the opportunities that independent schools have is that they can tailor-make what they think is appropriate education for the students and families.

At the end of the day, it all comes to down to CHOICE and whether the family can afford the choice. Parents obviously want the best possible educational opportunities for their children, within their family budget and if private schooling falls within that realm than that's a choice for parents and children.

Which brings us to the CHOICE in private education, which is primarily religious denomination based. What we need to emphasize is the fact that any private school, be it Islamic or otherwise is strictly required to adhere to the requirements of Australian State Government Education department's rules and regulation in terms of choice and adherence to curriculum.

This means the curriculum at these schools must comply with Australian Educational standards. Any school that is found to be in breach of these requirements is subject to be deregistered and its doors shut, as was the case recently with a School in Perth.

AFIC operates all of its 5 schools, which are the pride of the respective State Government in terms of the excellent work they do in encouraging participation with the many activities with the larger community in general. These Schools have teachers who are the very best in the state and are paid at the top range of the salary structure.

ISLAMIC SCHOOL OF CANBERRA



Now in its fourth year of operation, the Islamic School of Canberra continues to mature and progress. This year has seen greater interest in the school, higher enrolments, improved participation of parents as partners in education, support from the Management Board, Parent and Citizens Committee and support of both the ACT and Federal Governments.

An increase of 50% since 2007 in the rate of enrolments is indicative of the popularity and demand for placements at Canberra Islamic School.

Our focus is to create a learning environment conducive to educational excellence. Notwithstanding this objective, our curriculum also includes physical education as part of healthy bodies equal healthy minds, philosophy. To this end, we resolve, in 2008 to vastly improve sporting and recreational facilities for our children and consider the appointment of specialist physical education teacher to handle this part of our program. We are confident of the support of our partnerships with local and Federal government funding sources, and other funding bodies to meet this objective.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the Federal and ACT governments for funding the computer laboratory and ongoing support for the establishment of the School library. The Islamic School of Canberra is determined to develop into one of Canberra's leading educational establishments. The teaching staff is highly qualified and dedicated to offering the highest level of excellence in religious, academic and physical education. We also have a Special Needs/ESL teacher who is able to provide one to one and small group lessons for children who need extra academic support. We endeavour to achieve excellence in religious education through both formal instruction and the practical living out of the religion.

In the absence of external examinations we will encourage all Years 3 to 6 students to participate in the International Competitions organised by the University of New South Wales. All our Year 3 and Year 5 students will also take part in the National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy during 2008. The results in these competitions and assessments will reflect the level of academic excellence achieved by our students.

With the continued support of the school community and the ACT and Federal Governments and the sustained efforts of our teachers and students, we are confident that the Islamic School of Canberra will continue to thrive and prosper.

Manners @ ICB

We are now in our second year of our manners focus here at the Islamic College of Brisbane.

In 2006 the school began a lengthy consultation process with the wider school community with the aim of developing and improving the teaching of manners at our school. From this consultation process thirteen manner focuses were decided upon, they are:

- > Use greetings & farewells
- > Give & receive with right hand
- > Sit correctly
- > Use appropriate language
- > Use please & thank you
- > Say sorry when wrong
- > Say excuse me when interrupting or passing others
- > Be considerate of the feelings of others
- > We make everyone feel welcome
- > We do not bully (Social, Verbal & Physical)
- > Eat food politely & with clean hands
- > Be on time
- > Respect to living and non-living things



We have decided to take a whole-school approach by concentrating on one manner focus each week, in every grade. Already we have covered three of these focuses this year, with explicate teaching, regular reminders, and links into the standard teaching. The Imams are also linking the manner focuses into prayer times and classroom teaching as appropriate.

The primary school ran a competition to create posters, both in English and Arabic, these posters can be seen all around the school. Teachers are not only reminding, but rewarding students who use their manners.

At home, as well as at school, please encourage your child to use their manners. Please let your classroom teacher know of any good ideas you have as to how we can encourage the use of these manners further.

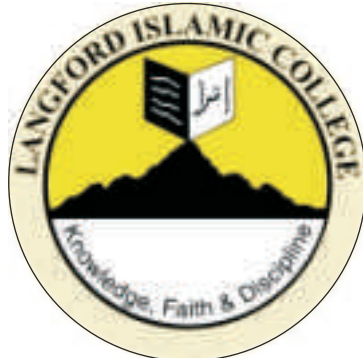
A special thanks needs to go out to all the parents, teachers and students who continue to develop these most important manners.

“We are so proud to have well mannered people at our school!”

Mr Paul Hemphill
Teacher, Islamic College of Brisbane



Langford Islamic College Photos



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EFFECTIVE USE OF EDUCATION AS A TOOL TO SHAPE THE ATTITUDES OF THE YOUNG AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

by Ikebal Adam Patel - PRESIDENT OF AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF ISLAMIC COUNCIL

My talk today will first comprise on the position and importance of education generally and how this then reflects on the community and the environment.

My presentation today will have an emphasis on education and its place in Islam. And it will then look at Islamic schools in Australia with an emphasis on the schools run by the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils.

From the outset I would like to set the scene that when I speak about education's place in Islam, or Islamic schools in Australia, or indeed any where else in the world, I am by implication also generalising about education in other faiths and other faith based schools in Australia. I request you all to allow me to indulge in this acceptance of commonality for ease of this presentation.

Position Of Education In Islam
Allow me to begin with a question. What was the first revealed word of the Holy Quran? It was "Iqra": or translated - READ.

From the onset mankind is encouraged to seek knowledge and to educate oneself.

The pursuit of knowledge is a sacred duty; it is obligatory on every Muslim, male and female. And it is no different in any other faith, education is placed as a high priority amongst all faith.

Educate yourselves. Be educated. These are profound words. The quest and pursuit of knowledge should be an ongoing goal in all our lives. Allah reminds us of this 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, a companion of the holy Prophet reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him (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."

The Hadith Tirmidi containing the practices of the Holy Prophet Mohammed narrates that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: "A single scholar of religion is more formidable against shaytaan (satan) than a thousand devout persons."

As Muslims, our foremost obligation is to acquire knowledge and secondly to practice and preach this knowledge. 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.

Knowledge as a form of worship

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 and to lead a life that will do good for fellow human beings. 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.

Modern Concept of Education

Education is the ability of putting one's potentials to maximum use. This importance of education is basically for two reasons.

The first is that the training of a human mind is not complete without education. Education makes one understand how to think and how to make decisions that are informed and hopefully the optimum one for the benefit of the individual.

The second reason is that only through the attainment of education is one enabled to receive information from the external world, to acquaint himself with past history and receive all necessary information regarding the present.

Without education, one is insulated from the rest of the world as though in a closed room and with education he finds himself in a room with all its windows and doors open towards the outside world.

This is why Islam attaches such great importance to knowledge and education. Education is thus the starting point of every human activity.

Difference between animals and humans

To bring home the pivotal but forgotten role of education we need to recall that there is a fundamental difference between human beings and animals.

Instincts and physical needs alone can bring ants, bees, or herds of beasts together to live in a perfectly functioning animal society.

Human beings are not constrained by nature to follow only those ways that are necessary for the harmonious operation of their society. If they are to form a viable, thriving society, then they should challenge themselves always to strive better than the past generations.

Common goal of all humanity

What drives this choice for excellence is the sharing of common goals, beliefs, values and outlook on life. Without a common framework binding its members, a human society cannot continue to exist. Further, the society must ensure that the common ground will continue to hold from generation to generation. This is the real purpose of education.

The education system of a society produces citizens and leaders needed for the smooth operation of that society, now and into the future. The calibre of its leaders and their education translates directly into the health or sickness of the society that they are meant to serve.

Responsibility for Irking out good for Humanity

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 nature, science, arts, history, geography, communication, the list is endless. The answer is an overwhelming, yes! It is our duty as parents, teachers, leaders of communities to emphasize the importance and great value attached to acquiring knowledge and 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 and in fact the whole world. Islam places a very high priority on education. It is incumbent on all Muslims to seek knowledge - Higher education provides considerable value to individuals, the economies where educated individuals live and work and society in general.

Faith based Schools in Australia

In Australia, there is no restriction on the establishment of faith based schools. In fact all governments actively encourage this to offer parents a wide choice in the education of their children. One of the key objectives of AFIC is "To ensure that practical steps are taken to advance progress and security in moral, social and cultural life of the Muslims in Australia with the object of enabling them to attain and maintain their rightful and honoured place amongst the other communities of Australia and make their full contribution towards peace, prosperity and progress of Australia."

This goal is achievable through: Education. Education is an effective tool in shaping the attitudes of the young and the wider community.

AFIC AS PIONEERS OF ISLAMIC SCHOOLS IN AUSTRALIA

AFIC operates 5 schools, which are the pride of the respective State Government in terms of the excellent work they do in encouraging participation with the many activities with the larger community in general. These Schools have teachers who are the very best in the state and are paid at the top range of the salary structure.

Islamic Schools in Australia is not a new phenomenon. AFIC set up the first Islamic School in Melbourne in the early 1980's.

AFIC's Malek Fahd Islamic School also set up in the late 1980's is exemplary, as far as academic excellence is concerned. The School started with a total of 150 children in Kindergarten to Year 4 with five teachers. Today MFIS has about 1800 children and 120 teachers.

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS

In 1998 the school had its first Year 12 class and all the 24 students qualified for university entry. Since then, the school has been the number one school in the Bankstown Education district.

100 per cent of the Year 12 students have qualified for university entry since its commencement with a number of the students now having qualified as lawyers, doctors, engineers, teachers, nurses, pharmacists and other noble professions serving the people of Australia and abroad.

COMPETING WITH THE BEST AND THE MOST EXPENSIVE

Malek Fahd Islamic School has swept into 9th place among the top 10 Higher School Certificate (HSC) performers in 2007, receiving 4 distinguished 4 Premiers awards. This is a tremendous scholastic achievement with all 2007 MFIS's HSC student's enrolled into University courses.

The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils operated Islamic College of Brisbane has also followed in the tradition of Malek Fahd Islamic School by being one of the top six schools in Queensland for the second year running with all graduates proceeding to University courses.

By providing excellence in teaching, a broadly based curriculum based on Queensland Studies Authority guidelines along with school-based Islamic education, up-to-date facilities, and an environment conducive to learning, the school is producing fine Australian citizens as well.

Islamic College of South Australia which had its first cohort of year 12 students in 2007, also had fantastic results with all year 12 students passing and being eligible for university entrance.

The successes at Malek Fahd Islamic School, Islamic College of Brisbane and Islamic College of South Australia is attributable to hard work and due diligence of students, parents, teachers and support staff respectively with the very good support from the respective State Education Departments and the Federal Department of Education Science and Training in Australia.

We are also proud of our educational facilities offered at Langford Islamic

School in Perth, which has kindergarten up to year 10 facilities. Parents, teachers and the community is working hard to cater for the growing needs of the local children hoping to provide up to year 12 education in the near future. We have a similar situation in Canberra at the Islamic School of Canberra which currently provides up to year 6, with plans to cater for up to year 12, as the populations grows and demand increases for education.

AFIC has already purchased land for another 2 schools to be hopefully operational in 2009, one in Melbourne and the other one in Sydney. When one considers that AFIC run schools charge between 5% and 10% of the fees charged by the elite and exclusive schools, AFIC truly is providing a service to the community. AFIC schools in Perth and Canberra makes a loss collectively of some \$1M a year for the last 5 years running.

At all of AFIC's Schools there is a common theme: We make sure that the students are exposed to a broad academic curriculum, which encourages them to develop their intellectual potential. Our curriculum is based on the respective State Curriculum Framework and we have received excellent feedback on it from the Non-Government School Board. We teach students a wide range of skills, which they will be able to use throughout their lives. Students learn how to use technology and the Internet. Small classes and highly qualified teachers give students every chance to achieve their personal best. We are doing everything possible to prepare our students academically and intellectually for their future lives.

At all AFIC Schools we want our students to develop into emotionally mature and socially responsible human beings. We engage students in co-curricular activities that allow them to mix with students from other schools and to face challenges that go beyond their comfort zone. Various competitions throughout the year offer students opportunities to have their achievements recognized in the wider community.

We also believe that physical activities are important to support a healthy intellectual development. Our students have regular Physical Education lessons and participate in sports competitions with other schools.

I am convinced that a human being will only become complete with appropriate spiritual development. We teach students Arabic and Islamic Studies. At the core of our curriculum is the Quranic Education Program, which teaches students how to read and understand the Holy Quran. Receiving this Quranic education will prepare students for all events in their lives because they can find the answers to all their questions in the Quran.

Australian State and Federal Government assistance to schools

The Australian Muslims acknowledge the commitment by the Federal and State government in assisting Islamic schools becoming some of the very best schools in the country. The ACT Education Minister, Mr Andrew Barr at the annual prize giving ceremony at the Islamic School of Canberra on 14 December 2007 said, that "the Islamic School of Canberra for the period of its operation has made a very positive contribution to the ACT educational landscape and the community in general". The School is hopeful of continuing to progress to become the best in the State.

To summarize, students at our Islamic Schools are valued as individuals who have a right to academic, emotional, social, physical and spiritual nourishment. This is how we prepare our students for their bright future.

In this climate of confused "identity" and so called "Islamic" values, which, I might add are definitely inconsistent with the teaching of Islam and the practices of Prophet Mohammed PBUH, it is imperative that we as parents and leaders do our utmost to provide our children with an understanding of Islam and its positive contribution to society, within the parameters of the respective State Education authorities. Their spiritual education must not be left to some second rate, backyard religious import who has no or very little notion of the day to day challenges our young Australians are faced.

Faith based schools in Australia compared to other western countries

If we look at the example of British educational institutions, there are currently only seven state funded Muslim schools in Britain compared with more than 4,700 Church of England schools, 2,100 Catholic schools, 37 Jewish and 28 Methodist schools that are all state funded yet their place within the British education system remains a hotly debated issue.

In Germany, the call to close one of its Islamic Schools due its it's anti-democratic outlook, with an overseas based curriculum and medium of teaching that was not the official German language. Of course, if the School does not abide by and comply with a country's education department's set curriculum, then it is a recipe for alienation, intolerance and isolation. School authorities have similar concerns in The Netherlands.

In comparison, our Australian experience is different. Our identity is clear, there is no ambiguity. Our Australian Islamic Schools provide a centre of educational activities, which will provide a high quality and standard of education in compliance with Australian curriculum, in an Islamic environment and thus produce good citizens, imbued with Islamic spiritual values. Our Schools are designed to create a harmonious and stimulating community atmosphere in which staff are mutually supportive and care for the pupils in which the pupils can grow as persons developing a feeling of self-worth, a high level of personal integrity, a sincere respect for others, and increasing sense of individual responsibility and competence to form mature value judgements and an ability to establish constructive relationship.

AFIC Schools encourage each pupil to develop self-appreciation, social awareness, reverence of life, integrity and responsibility. Each pupil is further encouraged to develop to the highest possible level of academic and cultural attainment of which he or she is capable, with excellence as a goal in all activities.