

# POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF MUSLIMS IN AUSTRALIA

Final Report  
June 2010

Prepared by:

Kais Al-Momani  
Nour Dados  
Marion Maddox  
Amanda Wise

Centre for Research on Social Inclusion  
Macquarie University



MACQUARIE  
UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Table of Contents .....   | 2   |
| Acknowledgements .....  | 3   |
| Executive Summary .....   | 4   |
| Chapter 1: Aims, Research Questions & Methodology .....                     | 8   |
| Chapter 2: Political Participation & Muslims in Australia .....             | 12  |
| Chapter 3: Literature Review .....  | 28  |
| Chapter 4: Opportunities and Barriers .....                                 | 35  |
| Chapter 5: Tackling The Problem.....  | 50  |
| Chapter 6: Australian And International Case Studies.....                   | 69  |
| Chapter 7: Summary of Key Findings.....                                     | 99  |
| Chapter 8: Recommendations .....  | 102 |
| Appendix One: Audit of Initiatives.....                                     | 109 |
| Appendix Two : Profiles of Selected Political & Academic Commentators ..... | 142 |
| Appendix Three: List of Interviewees (de-identified) .....                  | 155 |
| Appendix Four: Interview Questions .....                                    | 157 |
| Appendix Five: References .....   | 160 |

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

The research for this report was undertaken by Kais Al-Momani, Nour Dados, Marion Maddox, and Amanda Wise. All authors are researchers in the Centre for Research on Social Inclusion at Macquarie University. Lead Researchers, Marion Maddox and Amanda Wise, wish to thank Nour and Kais for their excellent work on the project, especially in recruiting participants and conducting interviews for this study. We also thank Lillian He at Access Macquarie for her efficient assistance with project, budget and contract management.

The report authors wish to thank all those who generously gave up their time to be interviewed for this project. Thanks also to the Australian Electoral Commission for providing data on patterns of informal voting in culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

We also thank Anna Hassett and Matthew Jones from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship for their assistance during the course of the project, and DIAC for providing funding to undertake the research.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

DIAC commissioned Macquarie University's Centre for Research on Social Inclusion to investigate the extent to which Australian Muslims participate in the nation's politics, and to recommend strategies to enhance their participation. We conducted a literature review and interviews with politically active Muslims. We also conducted focus groups with Muslims who were not politically active, recruited through community organisations. Further, we analysed successful Australian and overseas initiatives which have facilitated increased political participation by Muslims.

According to the 2006 Census, 1.7% of Australians identify as Muslim. The majority live in NSW and Victoria. At the time of the research, Australia's federal Parliament had no known Muslim Member or Senator, and none was known to have served since Federation. The State Parliaments of Victoria and NSW each had one self-identified Muslim. Muslims were better represented in local government, particularly (although not exclusively) in local government areas with high Muslim population. Muslims represented all major parties, with a particular concentration in the Australian Labor Party and the Greens. None of our interviewees reported having experienced religious discrimination hindering their efforts to become politically active, although some found the machinations of party politics incompatible with their faith. Those elected to office universally rejected any suggestion that they represented a specifically Muslim constituency. All emphasised that they represented all their constituents, regardless of religion, and that they were careful to make all political decisions on their merits.

Historically, Australian Muslims have tended to vote Labor. The vast majority of Australian Muslims are first- or second-generation migrants, and this Labor preference reflects that of many post-war migrant groups. Our research suggests a possible shift among younger Muslim voters to the Greens. Further research would be needed to verify this trend.

Rather than specifically religion-based barriers to political participation, our subjects, both in interviews and focus groups, reported barriers related to ethnicity, English acquisition, income and time since settlement. Electorates with the highest proportions of recent migrants register the highest levels of informal and donkey voting. No evidence allows us to say whether these practices are more common among members of any particular religious or ethnic group.

Circumstances in the home country were a significant factor in Muslim migrants' political participation. Those who had lived in Australia for a long time or had come from countries with a robust democratic culture were more ready to participate than recent arrivals or those who had come from situations of repression. Women from backgrounds emphasising traditional gender roles found it harder to participate than Australian-born converts and those whose cultural traditions encouraged women's participation. Growing up in an environment where politics was regularly discussed also helped. Several migrant women who are politically active cited their mothers' and other female relatives' examples as inspiration for their own activism.

We conducted an audit of participation-enhancing programs in Australia and overseas, including more detailed case studies of four Australian and three UK initiatives. These programs encouraged not only running for office but also other forms of political participation, such as community organisation, mentoring, participation in youth activities (eg Youth Parliament), and making their views heard in the media.

Interviewees were divided over whether such initiatives work best when they are directly targeted at Muslims, or when they are available to a broader audience such as immigrants. A very common sentiment was that Muslim-specific programs run by government, even when intended to benefit Muslim communities, can contribute to a sense of alienation, and the feeling that government regards Muslims as particularly prone to deficits or in need of surveillance. Several pointed to successful programs, such as those run by Victorian Arab

Social Service, in which Muslims are well, but not exclusively, represented. Muslim-specific programs were much more likely to succeed when they were seen as community-driven, rather than government-initiated. Programs which are not Muslim-specific need nevertheless to ensure Muslim participants' needs are taken into consideration, for example through provision of halal food and freedom to pray at the appropriate times.

Mentoring emerged as an extremely important aspect of successful programs. Some politically active subjects had been mentored by other Muslims; some argued that the mentor's religion is insignificant.

Participants in these various programs reported particular satisfaction with components that enabled them to meet political actors such as politicians, newspaper editors and journalists. These encounters enabled participants to express frustration, for example over media misrepresentation of Muslims. They also enabled participants to imagine themselves in similar roles.

Several of our interviewees noted the need for better political literacy not only among migrants but also among Australians of long-standing. We note similarities between some of the most successful leadership-style programs and aspects of the Civics and Citizenship program taught in schools through the Discovering Democracy units.

1. Consultations aimed at increasing political participation should include not only 'official' community leaders representing main community and religious peak bodies, but also ensure a **diversity of voices** – in terms of gender, ethnicity, generation, geography. An example is the Muslim Community Reference Group: although its context and concept were controversial, the spread of representation on was a good example of diverse voices, old and new, participating in the political process.
  - 1.1. Consultation needs to **clearly value participants' contribution**, so that it is not felt to be simply tokenistic. Need to demonstrate that their advice is taken seriously.
  - 1.2. This includes, but is not limited to, **feedback by policy makers** to consultation groups on how their advice has or has not impacted on policy or funding and why.
  - 1.1. Consultation needs to be **efficient**, to avoid the often-reported impression that Muslims are endlessly asked to volunteer their time in order to be consulted about things on which their opinions are already known. An example of good practice in this respect was the NAP-sponsored collaborative consultation involving co-operation between numerous community groups and different research teams (including the present authors). Given that simultaneous projects were examining related research questions and often seeking to interview the same people, the collaborative approach meant interviewees were able to give maximum information with minimum intrusion on their time and resources.
2. Support greater accessibility and availability of **existing and proven successful leadership programs**.
  - 2.1. **Expand the Australian Multicultural Foundation Young Muslim Leadership program** beyond Victoria, rather than rely on interstate participants to 'fly in fly out'.
  - 2.2. Add a component **on political participation** to existing **leadership programs**: civics, the Australian system of government, the workings of the public service, and strategies to influence policy development.
  - 2.3. Where possible, leadership programs should work to **establish networks and mentoring relationships**, and provide for ongoing engagement of participants.

- 2.4. Taking into account geographical and demographic considerations, leadership programs should, in principle, **share information and evaluations, pool resources, and develop articulated pathways** so that programs dovetail rather than compete.
3. Ensure sufficient **consultation** (noting 1 above) on any programs or initiatives targeted at the Muslim community.
  4. Consider the possibility of gathering opinions of local **Islamic scholars** on issues like voting and political obligations (eg Nasiha in the UK), and **working with them** to disseminate Muslim perspectives on related issues.
  5. Consider **women-only workshops** on civics education, leadership and political participation in some areas as some women may not wish to attend mixed sessions, especially in the light of criticisms within their own communities.
  6. Consider **cross-cultural** approaches rather than interfaith.
  7. Ensure programs **restore the confidence** of the Muslim community in government and political processes.
  8. Funded programs should, with some exceptions, **avoid singling out Muslim communities**, in a way which suggests they alone have a 'problem'.
  9. Actively recruit and engage a **diversity of Muslims** for multicultural programs so they are equally included.
    - 9.1. Consideration should always be given to whether it is a **lack of inclusiveness on the part of mainstream organisations** or programs, or structural problems, that deters Muslims from participating (rather than some deficit that exists among Muslim communities).
  10. Ensure that funded multicultural or joint Muslim and non-Muslim programs encourage and **provide facilities and make provision for Muslim participation** (eg halal food, prayer facilities, etc).
  11. Ensure adequate funding for grass-roots community programs that **prepare and enable Muslims from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds** to participate in mainstream programs and events.
  12. Strengthen and broaden **civics and citizenship education**, particularly at school level and in local communities.
    - 12.1. Encourage **parent involvement** in political education programs for children.
  13. Re-introduce political education in the **late post-settlement phase**. The settlement phase is stressful and focused on everyday survival. Ensure community organisations are funded to provide programs later in the settlement process, for example, leading up to citizenship test. If it is too early in the settlement process the information won't be useful to them and will be quickly forgotten.
  14. Explore **non-traditional ways to disseminate information and engage communities**. Important to consider how these might be used effectively (for example, don't just expect young people to watch a YouTube clip to 'inform' them if they feel they have nothing to gain from it). Consider mixed methods of engagement – online, hustings, well thought through and researched campaigning, engagement, information gathering and dissemination.
  15. Disseminate information on how Muslims can effectively seek redress for biased **media reporting** and counteract negative portrayals of Muslims.
  16. Expand and extend **mentoring and networking** opportunities for young Muslim leaders, and build programs that embed opportunities for these to occur.

- 16.1. Be aware of the **networking possibilities** of being involved not just in one's own ethnic or religious organisation, but in multi-ethnic organisations and forums, as well as mainstream ones. Participation in multiple forums is important, and strategies should encourage this.
17. Facilitate networking among up and coming and existing non aligned **Muslim influentials**, which reflect gender, ethnic and generational diversity, include past leadership program participants and draw participants from different levels of government.
  18. Consider using these networks as a **diverse database of Muslim leaders and opinion makers** for mentoring and communications, and to complement existing public service and media relationships with official representatives of Muslim institutions when undertaking policy review and consultations.
  19. For leadership programs aimed at increasing political influence of Muslim, consider targeting young Muslims involved in University clubs for Muslim students, as well as Muslims enrolled at universities generally. Note that these are potential future leaders and well placed to become political and community 'influentials'.
  20. Ensure adequate funding to reach out to other states, to include representation from and run programs outside of Victoria. Some of the most influential programs and organisations targeting **multiculturalism are centred in Victoria**. Examples include organisations such as Australian Multicultural Foundation and Federation of Ethnic Community Councils of Australia. Much of their representation and consultation takes place in Victoria, and programs they run tend to be focused there.
  21. Produce **targeted educational strategies** tailored to culturally and linguistically diverse groups in localities which have high levels of informal voting (for example, drawing on the existing Indigenous Electoral Participation Program).
  22. Consider auditing **mainstream and non ethno-specific multicultural forums** that already have policy and political influence to identify where Muslims and other culturally and linguistically diverse groups are underrepresented, facilitating pathways for their inclusion.
  23. Support **capacity building for diverse young people** so that they are prepared to enter these types of forums (eg youth parliament) rather than being 'parachuted' into potentially alienating situations.
  24. Establish, actively recruit for and promote **registers of qualified individuals** from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds appointable to boards, authorities and high level advisory committees (for example, as state government initiatives drawing on precedents to increase the representation of women such as the Queensland 'Register of Nominees', the NSW Register of Boards and Committees, the Victorian Women's Register, and the national NGO 'Women on Boards').
  25. Support the role of all levels of government, municipal associations and other sectors in facilitating political participation.

## CHAPTER 1: AIMS, RESEARCH QUESTIONS & METHODOLOGY

---

### AIMS

To identify:

1. The scale of Muslims' participation in Australian political life;
2. The locations in which Australian Muslims are politically active;
3. Enabling factors and obstacles to greater political participation by Australian Muslims;
4. Characteristics of successful Australian Muslim political leaders;
5. Programs (both successful and unsuccessful) that address these issues; and
6. Recommendations for future interventions to enhance political participation by Australian Muslims.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS & OBJECTIVES

Through the literature review and field research, the project identified both successful and unsuccessful initiatives, enabling new strategies to build on past achievements and avoid foreseeable mistakes. Specifically, the project had the following objectives:

- Identify overseas examples of direct and indirect Muslim political participation.
- Examine factors which have contributed to successful participation of Australian Muslims and Muslims in other Western countries.
- Identify barriers to Muslim political participation in Australia.
- Document international and local best practice initiatives to support and accelerate direct and indirect political participation by Muslims.
- Conduct an audit of successful Australian and overseas interventions, both government and non-government, which support and accelerate Muslims' political engagement and participation. Identify common or distinctive themes and approaches.
- Conduct in-depth case studies of selected successful initiatives, including analysing their strengths and weaknesses.
- Analyse ways in which such initiatives could be strengthened, developed or, in the case of international examples, adapted for Australian circumstances.
- Document suggestions from interviewees of strategies that have yet to be tried.
- Propose additional strategies to enhance Muslim political participation.
- Identify ways in which international best practice models could be implemented in Australia – including by local, state and national government levels, NGOs and other organisations.
- Develop a three-tiered best-practice model for local, state and national level interventions.

The model will:

- a. Be evidence-based.
- b. Be informed by overseas and local best practice.
- c. Be informed also by overseas and local unsuccessful interventions, so as to avoid repeating their mistakes.
- d. Include measurable/testable outcomes so its success can be monitored.
- e. Include strategies for further refinement and development in the light of experience following its implementation.



## METHODOLOGY

The research employed a mixed methodology, with a focus on qualitative data. For the qualitative component, politically active interviewees were identified through a mixture of snowballing and web-based methods. An NGO and a relevant settlement organisation were the point of connection for recruiting participants who were not politically active.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

An iterative literature review was undertaken, evolving as the project went on. The scope of the review includes:

- General research on political participation
- Political participation and belonging
- Participation and ethnic minorities
- Religion and political participation
- Political participation of Muslims in Australia
- Evaluations of Australian and UK initiatives aimed at enhancing political participation of Muslims.

### INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Representatives from the groups outlined under 'sample summary' below were recruited to participate in semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus groups, conducted either in person or by telephone. Thirty-nine individual interviews were conducted, twenty-three face to face and sixteen by telephone. Twenty interviewees were from Melbourne, sixteen in Sydney, and one each in Canberra, Brisbane and Adelaide. Telephone interviews were only used when it was not possible to arrange a face-to-face interview in a mutually agreeable location.

The main sample for these interviews was thirty individuals identified as politically active, or influential within and beyond Australian Muslim communities. Nine telephone interviews were conducted with coordinators and participants of selected case study initiatives.

All interviewees are profiled in Appendix One, including their organisational and nature of interviewees' roles in public life.

### FOCUS GROUPS

Four focus groups were organised in Sydney, of which three went ahead; the fourth did not attract participants, for reasons discussed under 'limitations', below. The focus group sample was primarily intended to be Australian Muslims able to represent the voice of those not involved in active political participation or community leadership. Groups were co-ordinated through a small NGO and a community settlement service working with this demographic. The researchers also attended a workshop in Campsie on 26 November 2009, organised in conjunction with the other research teams undertaking research projects under the umbrella of 'Working with Muslim Communities'.

### SAMPLE SUMMARY

- a. Current and past federal, state and local politicians.
- b. Active members of political parties.
- c. Australian Muslim 'community influentials'.
- d. Australian Muslims who have been unsuccessful in having their voice heard in the public arena.
- e. Convenors and project workers from selected initiatives.
- f. International 'community influentials' and those involved with selected identified initiatives.
- g. Bureaucrats at federal and state level.

Of the total number of interviewees, seven were members of Australian political parties (3 ALP, 3 Greens, 1 Liberal). Five of these had successfully been elected to a seat at local government level. Two of these elected councillors were members of the ALP, two were with the Greens, and one was a member of the Liberal Party at the time of the interview (having previously been a member of the ALP). A further two interviews were conducted in Canada with one current and one former elected member of its national parliament, both members of the Liberal Party (Canada's nearest equivalent to the ALP). No Canadian Muslim MPs were identified in the ruling Conservative Party.

The original research structure was sufficiently flexible to account for variations in responses from the broad range of interviewees. The question of leadership, and whether participants describe themselves as 'leaders', arose consistently. We found that many involved in community roles, preferred to be called 'activists' or 'workers', even when their duties included leadership. Issues such as these did not require modifying the research questions but did require adapting the research premises to the individual situation.

## CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Like any project, this study has limitations. A small number of unanticipated obstacles further limited the scope of the study to some degree. Limitations and obstacles are discussed below.

Our range of respondents may have been limited by the qualitative approach and mix of snow-balling and web-based methods to identify and recruit 'politically active' participants. However, we were not able to identify any resulting selection bias. Our geographical location in Sydney meant that face to face interviews were largely confined to Sydney and Melbourne, with other states covered by telephone.

Language proved less of an obstacle than we anticipated. Most interviews were conducted in English, especially with 'community influentials' and the politically active, who tended to be fluent English speakers. However, the researchers who conducted most of the interviews are also fluent in Arabic, and, at the participants' request, a small number of interviews, including one of the focus groups, was conducted in Arabic.

At the same time as we were conducting the present study, several other projects were being undertaken by different research teams, also under the aegis of the National Action Plan and with significant overlaps in interviewee lists. Added to the large number of research projects conducted over recent years, these contributed to a feeling among many Australian Muslims of being over-researched and pathologised. Past experience had produced significant scepticism as to whether the research would lead to any measurable change in areas such as entrenched disadvantage, discrimination, or racism, or any injection of on-the-ground funding and resources where they are needed.

In any community, political participation tends to be most accessible to its best-educated and best-resourced members. Our team set out to ascertain which members of Muslim communities, in terms of occupation, age, generation since settlement, gender, education etc., have been most successful in achieving a political voice, and what obstacles might prevent others from doing likewise.

We had some difficulty recruiting 'everyday' participants. In addition to the issues of 'research fatigue' and scepticism about the value of research, we found these potential participants reluctant to join focus groups without compensation (which our budget did not allow). These individuals said that they had given their time freely to researchers in the past but that the cost and inconvenience was such that they felt some form of compensation would be fair.

Some also expressed fear of persecution for participating in a project about politics. This tended to come from older men who had left politically unstable or dangerous situations in their home countries. Some feared that their identities would be revealed to 'the government' if they expressed views that sat uncomfortably with

Australian norms. The combination feeling that Muslim communities are 'under the microscope', and the political circumstances common in home countries influence how individuals perceive interactions with government officials, particularly researchers, around politically sensitive issues. At least in part for these reasons, offered by some potential participants approached, one of the planned focus groups failed to attract participants. A second focus group went ahead, but, after its completion participants declined to allow their responses to form part of the study.

A final obstacle was recruiting participants of case study initiatives for the final section of the study. We identified the seven case studies for in-depth analysis through interviews with co-ordinators, program convenors and participants, as well as review of any evaluation material, where available. One program's organisers initially agreed to participate, but subsequently withdrew consent. We were only able to interview past participants from four of the remaining six case studies. This was mainly because organising bodies did not keep records of participants or the program co-ordinators did not have time to assist us to contact former participants. While we were able to interview program convenors and co-ordinators of the four Australian initiatives, we were unfortunately unable, despite numerous attempts, to establish contact with program convenor of one of the two overseas initiatives. For the other, our descriptions and assessment rely on web materials, including participant evaluations, and some secondary sources.

## CHAPTER 2: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION & MUSLIMS IN AUSTRALIA

---

This chapter sets out our working definition of political participation, outlines the level of political participation of Muslims in Australia, and identifies the diverse social locations through which this political participation takes place. The chapter also flags some international trends and discusses how Australia compares.

Muslims arrived in Australia before the earliest Europeans and have formed a vital part of Australia's social and cultural life ever since. Yet only two Muslims, Adem Somyürek MLC (Vic.) and Shaoquett Moselmane MLC (NSW), currently sit in any Australian parliament. Moreover, the last two federal elections featured anti-Muslim electoral smear campaigns (Greenway in 2004 and Lindsay in 2007), while several federal politicians have made comments portraying Muslims as a threat to Australian values and political institutions. Australia's formal political institutions need to do more to foster Muslim participation, and to minimise activities or innuendos which send a 'not welcome' message to Muslim would-be participants. Australian Muslims have, however, achieved political influence through a number of avenues, detailed later in this chapter.

### WHAT IS POLITICAL PARTICIPATION?

Following the classic study by Verba et al. (1995), we understand political participation to include a broad range of behaviours directed toward influencing the political scene. Beyond voting and standing for office, political participation can include joining a local or issue-specific action group, volunteering to support a political campaign, writing to a Member of Parliament or raising funds for a political campaign.

In one respect, we cast a wider net than Verba and colleagues. They do not count writing to a newspaper or phoning talkback radio as a form of political participation. We follow Sinno in recognising such participation in public discourse as a form of political participation, because it increases the visibility and public understanding of the points of view of members of groups which are underrepresented in public debate. Letters to the editor, opinion columns and similar interventions are a way of voicing concerns to politicians as well as to the wider community (Sinno 2009: 286-7).

Some kinds of political participation, though important to the individual performing them, are extremely difficult to measure—either who is doing them, or what effects they might have. One such example is political shopping (Stolle et al. 2005). Even a large-scale boycott is difficult to evaluate in terms of directly attributable impact. Much 'political shopping' consists of individual purchasing choices that are not part of a mass movement but merely a personal decision. For example, while sales of large, high fuel consumption cars have fallen and bicycle sales have increased over recent years, it is impossible to say what proportion of this effect is due to environmental considerations and what to economic pressures, health and fitness concerns, fashion or other factors. Predominantly personal instances of political participation, such as purchasing choices, are therefore not part of the present study.

Another channel of political participation is via the internet. Some, such as participation in net-based lobby groups such as GetUp! and Avaaz.org, replicate the patterns of offline lobbying. Blogging and citizen journalism are other modes of internet engagement which can have significant political impact (Flew and Wilson 2008). A number of such instances are included in our study; however, given the similarity in patterns between online and offline political participation, we have not addressed internet participation as a separate category.

By contrast, some forms of internet participation are highly individual, and therefore difficult to measure, either in scale or impact. These forms include participation in online forums, which, compounding other difficulties, is often pseudonymous. While internet forums (eg muslimvillage.com) provide an indication of current concerns among forum members, membership in such forums (as distinct from active contribution to them) will not be taken as an indicator of political participation.

Not only is individual online engagement in such forums difficult to measure, but, even if it were measured, it would be unlikely to yield much information about political participation not accessible by other means. Much of the literature on internet political participation suggests that patterns will largely reproduce those of off-line participation. In practice, those with higher socio-economic status and educational attainment have higher levels of internet access, and they are also most likely to participate offline. Internet access would need to be more equally-distributed before it effected much change in patterns of political mobilisation (Best and Krueger 2005).

## WHY POLITICAL PARTICIPATION MATTERS

International research demonstrates that active citizenship, including participating in and feeling a sense of ownership of the nation's political institutions, is crucial to developing and maintaining a sense of belonging and overcoming the alienation and powerlessness which minority communities of experience.

In particular, political participation:

- Gives the minority community channels through which their concerns and ideas can be raised in the forums best placed to bring about change.
- Provides formal and semi-formal means of building bridges with other groups who share similar concerns and ideas, lessening the feeling of isolation.
- Enables the majority community to become aware of, and grow to understand, the minority community's concerns and ideas.
- Provides both the minority and wider communities with role models of engagement between the minority and the majority community's institutions.

Muslims endure particular forms of marginalisation which would be helped by increased political participation, over and above the benefits that participation affords the members of any marginalised group. Several recent studies of Australian Muslims have found increased levels of alienation as a result of the negative publicity ensuing from international terrorism, and because of the sense that they are uniquely targeted under Australia's (and other western countries') anti-terror laws. The federal Security Legislation Review Committee's Sheller Report in 2006 found the legislation had contributed to 'a considerable increase in fear, a growing sense of alienation from the wider community and an increase in distrust of authority' among Australian Muslims. On the other hand, the sense of fear and confusion that non-Muslims sometimes report with respect to their Muslim neighbours (Brett & Moran 2006) might also be alleviated by more visible Muslim participation in mainstream politics.

To sum up, we view political participation broadly, comprising a spectrum of activity from voter turnout to formal political representation, with activities such as advocacy and community consultation, community leadership, and opinion making somewhere in between. Each of these modes requires particular skill sets that will, in turn, inform our discussion, later in the report, of obstacles and strategies. Further, individuals sometimes cross all or some of these forms of political participation, and there are a range of personal, social and political circumstances that lead individuals to engage more in one form than another.

## MUSLIMS IN AUSTRALIA

Muslims have been present in Australia since before European settlement, and Australia's first mosque was built in Broken Hill in 1889 to serve the Afghani cameleers who worked the outback at that time. The Australian Muslim population rose significantly following WWII, with the arrival of Turkish Cypriots in the 1950s and Turkish immigrants between 1968 and 1972 (under an agreement with the Turkish government to supply workers to Australia). The dismantling of the White Australia Policy in the late 1960s saw a number of new Muslim communities settle here from various parts of the world. Lebanese Muslims, now the largest

Muslim community in Australia, began arriving from 1970, and in large numbers fleeing the civil war from 1975 to the mid 1980s.

By 2006, 340,389 Muslims constituted 1.7% of the total Australian population (ABS Census, 2006). Though Muslims live across the Australian continent, 2006 ABS data indicates they are mainly concentrated in New South Wales (168 786) and Victoria (109 370). In all states and Territories, Muslims mainly live in the capital cities (see Wise & Ali 2007) and are concentrated in relatively few local government areas (See Table 2). In terms of country of birth, Australian Muslims are extremely diverse. Table 1 outlines the top 8 countries of birth; however, it should be noted that the ‘Other’ category (more than a quarter of the total) incorporates a large and disparate range of home countries from all parts of the globe. Importantly, more than a third of the total is Australian born.

| Country of Birth | No. resident in Australia |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| Australia        | 128 906                   |
| Lebanon          | 30 290                    |
| Turkey           | 23 125                    |
| Afghanistan      | 15 961                    |
| Pakistan         | 13 820                    |
| Bangladesh       | 13 358                    |
| Iraq             | 10 038                    |
| Indonesia        | 8 656                     |
| Other            | 96 235                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>     | <b>340,389</b>            |

*Table 1: Australian Muslims – country of birth.*

*Source: Census 2006.*

| Rank | LGA                     | No. Muslims |
|------|-------------------------|-------------|
| 1.   | Bankstown (NSW)         | 25996       |
| 2.   | Hume (Vic)              | 19688       |
| 3.   | Canterbury (NSW)        | 17792       |
| 4.   | Auburn (NSW)            | 16111       |
| 5.   | Liverpool (NSW)         | 13740       |
| 6.   | Blacktown (NSW)         | 12463       |
| 7.   | Parramatta (NSW)        | 12120       |
| 8.   | Brisbane (QLD)          | 10868       |
| 9.   | Moreland (Vic)          | 10618       |
| 10.  | Greater Dandenong (Vic) | 9875        |
| 11.  | Rockdale (NSW)          | 8897        |
| 12.  | Brimbank (Vic)          | 8407        |
| 13.  | Fairfield (NSW)         | 7896        |
| 14.  | Holroyd (NSW)           | 7478        |
| 15.  | Casey (Vic)             | 7475        |
| 16.  | Whittlesea (Vic)        | 6763        |
| 17.  | Campbelltown (NSW)      | 6371        |
| 18.  | Darebin (Vic)           | 4848        |
| 19.  | Stirling (WA)           | 3921        |
| 20.  | Wyndham (Vic)           | 3656        |

*Table 2: Top Twenty councils in terms of number of Muslim residents  
Source: ABS 2006 Census*

## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF MUSLIMS IN AUSTRALIA

Political participation should be considered as a spectrum: at one end, it means exercising one's right to vote, while at the other end are more demanding activities such as standing for parliament. In the Australian context, where voting is compulsory, one measure of non-participation at the early end of that spectrum is 'informal' voting.

The Australian Electoral Commission defines an informal ballot paper as one that has been incorrectly completed or not filled in at all. Informal votes are not counted in the election tally. The Australian Electoral Commission gathers data on patterns of informal voting, tracked by electorate and polling booth. Electorates with the highest levels of informal voting tend also to have the largest numbers of voters from culturally and linguistically diverse communities (Australian Electoral Commission 2005). Table 3 shows the top ten electorates in terms of numbers of informal voters as identified by the Australian Electoral Commission in the 2007 federal election.

Federal electorates do not precisely correspond to local government areas; but comparing Tables 2 and 3 shows that these electorates map very closely onto the local government areas with the highest number of Muslim residents. Moreover, Arabic is among the significant language groups identified in these electorates. So, while the Australian Electoral Commission does not gather data on place of birth, cultural origin, or religion of informal voters (impossible in any case, given the secret ballot), it is possible to extrapolate very broadly from this data to suggest that areas with high numbers of informal votes are also, by and large, those with large numbers of Muslim residents. In Blaxland and Watson, for example, the level of informal voting is more than twice the Australian national average of 3.95% (Australian Electoral Commission 2007 election data). Australian Electoral Commission data from the 2007 election showed that the 10 divisions with the highest

levels of overall informality were all located in Western Sydney: Blaxland, Watson, Chifley, Prospect, Fowler, Reid, Parramatta, Werriwa, Banks, and Bennelong. The informal vote count may not tell the whole story, due to the alternative strategy of intentional ‘donkey voting’ (numbering candidates in simple numerical order rather than order of preference).

One possible explanation for such non-participation is that lower levels of English language proficiency and educational attainment correlate with lower levels of knowledge about the Australian electoral system, leading to mistakes such as misnumbering or wrongly marking ballot papers. Another is dissatisfaction about the political options available. ‘A lot of people have that mentality: “Oh, there’s no point. There’s no difference. The government will never do anything for us. It’s a waste of time, I’m not voting.”’

A few respondents reported a view that voting is *haram* in the absence of Sharia law and government. These respondents had heard community members say:

*“Well, it’s not a sharia/halal government, so it’s haram, we shouldn’t vote anyway, it’s forbidden for you to vote.” And ...people ... write letters when they get fined, saying “It’s against my religion to vote” and [so] they get away with not paying the fine. And there’s Imams who actually push that line amongst whole groups of people. (Community leader)*

The Australian Electoral Commission’s analysis of the 2004 federal election and March 2005 by-election in the seat of Werriwa—an unusually linguistically diverse electorate, with Arabic is the main language other than English—categorised informal votes into blank ballot papers misnumbered papers and papers using ticks, crosses and other invalid symbols. Werriwa’s vote in the 2004 federal election was 8% informal, and over 13% informal in the 2005 by-election. In each case, around one-fifth of the informal votes were blank.



| Top 10 electorates in terms of Informal votes | % of total votes cast that were informal | Corresponding LGA where LGA appears on the 'Top 20 Muslim LGAs' | Main countries of origin among the Muslim residents of these LGAs |
|---|--|---|---|
| Blaxland                                      | 9.49                                     | Bankstown/Fairfield   | Lebanon, Iraq   |
| Watson  | 9.05                                     | Canterbury/Bankstown  | Lebanon, Bangladesh, Pakistan                                     |
| Chifley                                       | 7.99                                     | Blacktown   | Pakistan, Afghanistan   |
| Prospect                                      | 7.73                                     | Holroyd   | Afghanistan, Lebanon  |
| Fowler  | 7.67                                     | Fairfield   | Lebanon, Iraq   |
| Reid  | 7.57                                     | Auburn  | Turkey, Afghanistan, Lebanon                                      |
| Parramatta                                    | 6.56                                     | Parramatta  | Lebanon, Afghanistan, Turkey                                      |
| Werriwa                                       | 6.53                                     | Liverpool   | Lebanon, Fiji, Iraq   |
| Banks   | 6.36                                     | Canterbury/Bankstown  | Lebanon, Bangladesh, Pakistan                                     |
| Bennelong                                     | 6.22                                     | - (Eastwood area)   | No significant Muslim population                                  |
| Grayndler                                     | 5.98                                     | Canterbury  | Arabic  |

*Table 3: Top ten NSW electorates in terms of informal votes, listed against corresponding local government areas, showing a close correlation to local government areas in the 'top 20' in terms of residents identifying as Muslim. Source: Australian Electoral Commission and ABS 2006 Census data.*

There is, of course, no way of knowing what proportion of the informal vote was cast by which ethnic group. While Werriwa has four times the national average proportion of Arabic-speakers, their numbers are almost matched by speakers of Hindi, Italian and Spanish, while numerous other language groups make up the bulk of the 41.68% of Werriwa voters who do not identify as English-speakers. These data certainly do not suggest that the informal vote is higher among Muslims than among other religious groups. It does, however, point to the fact that language difficulties, which particularly affect recent migrants (some of whom are Muslim), correlate with unsuccessful voting.

### STANDING FOR ELECTION

Our research identified only two Muslims, Adem Somyürek MLC (Victoria) and Shaoquett Moselmane MLC (NSW), who currently sit in any Australian parliament. Both of these are at state level, both are in the upper houses of their respective parliaments, and both are with the Labor Party. Somyürek is of Turkish background, but does not actively promote himself among Victoria's Muslim communities as representing them in particular. Moselmane is of Lebanese background, identifies as Muslim and has been involved with the Lebanese community. He chaired the Australian Lebanese Friends of Labor group, and is an honorary member of the Arab Business Network. He was elected Mayor of Rockdale four times between 2001 and 2009. Moselmane was pre-selected to stand for the NSW Lower House seat of Rockdale in 2003 but was asked to stand aside to make way for Frank Sartor. In 2010 he was selected to fill a casual upper house vacancy caused

by the departure of Henry Tsang. After this research was completed, but before the study's release, Ed Husic became the first Muslim elected to federal parliament, as the Labor Member for Chifley.

The study identified a number of other Muslims preselected for federal or state parliaments. They included Silma Ithram (Democrats – pre-selected but did not run), Mohammed El-Leissy (Greens) and Michael Hawatt (Liberal). We also identified several local councillors of Muslim background, some of whom we interviewed for this study. Past councillors or contenders include Saeed Khan (Marrickville, Greens, 2003-2008); Samira Batik; Sam Almaliki (ran unsuccessfully as an Independent in Hurstville, 2008) and former Mayor of Hobson's Bay Bill Baarini. Councillors currently holding seats are listed in the following table.

| LGA             | Councillor                 | Party       |
|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| <b>NSW</b>      |                            |             |
| Canterbury      | Karl (Khodr) Saleh         | Labor       |
| Auburn          | Hicham Zraika              | Labor       |
| Auburn          | Izzet Anmak                | Independent |
| Auburn          | Ronney Oueik               | Liberal     |
| Auburn          | Malikeh Michaels           | Greens      |
| Liverpool       | Mazhar Hadid               | Liberal     |
| Liverpool       | Ghulam Gillani             | Labor       |
| Liverpool       | Ali Karnib                 | Labor       |
| Kogarah         | Sam Elmir                  | Liberal     |
| Rockdale        | Joe Awada                  | Labor       |
| Marrickville    | Sam Iskandar               | Labor       |
| <b>VICTORIA</b> |                            |             |
| Hume            | Adem Atmaca                | Labor       |
| Hume            | Burhan Yigit               | Labor       |
| Dandenong       | Pinar Yesil (Mayor 2008-9) | Labor       |
| Dandenong       | Jim Memeti (Mayor 2009-10) | Labor       |

Table 4: Listing of current Muslim councillors identified in the study.

Apart from Marrickville, all of the listed local government areas have high numbers of Muslim residents. Victoria had many fewer Muslim councillors, despite much higher levels of community and political engagement with multiculturalism and the greater funding for anti-racism and anti-discrimination programs in that state compared to NSW.

Being elected to local government is easier, because each council has multiple councillors and representation by wards means that strong ties to a geographically-clustered ethnic or religious community can potentially assist a candidate's chances. Further, by and large, local government preselection is less influenced by the major parties' 'machine politics' and there is less fear of targeted anti-Muslim scare campaigns, such as those in the 2004 election in the seat of Greenway (involving Muslim candidate Ed Husic) and Lindsay in 2007 (involving allegations about a non-existent Muslim extremist group).

All elected representatives interviewed for this study emphasised that they represented all their constituents, rather than just the Muslim community. For example:

*I don't think I sit there in my chamber as a Muslim.... I sit there as a citizen of this country who lives in Liverpool and who is there to look after the interests of the people who have put their trust in him. ... A lot of Muslim people identify with me, they relate with me more because I'm a Muslim. They kind of feel more encouraged to speak with me and bring their problems to me... I help them if I can, but that doesn't mean that they're the only customers I have. (Liverpool councillor)*

*Being elected – I was voted for unanimously, by everyone, so at the end of the day I represent party, one; two, I represent the whole community, and I'm not in it to say I'm a Muslim candidate for the Muslim people. I'm an Australian candidate for the Auburn community. (Hicham Zraika – Labor Mayor of Auburn)*

Mayor Zraika said that he cannot hide the fact that he is Muslim, and indeed, does not wish to 'run away' from his religion. However he emphasised that his identification with his religious community put a particular onus on him to be consciously fair and equitable at all times and demonstrate that he is not just speaking for Muslims. This is particularly so when issues such as development applications for religious facilities come up for debate at council.

*To gain someone's trust is not easy, particularly for us of Islamic background. We've probably got to work extra hard to prove ourselves and say "Look, I'm open and fair with everyone". But I have taken decisions before that are not popular with the Muslim community ... That's the way it is. You have to look at the interests of the whole community. But, generally, ... you are known, and people assume that you make decisions based on your religion. You can't run away from it. You've just got to leave it, and keep going. (Hicham Zraika – Labor Mayor of Auburn)*

Candidacy at state and federal levels is a fraught business, particularly when it comes to the major parties. It often involves long years of networking and deal making, with compromises along the way which make it harder to explicitly represent a particular community such as Muslims. Some of these challenges will be discussed in Chapter Four. In this next section, we outline some alternative forums through which Australian Muslims have found effective political voice.

## OTHER MEANS OF ACHIEVING POLITICAL VOICE

### COMMUNITY SECTOR

A number of participants were quite sceptical about the possibilities of advancing their political aims through formal mechanisms such as standing for political office. Muslim women, in particular, were uncomfortable with the rough and tumble of political life in a major party and sceptical as to whether such a forum would allow them to influence policy.

*Everybody knows that the candidates for state election are decided in Sussex Street, not in the electorate. There's not much grassroots participation. I find it all very distasteful and I keep away from it. (Female community leader)*

*I had a great difficulty being part of factional politics of any sort, because I couldn't do any dirty political thing. So it's extremely hard for me ... there is so much backstabbing and stuff. I couldn't handle that. So I decided to be a leader in a different way – a grassroots community leader that could relate to all the political parties and factions. (Female community leader)*

Further, these women were aware that political life is not always compatible with family responsibilities:

*Laurie Ferguson, I know that he attends every community function, and sometimes he'll go to five or six in one day. He works like a dog, he's ... I often see him going to his office on Sundays... So I guess that's what you've got to do if you want to get elected, and of course that makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for women because who has that sort of time? (Female community leader)*

However, political voice is advanced in other forums, such as involvement in advisory bodies and community consultation panels, writing and publishing opinion pieces, or employment in the public service or as a ministerial or political staffer or advisor. Some, such as the participants in the Commonwealth Government's Muslim Community Reference Group, have been specifically sought out by government to bring a Muslim

perspective to mainstream politics. Others, such as the various state Islamic Councils, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, the Australian Muslim Civil Rights Advocacy Network and Muslim Women's National Network, have arisen out of Muslim communities and convey their communities' concerns to the wider public. Service organisations such as certain Migrant Resource Centres and the Victorian Arab Social Services are also effective, especially in terms of leadership training, and advocacy around welfare issues.

*There's different ways to influence, and it's what I call the "inside the tent" approach, and "outside the tent" approach.... Political participation needs to be broad. It doesn't need to be boxed into "OK, do you want to run for local council? Do you want to run for state or federal parliaments?"... It's about having a voice in the organisations. (Female community leader, Victoria)*

Often, leadership roles in community organisations provide a pathway to consultations and influence with on policies that affect the Muslim community.

*The Muslim Women's National Network ... don't take part in welfare activities to any great extent. They basically see themselves as being a lobby group, or a group that works towards the empowerment of Muslim women. (Female community leader)*

'Coalition building' networks connect organisations targeting women and youth, and were important spaces for mentoring relationships that opened pathways for new political voices to emerge. Some of the more influential women in the study were those who had the opportunity to link into multi-ethnic or mainstream women's organisations while retaining their role in the Muslim community. Often, involvement in one organisation connected these individuals into new organisations and forums, where mentoring relationships emerged and useful political networks formed that, in turn, connected women into further forums where policy could be influenced.

The political biography of one participant is a telling example. In the 1970s, she attended a conference of women's groups where she met Franca Arena, then member of the NSW Legislative Council. Arena invited her to a monthly forum of women's organisations, held at Parliament House. This led her to contact with the Australian Women's Coalition, which, in turn, provided an avenue to the Office for the Status of Women. In the 2000s, the Australian Women's Coalition invited her to discuss Islam and terrorism, which led to numerous invitations by other women's organisations such as the Country Women's Association, Girl Guides and the Smith Family's VIEW club. She later joined the Muslim Women's National Network, where she now manages a number of projects.

Another participant draws on her experience as a former ministerial advisor and current position in the Attorney General's department to inform her voluntary role in the Muslim Women's National Network. As a public servant, she is careful to keep her paid and unpaid work separate; however, she is able to draw on networks and lessons from her professional life to help her organisation's lobbying.

The highly networked, coalition-based *modus operandi* was also present in youth-focused programs and organisations, and, in some instances opened pathways for quite direct political influence. This is highlighted, for example, by one youth leader's experience. Her political path began as far back as high school, where she was exposed to a number of youth leadership programs. However, politics wasn't a big part of her life until university, where involvement in the Arabic Club brought her into contact with Palestinian activists. She learned a lot through that involvement, and also developed strong community links, eventually leading to a connection with the Victorian Arabic Social Services. She began co-ordinating some of its youth programs, sometimes paid and sometimes in a voluntary capacity, and, through this, became involved in a number of advisory committees. She met some key mentors at this stage, including another of our respondents, Leila Alloush. The youth worker now works at a Migrant Resource Centre, where, she says, she has had the opportunity to meet mentors from other non-English speaking backgrounds who have guided her

professionally. In one program, the Ethnic Youth Council, she was able to include young Muslims . The Ethnic Youth Council, in turn, has participated in the Victorian Youth Parliament program. The Ethnic Youth Council also enrolls young people into programs such as the Duke of Edinburgh Leadership Awards, and the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, and trains young people in writing media releases, opinion pieces and so on. These programs are not without their barriers and challenges (discussed in Chapter 4), but the interlocking networks in this biography show the opportunities for political voice to emerge when organisations work together through multi-ethnic alliances.

A number of respondents were concerned that some of the Muslim community’s major leaders and representative bodies, whom governments tended to seek out, did not effectively represent the diversity of Australian Muslims. These respondents considered the traditional leadership too male dominated, sometimes too conservative, and inclined to exclude younger, emerging leaders:

*Our peak body is supposed to, but it doesn’t speak for all Muslims. So, they come out and make nice press releases from time to time, and they do some work in halal needs, they run a few of the Muslim schools, but they’re really out of touch with the grassroots community and the grassroots issues. But, unfortunately, the government recognises them and goes to speak to them when there’s an issue and sometimes it funds them. (Young community leader)*

#### ADVISORY BOARDS & CONSULTATION FORUMS

High-profile nominees of the Muslim Women’s National Network were also involved in the Muslim Community Reference Group. While this group attracted controversy, mainly due to its link with anti-terrorism strategies, interviewees in our study were largely positive about it as a forum that drew representation from beyond the ‘old guard’ (male religious and community leaders) to include new voices, especially of women and youth. Table 5 shows the diverse membership of the Muslim Community Reference Group, which met between September 2005 and September 2006.

| Muslim Community Reference Group Members                      | Members of Sub-Groups supporting the Muslim Community Reference Group |
|---|---|
| Dr Ameer Ali, (Chair)   | Ms Salam El-Merebi  |
| Mrs Aziza Abdel-Halim AM                                      | Mr Umar Batchelor   |
| Sheikh Taj Aldin Alhilali,<br>represented by Mr Samier Dandan | Ms Joumanah El-Matrah   |
| Dr Mohammed Taha Alsalami                                     | Mr Hajji Abdul Rahman Deen  |
| Sheikh Fehmi Naji El-Imam                                     | Dr Nazre Sobhan   |
| Ms Nadia Gani   | Ms Sherene Hassan   |
| Dr Amin Hady  | Ms Senada Softic-Telalovic  |
| Mr Harry Hage   | Ms Jamila Hussain   |
| Ms Iktimal Hage-Ali   | Mr Ali Roude  |
| Mr Kemal Ismen  | Mr Ahmad Mokachar   |
| Mr Abdul Jalal  | Mr Mohamed Hassan   |
| Mr Mustapha Kara-Ali  | Mr Ghulam Abbas   |
| Mr Yasser Soliman   | Dr Ahmed Hammoud  |
| Mr Malcolm Thomas   | Ms Nancy Aisha Novakovich   |
|   | Dr Waqar Ahmad  |
|   | Sheikh Shafiq Rahman Abdullah Khan                                    |
|   | Mr Hassan Bazzi   |
|   | Ms Yasmin Khan  |
|   | Imam Sabri Samson   |
|   | Mr Kaled El-Hassan  |

Table 5: Membership of the Muslim Community Reference Group and its Sub-Groups

The Muslim Community Reference Group is a reminder not to underestimate the role of public servants in facilitating political voice and policy influence. A number of members mentioned chance meetings with public servants at symposiums, conferences and events that opened opportunities to participate in consultation and advisory forums. Well-engaged public servants have the ability to cultivate voices outside of the traditional channels self-nominated religious leadership. Traditional community leaders and organisations need to be included; but sometimes their demographic and organisational nature prevents a more diverse range of political voices participating.

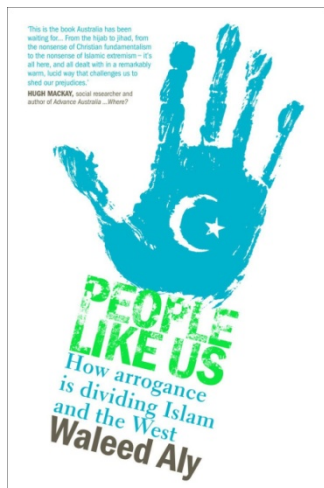
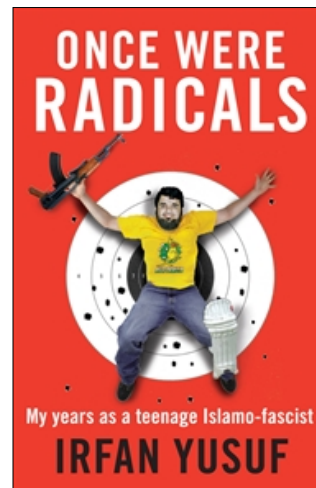


Figure 1 (left):  
Cover image of Waleed  
Aly's book 'People Like  
Us' (2007)

Figure 2 (right): Cover  
image of Irfan Yusuf's  
'Once Were Radicals'  
(2009)



## OPINION MAKERS

Some individuals have achieved a public voice through the media. A number of media commentators published political and social opinion pieces in major capital city papers. Some are academics, others are journalists or professionals in other fields. Influential media commentators and journalists include Irfan Yusuf, Waleed Aly, Tanveer Ahmed, Nadia Jamal and Farah Farouque. Other influential voices belong to writers like Hanifa Dean and Rand Abdel-Fattah and cultural producers like the team behind the television series Salam Café. (See Appendix One for biographies of some of the key media commentators). As well as writing for major newspapers, they regularly appear as panellists on influential programs such as ABC's Q&A and SBS's Insight. While much of their commentary revolves around issues of Islam and Muslims in Australian society, a number of notables (such as Waleed Aly) write much more broadly. Indeed, Aly sees this as a marker of successful political influence, as well as a sign of integration and national belonging.

Following in the footsteps of 'Wogs out of Work', comedy with a political edge has been a key way for a number of Muslims to deal with some of the more sensitive aspects of Islam in public debate. Prominent users of politically tinged comedy include Irfan Yusuf, author of *Once Were Radicals: My Years as a Teenage Islamo-Fascist* and stand-up comedians Nazeem Hussain and Aamer Rahman, whose 'Fear of a Brown Planet' won the Melbourne International Comedy Festival Best Newcomer Award in 2008. Perhaps best known nationally was the Salam Café program. Originating on Channel 31 community television, then aired nationally on SBS TV in 2009, Salam Café had a team of about eleven Muslim panellists and writers. Regular panellists included Waleed Aly, Ahmed Imam, Susan Carland, Toltu Tufa, Dakhylina Madkhul, Nazeem Hussain and Aamer Rahman.



Figure 3: Salam Café poster

Australia also has numerous successful Muslim academics like Alia Imtoul, Waleed Aly, Shakira Hussein, Jamila Hussain, Samina Yasmeen, Shahram Akbarzadeh and Abdullah Saeed. Many have achieved some influence in academic, political and media circles and a number actively participate in political and social commentary as opinion makers. A number of these are prominent Muslim feminist academics and have contributed thoughtful and influential pieces on matters such as the burqa ban in France and the hijab debates in Australia.

*When there is public discourse on Muslims or in the media, whatever—too often I feel that Muslims aren't part of the discussion, or if they are its one or two individuals that aren't really that representative, or worse, there's discussions on Muslim women I find often exist without Muslim women at all. Or if it's like discussions about the hijab they don't bother to ask a woman who covers her hair. (Susan Carland)*

#### ONLINE FORUMS & INFORMATION SOURCES

A number of these commentators write for online sources such as New Matilda, Online Opinion, and personal blogs, and for the small number of Muslim-specific online sources such as Muslim Village Forums ([www.muslimvillage.com](http://www.muslimvillage.com)), used regularly by Muslim and non-Muslim Australians to debate key issues concerning Muslims in Australia. Other online sources include the Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations ([www.fair.org.au](http://www.fair.org.au)) and the Aussie Muslims website (<http://www.aussiemuslims.com/forums/>).

*I think the way we're perceived is that we deal with everyone, that we're fair, that we promote everyone, we're a source of information for the whole community, and we're a reliable source and they trust us, and that's why they keep coming back. And in the forums they have an opportunity to have a discussion as well. (Website editor)*

#### POLITICAL MOBILISATION CAMPAIGNS

During the federal election campaign in 2007, the Muslim Women's National Network ran seminars at the Auburn Gallipoli Mosque to educate Muslims on voting, to encourage Muslims to participate in the political process more generally, and to explain voters' obligations and how the system works.

*Because there is not much activity by Muslims in the political sphere—and from what we have been able to find out, there's a huge ignorance: not only among Muslims, there is among other people too. We thought we'd try to run just a seminar, afternoon program, which we did in the Annexe to the Auburn mosque. .... There is a huge need for just basic civics education: why you vote, how the political system works, what the electorates mean, and you know, how the proportional voting system works. (Academic)*

In 2004, the group which edits the muslimvillage website, along with a coalition of Muslim organisations convened, the Australian Muslim Electoral Taskforce. The group settled on a number of key issues:

*Like Palestine, like pornography, censorship of media, settlement... freedom of religion, funding of Islamic schools, anti-discrimination. Things like that.*

The issues were put to the four main political parties (Liberal, Labor, Democrats and Greens), with responses published on the muslimvillage website (see <http://muslimvillage.com/story.php?id=2619>).

*Funnily enough, the Liberals just ignored us completely. Labor acknowledged receiving it but never responded. The Greens responded. The Democrats responded and followed up, which was really good. But generally what we found was that the two major parties just didn't really care about what we have to say. ... We were telling the Muslim community to go and see what the responses of which party are. (Ahmed Kilani, Muslim Electoral Taskforce convenor & editor of muslimvillage)*

The Muslim Electoral Taskforce website also published details on electorates with high proportions of Muslim voters, as well as a voters' guide, running commentary on the election and media analysis. They felt the campaign had moderate success, but did not have the resources to repeat the exercise in 2007. However they did express interest in doing something like this again in the future.

## COMPARISONS

Models exist for enhancing political participation on the part of marginalised groups. For example, the Women's Electoral Lobby and EMILY's List have proved successful at increasing the visibility of women's concerns in parliament, and increasing the numbers of women elected to Australian parliaments. The NSW Ethnic Community Council's Youth Wing activities, such as leadership awards and youth conferences, enable young people from ethnic minorities to gain experience and skills relevant to participation in the wider political arena.

Some impressive examples on the international scene may serve as useful models for future Australian interventions. For example, the Muslim Parliament of Great Britain is a non-government organisation which originally discouraged British Muslim involvement in non-Muslim politics but which has more recently emphasised coalition-building with non-Muslim parties, community leaders and NGOs (such and civil rights and environmental organisations).

Some countries have adopted highly formalised initiatives to target a particular community, such as the New Zealand Parliament's designation of Māori seats and the choice for voters of Māori or Cook Island descent to enrol on either the general electoral roll or the Māori roll. Another instance is the differential constitutional status proposed for Inuit in Canada's Arctic north and for French Canadians, to facilitate greater political representation, described by Kymlicka (1991: 137-157). While none of these models is necessarily directly transferable to the situation of Australian Muslims, they give an indication of the wide range of existing interventions for enhancing the political participation of particular groups.

Proportional representation systems, which favour the proliferation of minor parties, have often produced ethnic or religion-specific parties (eg NZ's Māori Party). Australia's two-party system makes such developments unrealistic; in any case, Muslims make up only a small proportion of the electorate and religious interests are seldom sufficiently compelling to, on their own, determine voting behaviour of an entire community. In 2008, substantial efforts went into Muslim voter registration in the USA, such as the Council for American-Islamic Relations' Eid voter registration drive and 'Rock the Muslim Vote' town hall meetings.

Britain's 2010 elections saw an unprecedented campaign by leading British Muslims encouraging Muslims to vote. An organisation entitled 'Get Out and Vote' (<http://www.getoutandvote.info/>) was underpinned by a



YouTube video campaign featuring leading Muslim scholars explaining why it is important to vote, and a website explaining why it is not *haram* to vote in democratic elections. The campaign also promoted Muslim politicians, and published a series of questions posed to candidates in 50 constituencies with high concentrations of Muslim voters. Another site, Salaam UK, also provided detailed political analysis from a Muslim perspective. (<http://www.salaam.co.uk/themeofthemonth/>)

In Australia, compulsory voting makes such activities less necessary, but similar techniques could be adapted to address problems like informal voting, and to encourage other forms of political participation.



*Figure 4: Logo for the EngageUK Get Out & Vote campaign*

In the 2010 UK elections, the total number of Muslim MPs doubled to eight seats (out of a total 650 seats overall). The first three Muslim women entered Parliament: Yasmin Qureshi (Labor– Bolton South East), Shabana Mahmood (Labor– Birmingham Ladywood) and Rushanara Ali (Labor– Bethnal Green & Bow). That election also saw Britain’s the first Muslim Conservative MPs, Sajid Javid (Bromsgrove) and Rehman Christi (Gillingham & Rainham). Anas Sarwar (Labour) successfully defended Glasgow Central (previously held by his father, Mohammed Sarwar) against Osama Saeed’s challenge from the Scottish National Party (SNP). Incumbent MPs Sadiq Khan (Labor– Tooting) and Khalid Mahmood (Labor– Birmingham Perry Barr) held on to their seats, while Shahid Malik, former Communities minister, lost his former seat of Dewsbury (source: Get Out & Vote campaign site). Shahid Malik, a Labor MP, was until 2010, Minister for International Development. He was the first Muslim minister in any British Parliament.

However, the tally of successful Muslim MPs is only part of the story. Over ninety Muslims stood in the 2010 election. For example, in Bethnal Green and Bow, all six candidates were Muslim. In Birmingham (Hodge Hill), three of the four candidates were Muslim, while in Birmingham (Ladyfield), three of the five candidates were Muslim. All three major parties recognised British Muslims as a potentially important voting block in a tight election.

Any comparison with Australia needs to take these numbers in context: Britain has an estimated 1.6 million Muslims (of a total population of 57.1 million) and these are generally longer-standing communities than in Australia. In 2000, 217 Muslims were elected to British local government (of whom only nine were women). Differences in the political system, as well as patterns of urban ethnic clustering, make high levels of Muslim representation more likely in Britain. Britain has greater ethnic concentration than does Australia, with some constituencies upwards of 30% Muslim. In parts of Birmingham, up to 50% of residents are Muslim. In comparison, in Australia’s local government area of Bankstown, which has the highest proportion of Muslims, they make up only 15.3%. UK local government, which co-ordinates public housing, health and education, also has a stronger history of Muslim political participation than Australian local government.

In Canada, Wajid Khan and Yasmin Ratansi became the first Muslim MPs, followed later by Rahim Jaffer and Omar Alghabra. Proportionally, terms, the Canadian record is not much stronger than Australia’s, given Canada’s 600,000 Muslims. The US fares worse, where the first Muslim, Democrat Keith Ellison, from Minnesota, was elected to the 435-strong Congress in 2006 (Bard 2008). He was joined in 2008 by Illinois

Democrat André Carson. Table 7 provides figures on Muslim elected representatives in national legislatures of some of the main Western democracies. It should, however, be noted that often representation is higher at the state and local levels, however international figures for these were not compiled for this study.

| Country       | Legislative Body         | Total Representatives | Muslim Representatives     | Muslims as % of Total Population |
|---------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Australia     | House of Representatives | 150                   | 1                          | 1.7%                             |
|               | Senate                   | 76                    | 0                          |                                  |
| Canada        | House of Commons         | 306                   | 4                          | 1.9%                             |
|               | Senate                   | 105                   | 0                          |                                  |
| France        | Senate                   | 346                   | 2 (estimate)               | 5-10%                            |
| Germany       | Bundestag                | 614                   | 4                          | 3.7%                             |
|               | Bundesrat                | 166                   | 0                          |                                  |
| Great Britain | House of Commons         | 646                   | 4 (increased to 8 in 2010) | 2.7%                             |
|               | House of Lords           | 738                   | 7                          |                                  |
| Netherlands   | Lower House              | 150                   | 2                          | 5.5%                             |
|               | Upper House              | 75                    | 0                          |                                  |
| Sweden        | Riksdag                  | 349                   | 0                          | 3.3%                             |
| USA           | Representatives          | 435                   | 1 (increased to 2 in 2008) | 1%                               |
|               | Senate                   | 100                   | 0                          |                                  |

Table 6: Muslim representatives currently serving in various western national legislative bodies in 2007. (Source: Bard 2008, with the addition of figures on Australia, USA and UK from other sources)

New Zealand does a little better than Australia at the national level, having elected Ashraf Choudhary to the national parliament in 2002. Choudhary is a Pakistani-born Muslim who served as president of the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand in 1984-5. He was also the first New Zealand Member of Parliament to swear allegiance on the Holy Quran. However as a parliamentarian, he garnered some controversy among Muslims when he voted for New Zealand's civil union laws (after abstaining on the first vote).

## CONCLUSIONS

Considering political participation in its broadest definition, Australia fares competitively compared to the political participation of Muslims in other Western democracies. In terms of formal participation, the national level has room for improvement, with a complete absence until 2010 of federal politicians of Muslim faith. At the state level, things are slightly better, but still unrepresentatively low. However, in NSW at least, local government looks very healthy as a space for participation of Muslims, largely due to the more localised nature of the voter base.

Muslims involved in formal politics are somewhat reticent to identify as Muslims, preferring to present themselves as representing all Australians. Viewed positively, this implies that they feel confident enough as Australians to speak for a more general constituency. Also, their reticence may be a reflection of a general sentiment (common among Muslims and non-Muslims) in secular Australia that religion and politics simply 'do not mix'. On the other hand, our interviews uncovered a sense that there is some electoral risk in too publicly proclaiming one's identity as a Muslim, especially in light of anti-Islam incidents such as occurred in Sydney during the 2004 and 2007 federal campaigns, and of a certain generalised public fear about Islam. All the elected representatives we spoke to were very careful to stress their 'fair and objective' approach when

considering issues related to their religious community, such as development applications for Mosques or religious schools.

Despite obvious challenges for Muslims participating in the formal political sphere, especially in the major parties, a number of Australian Muslims have achieved impressive political influence in the public sphere, as journalists, social and political commentators, comedians, in academia, and through other channels of opinion-making. Many individuals work across more than one of these roles. Our interviews found Muslim opinion makers in the mainstream public sphere are much more confident to engage forthrightly with Muslim issues and identify as Muslim than were the elected representatives. In certain notable cases, Muslim opinion-makers also contributed to wider community debates, beyond specifically 'Muslim' issues.

Enabling influences, to which we return in detail in Chapter Four, began to emerge in the discussion of those operating in leadership roles in the community sector, especially among youth and women. Political and professional mentors, both Muslim and non-Muslim, were extremely important in developing leadership skills, networks, and capacities. Youth and women in particular benefited immensely from access to multi-ethnic political and advocacy forums, in addition to their roles in Muslim-specific organisations. Access to diverse, interconnected forums had helped interviewees develop knowledge of the political process, make networks and connections with people of influence, and gain access to institutions that facilitate political and policy influence.

However, political participation was still, by and large, the domain of the privileged. Like other communities—ethnic minority and mainstream alike—the politically active tend to be drawn from higher educated and more prosperous socio-economic groups. Those involved in formal politics tended to be from particular ethnic backgrounds, such as Turkish, Lebanese or South Asian, and also to be either second generation migrants or long-term Australian residents. Anglo-Celtic female converts were also well represented.

In NSW, politically-active Muslims were well-represented in local government, while other public commentators and political 'influentials' were often Victorian. This might reflect the different class and ethnic makeup of the Muslim populations in each state. The greater public visibility of Victorian Muslim commentators may also reflect the clustering of organisations such as Australian Multicultural Foundation and Federation of Ethnic Community Councils of Australia in Melbourne.

Voting is the most accessible end of the political participation spectrum, and so is where most citizens come into contact with politics. While Australia's compulsory voting might suggest little effort would be needed on this measure, our study found a lot of work to be done, particularly in NSW. Informal votes amount to non-participation, even though they fulfil the compulsory ballot rule, and all of the top ten areas for informal voting are in NSW. Of these, all but two also have the highest concentration of Muslim residents. This is not to say Muslims are less educated on voting than other groups. However, much Australian and international evidence confirms that culturally and linguistically diverse groups have lower knowledge of the political system, and higher rates of non-participation and informal voting, than the general population.

This chapter has highlighted a number of needs, to which we return in later chapters. First, we identify a pronounced need for basic civics education in areas of high Muslim concentration. Our research also shows the importance of carefully crafted leadership programs, as well as capacity building for political education, similar to those which have proved successful in the UK. Mainstream parties, groups, and consultation forums also need to be more responsive to and culturally aware of Muslim (and indeed minority) issues, and direct more concerted efforts at encouraging and working with talented Australian Muslim leaders and 'influentials' who have the potential to make a sophisticated contribution to Australian political life.

### POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND BELONGING

The most basic and obvious reason for political participation is in order to be heard. As Sinno notes, 'Politicians need to feel the presence of Muslims in their communities and to understand that they matter' (2009: 287), and are only likely to do so when Muslims are present in parliaments, parties, volunteer associations and so on in more-than-token numbers (2009: 283, 286). Tokenistic representation, he warns, only leads to the representatives being discounted by their constituencies, who then look for leadership elsewhere.

However, participation also brings less direct benefits. Owen and her colleagues find that citizens in liberal-democratic systems experience higher levels of subjective well-being than citizens of other kinds of state; and citizens who take advantage of liberal-democratic systems' opportunities for political participation are more satisfied with life than those who do not (Owen et al. 2008: 998-9). Moreover, they find that some forms of representation are more conducive to happiness than others. They conclude that: 'In addition to being desirable in and of itself, happiness levels influence vital political goods like stability and societal generosity' (2008: 1003).

Moreover, the international literature supports the idea that these beneficial social effects of political participation come into play well before children reach voting age. Fridkin et al. (2006) examined the practice of democratic skills among children too young to vote. They found that forms of political participation appropriate to the children's age, such as talking to parents about politics, reading the newspaper and making speeches at school correlated positively with trustfulness, civic duty, attachment to party and positive attitudes towards government. Both opportunities for participation, and the characteristics to which they give rise, were significantly more prevalent among Anglo-American children than among members of ethnic minorities (2006: 613-618). Their results parallel known patterns for adults; 'Nonetheless', Fridkin et al. observe:

*it is startling to hear firsthand that some young people already feel that they are on the margins of democratic life. In fact, it appears that the desire to engage in politics is already forming at the tender age of 14. (2006: 606)*

Sinno finds that electoral system and form of political institutions has an effect on minority groups' political participation. Muslims are spectacularly underrepresented in the US system, whether compared to the general population or to other religious minority groups (2009:91). He attributes this to 'an unfavourable mix of a majoritarian first-past-the-post system ... and hostility from the Evangelical, pro-AIPAC and ultraconservative sections of the American voting public that deters Muslims for running for elected office and discourages the two large parties from recruiting them' (2009:91).

Although Australia's electoral system is preferential rather than first-past-the-post, it is majoritarian and replicates the FPP system's effect to the extent that even quite large minority groups, unless they are geographically concentrated, stand next-to-no chance of winning an electorate. This point is illustrated by comparing the fortunes of the National Party and the Australian Democrats through the 1990s. Although they consistently polled within a few points of one another, the Australian Democrats never won a lower-house seat, whereas the National Party was represented in every parliament.

Australia lacks the strong evangelical pro-Israel voter base of the USA; nevertheless, the 2004 (Greenway), 2007 (Lindsay) and 2010 (Chifley) elections demonstrated the existence of anti-Muslim electioneering. We can

therefore expect that the deterrent effects in the USA would be similar for Muslims considering running for office in Australia.

## PARTICIPATION AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

For reasons to be discussed below, literature addressing the political participation of Muslims is sparse and recent; however, the political participation of ethnic minorities has been extensively studied, both in Australia and overseas, for at least forty years. The literature on ethnic minority participation is useful for the present study, although it needs to be approached with several caveats. Not all Australian Muslims are recent migrants: they include, for example, Indigenous and non-Indigenous converts, and the descendants of nineteenth century cameleers.

The association between ethnic minority status and lower political participation is reiterated in numerous studies (eg Jacob 2006; Jacobs et al 2004; Togeby 2004). Jupp (2004) argues that, in Australia, as far as political representation is concerned, the time since immigration is more important than migrant status as such.

A couple of UK studies have found that Asian migrants vote at a higher rate than the 'white' population, while some other migrants (notably Afro-Caribbean) vote less than 'white' citizens do. These studies are summarised by Düvell (2005: 32).

Jupp (2004: 19-22) pointed out that Australian democracy serves migrant minorities fairly well in several respects. Since 2002, dual citizenship arrangements have meant that Australian-born children of immigrants can vote in Australian elections without having to renounce their parents' citizenship. However, dual citizens cannot stand for parliament: they must first renounce their non-Australian citizenship. We note that some of the conditions for new migrants applauded by Jupp have tightened since his study. One is the waiting period for naturalisation, reduced to two years in 1984, but increased to four years in 2007.

## RELIGION AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Overall, being involved in a religious community (such as a church, mosque or synagogue) correlates with higher levels of political participation than among those without a religious involvement. Verba et al. (1995) show that religious communities provide opportunities for lay people to gain the necessary skills for political participation. This participation-enhancing effect is especially strong for those marginalised from more formal channels of political socialisation and training, such as membership of a political party or trade union, or a career in one of the professions.

Verba and his co-authors looked at church membership. It is reasonable to expect that many of the same effects would be found in relation to membership in minority religious communities, which often provide similar opportunities to those Verba's research found among church members. Examples include: organising others (for example, youth groups, women's groups, parents' groups, duty rosters); articulating a position and arguing a case in front of others (for example, when disagreements break out among members or at times of potential organisational stress such as appointing a new religious leader); planning to achieve collectively a long term aim (for example, increased membership, a new building, founding a school); and becoming comfortable with positions of leadership. Similarly, Jamal argues that mosques promote a greater sense of belonging among Arab and Black Muslims in the US, consequently playing a significant role in political mobilisation (2005).

On the other hand, holding religious beliefs, without involvement in a religious community, does not have the same correlation and in fact, according to some studies, goes with lower-than-average participation (Ayers & Hofstetter 2008). Ayers and Hofstetter explain the discrepancy by distinguishing between religious belief and religious resources. While religious behaviour can be attributed to religious belief, it also allows for the accrual of religious resources, suggesting that 'as believers participate within their faith they develop skill sets

transferable to political participation beyond those explicitly influenced by religious belief' (Ayers & Hoffstetter 2008). Consequently, echoing Verba et al., Ayers and Hofstetter conclude that the development of religious resources increases participation (2008) (whereas more internal and cognitive modes of identification such as prayer or assent to religious doctrine do not have such an effect).

At the same time, being a member of a *minority* religious community often correlates with factors which make political participation less likely. For example, members of migrant religious communities may be more likely to have difficulties with English expression, lower incomes and more restricted educational opportunities. They may also lack social contacts and associations beyond the religious community; and these are important channels of political engagement (Klofstad 2007; Fahmy 2003). Consequently, any political skills gained within the community are at risk of remaining there. Moreover, while participation in civic organisations, including religious ones, enhances many forms of political mobilisation, LeRoux finds that faith-based non-profit organisations are less likely than other kinds of nonprofits to encourage clients to link with public officials or forums (2007: 418-419). She hypothesises that this may reflect leaders' reluctance 'to attract negative attention to their organisation by political leaders who have the power to influence funding' (2006: 419). If she is right, we can expect the effect to be still stronger among non-Christian faith-based organisations, whose relative lack of non-government resources and sense of being at risk of discrimination would leave them more vulnerable.

A number of US studies (Sinno 2009; cf Jacob 2006) point out that possession of resources such as above-average income, above-average education and so on are not, alone, enough to produce higher levels of political participation. Some minority groups whose members have achieved such resources still do not participate on the same scale as their Anglo-American neighbours. Sinno finds this effect strongly among educated and affluent American Muslims.

A report by the Open Society Institute in 2010 considered Muslim integration across eleven European cities, taking political participation as one of the markers of integration. It measured political participation under the headings of voting, standing for elected office, attending public meetings, attending demonstrations and signing petitions. The statistics on voting are of limited relevance to Australia, since, of the European countries studied, only Belgium shares Australia's compulsory voting in national elections. Nevertheless, the present study is informed by the European finding that, where voting is optional, self-identified Muslims do not elect to vote at a consistent rate. For example, in countries where foreign-born residents were eligible to vote, Muslims born outside the host country voted at higher rates than Muslims who had lived in the country from birth. The Open Society Institute authors attributed the discrepancy to the age difference between the generations (2010: 191).

The report found little push in any of the eleven cities for specifically Muslim parties, with the exception of Brussels; and there, the several overtly Muslim parties had failed to achieve a significant Muslim vote (OSI 2010: 193). In common with other studies, including ours, the Open Society Institute found considerable reluctance among Muslim (and other ethnic-minority) candidates to be regarded as representing a minority community. The OSI authors quote Samia Ghali, mayor of the 8<sup>th</sup> district of Marseilles: 'I do not want to be determined by my origin ... let's talk about education, remedial courses and housing rehabilitation!' (2010: 191)

Barretto and Dana (2008) argue that political participation may be greater among devout Muslims than among their less-devout co-religionists. This, they argue, is because of devout Muslims' greater knowledge and practice of religious doctrine, which generally encourages civic participation (on this issue, see also Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins 2004). Mandaville (2003) concludes that the current generations of young western Muslims are engaging constructively with the societies in which they live and participating in public life. Edmunds (2006) presents a similar argument, suggesting that rather than radicalisation, 'young, professional Muslims are setting a new political agenda'.

Different forms of political participation do not necessarily follow one another. For example, while Fieldhouse and Cutts (2008) found British Muslim voter registration rates comparable to those of the general population, this translated into Muslim representation in the House of Commons well below population parity (and only marginally higher in the unelected House of Lords) (Sinno 2009: 77). Fieldhouse and Cutts did, however, find that 'Muslim registration is ... closely connected to the size of the local Muslim population', with both registration and turnout higher in areas with a high Muslim population. They concluded: 'For academics, the challenge is to redress the emphasis on the negative impacts of segregation of "ghettoisation" and also to consider the positive aspects of community cohesion generated by spatial concentration, and the potential negative aspects of dispersion including "hidden exclusion"' (2008: 347).

## IS THERE SUCH A THING AS MUSLIM POLITICS?

The literature concurs that 'Muslim' is, to some degree, a misleading category for analysing political participation. Its emergence as an identity category in Australia, as in many other western nations, is a product only of the last twenty years, with a particular increase after 2001. In Australia, it entered political discourse in the late 1990s debates over asylum-seekers (Maddox 2005: 167).

Düvell (2005) points out that 'Muslim' first emerged in Britain as an identity category, distinct from race or ethnicity, after the *Satanic Verses* controversy in 1988-1989 (see also Chaudhury 2007: 6-9). Two decades after the publication of Salman Rushdie's novel, Düvell still finds a consensus in the literature on British Muslim civic engagement that:

*In daily life, there is no such thing as one Muslim community, instead there are many. Only from time to time, these become united around issues of common anger over, for example the Satanic Verses or the war on Iraq. Otherwise, the many territorial organisations (e.g. mosques), local organisations and even the large number of Muslim umbrella organisations rather reflect the diversity of Muslim political life in the UK. And each strand ... has its own local, territorial and national expression. (Düvell 2005: 38-9)*

In other words, religion as such has only a minor influence on political participation, since Muslims do not act with a single voice (any more than do Christians, Jews or the members of any other religious group). Such commonalities as emerge are likely to be precipitated by factors which are only secondarily religious, and which have more to do with shared experiences of discrimination or of solidarity with Muslim communities overseas, whose troubles are, however, more about territory than about religion *per se* (such as the Israel-Palestine conflict).

Complicating matters further, identification with a religious category (such as Muslim) does not necessarily go with religious practice. According to research with young London-based Turks and Kurds, a majority of those who fast and pray regularly do not describe themselves using a religious identity-marker; while a quarter of those who do not fast nevertheless use a religious identity. Sixty-eight per cent of those interviewed do not identify themselves in religious terms (Choudhury 2007: 7-9).

A considerable body of literature on Muslim politics in the west is motivated by the fear of radicalisation. However, qualitative studies in several countries have found that Muslims in western societies, including those adopting what are sometimes seen as extreme practices (such as wearing of the niqab or burqa) overwhelmingly express their political aspirations and self-understanding in terms of liberal individualism (eg Klausen 2005; Liogier 2006; Morsi & Little 2009)

## MUSLIMS IN AUSTRALIA

Literature on Muslims in Australia long concentrated on demographics, with a richer literature exploring the contours and variations of Australian Muslim communities emerging only recently (eg Deen 2008; Yusuf 2009; Ata 2009; Imtoul 2006). A further body of literature (eg Manning 2005; Aly 2007, Saeed 2005; Maddox 2005: ch 7; Gani et al 2007) considers the public standing and representation of Muslims in Australian political culture. A number of government documents (eg HREOC 2004, DFAT 2001; Boyle and Sheen 1997) have examined Australian Muslims' experience from the point of view of religious freedom.

Little Australian research directly addresses the specific area of Muslim political participation (Saeed 2005 is an exception), while many studies (eg Deen 2008, Imtoul 2006, Manning 2005, HREOC 2004, DFAT 2001) indicate areas of overt discrimination, 'hidden exclusion' and marginalisation which act as likely deterrents to Muslim political participation and which therefore need to be addressed in the process of developing an outcomes-focused intervention to enhance Muslim political participation in Australia.

## INITIATIVES FOR MUSLIM POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN AUSTRALIA AND THE UK

The literature and web review has uncovered a number of initiatives in Australia and abroad aimed at encouraging more active political participation within Muslim communities. In Australia, while some programs are funded independently, much funding has come out of the federal government's *National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security* in cooperation with community based organisations or peak community bodies. Broadly speaking, the initiatives in Australia fall within the following three themes: Leadership, Voice and Policing programs, with the focus being either gender-specific, on youth (markedly school-aged children), on community leaders and representatives or on the community in general.

While the demographic focus varies, the programs share the purpose of improving social inclusion for Muslim communities through encouraging participation in the social, economic, cultural and political life of Australia – the objective that has underpinned the *National Action Plan* since 2005. Initiatives such as the Islamic Awareness Workshops and the Liaison with Muslim Communities, both convened by the Australian Federal Police, aim to improve intercultural relationships between Muslim communities and the broader Australian community and providing Muslim citizens with a voice within previously inaccessible spheres such as the institutions of the Legal Justice System.

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission implemented seven projects as part of their *Community Partnerships for Human Rights – Working with Muslim Communities* project which was undertaken as part of the National Action Plan. These projects focused on several areas including, research, education, community participation and resource development with the primary focus being to increase social inclusion and to counter discrimination and intolerance towards Australia's Muslim communities.

Federally funded programs have a notable focus on leadership and interfaith dialogue, such as the *Self-esteem, Identity, Leadership and Community for Women* workshops, funded by DIAC and implemented by the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria, and *Leadership Training for Young Muslims*, funded by the Australian Government and implemented by La Trobe University. Such initiatives aim to empower Muslim men, women and youth by developing the skills necessary to engage actively in the broad spectrum of Australian public life. This is achieved through leadership training as well as personal and professional development.

The *Youth Leadership Program*, implemented by the Islamic College of South Australia and funded by DIAC, promotes interfaith and intercultural dialogue between mainstream and minority communities. The schools involved in the project were the Islamic College of South Australia, Nazareth Catholic College and Adelaide Secondary School.



A number of studies have questioned the success of interfaith dialogue as a technique for enhancing religious minorities' social inclusion and civic engagement. One reservation hinges on the fact that, by emphasising faith (understood as the doctrinal dimension of a religious tradition—see Smart 1996), dialogue activities exclude a tradition's more nominal or cultural adherents, who may have little interest in doctrinal rapprochement but yet experience discrimination on the basis of their religious identification. The more devout members of a tradition may range from the conservative to the liberal, and dialogue participants tend to self-select for the more liberal end of their respective traditions. This is because the more conservative members, at least of the three main monotheist traditions, are more likely to see their own as the only path to truth and therefore to see little point in dialogue with those whom they believe to be mistaken. Finally, in a secular society such as Australia, where fewer than one in ten of the population claims to attend church weekly, a dialogue between faith positions can be limited to a conversation amongst minorities, excluding the mainstream, secular culture with which most Australians identify. The most successful interventions emphasise building rapport and a sense of shared purpose among members of different faiths through collaborative action, rather than exclusively concentrating on discussion (Smock 2002).

## SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

*Leadership Australia – A New Generation*, implemented by the Australian Multicultural Foundation and funded by DIAC, is a leadership and mentoring program for 16 young Australian Muslims from each state and territory. *Step-in-out: Multicultural Young Men's Leadership*, also funded by DIAC, is implemented by Multicultural Youth South Australia. It aims to build leadership skills among young Muslim men aged between 14 and 25, in order to increase participation in the mainstream community.

Programs of interest that have emerged out of the United Kingdom fall broadly into the following categories:

- Religion and school
- Faith and social cohesion
- Diplomacy between Britain and Muslim nations
- Muslim women's voices
- Muslim men's voices
- Political inclusion, power and participation.

Many are funded by independent trusts and philanthropic foundations. Notably, the *Role of Faith Schools – Discussions, Dialogues and Debates*, funded by the Runnymede Trust, promotes cohesion between young people from various ethnic and faith backgrounds. Two sister projects were funded and implemented by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation: *In My Name – a Collection of Muslim Women's Voices* and *In My Name – a Collection of Muslim Men's Voices*.

Of special interest is a project called *Active Citizenship Program of Study*, delivered by the independent Nasuha Education Foundation. It seeks to improve life skills of young people from Muslim backgrounds and teach the importance of diversity, social cohesion and a sense of common purpose. Its approach is unique in presenting an enriched Islamic perspective on citizenship values, sourced directly from Islamic traditions. The program has been designed to be part of existing curriculum in mosques and madrassas.

Government funding in the UK for social programs focused on Muslim communities explicitly emphasised preventing violent extremism and terrorism, in a strategy called PREVENT. Its goals were to:

- Challenge violent extremist ideology and support mainstream voices
- Increase the capacity of communities to resist violent extremists
- Address grievances.

In 2007, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced £45 million to local authorities under the program. In August 2009, this funding was boosted by an additional £7.5 million. These programs, under the heading 'Empowering Communities', included the Community Leadership Fund, Local Government Performance Indicator on Preventing Violent Extremism, Pathfinder Fund, Challenge and Innovation Fund and the Young Muslims Advisory Group.

The *Community Leadership Fund* provided funding to organisations working on:

- Capacity of organisations and communities
- Supporting Muslim young people
- Supporting Muslim women
- Capacity of Muslim faith leaders
- Local forums against extremism and Islamophobia.

The *Pathfinder Fund* gave £6 million to local authorities to build on existing programs and to forge partnerships with police, community and faith groups.

The *Challenge and Innovation Fund* put £3.2 million towards local authority initiatives directed towards the PREVENT strategy's objectives.

The *Young Muslim Advisory Group* was established in August 2008 to work with Cabinet ministers on such matters as reducing discrimination, enhancing civic participation and lifting employment levels.

## SUMMARY

The current literature does not facilitate an accurate assessment of levels of Muslim political participation in Australia. This is for a number of reasons. One is the very great diversity of Australian Muslims. Self-identified Muslims come from almost every geographical background, including both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Factors which affect political participation include age, education, employment, English fluency, socio-economic status, length of residence in Australia, integration into a religious community and level of religious commitment. Further, some of these (such as the last two) interact in ways which complicate one another's effects. Australian Muslims range from very low to very high on each of these measures, making their assessment as a single community very difficult.

In spite of these difficulties, meaningful information can be mined from the large international and Australian data on migrant political participation, and from the smaller, mostly overseas, literatures on the relationship between religion and political participation and on Muslim political participation specifically.

The survey of initiatives demonstrates that Australia has already made a significant start in developing programs to enhance political participation by Australian Muslims. The remainder of this report augments the existing literature through qualitative research to assess which initiatives are most likely to succeed, and why.

### COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POLITICALLY ACTIVE

Not surprisingly, interviewees tended to describe themselves as highly self-motivated, and not easily discouraged. Asked what barriers they had encountered, many echoed the response of a youth leader: “I tend to be the sort of person who doesn’t see barriers”. Several said that, rather than be discouraged when they encountered opposition, they merely took it as a stimulus to try even harder.

As in other communities, the politically active often grew up in supportive, and perhaps politically-aware, families. For example, Diana Rahman came from a very politically-engaged family: her father always read the paper (*“the Courier Mail, because that was what there was—so he was always abreast of Australian news”*), and encouraged his daughters to be active.

As well as direct political socialisation, many interviewees found in their family backgrounds the resources to be personally strong, willing to go out on a limb, unafraid to risk criticism—necessary attributes for anyone taking a public stand.

Cultural background is also important. Those whose families originated from countries with robust democratic institutions found political involvement easier, and more attractive, than did those from totalitarian or repressive countries of origin.

A number of interviewees described wanting to “give something back” to Australia, and emphasised that their work, even if directed specifically towards Muslims or towards a particular ethnic group, was aimed at improving things for the whole Australian community.

To some, the negative publicity about Muslims after September 11 2001 was a motivating force. Media stereotypes inspired some to demonstrate a different face of Islam. Others were moved by the discrimination Muslims experienced to help other Muslims understand and act on their rights. One said that, since 2001, he felt he could not publicly criticise any Muslim community because “there’s enough of that already”. He felt a constant obligation to challenge negative stereotypes.

Some attributed their move into political activity to a particular issue. A number of Australian interviewees echoed Canadian MP Omar Alghabra, who said he finally got to the point where expressing dissatisfaction with the political situation was not enough: a friend challenged him that if he wanted to complain about how things were then he should try and do something about it. Most described their political awakening as a gradual process. By contrast, Malikeh Michaels had been politically active since high school, but found her conversion to Islam gave her activism a new focus.

A very strong theme for all interviewees was the importance of education. They argued that discrimination in the general community was largely attributable to lack of education and that better-educated people were less likely to hold negative, stereotypical views of Islam. They felt that all Australians, Muslim and non-Muslim, needed to be better educated about the Australian political system in order to participate effectively in democratic processes. One participant had designed an education program, “How to Lobby Effectively”, about Australian democracy, which was first used at Auburn Mosque in the lead-up to the 2004 federal election. But, convinced that the wider Australian population also needed basic civics instruction, the participant has now used it in other forums with non-Muslims.

Interviewees also all felt strongly that education was vital for new migrants, as a means of settling in and improving their circumstances, and that knowledge of English was a determining factor in people’s ability to participate (as our research confirmed). Moreover, several argued that lack of education about Islam made

Muslims more open to extremism. “Backyard imams” with little training, and new converts with more enthusiasm than knowledge, could easily be misled; whereas those with a deeper knowledge of Islamic theology and political traditions were less susceptible to radicalisation. Affinity Intercultural Foundation’s newly-launched Islamic Sciences and Research Academy (ISRA) offers university-level courses which aim to teach Muslim students a better understanding of their faith, and non-Muslim students, such as trainee nurses and teachers, a better understanding of how to interact with Muslims they encounter in their professional practice.

## WHAT OPPORTUNITIES OR ENABLING FACTORS WERE MANIFEST AMONG THE POLITICALLY ACTIVE?

Most stressed the importance of mentoring. Hutch Hussein had been involved with the Labor women’s organisation EMILY’s List, which had been a vital part of her own development, including mentoring by former Victorian premier Joan Kirner. Hutch Hussein strenuously opposed the idea of a Muslim EMILY’s List-style organisation, however, because that would isolate people and make them appear to be representing a sectional interest. She was emphatic that Muslims should take advantage of the mentoring opportunities available through mainstream channels.

Many mentioned strong family role models—particularly women, who had often been inspired by strong female relatives in leadership positions or with successful professional careers.

Several of Lebanese background mentioned coming from a community where politics was discussed regularly. For some, the important step was making the leap from talking about homeland politics to engaging with Australian issues in Australia.

One interviewee pointed out that, in order for people to become politically engaged, they need first to believe that they can make a difference. He echoed many participants’ argument that education about democratic processes, and how to effect change, is therefore crucial.

Programs specifically developed to increase political involvement had mixed results. Ahmed Kilani co-convened the Australian Muslim Political Lobby in the lead-up to the 2004 election, which we discussed in Chapter Two. The Lobby wrote to parties and candidates asking for their policies on issues it identified as of particular concern to Muslim voters. Results were disappointing: the Liberal Party did not reply; the ALP acknowledged receipt but never followed up with answers; only the Greens and Australian Democrats gave meaningful responses. The group nevertheless distributed “How To Vote” cards, pointing out areas on which one party or another was closer to Muslim concerns—for example, highlighting the Liberal Party’s greater support for private (including Muslim) schools and the Labor Party’s more pro-Palestinian stance.

Voter education forums run through the Auburn mosque in the lead-up to the 2004 federal election had also achieved disappointing turnouts, although the program itself was successfully transferred elsewhere, including beyond the Muslim community.

On the other hand, a respondent who did not wish to be named had run successful leadership courses for Muslim women in Queensland, NSW, Tasmania and South Australia. The courses covered financial management, how to conduct a meeting and get people to air their grievances, and how to resolve problems. Some women were wary of participating. Some husbands did not want their wives away for a whole weekend, or feared them becoming feminists. ‘But we stress that it’s run on Islamic guidelines’, the convenor explained, and that the women’s skills would be useful to the whole community, not just women. The program used a train-the-trainer model, equipping participants to then run it for others.

Victoria Arab Social Services runs TAFE-accredited leadership programs which emphasise the importance of self-understanding before one can lead others. Lawyers and debaters volunteer to teach skills in mounting an

argument and making a case. Its graduates have come back as volunteers, to help others gain the same experience. Leila Alloush attributed the program's success partly to the fact that, where some other programs encourage participants to suppress their own feelings, Victorian Arab Social Services acknowledges that experiencing racism and unfair discrimination leaves people hurt and angry, and so participants learn how to understand and deal positively with those feelings.

Emotions are also acknowledged in the programs that one participant, a lawyer and community worker, runs for Muslim children in state schools through her independent educational organisation:

*The media is one of the most difficult areas to deal with ... For example, ... with Camden [protests against the Quranic Society's proposed school], we showed these videos to the children and asked them to suggest responses: 'What would you do if you had the chance to respond?' This really helps those kids because, when you show the video for the first time, immediately there's a response, ... I don't know if you remember this woman wearing the hat, the Australian flag ... she lashed out ... and the kids were like, 'Oh, I want to kill her! ... I hate her!' Well, how do you deal with this? This is not good enough. You're actually proving her point. You're being angry. She says that you people are all dangerous and angry, and that's exactly what you're doing. What would you do? And it really helps them to pretend they're on camera, giving a response to her ... they come up with interesting answers. For example, if there is a ... Muslim soccer club they will offer to have a match with a Camden school and show them that, 'Hey, we're just normal people like you'. ... So they will come up, eventually, with ideas, but there's a lot of anger there and you have to go through it first, before you can come up with the positive responses.*

The La Trobe Muslim Leadership Program was universally praised, and a number of its participants had gone on to leadership positions, including as board members of the Islamic Council of Victoria. The three-month part-time program, whose participants are chosen by application and interview, includes week-long visits to Sydney and Canberra, and opportunities to meet politicians, judges and religious leaders. Tasneem Chopra, one of its organisers, assessed its achievements:

*After the graduation of the program every year, we look back at the twenty participants—ten male and ten female—and we see how many are actually actively involved developing their own spin-off projects. And there's quite a number ... it's fantastic.*

Sam Almaliki had already been active in the Muslim community before he attended the Australian Multicultural Foundation Leadership Australia program when he was nineteen. To him, the program's biggest success was that it 'didn't finish when the seminars finished, it's still going.' Sessions on the media, for example, had concluded with the assignment of discussing the leadership program in the media.

*Now, I don't think many of us would have done that if the program didn't ask us to. ... I took it upon myself to go and get an interview with Alan Jones. ... From that experience I've been given the confidence that I can create my own opportunities, rather than say ... 'I'm always denied the opportunity to speak, I'm always denied the opportunity to put the case forward'. The reality is if you investigate you'll likely get a go. And that's what it proved for me. ...*

*Alan ... was only too happy to give me the opportunity to speak on his program, prime time, 7:15 am on 18 March ... the important thing was Alan's own comments and views.*

*He's renowned for being kind of critical of the Muslim community ... But ... he gave me a very good acknowledgment and credit and also acknowledged the fact ... that forty per cent of young Muslims are born in this country. So we need to regard them as young Australians who are facing issues not so different to what other young people are facing from other cultural backgrounds.*

The Federation of Muslim Students and Youth runs a program called 'Believe, Achieve and Inspire', offered in conjunction with Victoria University, leading to a Graduate Certificate of Management. It is open to Muslims and non-Muslims, but its website promises 'rich Islamic content' and federation president Umar Batchelor explained that:

*Just like any other organisation we have a target market, and our market is the Muslims, but we do not restrict it to the Muslims ... We want individuals to not only have ... knowledge of management and leadership, but Islamic values are required to become an effective community worker within the Muslim community ... and there's no other program out there that provides that.*

However, one leader speculated that:

*There's probably, if anything, an excess of leadership programs at the moment. The number of Muslim organisations who are running leadership initiatives is probably numbering into like nine or ten in a given year, which is saturation point.*

This leader reported that some young people would think 'Oh, no, not another leadership program!' while others were put off by the term 'leadership' which, they said, 'sounds daggy', or 'sounds uppity'.

Some respondents emphasised that the first step to political engagement is engaging in civil society, and so the most effective programs were those that overcame people's alienation, even if politics was not the topic. A standout example was Victoria Arab Social Services' Anti-Racism Action Band, which, at the time of our research, had been running for six years and involved over 150 young people from forty ethnic groups in Melbourne's northern region. Two of our respondents had been founders, and reported how previously disengaged young people had, through their involvement, learned skills in performance, dance and drama, and had, in turn, undertaken to mentor newcomers. Other successful programs for overcoming disengagement included sport, visual arts, poetry, music and community radio.

Tasneem Chopra advocated participating on a school board or equivalent, and emphasised it should be in the state school, not just at the Islamic school:

*There is that political awareness, making friends with your neighbours—it sounds very simplistic, but when you start building that kind of rapport from the grassroots up, it has a ripple effect.*

So, she emphasised:

*Encouraging families with children to participate in ventures that aren't going to just localise them within their own little communities ... like Little Athletics or swimming at the pool or joining the local library and not just being content to keep within a pretty closed network.*

These contrasted with some more directly political activities, such as advocacy and consultative groups, which some respondents felt can be tokenistic, though they were more successful when run by and for young people, rather than just existing to advise a board of adults. Victoria's Ethnic Youth Council was a successful example, its relevance to participants indicated in part by its low drop-out rate, with members staying in touch even after moving too far to participate in person.

Ahmed Kilani, co-convenor of the website muslimvillage.com, identified a number of federal seats in which the proportion of Muslim voters reached ten per cent, so a block vote could have had a significant impact. However, the literature on religious block voting and the interviewees' remarks about diversity in the Muslim community suggest a Muslim block vote would be extremely difficult to co-ordinate. Compounding the difficulty, some Australian Muslims consider voting haram, so either do not vote, donkey vote or deliberately vote informally. Kilani reported working on a polling booth with a high Muslim population for a NSW state election, and being taken aback by the high informal vote and low Muslim turnout.

## WHAT BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION HAVE WE IDENTIFIED?

The low turnout among Muslims was only partly attributed to religious proscriptions of voting for a non-Muslim government. Muslimvillage co-convenor Ahmed Kilani, who also co-convened the 2004 Australian Muslim Electoral Taskforce, argued that the climate of hostility towards Muslims which prevailed during the Howard government made some voters wary of any kind of participation. This was particularly strong for those who had recently arrived from undemocratic regimes, where voting was discouraged or dangerous. They would often interpret Australia's cultural and political climate towards Muslims as making non-participation the safest route.

As to whether racism deterred people from more active forms of political involvement, such as running for office, some respondents denied encountering any racism; some saw racism as attitude of some individuals but not as a structural or institutional problem; and some saw racism as both personal and structural.

Most said they had encountered no barriers to becoming politically involved, or no specific barriers to them as Muslims—though some noted that barriers might arise after preselection. For example, some argued that Muslim candidates are more likely to be pre-selected for unwinnable seats. Barriers to running for office were often seen as inherent in the party machines and factionalism, rather than being directed against a candidate for being Muslim as such.

An overwhelming majority of respondents spoke of their need to counter negative stereotypes of Muslims, and several had undertaken projects to counter such stereotypes. One, who did not wish to be named, had run a successful program for (non-Muslim) media students in which they had to report an event to do with Muslim affairs, which the convenor then went over with them, pointing out inaccuracies or prejudices, helping them to rewrite it in a more neutral way.

Some found themselves in a no-win situation, encountering opposition from both within and outside their communities. As Greens candidate and Melbourne Comedy Festival performer Mohammed El-Leissy described his experience, 'non-Muslims won't vote for you because you're a Muslim; Muslims won't vote for you because politics is corrupt!' Leila Alloush said that those she called the 'extreme Australian mainstream' thought her a fundamentalist, while conservative Muslims thought her 'a communist'.

Many respondents reported a strong feeling that recent migrants have enough to do finding a job, learning English, paying a mortgage and looking after family, leaving little energy for politics. Some felt that migrants from countries with repressive regimes have a further disincentive—it takes a long time for people from some backgrounds to get used to the idea that they won't be disadvantaged if they speak their mind. People can also tend to remain preoccupied by the politics they've left behind, at the expense of engaging with Australian politics. One considered satellite television a problem, because it allows exactly that.

Many reported negative images of Islam as a barrier. They either deliberately ignored it, or consciously set out to challenge the stereotypes. A related issue was lack of access to the media. Some felt that the media only wants to hear from Muslims who reinforce existing stereotypes—for example, only wanting to talk to covered women, even though they are a minority. But others pointed to success stories—Irfan Yusuf, Waleed Aly, Jamila Hussain—who achieve media presence from a non-stereotyped position.

Almost universally, interviewees stressed a need for more education, not only of Muslim migrants but of the general population. Many were surprised by Australians' ignorance of political processes, making it less surprising that that knowledge wasn't effectively passed on to recent arrivals. Many saw racism as a function of poor education. Others saw racism as coming from lack of personal connection with people from different backgrounds.

Respondents were divided on whether activism should be directly from the Muslim communities, or through encouraging Muslims to take part in wider multicultural or mainstream forums. Jamila Hussain's strongest advice to an aspiring leader would be:

*Don't advertise the fact that you are a Muslim, or you run the risk that bigoted people will use that to incite fear and hatred against you, as happened to Ed Husic.*

Some felt that mosque-based programs were too ghettoising, preferring that participation programs should be delivered through schools. Some felt that the fragmentation of Muslim communities made collective action impossible, and that therefore overcoming that fragmentation was the first step; others felt, on the contrary, that it was actually undesirable to do things under an identifiable 'Muslim' banner. Strong advocates for the latter argument were those involved with Victorian Arabic Social Services and its Anti-Racism Action Band. They found that anti-racist, crime-prevention and capacity-building activity were just as relevant to Indigenous, Pacific Islander and other young people and so had opened their programs to all. Similarly, the Ethnic Youth Council view was that it was important to represent minority voices, but actively discouraged isolating people into one or other *specific* ethnic minority voice.

One academic emphasised:

*I don't talk about 'the' Muslim community, because I don't think there is 'the' Muslim community, there are lots of different Muslim communities, and ... on different issues there's going to be a broad cross-section of opinion ... I think it's quite dangerous to start talking about 'the' Muslim community as a whole, so when I say get involved or get organised, I mean in as many different ways as possible.*

Similarly, Ahmed Kilani worried about:

*this whole problem of labelling Muslims, because it means so many different and varied things. Say, for example, if you're Arab and you're fifty years plus, then you might listen to Sheikh Hilali, ... but if you're of Arab background, born in Australia and you're twenty years old, he's completely irrelevant to you. And there's an equivalent of that in each community.*

He saw the solution as a future identity based more on Islam and less on specific regional variants. Another respondent, who wished to remain anonymous, had written a curriculum unit for Muslim primary and high schools, to promote the idea of a modern Australian Islam, rather than a collection of ethnic variants. A Melbourne community worker pointed out:

*One of the oldest communities is the Albanian one, and they've got their own mosque and they've got their own communities. You've got the Turkish one, you've got the Iraqi one ... each one is sort of isolated ... it is hard to crack through, particularly with the older generation having control of a lot of these mosques and community centres. ... What we see now is that a lot of the younger groups are breaking away from the established groups and trying to join up with other groups to do things together, but it's a very slow process ... It's like the United Nations, bringing all the nations together.*

Several respondents highlighted the need for Australian-trained imams, attuned to the needs of Australian-born Muslims, but Mehmet Ozalp, of Affinity Intercultural Foundation in Sydney, cautioned that the Australian government's attempt to develop imam training was of 'good intent, but done the wrong way' because 'it goes both against Australian secularism and against Islamic tradition. Whenever rulers try to interfere with religious scholarship, it backfires on them'.

In the quest for a pan-ethnic, Australian Islam, some found it best to stand outside any one ethnic tradition. Academic and Muslim Women's Network secretary Jamila Hussain saw an advantage in the fact that 'I don't



belong to any particular Muslim community, and nor did my husband, who was Chinese', finding it better to 'move between all the different communities', knowing people in nearly all of them. She concluded that lack of resources keeps different Muslim groups from collaborating:

*One of the problems with the Muslim communities is that there's so many of them, and they all live in their own separate little compartments and they don't get together and do things in a unified way ... I think the bottom line is money.*

A law lecturer at the University of Technology Sydney, she has written about dispute resolution and noted that some imams were currently practising counselling, mediation and dispute resolution—but they were working in isolation from one another, with no co-ordination.

Ahmed Kilani pointed out that even umbrella organisations struggle to be truly representative: he argued that the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, as a peak body, only represents those who join an affiliated group, which he estimated as between five and ten per cent of Australian Muslims. In place of such groups, which tend to represent one ethnic base, movements like muslimvillage and the drug rehabilitation service Mission of Hope are emerging as pan-Muslim organisations.

Also, he noted that services or activities that benefit Muslims are also likely to benefit non-Muslims with similar needs. He gave the example of the National Australia Bank's no-interest loans scheme, which fits the Islamic finance model, but is available not just to Muslims but to anyone in Canterbury Bankstown who receives any form of Centrelink payment. He argued that urgent needs for Muslims to be more politically active were also urgent for non-Muslims, particularly a Bill of Rights and stronger antidiscrimination law.

Several respondents worried that government consultations tend to engage with (often self-identified) 'community leaders', so the diversity of opinion within a community is easily overlooked. When opportunities arise to be involved in broader consultation, a difficulty is getting the message out to the full range of people who could be involved. As one interviewee, who wished to remain anonymous, said, 'You have to be in the right channels to see the advertisements', so many miss out. Similarly, Sherene Hassan, Vice-President of the Islamic Council of Victoria, worried that those who might most benefit from activities like the La Trobe Muslim Leadership Program could be missing the message:

*Invariably, we would be promoting these projects ... at Muslim schools, the alumni of Muslim schools ... or mosques, Muslim student organisations at the various universities. ... How do we attract Muslims who aren't connected to the Muslim community in any way? The first year student who isn't associated with a Muslim student association, who used to go to Melbourne High—we need to try and tap into that demographic and we're finding it quite challenging.*

## WHAT PART DO GENDER, ETHNICITY, CLASS AND GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION PLAY?

**Women** experienced barriers not only inside their community but also in the "glass ceiling" that regularly confronts Australian women aspiring to leadership.

Silma Ihram had been a Senate candidate for the Unity Party, and an Australian Democrat candidate at both federal and state levels. She found that:

*Being a woman, it's so difficult to tap into the Muslim community because the women, often, of traditional houses, they take their husband's point of view. A lot of women are not politically aware in the Muslim community. And men respond to males. They don't respond to females. So you really have to—you can't speak. I mean, this is something I used to agonise a lot about with the school that I ran, in terms of setting the agenda, in terms of real leadership ... it's a very big liability, being a woman and being able to appeal to the Muslim community. That's what I found, anyway. I'm really glad that Malikeh [Michaels] has been able to do it.*

Female interviewees found their political involvement constrained either by their family's demands, or by their own sense of family responsibility, though some endured considerable stresses in order to balance the competing demands. An example is Leila Alloush, who arrived in Australia from Lebanon with no English, but great determination, forged in a family characterised by its strong women. She worked and completed a Masters in Management and Social Work, while also raising three children. In 2007, she won the Victorian Women's Leadership award and in 2008 an Australian government award for leadership and contribution to the Muslim and Arabic community.

Each woman's individual family circumstances and cultural background affected the ways in which gender constrained or enhanced her involvement. Leila Alloush described how her outspokenness on matters of concern to Muslim women had led men in her community to try to silence her through exerting pressure on her husband and sons. She reflected that her activism comes at a cost, but that she reassured herself with the thought that 'I've helped twenty women get back into education. They got really professional jobs.' She observed that women have to work three times as long and hard as men do to get the same recognition.

Another emphasised that her family's needs came first, and cautioned young women that political engagement should fit around their family obligations. Women from Lebanese backgrounds were overrepresented among the politically-active, and women from some other groups, such as Iraqi, were underrepresented. This may have to do with length of residence in Australia, Lebanese women being more likely to have grown up and been educated in Australia, while Iraqis, being more likely to have arrived recently as refugees, tended to face problems of language and the pressures of early settlement which are a disincentive to political engagement.

On the other hand, some women identified gender-specific advantages, such as deeper community connections. Also, the fact that much grassroots interfaith activity is undertaken by women meant that women had an additional source of connections beyond the Muslim community. Diana Rahman said that, although Muslim men tend to be the official representatives, Muslim women are the silent achievers, and women's organisations are the ones that 'get things done'.

One gender difference which emerged from the research was the high proportion of politically-active women who were adult converts to Islam. Four of our interviewees—Malikeh Michaels, Jamila Hussain, Susan Carland and Silma Ihram—fitted this category. Our data do not enable us to say whether this is a consistent pattern, or an anomaly of our sample. Possible explanations include Australian-born adult converts' facility with English, making political engagement easier than it is for recent migrants, and Australian-born participants' greater willingness to participate in interviews. Another possible explanation is that their existing social justice orientation and activism contributed to their decision to convert to Islam. Our research so far does not enable us to say whether any of these effects is in fact gender-specific, as our sample would seem to suggest, or, if so, why that should be the case.

A further possibility is that Australian-born women who converted in adult life may have grown up in environments in which their early socialisation included fewer expectations of being constrained by family requirements than was the case for daughters of immigrants. However, we note that several of our female interviewees who are immigrants, or daughters of immigrants, cited their mothers' example and their fathers' encouragement as facilitating their political engagement.

The suggestion that converts—male or female—may find it easier to become politically involved is strengthened by the observation that Australia's most prominent religious vilification tribunal hearing to date, the investigation of whether two Pentecostal Christian pastors had vilified Islam in a church seminar in Victoria, was brought by Anglo converts (Deen 2008).

All our respondents' levels of participation reflected the patterns of length of residence in Australia and whether or not they had arrived as refugees. Refugees were less politically-engaged than voluntary migrants,

although refugees who had arrived as children and grown up in Australia were more likely to participate in Australian politics than their parents.

**Class** was barely referred to directly, but emerged between the lines. Reliance on government funding, and the consequences of that reliance (including perpetually scarce resources, uncertainty of continuation from year to year and the need to devote a lot of time to writing funding applications at the expense of direct community work) were recurrent themes.

Two participants who had been involved in mentoring Muslim students into the Victorian Youth Parliament had contrasting views about its class dimensions. Youth Parliament participants were generally Anglo-Australian, and many attended elite private schools. One mentor felt that migrant students, who tended to come from disadvantaged schools, benefitted from taking part in such programs, and thought the Ethnic Youth Council's objective of helping them to gain access to mainstream programs bridged some of the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged schools. However, another mentor reported the experience as being 'like a nightmare' for a Muslim student from a disadvantaged school sitting next to a student from a 'prestigious private school'. She felt that candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds ideally needed a year's preparation before taking part, so as to enable them better to deal with the cultural and class differences they would encounter.

Both mentors agreed that involvement in mainstream leadership programs such as the Youth Parliaments or Duke of Edinburgh Awards was preferable to Muslim-only, or even ethnic-specific, programs, but pointed out that many practical barriers can impede Muslim students' participation. One observed that, even when migrant students were selected, their parents would often not allow them to take part, and employers were reluctant to give them time off work to participate. Availability of halal food had been a major hindrance: the first Muslim participants in the Youth Parliament had found their only option was to stick to salad. However, subsequent years' participants had not only been offered halal food, but also invited to describe to non-Muslim participants the reasons behind it, which this mentor saw as a positive and supportive development.

A lawyer and community worker, who wished to remain anonymous, ran programs for recent migrant Muslim children in disadvantaged state schools. Working mainly with Iraqi and Afghani children, she found that their families' poverty and recent history of trauma and violence significantly compounded the usual difficulties of cross-cultural integration. The children, who often had difficulty with English and struggled at school, had exceptionally high school drop-out rates, with perhaps ten per cent of Muslim school students from these backgrounds going on to further education. To address this, she established a work-experience program for fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds. One might say:

*'Oh, I want to be an eye surgeon but I'll never be one because I'm not good enough' ... so we match them up with a Muslim eye surgeon. We say, 'Why don't you spend a couple of days with this person?' They come back and they say, 'Wow! He was so amazing! It was fantastic! I loved this, this is great, I can do this!' and that has a really positive impact on them.*

As well as broadening career horizons, such activities built students' confidence, enabling them eventually to take part in more directly political programs. The mentoring convenor praised the La Trobe Muslim Leadership Program:

*With the two girls I'm working with at the moment, they were very hesitant in working with the community. They didn't have the confidence. They thought they wouldn't be good enough ... whereas, when they went through that [La Trobe] program, having met those role models, having met those amazing people ... it gave them the confidence to say ... not just 'I can do this', but 'I actually have a duty to do this. I'm representing my community. I've got to do this'.*

Several participants in the La Trobe program nominated the trip to Canberra as the most significant component. Typical comments included:

*For me, personally, the trip to Canberra, just seeing ... the powers that be. That's something that—if you're some kid from Broadmeadows, you don't get to see that stuff, ever.*

**Geography** could be an advantage, especially at local government level—interviewees found it easier to represent a similar community. As expected, local government areas with higher Muslim population had a higher proportion of Muslim councillors. For example, at the time of our research, Auburn council had four Muslim members (one Green, one Liberal, one Independent and one ALP) and Liverpool had three (one Liberal, two ALP). However, Malikeh Michaels, standing as a Greens candidate for Auburn council, gained more votes from white middle-class booths than predominantly Muslim booths—a pattern also reported by Canadian Muslim MP Yasmin Ratansi. While Muslim candidates were more likely to run for seats with some Muslim population, none gave the Muslim population as a reason for running in that seat, or as contributing to their electoral success or failure. While the correlation could be explained by the simple logic that areas with a higher Muslim population have a larger pool of potential Muslim candidates, the underrepresentation of Victorian Muslims on local government councils compared to NSW suggests other factors.

Urban communities were more open to electing Muslim candidates than rural ones.

**Ethnicity** as such played little role, except as it was a factor in the already-noted influences of length of residency in Australia and political culture in the country of origin. For a number of respondents, including Jamila Hussain, not being identified with any one ethnic community was an advantage, because they thus avoided appearing tied to one set of interests—or vulnerable to any one group of nay-sayers.

On the other hand, Silma Ihram felt that Muslim community support for her campaigns in state and federal elections had been reduced because:

*I'm not an 'ethnic', I'm an Australian. So, from their [other Muslims'] point of view ... they all had their own candidates ... Ethnicity is important. I don't think it's the most important thing, but the way that you reach out to a community is through a community ... I think things are going to change. Although the majority of the Muslim community is second, third generation, it is owned and led by first generation Muslim migrants. You look at all the schools. They're mostly still under the control of first generation. The mosques—most of them, under the control of first generation. Even if it's behind the scenes. So ... the second and third generation ... are only going to get a leg up if they have these first generation guys right behind them and they're playing their agenda.*

## WHAT ARE INTERVIEWEES' MAIN POLITICAL INTERESTS?

Very varied! Our interviewees nominated their particular concerns across a range including litter, recycling, speed humps, street beautification, Indigenous rights, crime prevention, human rights in Australia and overseas, racism, Palestinian autonomy, global warming, the global financial crisis and more. For some, their interests were principally local (particularly those working in local government), while others' concerns extended internationally. Several interviewees pointed to recent migrants' frequent preoccupation with politics in their home country and emphasised the need to engage with Australian issues and become involved in Australian politics.

In 2004, the Australian Muslim Electoral Taskforce canvassed parties on issues the Lobby identified as important to Muslim voters. Co-convenor Ahmed Kilani recalled:

*A lot of it was more to do with general things, but also issues like the Palestine issue, things like pornography, censorship of the media ... freedom of religion, funding of Islamic schools, anti-discrimination.*

Many emphasised equality and fairness for everyone, rather than limiting their concerns to Muslims. This was particularly evident for the interviewees who were members of, and in some cases candidates for, the Greens. It arose especially in relation to the Greens stance on same-sex marriage.

Interviewees who had stood for the Greens differed in their positions on gay and lesbian rights—some would have preferred to see Greens policy changed, while others supported the existing position. However, interviewees were unanimous in the view that they could not support human rights for their own communities while opposing them for others. The same view has been expressed by overseas Muslim politicians in parties that support same-sex marriage or equivalents. New Zealand Labor MP Ashraf Choudhary abstained when the Civil Unions bill (allowing a marriage equivalent available to same- and opposite-sex couples) was first debated in 2004, but voted in favour on the second reading, telling the *New Zealand Herald* that he had decided, ‘after a lot of soul searching’, and despite hefty lobbying from some Muslim and ethnic minority constituents, that ‘the law has to treat everyone equally and fairly ... if the law allows one minority group to be discriminated against then all minorities are vulnerable’ (*NZ Herald* 30/11/2004). Canadian Liberal MP Yasmin Ratansi similarly supported her country’s move to same-sex marriage, despite being ‘lobbied by every religious group in town’ to oppose it. She explained to irate callers that, if she failed to support one vulnerable minority, she would be less effective in protecting her constituents’ rights in future.

To a person, those in elected office resisted being seen as representing minority interests. ‘I represent my whole electorate, not just its Muslim members,’ was a very frequently-repeated line. This observation is consistent with the views of Muslim politicians we interviewed in Canada, and of those in other western countries available in the international data, reported in the literature review. To take just one example, Ghulam Gillani, a Labor member of Liverpool Council in western Sydney, reported supporting development applications for a Muslim school and a Christian school, both on their merits, and emphasised:

*I particularly believe that my identity is not based on my colour or my belief ... And in the chamber, when I debate, it’s my ability to debate, it’s my way of communication that makes me good or bad. It’s not my Muslim identity, it’s not my faith, it’s nothing ... it’s my personal experience, I’m telling you.*

Hutch Hussein, who works at Spectrum Migrant Resources Centre and considers one day pursuing a more directly political career, saw being Muslim as:

*One of my identities. It’s not my sole identity, so I wouldn’t at all hide the fact that I am of Muslim background ... I don’t think that Muslim people automatically vote for Muslim people. That’s, I think, a really dangerous trap that people fall into ... What I will put up front is ... my record ... as a community activist and what I’m proposing to do ... Anything else will be behind that, really.*

The tendency to fit people into ‘Muslim’ stereotypes was experienced even by one interviewee who was not a Muslim and found Australians reluctant to accept that one can be an Arab but not a Muslim. When this respondent identified as a Lebanese Christian, people would respond, ‘Oh, so you’re a Christian Muslim?’ This participant was regularly asked by non-Muslims to speak on behalf of Muslims—about the hijab, the status of Muslim women, the political climate. But then, if non-Muslims finally ‘get that I’m not Muslim, they want to vent all their anti-Muslim sentiment, and I end up again defending and speaking for Islam’.

Hicham Zraika told us that, before his election as Mayor of Auburn, he had reached out to every ethnic and religious community in his electorate *except* his own; only after the election did he build political connections with the Lebanese Muslims with whom he identified. Several respondents cited the cautionary instance of Ed Husic, a Labor candidate of Bosnian Muslim heritage, who was defeated in the traditionally Labor seat of Greenway in the 2004 federal election after a leafleting campaign falsely suggested he was promising “a better deal for Islam” in Greenway. If even someone not particularly closely associated with the Muslim community could suffer electorally as a result of their heritage, several respondents reasoned, those who practised their faith and identified closely with their community could fear even worse vilification. (Mr Husic was elected Member for Chifley in the federal election on 21 August 2010)

On the other hand, some respondents distrusted Muslim politicians and public figures who do not immerse themselves in a community. One Sydney activist worried that a Melbourne academic and opinion maker is ‘not a community man’. To a small number, Muslim politicians who emphasise their connections to the mainstream are ‘sell-outs’.

This perhaps reflected the fact that, while politicians and some other public figures found their work impeded by being perceived as too close to a particular ethnic or religious community, those employed as community workers were much more likely to be overtly concerned with issues relating to Muslims. Even then, the nature of their work affected their willingness to be seen addressing a primarily Muslim audience. For example, a policy officer working in a multicultural settlement services agency emphasised that his work was for all ethnic groups, not just Muslims. An academic, who preferred to remain anonymous, avoided being seen as representing any particular ethnic or religious community in the academic arena. On the other hand, when asked for advice to young Muslims wanting to become politically active, this academic replied, ‘community context is everything, so stay connected’.

Most interviewees nominated negative stereotypes of Islam and Muslims as a major concern. A common view was that interventions which target Muslims exacerbate the problem, even if they are intended to do the reverse. One youth leader told us:

*I think the governments—state and federal—have too much of a tendency to fund Muslim projects. And I don't think that's the right way to go ... the beauty of EYC [the Victorian Ethnic Youth Council] is the fact that it is a mixture of ethnicities, it is a mixture of religions, and for young people to learn about each other, and to live and work with each other, because that's what they have to do as Australians. If we really are a multicultural society, then we have to promote multiculturalism in the makeup of projects that exist. ... Any mainstream or any funded projects in my opinion should actually promote diversity, rather than 'We're going to give you more money, because you're targeting this particular group which is the flavour of the month right now'.*

Many participants felt deeply discouraged by the targeting of Islam under the Howard government, tied up as it was with punitive treatment of asylum-seekers. Some whom we had hoped to interview refused to participate in our research on the grounds that the National Action Plan had emerged from a political agenda which they saw as unfairly targeting Muslims. On the other hand, a few saw the Muslim Community Reference Group as a positive development—not only in getting Muslim voices heard beyond the Muslim community, but also for its internal effects. For example, Jamila Hussain felt it had made male Muslim leaders readier to take notice of women's voices.

To many, the Rudd government's less punitive stance towards asylum-seekers (up to and at the time the interviews were conducted) was a major attraction and several felt it had contributed to a safer and more welcoming atmosphere for Muslims and migrants in Australia generally. Those who supported the Greens similarly cited that party's history on refugee and asylum-seeker issues as a plus—in some cases, big enough to cancel out the deterrent effects of other Greens policies, with which they disagreed on religious grounds.

## PATTERNS IN POLITICAL DISPOSITION

Muslims have stood as candidates for all major parties, but those available for interview were skewed to the left of the political spectrum, most identifying with either the ALP or the Greens. A few community activists described themselves and their organisations as determinedly apolitical or bipartisan.

A very common response was that, as Muslims, our interviewees overwhelmingly felt that they could neither stand nor vote for the Liberal Party during the Howard era, because of what they saw as the unfair targeting of Muslims during the border protection debates.

On the other hand, some felt that Muslims' traditional Labor voting had made the Labor Party complacent and unresponsive to their concerns. Saeed Khan, Greens councillor for the Sydney suburb of Marrickville, described how, in the first years of the new millennium, 'there wasn't much difference between Labor and Liberal', particularly on asylum-seekers and border protection.

*At the time, almost eighty-five to ninety per cent of Muslims were voting Labor. And some of us went and spoke with Labor at the time, and they just wouldn't listen. Because they got the votes every time, you know, in Lakemba, and Canterbury, and Bankstown, and Liverpool—they just couldn't care less. And some of us thought, 'No, no, this is not right' ... and the Greens were growing at the time, and they had some good leadership at the time ... so I spoke with them, I said, 'Well, here's what ... Islamic communities want ... they're very similar to other communities, but there are some specific issues that need to be addressed'. And they [the Greens] looked at it; they came back with a very detailed response.*

Saeed Khan recalled that 'I was one of the key people from Islamic communities that was involved in convincing Muslims in New South Wales to vote for the Greens', around the time of the state election in March 2003.

More precise psephological data would be needed to arrive at a firm conclusion, but our research indicates that we may be witnessing the beginnings of a significant shift away from Muslims' traditional Labor voting towards more Muslims identifying with the Greens. The number of Muslims who have stood as Greens in local government elections may be an early sign of this shift. Liverpool councillor Mazhar Hadid (previously Labor, but Liberal at the time of our interview) mentioned that his daughters preferred the Greens, and Silma Ihram had also observed that younger Muslims tended to have more interest in the Greens.

## WHO WAS EXCLUDED OR UNDERREPRESENTED?

Women experienced additional barriers in getting support, and being heard, as did young people. The most underrepresented group was recently-arrived migrant women. Newly-arrived men were also underrepresented, especially when their transition to Australia involved language or cultural barriers.

The length-of-residency effect was often compounded by home culture. For example, some of the longest-standing residents (eg Lebanese, Turkish) were also from countries with traditions of democratic participation. Conversely, some of the newest arrivals had grown up in environments in which political participation could be dangerous. Auburn-based settlement services officer Rana Dabliz explained:

*Most of our clients come in from Iraq, which is—you know what the regime is like in Iraq. So apparently they've been tortured, and been educated not to talk about politics ... so we try to avoid political conversation at the office ... we don't talk about it at all.*

Nevertheless, Rana Dabliz, working mainly with women, encouraged them to understand their rights in Australia, to understand legal aid and to know how to speak up if they experienced problems like domestic violence.

An academic, who wished to remain anonymous, emphasised the need for more input from Muslim women, including feminists, and from young and rural Muslims – and less from the “usual suspects”. A number of interviewees felt that some of the “usual suspects”—Muslim community representatives who are regularly called on as media commentators on Muslim affairs—didn’t actually advance the cause of Muslim participation much, tending instead to reinforce negative stereotypes.

## CONCLUSION

Taken together, these observations suggest that being Muslim, as such, is hardly a major factor in an interviewee’s level of political engagement. More significant factors are length of residence in Australia, facility with English, political socialisation through role models, mentors and family culture, and, in the case of migrants, whether they came from societies with robust democracy or from situations in which political participation was likely to be associated with torture and trauma. Gender and class were also significant, interacting with the foregoing characteristics in various ways. For example, women from very traditional cultures found it harder to engage politically than women who had grown up in communities where their mothers and other female role models had been assertive and publicly-engaged. Class worked for Muslims in much the same ways as for non-Muslims, but class disadvantage (for example, attending an underprivileged school or coming from a poorly-resourced suburb) compounded other problems, such as lack of English fluency and or of familiarity with Australian institutions.

The further participants had moved into formal political representation, the more concerned they were not to be seen as a ‘Muslim candidate’, emphasising instead their ability to represent constituents from any part of the community. Similarly, several of the Muslim academics we interviewed valued their capacity to speak on issues other than those to do with Islam, and built their public identity more on their professional and disciplinary qualifications than on their faith. On the other hand, some interviewees whose involvement was more at the community level felt betrayed by what they saw as other Muslims’ disowning of the community once they had achieved recognition in the public sphere.

Participants were divided on whether programs to enhance political participation should be directed specifically towards Muslims. Many had benefited from existing programs; but the majority view was that faith is not the most appropriate selection criterion. In practice, ‘Muslim’ often seemed to act as shorthand for a range of other categories, such as ‘recent migrant’, ‘refugee’, ‘member of an ethnic minority’ or ‘person from an outer suburb of Sydney or Melbourne’. Many, but by no means all, members of each of these groups are Muslims; and many Muslims are not members of any of these groups. Consequently, participants generally felt that programs to boost political participation could be better directed toward more relevant criteria.

Compounding the problem that ‘Muslim’ is an only partly relevant descriptor is the fact that it is also highly politically charged. Many respondents expressed in very strong terms their sense of having been under assault during the 1996-2007 Liberal government. Typical comments included ‘I don’t see how *anyone* could vote Liberal with Howard and Costello’; ‘When senior politicians and your own government keep running down your community, how can you feel Australian?’; ‘Well, I might have considered standing as a Liberal, but certainly not when Howard was there.’ Some participants concluded that intersecting political and media storms, including those to do with asylum-seekers, terrorism and western Sydney gang rapes, had led to ‘Muslim’ becoming associated in the public mind with criminality. Even when programs directed at Muslims were intended to counter this image, the result could still be that Muslims felt further singled-out for special scrutiny and social engineering. This was particularly so when the program came from government, rather than from within the community.

On the other hand, several specifically Muslim-oriented programs had made large, lasting and tangible differences to their participants’ level of participation. They included the ‘Believe, Aspire, Inspire’ program run by the Federation of Muslim Students and Youth and Victoria University, the La Trobe Muslim Leadership Program and Australian MADE (Muslim Adolescent Development and Education). Similar results had also come



from programs not specific to Muslims, such as Victorian Arab Social Services' Anti-Racism Action Band, Victoria's Ethnic Youth Council, Duke of Edinburgh Awards and the Youth Parliament, although some of these had involved barriers of class and religion (eg availability of halal food) which had taken time to overcome.

In addition to provision of culturally-specific needs such as appropriate food and prayer times, other measures which could boost participation in programs or activities are financial assistance for those for whom costs are prohibitive and childcare for programs likely to attract parents of young children.

While programs and activities directly targeted towards political participation can play an important part, our findings also stress the importance of general civic engagement, through such activities as sport, arts programs, music, play groups or participation in school activities like P&C. Activities that support students academically and encourage them to remain at school longer are also important, and include homework clubs, camps, English language support, and work experience with culturally appropriate role models.

Many Muslims have run for office, from local government to federal levels. Some expressed frustration at being preselected (like most novice politicians on their early runs) only for unwinnable seats. Few reported specifically religious or racial discrimination in pre-selection, although some felt that their faith made it particularly difficult for them to accept aspects of party practice. Their reservations ranged over matters of policy, the cut-and-thrust of factional politics and the prevalence of alcohol at party events.

Historically, Australian Muslims, like members of most other ethnic minorities, have voted Labor. The majority of Muslim representatives in local and state government represent the Labor party. Some Muslim voters, for religious reasons or because of recent persecution, are reluctant to vote, despite its being compulsory in state and federal elections. They negotiate this in various ways, including donkey voting, deliberate informal voting, voting for a party that they do not expect to win (when the reluctance is religious) or making a formal case for exemption from the requirement to vote.

Beyond this, our interviews suggest a possible shift in traditional voting patterns among Muslim voters, away from Labor and towards the Greens. Reasons included the feeling that the ALP was taking Muslims' votes for granted and therefore not responding to their concerns; the similarity of the two major parties' stances on the key issues of treatment of asylum seekers and Palestinian autonomy; and a preference for the Greens' position on environmental and social justice issues. For some, the Greens' stance on same-sex marriage was a stumbling block; but, for several of these, their reservations were not enough to deter them from supporting the party. Some were happy to support the policy, arguing that when Muslims, as a marginalised minority, defend their own rights, then they should also be ready to defend other marginalised minorities.

## CHAPTER 5: TACKLING THE PROBLEM

---

### THE DIMENSIONS OF POLITICAL DISENGAGEMENT

As Ahmad Kilani, Director of muslimvillage, points out, Muslims are a minority in Australia. Those who identify as Muslim make up only 1.7% of Australia's total population, according to the 2006 Census. It is therefore important to consider the political engagement of this minority community within the broader national context. Individuals who took part in the interviews we conducted and who were active in the community, civics or political arena, were keen to stress that disengagement with the political system had many dimensions and did not concern Muslim Australians alone.

Jamila Hussain, a lecturer in Islamic Law and member of a peak Muslim women's association, noted the difficulty of generating interest in politics in general and not only amongst Muslim Australians.

*It's the same in the wider community; it's really hard to get people interested in politics.*

Speaking about strategies that could engage Muslim Australians in the broader political sphere, another academic noted the difficulty of engaging any community in political action:

*Thinking about political participation in terms of being a public spokesperson on behalf of communities then it's up to local communities to encourage their young people on an individualised basis to get involved, whether it's ...writing about issues, kind of working their way up the rung of community organisations, that's one I guess pathway people can take. Or there's the pathway of formal involvement with a Muslim identity through party politics, that's another route, then there's the academic pathway, there's a pathway through journalism... Sometimes it's going to be a matter of communities identifying people who have particular talents or skills and encouraging them to get involved, and sometimes it's going to be people having their own individualised dreams and passions and getting involved in their own way. I don't think we can come up with a formula that says this is how we produce politically active Muslim Australians, I don't think there's a formula for encouraging people to become politically active in general, let alone for Muslims.*

One participant, who had developed training for public servants, viewed the general lack of political knowledge amongst the Australian population as a widespread problem:

*I wear a hijab, and I have been for the last five years, so here's this woman – I'm describing myself – wearing a hijab and training these mostly Anglo Australians in the machinery of government, starting off with the Constitution, and going through the separation of powers of government – the system, how the system works – and then ending up with their role, working in, say, the government department, when a question on notice comes through. How does that fit within the system? And doing senate estimates; where does that sit? And when a Ministerial comes in, where does that sit? And their role and how they're supposed to operate within government. None of them had a clue. And I'm talking not only of the younger ones, but even some of the older ones, and that's an interesting observation. It's not just synonymous with Muslims per se, or Arabs per se. It's actually across the board, and it's a major gap in the education system in Australia, I believe.*

Liverpool Labor councillor Gullam Gillani similarly stressed that not only Muslim Australians feel excluded from mainstream participation: ‘that’s not just restricted to Muslims—your subject is Muslims, but I’m suggesting in general’. He maintained that efforts to foster political inclusion needed to be broader:

*I do suggest that it would be better for Australian society as a whole that those groups ... which feel that they are disadvantaged, that they are not being treated fairly... need to be approached, they need to be educated.*

A lack of interest in politics was also seen as generational, with younger people less likely to be interested in traditional means of engagement. One participant, an employee with a multicultural services provider in Victoria, noted that younger people tended to be attracted to different methods when it came to disseminating and obtaining information about politics.

*I know a lot of people that use this [the internet] as a platform to raise awareness on a lot of issues, and mainly political issues. So it’s not only using it as a site to network, but it’s a site to disseminate information to your network, as quickly and effectively as possible. ... And that’s the beauty of it: you’re not actually pushing it down anyone’s throat. So, if you post something in your News Feed, or your Live Feed, and if someone finds it interesting, they’ll click on it and read what you’ve posted.*

## INCLUSIVITY VERSUS EXCLUSIVITY

Participants held mixed views about whether programs focusing exclusively on Muslim communities were effective. We found a strong sense that programs which targeted Muslims exclusively could further stigmatise Muslim communities and isolate them from the wider community. Many of our interviewees strongly supported programs which do not specifically target Muslims, as long as they took into account the need for things like halal food and facilities for prayer to enable Muslims to engage actively. However, these participants also expressed concerns that programs intended to be inclusive at a national level did not always sufficiently cater for the needs of Muslim participants and therefore unintentionally discouraged their involvement. This point is taken up in the next section (‘The Needs of Diverse Communities within Mainstream Initiatives’).

Many interviewees argued that levels of political participation in the community at large may be affected by different factors at different times, and, since this is not a Muslim-specific problem, its solution should not focus on Muslims. Some who declined to participate in our research attributed their reluctance to the National Action Plan’s focus on the category ‘Muslim’ and its association with the anti-terrorism strategy. Others, both participants and those who declined, were concerned that the focus on ‘Muslim’ Australians further maligned this group in the public arena. Some participants stressed that the community had been ‘over-consulted’ and that there was now a malaise and general reluctance to be involved in initiatives targeting them.

Our attempt to organise focus groups in a local government area with a large Muslim population received an overwhelmingly negative response from Muslim members of the community, because they did not wish to be singled out. A Muslim respondent of African origin who did not wish to participate told us that people were scared to talk about politics and to complain about government. Meanwhile, some non-Muslim community members took the focus group invitation as an opportunity to voice anti-Muslim views. One non-Muslim resident said, ‘I do not want any Muslim to share in the Australian political life at all because they will destroy the country.’

Jamila Hussain stressed that in organising programs to encourage political participation, it was important that these were seen as coming not from the government but from the community. Grassroots programs not only better serve the needs of their communities, but are also able to generate the confidence and trust required

for their success. While governments can fund such programs and provide resources, said Hussain, it is ultimately more effective to allow the community to decide how these are run.

Nayef Hajaj, a settlement services officer at the Australian Arabic Community Welfare Centre, ran weekly information and discussion sessions for Arabic-speaking senior citizens. These sessions, which received little or no government funding, were very successful with older Arabic-speaking members of the Muslim community. Participants were encouraged to voice their views on a variety of issues from local council concerns to health matters, worries about the media and anything in between. The discussions were open to all participants, who were encouraged to ask questions or raise their own concerns. However, despite the freedom with which participants expressed their views within the group, they did not feel comfortable participating in our research. Part of the problem that these weekly sessions addressed, Nayef Hajaj told us, was the fear people have about speaking on political and social issues in public. Many of the participants came from regimes where expressing one's opinion freely was not permitted and it was difficult to speak without fear of repercussions. Such fears were exacerbated by frequent government-funded research on Muslim communities.

On the other hand, one of the successes of this group was in bringing together Muslim and non-Muslim Arabic-speakers. This fostered friendly relations between the two groups. It also countered the concentration on the Muslim community and the negative media attention that Muslim members of the group strongly decried. This group demonstrated how an open, shared forum for debate helped those involved to participate in community concerns and express their views.

## THE NEEDS OF DIVERSE COMMUNITIES WITHIN MAINSTREAM INITIATIVES

One of the participants involved in co-ordinating a contingent of youth from diverse backgrounds to take part in the National Youth Council spoke about the multiple problems that these young people encountered in in the program. They were primarily from refugee and migrant backgrounds, many went to disadvantaged schools and few had had opportunities to develop public speaking and debating skills. This placed them at a significant disadvantage in what they could contribute, and necessitated an additional program to prepare them for the mainstream program.

*Most of the young people I work with are at schools that don't offer too many things. So it's [the Ethnic Youth Council] kind of playing the role of the advantaged school, in that sense. In that regard, that's been great ... but- the young people that we send to these programs do need a lot of support, because the programs aren't ... culturally sensitive ... You know, me being a support worker, I'm on the phone with them the entire time they're at the camp, because something keeps coming up. 'Oh hello, they don't understand this' or 'they won't let me go and pray'. You know, they say 'I have to do this activity, I can't go and pray'. Things like that, and then liaising with the organisers, and it's been an extremely slow process.*

The support worker estimated that members of the first cohort:

*Kind of have to suffer—these are the groups that are kind of getting the worse end of it, so that this program does become more diversified. And over time, it will be well set up to deal with other groups.*

And, indeed, co-ordinators ensured that subsequent cohorts were adequately catered for:

*The program's becoming more diversified, ... the environment is made safe for them, and people want to learn about them, that's very empowering. Rather than the first group, who suffered because it was more treated like a nuisance.*

The concern that Muslim community members lack the necessary skills to participate in mainstream programs was widespread. Leila Alloush, director of Victorian Arab Social Services, notes that many of her organisation's

programs, and those of similar community organisations are designed to help young people acquire skills to participate in mainstream programs.

*Youth parliament has been really difficult, in engaging Arabic kids, because ... VASS is recruiting from the Arabic areas, and then they [participants] ... compete and debate bills, with very high, prestigious private school students. ... We want funding to prepare our kids for one year before they can go into that and survive it.*

Despite the lack of funding, organisations such as Victorian Arabic Social Services continue to develop and support such programs, sometimes on an entirely voluntary basis, believing that these programs' disappearance would be disastrous for the young people involved.

*In VASS, we have accredited leadership training, in connection with the TAFE colleges here. ... We don't dictate the topics- the young people do. So if they want to talk about peace in the Middle East, or they want to talk about peace in their school or educational outcomes, we will allow for any of that. None of the young people's ideas are censored, as long as they're not of any harm to anybody, anywhere in the world. ... Lawyers will volunteer their time ... but it's limited capacity. I'd like to see funding. We usually have to raise money for those courses ... those kids can't even pay the enrolment fees.*

## THE NEEDS OF NEWLY-EMERGING COMMUNITIES

Communities with only a short history of migration to Australia have specific needs. Liverpool councillor Gullam Gillani noted that for many migrants, involvement in the political system is often not very important.

*The majority of the immigrants either from the Middle East or from the sub-continent ... whether they come as skilled migrants or as a result of war as refugees or whatever, their main target becomes what we call "essentials", you know? The bare minimum essentials. And they put their efforts and struggles into that. To achieve that goal is to have a house, you know, things for their family. And they have very little time ... to think that we have to integrate into mainstream Australia and become part of this society and contribute ... The first generation... spent most of their time to earn their living.*

This perception was echoed by another participant:

*I think the majority of people, especially fairly recent migrants, have their major concerns: getting a job, getting a house, looking after their family, taking the kids to school – just the everyday concerns.*

A director of an education organisation for young Muslims said that:

*Parents don't have the time or the commitment to take their kids to these programs in many of these communities, particularly from the low socioeconomic backgrounds.*

We asked whether this reluctance was due to the need to travel long distances to reach to programs. But our informant explained:

*No, no, no. Even if it's next-door, it doesn't really matter, ... they don't believe these programs are necessary for their children. They don't see what the problem is. To them, these issues that their kids are dealing with are nothing compared to what they had to deal with back home, with the war, with killing, with life and death, so to them, social issues, emotional issues, are not a priority. ... They don't realise the kind of damage that's happening and how it impacts on how their children view their surroundings and interact with it, and achieve ... I know that from*

*personal experience because I know how my parents [were], when they came under stress. ... And ten years down the track ... they look back, they say, 'How could I miss that? What was wrong with me? Why couldn't I see that?' ... That's why we decided to do it inside schools. The program happens inside school, so no-one has to pick them up and drop them off at particular programs.*

## IMPROVING POLITICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Many interviewees considered education very important. Auburn Mayor Hicham Zreika (ALP) emphasised education's role in informing people about council's activities, and also about its role and responsibility.

*We're going to spend more money having interpreters and translators to make it work. And it's a very diverse community, so obviously there's a lot of pressure, it needs more resources ... It's very, very multicultural and diverse. So that's a challenge, but it's an asset.*

Liverpool Councillor Mazhar Hadid (Liberal) also stressed education's importance for increasing involvement. He mentioned the educational initiatives provided by organisations like the Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth.

*Through our organisations and our associations we can get it [the message] out. Provide them with lectures, special classes, leadership classes, you know what I mean?*

One participant advised fellow-Muslims:

*One of the simplest things that you can do is write to your local member, or even to the prime minister directly... I do know that letters that come in volumes to a minister does make the minister stand up and take notice ... And then there's the other level, too: the lobbying where you actually have representation, meeting ministers, etcetera. So I feel that we need to teach the community that you don't have to be just a passive bystander, that you vote these people in but they're only in for a certain period of time, until you've had enough of them, or you didn't like what they did and you vote them back out. You have a voice through the vote ... they're there to work for you. If you voted them in, or they're part of your electorate, and you've got a problem, you need to go to them, but no-one seems to know that. No-one seems to understand that ... they should make their local politician work for them! That needs a real, massive, education.*

Jamila Hussain, a lecturer in Islamic law, agreed:

*I think the bottom line is the need for more education. And you have to think about strategies to get people to be interested in undertaking some more civics education, so you have to use a carrot approach. At the moment, a couple of friends and I are thinking of running sort of get-togethers for women occasionally, maybe once a month, once every two months or something, where people can come along to probably Anatolia in Auburn and just have lunch. And maybe we'll get a speaker; nothing too heavy, just somebody to give a bit of a talk ... I found that if there's some kind of social occasion involved, then women will come along. I guess men will too, but I know for a fact that the women will come along. And that way you can sort of get the ball rolling and get people to start thinking about, maybe they really ought to have an opinion, or 'What are the policies of this or that political party?'*

There was a particular emphasis on school level education that could teach not only about rights and responsibilities but also about active participation in the political process. Educator and former Democrats candidate Silma Ithram stressed the role of schools in improving understanding of the political system amongst members of the Muslim community. She noted that progress had been made:

*A lot of our [Islamic] schools are trying to make them [students] more politically aware ... They're doing a fair bit. And I think in public schools, too, they're encouraging a lot of leadership mentoring, and that often sparks off stuff, because often leading lights in school will go on to leadership and political positions once they leave school.*

Auburn Councillor Malikeh Michaels (Greens) said that political participation would only come through improvements in education:

*You have to get into the schools, and the Muslim schools, because that's where you get a concentration—well, not just the Muslim schools, but I don't think the mosque is a good place to start. I've been arguing with a few different people that there are not enough non-sectarian activities ... there's just not enough activities that are secular. I'm not saying you should go against your religion, or that we should go against our religion, but I think there need to be more secular-based activities for people that aren't necessarily attached to the mosque.*

A principal of an Islamic school noted that the school now places a great deal on importance on civics education, with each primary school grade undertaking an excursion to a different Australian state.

## SUPPORTING SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP MODELS

The provision of a large number of leadership programs in Australia has been inseparable from a strong emphasis on community leadership, particularly within the Islamic community. This has been compounded by both international and local situations where Islamic leadership has come under scrutiny. On the question of leadership in the Muslim community, ALP member and EMILY's List Activist Hutch Hussein said, 'I think there's a real dearth, a real gap and vacuum, in positive Muslim leadership.' She felt that:

*Because of the number of issues that have come up affecting the Muslim community in the past ten years, there's been a greater need for that leadership ... and also, we haven't done well as a community in succession planning and fostering leaders in that sense.*

As a consequence of these negative connotations, many felt reluctant to describe themselves as leaders. More than one preferred the term 'activist' to 'leader'. As one put it:

*Everyone was running a leadership program, you know, at some point. So I think we have to redesign how we do it to make it more effective and attractive ... There's a disconnect between what they [program participants] think leadership is and what they want to do; in fact, they might be ideal leaders but, you know, at that age whatever you say doesn't work. Some kids just get into a mindset that whatever you say is wrong—I don't want to do it, you know? So it's marketing ... Also, not to saturate the market is another issue.*

Despite some young people's negative associations with leadership, Chopra said that the leadership program that she contributed to, La Trobe University's *Young Muslims Leadership Program*, was about generating a sense of civic duty and awareness in the participants but also about getting them to understand the different levels of government.

Others, like the Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth's Umar Batchelor, who was involved in developing and delivering the 'Believe, Achieve & Inspire' Leadership Program, saw leadership as a key issue. Batchelor believed that the meaning of 'leadership' was still being negotiated and defined:

*From our perspective, it's not only a term that is given to a role where someone is directing and controlling a team; we see leadership as taking initiative, taking charge of responsibility, working with others for common good ... Taking initiative, decision-making, working with others in collaboration for the greater good may, as a result ... [become] a leadership role where they have a number of individuals working under them. But that's just a by-product.*

Sherene Hassan, media spokesperson for the Islamic Council of Victoria, stressed the importance of representative leadership:

*Muslim leadership needs to reflect the Muslim community. 50% of Muslims are under the age of 25 so you need to have younger Muslims who are able to identify with Muslim youth. And females were underrepresented, as were people from different ethnic communities.*

The two longest running Australian leadership programs in our study—the La Trobe Leadership Program and the Australian Multicultural Foundation's *Leadership: A New Generation*—were both based in Victoria, but involved youth from other states, and, in the case of the La Trobe program, from overseas. Both were highly successful; both programs had seen participants undertake greater community participation in a number of fields, as well as continuing political participation after they graduated.

The La Trobe *Young Muslims Leadership Program* was designed to support young leaders to speak clearly and confidently about the various issues which confront people of Islamic faith in today's Australia and to participate actively in shaping the future of the nation. It aimed to empower participants to reach their full potential as citizens and future leaders and to develop their skills to engage confidently and creatively with all levels of government, business, academia, the professional world, the media and religious and community organisations. Two significant aspects of this program were a study tour of Canberra, where participant visited Parliament House and met federal Members and Senators, and a media workshop with national broadcaster SBS. Both propelled participants to view questions of government and media in a different light.

Program co-ordinator Larry Marshall explained that the course was concerned with helping these young people understand how the structures of Australian society operate. One field trip included a visit to the local council, where they met youth workers and community liaison officers. They spoke about disaffected youth who are dropping out of school and were encouraged to think of ways that they could help change this situation:

*There were a number of heads nodding because these young people had seen Muslim and non-Muslim young people on the streets, homeless, or unemployed, or angry, and they were saying, 'Yes, there are things we can do. These communities are feeling this. They need some sports gear, they need some focus groups to sit with them and talk about this,' and the council said, 'Yeah, look, we're doing some of that, but can you help us with that? Do we need stuff in Arabic? Do we need it in Urdu? Do you think if we have people like yourselves come and say, "Look, I was there a few years ago but now I've gone somewhere else in my life and I'm feeling better and more empowered," that that would help?' So, immediately, they were involved in actual decision-making about possible policy changes at that grassroots level.*

The excursion to Canberra, explained Marshall, enabled participants in the course to speak directly with those in power about issues of concern to them. For example, they were able to speak with Chris Evans, the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, about the problem of skilled migrants who end up doing unskilled labor once they migrate to Australia because their qualifications are not recognised. Understanding that there were



mediums and channels through which they could express their opinions about matters of policy was particularly encouraging in helping them to see how things could be changed. 'Being heard by somebody who would say, "Yes, we haven't got it right. We haven't got the policies right yet. We know people are hurting,"' said Marshall, 'was quite astounding.'

The experience of the course participants in the SBS media workshop was similarly positive. It included some of the station's senior producers and presenters. Marshall called this was a particularly empowering experience, given many participants' previous experience of the media as a generator of negative images of Islam:

*Someone says to them [the presenters and producers], 'But you're SBS. You're supposed to present a cultural voice that is different, that is attuned to the ear of the many cultures that make up Melbourne, and yet you run with the pack. Channel 9 and Channel 7 say "The Sheikh has said this," and you do the same. So, why do you do that?' And they were able to say that to their face, and then get a response of saying, 'Well, we're wrong. Sometimes on the busy days, when we don't have time to research stuff, we make mistakes. Can you help us? How can we do it better?' And to hear that, and to hear real people in front of them saying, 'Here's my card; call me if you think we're doing something wrong, if you think you've got an idea for a program,' and people did call them, and they did get some funding to ... make a video. People did get on committees and have training at SBS.*

Marshall mentioned one participant, in particular, who:

*Ended up feeling that the media is a difficult, complex animal. And rather than just ... saying, 'Well, the media's at fault, the media's at fault,' we found when we were with the politicians, they blamed the media; when we were with the media, they blamed the politicians. So it was important, then, for us to realise, 'Look, they're all open to better policy, but it's up to the communities to actually find a way, find a voice, find the ways in which they will listen.' So, there were a variety of ways, from ringing them up, from networking with them, from writing to the papers, from going and getting training, from actually starting to think about sitting on committees and boards of these organisations and not waiting for someone else to invite you, but actually pushing your way in.*

Marshall told us that some graduates had gone on to write in the media, while others had:

*Ended up on the Youth Advisory Committee for the Premier, people nominated themselves for the Board of the Islamic Council of Victoria. Others started up their own NGO organisations for refugees, or for homework for kids after school, to try to help those who may be a bit lost in the system ... so, a whole host of things happened, and people wrote to the papers, and people were interviewed by ABC Radio, and so on.*

Saeed Saeed, an Australian Muslim from an Eritrean background, went on to publish articles in *The Age* and *The Australian* on Muslim issues. *The Age* also ran an article by course participant Sushu Das and ABC radio's Triple J aired interviews with participants at a UWS conference, where SBS radio also interviewed some of the international participants.

One Australian participant, Mahommad El-Leissy, became a board member at the Islamic Council of Victoria and also gained Greens pre-selection for state parliament (although he was not elected). His decision to stand, he told us, was greatly influenced by the course's trip to Parliament House in Canberra:

*I met with, you know, Kevin Andrews and different politicians—maybe it was naive of me, but I think at that point I just realised they were just people, you know? And that this is how the democratic system works: it was just people that could be elected—you know, you don't have to be a king or someone that has high connections to money or whatever. So I saw them and went, 'Well, why can't I do that?'*

Several of the participants that we spoke to noted that the trip to Canberra was a particularly inspiring part of the course. In addition, understanding how government and media works empowered them not only to feel that they could make a difference, but to understand the channels through which they needed to work in order to effect change.

The Australian Multicultural Foundation's *Leadership Australia – A New Generation* was designed and run at roughly the same time as the La Trobe program, although for a shorter period of time. While the two courses share many things in common, there are some important differences. The Australian Multicultural Foundation program arose from a nationwide consultation during the 2007 Muslim Youth Summit. Program Co-ordinator Hass Dellal explained that the course set out to address issues identified by the young people themselves:

*We were looking at ways in which we could forge links between Muslim youth locally and nationally, building their sense of community involvement, building leadership capacity among Muslim youth and identifying issues of concern and looking towards an ongoing process of engagement with the government and the wider community. A lot of the young people felt they didn't necessarily have the skills and what I mean by skills is really the basics of engaging with the wider community, leadership style, public speaking skills, communication skills, how to handle conflict resolution, how to deal with or facilitate group dynamics, how to deal with issues of discrimination ... and also creating opportunities for participation in the community. This was something that young people themselves identified.*

Like the La Trobe program, the Australian Multicultural Foundation program aims to develop a cohort of confident and well connected young Australian Muslims who will be able to present their generation's views to the wider community. The Australian Multicultural Foundation program also specifically focused on strengthening the ability of young Muslim participants to play an active role in the community, whether through local council, representative politics, academia or other professions.

Unlike the La Trobe program, the Australian Multicultural Foundation program was based around a one-to-one mentoring relationship. The La Trobe program included a ten week workshop component; but Australian Multicultural Foundation participants attended an intensive three-day training workshop, after which they returned home to work on individual projects with the support of a local mentor. On completing the course, participants were encouraged to remain active with the alumni community and to become mentors for new participants. Participants were given a list of tasks that specifically demanded engagement at a public and political level:

- Identify and contact a mentor who is prepared to support them in their endeavours.
- Initiate two public speaking engagements—one to a school and one to the general community.
- Arrange a personal media interview, including a daily or local newspaper/journals or a radio station.
- Arrange a meeting with either the premier of the state, the Multicultural Affairs Minister or Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services with the aim of introducing themselves as a young person interested in being engaged within the community.

Of particular note is that the Australian Multicultural Foundation leadership program specifically asks participants to organise their own media and public speaking engagements as well as meetings with prominent politicians. At the same time, participants received one-to-one support from a local mentor in their area. The mentoring aspect was seen as crucial in developing participants' leadership skills, and is expected to continue in the future.

Positive engagement with the media was a particularly important part of the course. Organiser Hass Dellal commented:

*Media was always an area that young people spoke about. It was this continual perception of reinforcing Muslims through negative stereotypes and a lot of young people continually commented that the constant negative media attention coupled with irresponsible comments from high profile leaders both within the Muslim and the wider community contributed to what was a major concern for creating feelings of alienation and marginalisation.*

Participants applauded the media component, saying it had allowed them to create their own opportunities in and change the way that their communities engaged with the media. It also enabled them to inform non-Muslim society about the course. One of the participants was able to secure a prime time radio interview with journalist Alan Jones of 2UE. He reflected:

*If I wasn't encouraged—set the task of promoting and sharing and providing an insight into this program and community issues through the media—I don't think I would have done it ... It was a good choice to go through talk-back radio and think of being on the Alan Jones Program ... From that experience, I've been given the confidence that I can create my own opportunities, rather than say, 'Look, I'm always denied the opportunity to speak, I'm always denied the opportunity to put the case forward.' The reality is, if you investigate you'll likely get a go. And that's what that proved for me.*

This participant went on to run (albeit unsuccessfully) for local government as an independent. He also became active in community affairs and runs and promotes his own internet site, and has been the subject of a number of newspaper articles.

A female participant in the course also found being encouraged by participants to create her own opportunities promoted strong leadership skills and active participation. This participant ran a project-based organisation which links youth programs to one another:

*It's based on something called project-based collaboration. Instead of somebody saying, "I want to do this", they'll contact us, and we link you up with every organisation that's already doing something similar, or that can help you out, and then you can create the project around that. So it's all about linking people and networking and empowering them rather than having them compete against each other for funding and all that sort of thing.*

She felt that her own personal development and the development of her leadership skills had benefited her organisation. In addition, the course's mentoring aspect had proved very valuable in developing a leadership network of young Muslims. She said:

*One of the big things that I think the Muslim community in Australia is missing is that sense of leadership or those really strong leaders and so it's really important to have the foresight in developing a group of Muslim leaders who are all connected with each other and bringing them all together in a forum like this and getting them to interact with each other and to share ideas and that sort of thing. It makes a bigger difference than you would think, just creating that network of leaders and strengthening that core within the Muslim community in Australia.*

A measure of the success of this course is that young people have been able to interpret leadership broadly and to find opportunities to engage actively in their local communities. Hass Dellal explained:

*We've got a whole lot of examples of media articles. Not only that, but we have some fantastic examples where a lot of these young people approached schools, Rotary clubs, Lions clubs and gave addresses at public events about Australian Muslims, about the aspirations of Australian*

*Muslims, about how they are Australians first, and they're just as loyal and committed like anyone else. These young people I think have achieved some excellent results. They got themselves on committees, one or two have had a go for local council.*

While clearly both courses have been extremely successful and produced many positive examples of increased civic and community participation, they have also produced notable examples of political participation. Some who chose not to pursue political positions made their decision precisely due to a more acute understanding of how the political system works and the multiple ways in which they could effect change. One participant in the La Trobe program told us that the course had opened her eyes to what was happening 'behind the scenes':

*There are a lot of people working behind the scenes, which I didn't know before, because when you see things on television, you only see the people who are very prominent, who the media seek, but a lot of people are actually working behind the scenes and behind the news, who are actually shaping the future and who are actually shaping the news, but we just don't see them that often. But ... when I went to the Age I met some of the journalists who are actually working at the Age, and who are working at the Herald Sun, which I didn't know before because, obviously, you're not looking for those things. You just look at the headlines and not beyond that.*

In addition to its mentoring component, another widely-welcomed aspect of the Australian Multicultural Foundation's leadership program was that it established a strong, interconnected Muslim youth leadership network. Participants gained both opportunities to increase their engagement politically, and a support structure to give them the foundations to be able to do so.

## ENSURING LONG TERM FUNDING FOR SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES

A number of interviewees raised the question of long term funding, particularly for initiatives run by smaller community organisations that aimed to bridge the gap between Muslim-specific programs and mainstream programs, many of them aimed at a cross-section of people from marginalised and disadvantaged communities. Some of these initiatives, like those run by the Victorian Arab Social Service and Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, addressed a skill shortage for those from disadvantaged backgrounds to enable them to participate in mainstream initiatives. Such programs often received only intermittent funding. Funding cuts often meant that successful programs were run for only a short period.

It is worth noting that this is not an exclusively Australian problem. In the recent Open Society Institute report that looked at Muslims in eleven EU cities, recommendations for the city of Leicester in the UK noted that 'the short-term nature of government funding does not allow for longer term and sustainable planning of programs.' (OSI 2010: 132). The same can be said for many successful Australian initiatives that have subsequently had to be discontinued because of insufficient funds. Of three highly successful leadership programs in Australia, only two received government funding and of those two that funding only permitted the programs to be run for a short period of time. This is a significant issue that affects almost all community based programs across the board.

## RESTORING CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT AND THE MEDIA

Politically active Muslims expressed the view that many in the community had lost confidence in government and, even more, in the media, especially its claim to fair representation. Focus groups with older Muslims demonstrated that negative views about Muslims in the media have severely affected their sense of belonging in Australia. One male focus group participant said that despite the presumed equality of the Australian system, negative perceptions of Muslims in the media had disheartened many:

*There are a lot of lies in the media ... There are half a million Arabs in this country and they need to stand up to the media. Islam is a religion of love, peace, brotherhood and security. People*

*think it means crime. They have a negative image of Islam. We are peaceful. We help the old and disabled. There is no accurate information about Muslims. This is made worse by some Muslims, who think the measure of Islam is in the length of their beards. We all live under one roof: the Australian political system.*

At the same time as expressing their dismay at this negative portrayal of their own communities, participants in this focus group felt it important to stress that a candidate's religious identification was not significant in their decision to vote for a particular individual. To these participants, adequate Muslim representation did not mean having a certain number of Muslim candidates in office, but feeling their community would be treated fairly no matter who was in office. One explained:

*Even if he's a Muslim, that means nothing. There are many non-Muslim MPs who understand what is happening to Muslim communities and we can talk to them openly. They understand that most Muslims are peaceful. We need to make our voices heard to those who represent us in our local area, whatever their party. You can have your voice heard in that way. Just because one Muslim was successful it doesn't mean anything. Whether representatives are Muslim or Christian it doesn't matter, we just want them to treat us as equals.*

Rather than arguing that more Muslim representatives would mean better representation, participants in this focus group felt that what was necessary was equal and fair representation for all, regardless of a person's religious affiliation. Negative images in the media and a sense that Muslims were not treated equally had led amongst this group to a loss of confidence in government and in the media. Some respondents also felt that crimes involving Muslims were prosecuted heavily, while crimes against Muslims were treated more leniently.

Fear of repercussions in their home countries added to many older Muslims' sense that they have very few outlets to make their voices heard:

*There is no unity amongst us ourselves because everyone has their own political opinion. People here are afraid to speak against their governments [in their countries of origin] because they fear that what they say will be reported back home.*

Rana Dabliz, a settlement services officer with the Australian Arabic Community Welfare Centre in Sydney, explained that older Muslims' usual avenue of self-expression or protest was through religious authorities and community elders.

*Interviewer: So what about, for example, if a newspaper published an article that they didn't like. Would they ever think about writing a letter to the editor, or anything like that?*

*RD: Oh, no, no. They don't have the courage to do that. No, no. Because they're not used to it. They only pass it on to their religious leader, and the religious leader acts upon that ... They always refer to their religious leader.*

A member of the Muslim Women's National Network Australia expressed similar frustration about media treatment of Muslims:

*We are getting, actually, really positive feedback. The feedback is very positive, but when you listen to radio talkback – they harp on the other side of things.*

Another agreed:

*You know this as much as I do: that media feeds on sensational reporting, and if it is not something negative, they won't report it. We send a positive story, they never reported that. We had, once, a celebration of Harmony Day with the Daily Telegraph in their headquarters, and we*

*talked about it, and I brought with me young people from all communities who are lawyers, social workers, teachers and so on, who grew up as Australian Muslims, and we spoke to them. ... I asked the question, 'Why do you always go to this or that Imam? Why don't you ask young people in the community who are professional people who work with Muslim organisations [for] their views as well?' 'Oh, we don't have their names.' I said, 'Give them your cards.' They gave them their cards. They published one positive story after that.*

Representatives from the Affinity Intercultural Foundation in Sydney argued that negative media affected Australian Muslims' ability to participate fully in public life:

*After September 11 – I don't know how many years after, was it the next year? We did an anti-terror summit where the ideal was to condemn terrorism, and [a popular current affairs program] wanted to do a program on it. We should have known better! They just completely distorted the whole thing, and it just looked so negative. ... They twisted it. They kept asking, apparently, the same question over and over, and then ... he sort of smiled as if to say he's seriously asking the same question over and over. That sort of smirk ... And they cut and pasted that part, and I think they showed him smirking with the twin towers in the back, being bombed.*

The Affinity representatives had felt unable to respond: 'What do you do? ... We don't have a media voice. Who do you go to?'

Consequently, addressing concerns about negative media representations was a significant focus in many of the initiatives to encourage leadership and political participation in Muslim communities. The La Trobe leadership program and the Australian Multicultural Foundation's *Leadership Australia Program* both included major components to empower young Muslim leaders dealing with negative media publicity. These programs are dealt with in further detail below and again in the Case Studies chapter. The Islamic Council of Victoria also ran media training sessions. Sherene Hassan, the Islamic Council of Victoria's media spokesperson, emphasised its importance:

*I've conducted a couple of workshops on how to get Muslim youth engaged with the media, and there have been several media workshops specifically for the Muslim community and maybe some for the Islamic Council Victoria. I know when I was part of the Muslim Reference Group for the federal government, we were given media training.*

## EFFECTIVE USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Some of our interviewees noted that the use of new technologies needs to be well thought out. Simply putting things online does not always produce a positive response, argued Jamila Hussain:

*I think if you're going to run online courses or something like that, people have got to be able to see some sort of benefit to them for doing it.*

An interviewee working with a Victorian multicultural services provider, who has organised initiatives for young people, emphasised the need to think about how new media forums could be used effectively:

*You need to engage more with younger people. So you need to find out exactly what is it exactly that they want ... A lot of online forums have been set up [by state and federal government bodies]. There's the National Strategy for Australian Youth that is being developed at the moment. And they've set up an online forum, trying to engage young people. [But] it's obviously not reaching a lot of people, and there's not many hits on the website. I think there's a few hundred. I don't know how you could engage with young people ... I initially thought, maybe, you know, you use channels like YouTube and ... Facebook. But ... you always have to provide an incentive ... to get them more engaged.*

Such incentives could include a completion certificate or form of recognition that could become part of a young person's curriculum vitae. But the most important factor, this participant emphasised, was that:

*This should start by actually really being interested in what they have to say ... by showing ... that what they contribute is ... taken seriously, and is valued ... Unfortunately, many of them are very cynical about... politics in general. They feel that they really can't make a difference. So you need to empower them—make them feel that they can make a difference. And that's only going to happen if there's a message that is constantly reinforced at home, in the media, at school: that their contribution is going to be valued, and they're encouraged ... That's the only way they're going to get engaged.*

Despite the range and scope of views expressed by interview participants, common themes were raised repeatedly. Inclusion, education and funding were strongly emphasised. Below we consider the range and variety of programs encouraging political participation revealed by our audit, noting patterns as well as strengths and weaknesses in the Australian context.

## AUDIT OF INITIATIVES

Our audit of Australian initiatives revealed many types of programs that encourage participation, including many that focus specifically on members of the Muslim communities. We found over forty Australian programs that fostered active community participation, provided information on the political system, or developed and encouraged strong leadership.

More than half of the programs listed in the audit were specifically aimed at members of the Muslim communities. Twenty-three of the total number of Australian programs were funded under the National Action Plan. Of those which were not, several originated around the same period as the peak of the National Action Plan's funding. While many of the programs were very successful, a common response from members of the Muslim communities was that Muslim-specific activities unfairly represented them as having 'problems' which programs needed to 'fix'.

New South Wales and Victoria were significantly better represented in initiatives directed towards Muslims, presumably partly because the Muslim community is concentrated in these two states. Almost half the programs surveyed were specifically aimed at young people. More programs catered exclusively for women than for men.

More than half the total were leadership programs. Australia had more leadership programs than the UK, for example, and many Australian programs' success measured up well when compared with international best practice. Craig Dent, co-ordinator of the Federation of Muslim Students and Youth's 'Believe Achieve & Inspire' leadership program, told us that Keith Ellison, the first Muslim elected into US Congress, had strongly commended the program and regretted that the US had no equivalent.

A number of the Australian leadership programs specifically targeted Muslim women or were women-only programs. These included the *Self-esteem, Identity, Leadership and Community for Women* workshops, run by the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria, and the *Muslim Women's Leadership Program*, organised by Brimbank City Council. Others, like the *Australian Muslims Education and Mentoring Project*, run by Al-Amanah College in Liverpool (NSW), were aimed at school age children. The most successful leadership programs, and those that generated the greatest media interest, were generally those aimed at a broader age group of Muslim youth (roughly, below 30 years of age). Of particular note are the La Trobe Leadership program organised in conjunction with the Islamic Council of Victoria (2007-2010), the Australian Multicultural Foundation's 'Leadership Australia – A New Generation' (2008-2009) and the Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth's 'Believe, Achieve & Inspire' (2009-2010), run in conjunction with Victoria University. In

addition to these larger programs, organisations like Sydney's Affinity Intercultural Foundation have run their own 'Personal Leadership' program for a number of years and Youth Fusion (a division of the Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations) organised the 'Youth Leadership and Mentoring Program'.

With the exception of school based political education however, community type political participation workshops and information sessions were less developed on a broader national level in Australia compared to some UK models. Nasiha Active Citizenship program in the UK, for example, an intensive module-based program that looks at political participation from an Islamic perspective and is offered in school and mosques in the UK has no Australian equivalent. One interviewee suggested that perhaps the Australian government would not be willing to fund an Islamically based political education program. However, this has been done successfully in the UK through Nasiha, with support from both sides of politics.

On a community level, Australia has numerous examples of small political education and political information programs, some funded by local councils, some by local community organisations and others by the Australian Electoral Commission. For example, the Muslim Women's National Network ran 'Learn to Lobby Your Local Polly' workshops prior to the 2004 election. The workshop, which included a PowerPoint presentation on effective political participation, was later found useful not only within the Muslim community context, but also within the wider community. The Australian Arabic Community Welfare Centre ran a weekly open 'Discussion Group for Senior Citizens' from Arabic speaking backgrounds to encourage open debate and provide general information. Auburn Council Chambers, in conjunction with Auburn Diversity Services, ran information sessions on the Australian political system, featuring presentations by local councillors as well as information on the political system.

The Australian Electoral Commission offers information sessions for culturally and linguistically diverse communities in electorates where the number of informal votes is higher than the national average. The sessions feature bilingual educators who engage community leaders as well as the culturally and linguistically diverse community. Information is provided through shopping centres, culturally and linguistically diverse news media and at community engagement workshops.

A striking feature of our interviews was the dismay which many Muslim activists and community workers expressed about the ignorance of the political system and political illiteracy that they had encountered—not only within their own communities, but in the general population. In this context, we consider programs which are aimed at the general population.

In 1998, the Australian federal government launched the Civics and Citizenship Education Program. The program, built around the Discovering Democracy curriculum units, runs from middle primary to middle secondary, and explores the themes 'Who Rules?', 'Law and Rights', 'The Australian Nation' and 'Citizens and Public Life'. Curriculum materials were developed between 1998 and 2001, and from 2001 until 2004 the program's priority was on teacher training. At the time of writing, curriculum materials are available on the program's website (<http://www1.curriculum.edu.au/ddunits/units/units.htm>). Class activities cover political history and political change. Examples and class activities reflect the period of the program's conception: for example, the Middle Secondary unit 'Getting Things Done', which examines interest groups, Parliament, the role of the High Court and disputes between states and the Commonwealth, is built around class activities relating to the 1982 Franklin Dam dispute, which even the parents of many of today's teenagers struggle to remember.

The program's most recent evaluation, in 2003, found that the material was seldom taught comprehensively, but was rather used by teachers as a resource to 'dip into' from time to time. The evaluation found a substantial gap between 'best practice' and 'average practice' and predicted that, without continued funding and development, it would continue to make at best a marginal contribution to Australians' political literacy (Erebus 2003: xx-xxv). Students who embarked on the program in middle primary in 1998 and participated in all six years, would have reached voting age in time for the 2007 federal election. Unfortunately, lack of



longitudinal data makes it impossible to tell what effects the program may have had on their political engagement. Some elements from the civics program have been incorporated into the national Values Education curriculum.

A continuing feature of the civics and citizenship program is the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate, which subsidises schools travelling more than 150 kilometres to Canberra, to enable students to participate in education programs at Parliament House, Old Parliament House, the Electoral Education Centre and the Australian War Memorial. The rebate assists students from Year 4 to Year 12. Noting the importance which many of our interviewees attributed to their visits to Parliament under the various Muslim leadership programs, we strongly endorse the continuation of this program.

Civics and citizenship achievement is assessed under the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs' National Assessment Program. The report on Year 6 and Year 10 achievement in 2007 was released in 2009. It found little change from the previous assessment report, in 2004, with fewer students than hoped performing at the expected proficiency standards. The report concluded that:

*Students need to be taught explicit civic knowledge about how democracy works, and be provided with opportunities to take part in discussions and to become actively involved in decision making at school. Students so taught are more likely to be the 'active and informed citizens' sought by the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century; equipped to act as engaged and effective citizens. (2009:109)*

We also note a number of programs designed to educate the wider community about Islam, the Islamic community and the role of women in Islam. Examples included 'My Dress, My Image, My Choice', a touring fashion show organised in conjunction with the Islamic Council of Victoria to educate non-Muslim women about Muslim women, and *Did You Know?*, a book project organised by the Muslim Women's National Network of Australia to teach the general population about Islam and to correct misconceptions. While these programs were not aimed at generating greater political participation amongst Muslims, they are relevant here because of their contribution to addressing misunderstandings between Muslims and non-Muslims, which, in turn, facilitates the environment of trust and confidence that is an important factor in enabling Muslims to take an active role in the Australian community.

## SUSTAINABILITY AND EVALUATION

As pointed out by a number of participants, programs targeting leadership and media have multiplied in recent years. However there appears to be little in the way of co-ordination among them. Increased co-ordination and cooperation could contribute positively to sustainability in various ways, for example by avoiding replication of programs and thus multiple small scale programs of limited impact. Many programs (largely due to funding issues) are run only once or twice, and do not share information between them. A lack of evaluation (and information sharing) can lead to a situation where each new program 're-invents the wheel' and lessons learnt by previous programs are lost. Greater co-ordination would allow for a pooling of resources in some instances, and could also involve, for example, articulation pathways from one program to the next. Articulated pathways would allow for particular organisations focusing on different participant profiles, while feeding successful graduates up to the next level of program. For example a program for disadvantaged and disengaged youth could feed into a program for more experienced professionals or those with some leadership experience. Or, for example, different programs could focus on different skill-sets.

A further issue, not just confined to media and leadership interventions, is a lack of good quality evaluation. Serious program evaluation is a key to long term sustainability. However, many programs, including a number of those listed in the audit of initiatives, were either not evaluated, or evaluated at only the simplest level. Evaluations tended to be of the single page 'tick a box' variety, administered to participants to register their satisfaction with aspects of a program.

For example, a report on the La Trobe University 'Leadership Training Program for Young Muslims' (2007-2008) gave an outline of activities run under the initiative. A summary of the accomplishments of the program was provided; however, as the report made limited use of participatory evaluation processes or qualitative data collection, it did not evaluate the success of the program in any longitudinal depth. Similarly, the UK based *Nasiha Active Citizenship Program* (ACP) published participant responses in its 'Accreditations' page, but without an analysis or evaluation of the effectiveness of the program.

Hanberger (2001) defines three approaches for evaluating the effects of public policy and programs on civil society and democracy. They are technocratic, advocacy, and mediating. Technocratic and advocacy approaches promote expert-oriented and group-oriented evaluations respectively. Hanberger favours the mediating approach, in which the evaluator acts as a counsellor and mediator: inquiring, learning, and working together with various stakeholders, trying to describe the current situation in fair ways, taking account of critical arguments in the face of difference and conflict, and finding practical solutions to collective problems (Hanberger 2001).

As part of the 'Preventing Violent Extremism' campaign run in the UK, the Department of Communities and Local Government published a set of guidelines, *Evaluating Local PREVENT Projects and Programs*, that local authorities could use to evaluate the initiatives' relative success. The guidelines provided accessible information on evaluation parameters, data collection methods and data analysis models. The guidelines also favoured a participatory approach, encouraging program authorities to involve community-based partners in decision making and evaluation.

However, Mayo and Rooke (2008) identify some problems of participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation. Such approaches may simply lead to tokenism if participatory evaluation is taken to mean 'the occasional use of particular techniques' (2008). The scope and limitations of participatory approaches are examined through a case study of the UK based program 'Active Learning for Active Citizenship' (2008). In particular, they note the challenge of tracking the impact of such evaluations on wider policy decisions (2008) and understanding the diffuseness of 'ripple effect'. However the Active Learning evaluation did employ some useful methods, for example tracking participants sphere of influence before their participation in the program, and again at one year afterwards. They asked participants to detail any new spheres of influence that had opened up for them as a result of participation. Examples of new opportunities for influence were mapped at different scales, from 'self', to family, neighbourhood, local, regional, and national influence. Diffuse multiplier effects were best tracked through qualitative case studies of individuals over time.

Good quality evaluations do not rely on the evaluation of program convenors alone (who are often cautious in negative evaluation due to anxieties around continued funding), nor reliant solely on participants broad statements of satisfaction. Serious evaluation needs to take an in-depth participatory approach, assess specific and diffuse impacts in the short, intermediate and long term, and should involve both qualitative and quantitative components. Comparative evaluations have an important place in detailing differential outcomes for different participant groups and program types. Evaluations need to be customised for individual programs, and need adequate funding to cover participative approaches, observational work, in-depth qualitative interviews and participant case studies, and return research at a reasonable interval of a year or more following the end of the program. Considered indicators need to be established, but allowance needs to be made for diffuse, or less mechanistic or direct cause-effect impacts. For example media intervention projects may not lead to a widespread change in mainstream media representations, but participants who are successful in publishing or being interviewed positively in mainstream media may contribute subtly to the public conversation, and also to a sense of self efficacy and 'voice'.

## CONCLUSIONS: WHAT WORKS

The literature review outlines some more structural interventions such as constitutional changes that ensure greater minority representation and affirmative action policies that could be implemented by political parties.

However we are aware that changes such as these are unrealistic in the Australian context, and so the following discussion is largely confined to ‘softer’ options relating to education, capacity building, mentoring, and developing more inclusive mainstream forums.

It also needs to be understood that we did not undertake in-depth evaluations of individual programs, as this was outside the scope of the study. The following summary of ‘what works’ is based upon our analysis of available evaluation material; interviews with program managers and program participants; and insights from the literature. In a number of cases, case studies were of initiatives held more than two years ago, and thus, many of the insights from participants were of a retrospective/reflective nature and as we had no baseline data to work off, we were not able to track in any detail the specificities of program impact. Furthermore, we were unable to do any participant observation for similar reasons.

A final point to make is that interventions and approaches such as those detailed below, and later in the case studies and audit sections of this report, operate at different scales and target different audiences. For example, some leadership programs need and do target disadvantaged and disengaged youth so the yardstick of success will be quite different to a program focused on building further leadership capacity among those already successful in their respective professions, or with some background of political participation or participation in the public sphere. However both are important and legitimate and contribute at different ends of the ‘spectrum’ of political participation we referred to earlier in the report. Likewise, not all people (Muslim or otherwise) would be capable of or wish to run for political office or become a high profile media commentator, however political participation occurs just as importantly at the ballot box or lobbying local council for better services. Thus, programs need to be targeted both at the ‘high end’ and the ‘everyday end’ of the spectrum of political participation – and we have attempted to provide suggestions from across the available options accordingly.

#### INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY PROGRAMS AND PROVISION FOR MUSLIM PARTICIPATION

Programs that address a larger cross-section of the community, rather than specifically targeting Muslims, but make provisions for Muslims to be able to actively participate, tend to be viewed more positively. Provision of halal food, facilities for prayer as well as some cultural awareness amongst other participants in these programs would better facilitate the inclusion of Muslim Australians into mainstream programs. In order to be as inclusive of participants as possible, cross-cultural approaches would be more appropriate than inter-faith approaches.

#### SUFFICIENT FUNDING FOR GRASS-ROOTS COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Ensuring sufficient funding for proven grass-roots programs that facilitate the involvement of Muslims, particularly Muslim youths from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, into mainstream programs, is important in ensuring a positive environment where Muslim Australians can feel equipped with the skills to contribute to debates in the wider community.

#### POLITICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The content and delivery of political education programs, both at school level and as part of settlement programs for new migrants, should be reconsidered. The importance of education was stressed by many politically active Muslim Australians who felt that current initiatives do not sufficiently enable participants to take an active role in their societies and communities. In addition, the timing of political participation training for new migrants could be reviewed. The settlement process is a particularly difficult time and a period when new migrants do not always feel that they are able to give much thought to their social and communal commitments as they can later, once they are better established in a community. If information about the political system is delivered too early in the settlement process it may not be useful to participants at that time and so will be quickly forgotten. Civics and citizenship education in schools—for all Australian children—should be maintained and strengthened. The subsidy scheme for visits to Canberra should be maintained, and the Discovering Democracy units should be updated and their continued and systematic use strongly encouraged.

## EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND MENTORING

Based on the highly successful leadership programs that have been run in Australia, political participation amongst Muslim Australians has been shown to increase when opportunities are provided for leadership training for young people. In particular, evidence suggests that a mentor based leadership program where young Muslims work with local mentors on specific projects through which they acquire the skills for confident engagement in the media, political, and public spheres would be a highly supported model.

## MEDIA TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Given the emphasis placed on how negative media perceptions affect the ability of Muslim Australians to participate fully in Australian society by many research participants, adequate training in dealing with media is a matter of importance. Further, media training has been demonstrated as effective through the initiatives discussed in our audit and case studies. Such training can empower not only individuals by allowing them to experience pride in contributing to public debate, but also their communities by making them feel that their voices are important and are listened to. Obviously quality varies, but initiatives such as the Australian Multicultural Foundation Leadership Australia program which had a concrete exercise requiring participants to secure a media appearance or publish an opinion piece in a major paper are excellent examples of programs with a clear outcome focus.

## EFFECTIVE USE OF NON-TRADITIONAL TECHNOLOGIES

Concerns raised by some participants suggest that it is important for government to consider how new technologies can be utilised effectively. This means thinking about incentives for participation in online forums and ways in which participant involvement can be shown to be as valuable.

## ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES

Several participants mentioned that a small number of Muslims are, for religious reasons, reluctant to vote. They felt these non-voters were best addressed by presenting them with Islamic arguments in favour of voting. Liverpool councillor Mazhar Hadid noted:

*It does exist, I can't deny it. But it's a smaller percentage of the community. It's a small percentage that believes it's haram. Why? Because you may need to act, to go against Islamic Sharia law. Some of them believe in that. But to me, we work very hard on this group and lately they realise 'We are in the wrong,' ... I've spoken to many people, religious leaders in the community, to explain to them, because there are too many verses in the Quran ... that give you permission [to be politically engaged, even in a non-Muslim society].*

Some overseas programs, discussed below, have successfully addressed this issue from an Islamic perspective.

## WOMEN-ONLY WORKSHOPS

Examples from the audit of initiatives suggest that there are instances where women-only programs may be of great benefit. These may facilitate the participation of women who may otherwise not feel comfortable attending mixed gender sessions or workshops.

## CHAPTER 6: AUSTRALIAN AND INTERNATIONAL CASE STUDIES

---

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter features four Australian case studies and three UK case studies of initiatives designed to build and develop leadership skills, civic participation and knowledge of the political system and political responsibilities. Our focus was mainly on programs that engaged participants to be actively involved, but we also considered 'seminar' style examples.

The selected programs were identified, either by participants or from our literature and web review, as representing best practice. We further refined the search to ensure a variety of strategies and spread of locations. The case studies help to isolate success factors and will provide a ground for supporting good practice by building on existing models.

The Australian case studies are from Victoria, Queensland and NSW. Although leadership initiatives were more prevalent in some states, these initiatives have always had a national focus and have both encouraged and showcased participation from across Australia and from the diversity of Australia's Muslim communities.

The programs selected reflect a diverse range of approaches, locations, funding sources and organisations even within programs of a similar category. Of the Australian programs, one was funded by a state government while another received funding under the Federal Government's National Action Plan. The other two Australian initiatives were funded independently. The UK examples were also independently funded. The selected programs are as follows:

- Leadership Training Program for Young Muslims (Victoria, 2007-2010)
- Leadership Australia – A New Generation (Victoria 2008-2009)
- 'Learn to Lobby Your Local Polly' Workshop (NSW, 2004)
- 'Believe, Achieve & Inspire' (Queensland, 2009-2010)
- Young Muslims Leadership Network (UK, 2009-2010)
- Active Citizenship Program of Study (UK, 2009-2010)
- 'Get Out and Vote' campaign, UK elections (UK, 2010)

## CASE STUDY: LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM FOR YOUNG MUSLIMS

### INITIATIVE DETAILS

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Organisations:</b> | La Trobe University<br>Islamic Council of Victoria  |
| <b>Contact:</b>       | Larry Marshall<br>Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University  |
| <b>Email:</b>         | <a href="mailto:dialogue@latrobe.edu.au">dialogue@latrobe.edu.au</a>  |
| <b>Funding:</b>       | Commonwealth Government through the Regional Communities Outreach Program of DFAT<br>Government of Victoria |

### DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

The Young Muslims Leadership Program is designed to support young leaders to speak clearly and confidently about the various issues which confront people of Islamic faith in Australia today and to participate actively in shaping the future of the nation. The program, run through a successful partnership between La Trobe University's Centre for Dialogue and the Islamic Council of Australia is now in its fourth year of operation and has expanded to include young Muslims from South-East Asia – four from Indonesia, two from Malaysia and two from the Philippines. The South-East Asian participants joined sixteen local participants for the first time in 2009.

This program is aimed at Muslim men and women aged between 18-30 years old. It is designed to empower participants to reach their full potential as citizens and future leaders and to develop their skills to engage confidently and creatively with all levels of government, business, academia, the professional world, the media and religious and community organisations. The program encourages potential young leaders to reflect upon Australia and its place in the world and to think about the contribution Muslims can make to help meet the challenges of the future. Another key component of the program included the facilitation of interfaith dialogue and participants met with members of the Christian and Jewish faith to participate in debate, discussion and dialogue over the various conflicts in the Middle East.

Program co-ordinator Larry Marshall explained that the idea was to show Muslim young people that there were ways that they could make a difference.

*LM: So that was where it came from, and the whole idea was to gather together from the community through the Islamic Council of Victoria's offices, some of the brightest sparks around, bring them together and then take them to the places of power and influence in Australia, to have them meet up with media people, to listen to how they read things and to provide a forum, a dialogue, where they could also ask questions, they could also put their perspective on how they feel when superficial issues hit the paper, or issues of stereotyping occur in the newspapers and the whole community feels vulnerable and the whole community feels fearful.*

### Course Components

The program includes a study tour during which participations have the opportunity to meet and talk with decision-makers in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne. The study tour includes briefing sessions, workshops and

visits to political institutions, legal institutions, cultural and educational institutions as well as a one day media workshop at SBS.

The 2010 Program involved:

#### Course Components

- Train the Trainer Workshop 1 – ICV
- Introductory Seminar
- South East Asia & Australia Workshop
- Train the Trainer Workshop 2 – ICV
- Muslim Community Workshop – ICV
- Projects in the Community Seminar
- Evaluation Workshop
- Graduation Fri

#### City Study Tours

- Visits to Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne (fully subsidised travel and accommodation)
- 6 Week Course: 'Our World in Crisis?'  
This course is designed for understanding the globalizing world and Australia's place in it. Issues covered include human rights, climate change, poverty and development, racism, peace and war.
- 3 Day Conference: 'Prospects for Peace in the Middle East'

#### Application Process and Participant Profile

Applications were invited from interested young Muslims who were asked to produce a resume of their background, interests and qualifications, and a short essay outlining their reasons for wanting to undertake the training program. In 2007 around seventy applications were received and in 2008 the number was close to 60. Thirty applicants were then shortlisted interviewed by a panel of three made up representatives from the Islamic Council of Victoria and La Trobe University's Centre for Dialogue.

The participants that have been involved with the program over the past four years have reflected the diversity of Australia's Muslim community. Official figures available for 2007 and 2008 detail the gender breakdown of the participants as well as their ethnicities. The group of twenty young people who participated in the 2007 program included university students of 18 to 23 and early career people in their mid to late 20s. The participants were drawn from twelve different cultural backgrounds with approximately half being born in Australian and half born overseas in the regions of the Middle East, Asia-Pacific, South Asia, and Africa. The participants consisted of twelve women and eight men. Six of the women wore hijab and six did not. There were also significant differences in the religious practice of the participants.

For the 2008 program, eight of the participants were from countries in the Middle East (Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq and Turkey), six were from Asia (India, Bangladesh Indonesia, Malaysia), and five from Africa (Somalia, Eritrea, Kenya). There was also one Anglo-Australian who had become a Muslim three years prior to the program. The group consisted of ten men and ten women in the group this. Eight of the participants were under twenty years of age, seven were aged between twenty and twenty five and five were over twenty five.

#### Study Tour to Parliament House

A key component of the program over the years that it has been running has been a study tour of Canberra that is timed to coincide with the sitting dates in Federal Parliament. A key objective of this aspect of the program is to create opportunities where young Muslim leaders can meet with people in senior positions in

government departments, in the parliament itself, in the High Court of Australia and in the cultural and educational institutions in the national capital.

The group is also met by federal parliamentarians from across the political spectrum and given the opportunity to discuss and debate issues of relevance to the young Muslims. The group also meets with leading members of the Canberra Press Gallery, journalists from the *Canberra Times*, and sits through question time in Parliament where they are able to observe their representatives in action.

### CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Having been involved in the program for four years, program co-ordinator Larry Marshall explains the diversity of the opportunities that the young people involved have to meet people in positions of power and to have their voices heard culminate in shifting the perspective of many of those taking part.

*LM: And I think overall what we achieved was an astonishing diversity of meetings with influential and powerful people, and a dawning, I think, in the minds of a lot of the young ones, young leaders, that there were so many opportunities to actually have a say in the way Australia was heading, that it was a dynamic process of building a society, and that their voices would be heard, and could be heard.*

Marshall explains that a significant achievement of the course is that it enables participants to understand the structures of Australian society. By meeting with people in local councils and community organisations as well as with politicians in parliament, participants get a sense of how they can be involved in actual decision-making about possible policy changes at a grassroots level.

The success of the program in its first year of operation in 2007 prompted the Victorian Government to announce a funding boost of \$184, 000 to ensure the future success of the program. James Merlino, the Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs, announced the funding boost in 2008 on behalf of the Brumby Government:

*Minister James Merlino: This is an investment in Victoria's future. It is essential that we do everything we can to ensure our young leaders are as prepared as possible for the challenges that lie ahead.*

In addition to the four participants we were able to interview who spoke highly about the course, the host organisations have also conducted their own evaluations. Through these evaluations, the conveners found that the course has been able to achieve its objectives in each of the years that it has run. In particular, they found that through participation in this leadership program:

- The young participants were empowered and inspired to take advantage of further opportunities available in the wider community.
- Many of the young leaders became involved in inter-faith issues as a result of their learning during the program.
- The group has transformed into a solid network of young people still working together and supporting each other as young leaders in the making.

Of particular note was the success of the course in helping participants to understand how to work with media and to use media outlets successfully to have their voices and those of their communities heard.

One participant who had been quite critical of the media began to see the media landscape differently.

*Male 1: For me, I had quite a bubbled experience of the world, I think. You know, just one of these people who believes that the media hates Muslims, and politicians – especially during the John Howard era – politicians were out to get us, and it was a good experience because I got to go to Canberra and meet with politicians, and we met the editor of the Canberra Times, and just really had some frank*



*discussions with them, to hear their points of view, which I guess even if you don't agree with it, it humanises them on a certain level. So, for me, I thought it was more a reality check, I guess, with the views I'd had about the world previously.*

*Interviewer: Would you say that your views after the course, were they more positive about the media and things like that?*

*Male 1: I think they were more understanding of the media. I wouldn't say "positive", but much more understanding, I think. I guess I came to realise that, at the end of the day, they are a business and that's how they operate. I kind of learnt that there wasn't an agenda or anything like that out there. It's just what they do.*

Saeed Saeed, a 2007 participant from an Eritrean background, went on to write and publish in *The Age*, *The Australian* and *The Herald Sun* and *Eureka Street* about Muslim & youth issues. In an article published in *The Age* on 31 July 2007, Saeed wrote:

*It is understandable if some choose to view these as token stories, but the majority of Australia's young Muslims are working hard to ensure that their contributions are never viewed other than being part and parcel of being an Aussie. We all must stand behind and empower these youth in order to counter the pessimistic overtures of the extremist fringe. The fact that their stories are seldom told illustrates how all sectors of Australian society have a role to play in fighting against all types of extremism, no matter how politically and religiously inconvenient this narrative is to some.*

There have also been significant success stories in terms of participants who have completed the course and gone on to participate politically. A participant of the 2007 course, Mohammed El-leissy went on to successfully stand for pre-selection with the Greens for a seat in the Victorian state Parliament. He explained:

*Male 1: We sat down with Kevin Andrews, and there was a few other MP's that we got to meet – for me, I came to realise...I may be a bit naive (laughs), I thought, "Well, these are just everyday people. It's not like they've inherited power through family or through any major talents on their own." And so I understood that obviously there is a system in place, but anyone can get involved in that system, and for me, also, not being so friendly with – not having such a positive view of how the government was doing at the time, I realised that to change that you need to be part of the system. So that was a decision that I reached, maybe because of the program. And that's why I joined the Party, and that's why I ran for election. Instead of being an armchair critic, like so many Muslims, and feeling victimised, that I could actually go out there and do something. Yes.*

A twenty-year-old female participant in the 2009 program described the Canberra Study Tour as one of the most inspiring aspects of the course:

*I particularly liked going to Canberra. Before we went to Sydney – did we first go to Sydney? Yes, I think we first went to Sydney, and Sydney was very different from Canberra because Sydney was more about meeting the people there – And then Canberra, on the other hand, it was all about politics, so I loved it, obviously, and it was a lot of fun in Canberra. Yes, there was something on offer for everyone.*

Further, this participant felt that the Canberra Study Tour had not only taught her a great deal about how the political system works in Australia, but it had made her aware of the multiple avenues available for political participation:

*Even during the course, when we would go to Canberra, and the kind of discussions we would have there with politics – that really opens your eyes as to what politics actually – and tells them*

*what it is on a day to day basis. It's not what you see on television. So, it's very different from our perspective – it changes your perspective completely. It gives you a grasp on things. The other avenues that I actually learnt was that you can actually do a lot of things with people just in a small group. You can actually help a lot of people much more on a basic level; for example, through non-profit organisations or one of the – other Muslim youth, other Muslim leaders, was actually someone who worked on a suicide helpline. So you can see that those people changed many, many more lives than the politicians that you see on television. So for me, it was really that realisation that it was the normal people who actually work in the community, who make their hands dirty – those are the people who can achieve much more.*

For some participants, the course enabled them to find avenues through which they could become involved in community work and begin to contribute in positive ways towards change.

*Interviewer: Are there other things that you went on to do that you feel the program directly contributed to? Other things that you wanted to achieve?*

*Male 3: I wasn't as active within the community, and now I help out at an organisation for refugees. So yeah, I help out there. When I can, I put my hand up to help out with the ICV.*

One of the things that participants found particularly inspiring was the guidance they received in planning and working towards future goals and aspirations. A twenty-year-old male participant in the 2009 program found this aspect of the course contributed significantly to his personal and professional development.

*They drove us to think about some outcomes. The organisers drove us to think about some outcomes to the program, so there was lots of encouragement about, "Well, what are we going to do from here?" or, "What can you offer to do from here, or what would you like to do from here in terms of getting involved in the community, or organising events?" and things like that. So that was very much a focus, and throughout the program we got to meet with community leaders, also community leaders who have done some pretty amazing things in the community in Australia. So they imparted to us – they spent a lot of insights, and demonstrated leadership in terms of being able to deliver community events, get involved with community, engage with the broader Australian society and come out with some productive programs.*

## CHALLENGES

There were few challenges to speak of in terms of the success of the course. In addition, feedback received through evaluation was reviewed and its implementation was reflected upon for upcoming programs. Feedback from the 2008 evaluation for example, found that participants felt that the time spent by the South-East Asian participants should be extended and that these participants should have the opportunity to participate in the Canberra Study Tour. This was followed up in subsequent programs.

Further, one of the suggestions made by participants in the 2007 course was that the 'Media Training' component of the course be further developed as the capacity to be able to understand and work with media was felt to be an integral aspect of successful social inclusion. This component has been gradually built upon and it remains one of the strongest and most successful aspects of the program.

One participant also mentioned that the course cannot necessarily appeal to everyone and that there are inevitably those who are not open to it.

*Male 1: I know also from last year and the year before, people have walked away from the course and gone on to do greater things in life, so it definitely has a much more positive outcome for people. I'm just...but then there are some people, like I said, who are just beyond changing.*

*Interviewer: So you don't think that there's any way the course could address those people, do you?*

*Male 1: No. I think they need something else. I don't think there's such a thing called "one size fits all". I think this program, for certain people, will make them do great things, and for some people it won't.*

## ORGANISATIONAL AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

This course has been successfully organised, promoted and run for four years. It has been able to generate interest in the media, to sustain a large alumni network and very importantly, to work successfully with federal and local governments and community organisations to guarantee funding, support and exposure. A number of programs have also arisen from the *La Trobe Leadership Training Program for Young Muslims* including the *Infinity Leadership Program* (a new leadership program at the Centre for Dialogue) and Brimbank City Council's *Muslim Women's Leadership Program*. The future shape of the *Leadership Training Program for Young Muslims* is being reconsidered.

*LM: It's not necessarily a program that's going to stay in concrete. It may shift and change. It may move from being just a Muslim program...some ideas are that maybe we can open it now, the Muslim community is much stronger and wiser and more politically active, that we move it to become a more community-based program that's open to people of many religions. So, some of that is up in the air this year and we'll know pretty soon, when we've put in some funding proposals, and see what happens for next year. It is envisioned that planning for the coming year will be decided following the conclusion of this year's program at the end of July.*

## MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The success of this course was apparent through both the media publicity it received as well as the high praise of past participants.

It is a particularly important example of a young Muslim leadership programs and it has demonstrated successfully ways in which opportunities for future community leaders can be facilitated in the media, politics and the community sector.

This initiative promoted opportunities for women to train in leadership roles and provided opportunities for participants from diverse Muslim backgrounds to work together.

The program has demonstrated that these types of leadership initiatives have the capacity to promote political participation amongst young Muslims in diverse and creative ways.

## CASE STUDY: LEADERSHIP AUSTRALIA – A NEW GENERATION

### INITIATIVE DETAILS

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Organisations:</b> | Australian Multicultural Foundation<br>Australian Government/Department of Immigration and Citizenship<br>State Government/Victorian Multicultural Commission |
| <b>Contact:</b>       | Dr Hass Dellal<br>Australian Multicultural Foundation<br>Level 1, 185 Faraday Street, Carlton VIC 3053<br>Email: info@amf.net.au                              |
| <b>Funding:</b>       | Department of Immigration and Citizenship – National Action Plan to Build Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security/Victorian Multicultural Commission            |

### DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

This program was initiated and designed by the Australian Multicultural Foundation Victoria to teach leadership and mentoring skills to young Muslim Australians (both male and female) selected from each state and territory.

The aim of the program is to develop a group of confident and well connected young Australian Muslims who will be able to present the views of young Australian Muslims to the wider community. The program was run for the first time in 2008 with two individual cycles of fifteen participants taking part. It was run again in 2009 with fifteen participants. The course components include leadership skills in mentoring, public speaking, communications, working with the media, community networking, innovation and entrepreneurship, conflict resolution and team building. Organiser Hass Dellal explained:

*The main idea of the program was to provide a three day intensive training program to assist young Muslim Australians to develop and strengthen their leadership skills and to play an active role in the community –in local council, or even politics, academia or their professions. Therefore what we did was identify young people from around the country that were interested in participating.*

After the three day intensive training program, held in Melbourne, participants return home to work on individual projects with the support of a local mentor. On returning home, participants are required to complete several tasks and to apply the knowledge and skills gained throughout the training course. The tasks are multifaceted and participants must:

- identify and contact a mentor who is prepared to support them in their endeavours
- initiate two public speaking engagements—one to a school and one to the general community
- arrange a personal media interview, including a daily or local newspaper/journals or a radio station
- arrange a meeting with either the premier of the state, the Multicultural Affairs Minister or Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services with the aim of introducing themselves as a young person interested in being engaged within the community.

These individual projects include public presentations and mentoring other local young Muslims. In addition, the project participants have compiled an internet based leadership and mentoring resource kit for broader community use that continues to be developed. This guide includes information on leadership programs, mentoring, multifaith networks, working with the media, volunteering, community networking and speaking opportunities. It provides contact information for organisations that youth can contact on a range of issues. This resource is described as a 'working document' that will be updated with regular additions.

### CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

In this case study, we were interested in looking at the effectiveness of the course in promoting leadership qualities and civic participation amongst its participants. We found this to be an innovative, well-organised initiative that continues to have strong support from previous participants. Based on conversations with two participants and the co-ordinator, it is evident that the program was successful not only in achieving its aims but in providing opportunities for participants to engage in the wider public sphere and within their own communities beyond the time frame of the course. This was also confirmed by evaluations conducted by the organisation of the program in 2008 through evaluation feedback forms completed by all participants before and after the training course. Seventy-seven percent of respondents agreed that the program achieved its objectives and twenty-three percent strongly agreed. Further, fifty-three percent of participants said that they would fully recommend the program while forty-seven percent agreed that they would recommend it.

The media training component of the course was considered to be particularly important by all those involved with the course. Participants noted in the evaluation feedback that the media training was very useful and helped them think about how to better support their views and work towards breaking down barriers between Muslims and non-Muslims. Hass Dellal recalled:

*I think that media was always an area that young people spoke about. Because of the continual perception of reinforcing Muslims in a negative light, a lot of young people continually commented that the constant negative media attention coupled with irresponsible comments from high profile leaders both within the Muslim and the wider community, young people felt that this contributed to and was a major cause of creating those feelings of alienation and marginalisation.*

Understanding how the media worked meant that participants were better equipped to be able to negotiate having their own voice heard within the public sphere. For a twenty-year-old male participant:

*What I got out of it – from what the editor from the Sun-Herald said and the other media workshops that we had – was that the best way to give an alternate voice is to mould yourself within mainstream media rather than provide a competitive force to the existing media because the mainstream is already happy and is too engaged with the current forms of media and sources of media to think about changing and going to other sources. So for example we had Waleed Aly who you might know – a lecturer from Melbourne in politics and so forth. He writes regularly in papers such as The Age I believe and other print media. Now he could have easily started his own journal that nobody would have read but through his involvement and intellect in mainstream media, he's able to put a case forward and change the perspectives and change the views. Now, obviously that opportunity has got to be provided and it's not always provided, but, still, I think that's a better way than simply going and starting a website that has some information that is completely alien to most people out there and no-one will visit.*

During the course, participants were assigned the task of speaking about the course through various media and social outlets. This was considered an opportunity for participants to find ways in which they could inform wider Australian society about the course. A twenty-year-old male participant secured a prime time radio interview with journalist Alan Jones of 2UE.

*We were given a task to go back after the program and to sort of try and talk about the program through different media sources. Now, I don't think many of us would have done that if the program didn't ask us to. Through the program asking us, it put an onus on us and gave us a challenge to try and express our views about the program and broader community issues. Now I took it upon myself to go and get an interview with Alan Jones. Now if I wasn't encouraged – set the task of promoting and sharing and providing an insight into this program and community issues through the media, I don't think I would have done it. On my behalf it was a good choice to go through talk-back radio and think of being on the Alan Jones Program. But still I was shown – from that experience I've been given the confidence that I can create my own opportunities, rather than say, 'Look, I'm always denied the opportunity to speak, I'm always denied the opportunity to put the case forward.' The reality is if you investigate you'll likely get a go. And that's what that proved for me.*

Just as important as the ability to create one's own opportunities, was the perception that community attitudes could be changed through dialogue. One seventeen-year-old girl, who was still completing Year 12 when she undertook the course, was able to secure an interview with a local community newspaper. In the interview, she discussed the challenges faced by young Muslim men and women because of negative community views about Islam:

*A lot of people in society are very ignorant about Islam. There are a lot of negative views about Islam that stem from people not understanding it.*

While the female high school student hoped to be able to go on to do community work that would change those attitudes, the young male participant who organised the interview on talk back radio felt that the dialogue created by the interview had already begun changing some of these negative perceptions.

*As somebody who is active in the community, he gave me a very good acknowledgement and credit and also acknowledged the fact to say to his listeners, forty percent of young Muslims are born in this country. So we need to regard them as young Australians who are facing issues not so different to what other young people are facing from other cultural backgrounds.*

In addition to the sense of achievement and of being able to create one's own opportunities within the wider community, the participants we interviewed noted the appeal of the course for those participants who had not worked closely within their own communities and who found the program especially beneficial in allowing them access and insight to community dynamics. One Muslim female participant, who had been heavily involved in youth programs prior to the course but had not worked closely with the Muslim community, found the Islamic focus of the program extremely important.

*When you're looking, not necessarily at becoming a leader, but when you've got some sort of responsibility in the community, it's really important to make sure that whatever values you're upholding are reflected in the way you go about helping the community and that sort of thing. The difference between your normal, run of the mill leadership program or group is that there are some things that it helps to look at from a Muslim perspective. It's not necessarily something explicit, but there are differences in the way things are run, even the basic morals are definitely Muslim as opposed to be being just your normal morals in a sense. That, and the fact that you're working with people who have the same background and so deal with the same issues and have the same responsibilities in their communities makes it a very good experience.*

A significant component of this leadership course was the development of leadership skills through the help of local mentors and the development of future mentors through the course. According to a male participant:

*I think this aspect of the course was effective in that it made me aware of the importance of having a mentor and since I've had very close and much older friends as mentors...people I can ask for advice, discuss with my plans and goals, run by projects etc. While I didn't consciously aim to satisfy this aspect of the program, it was highlighted to such an extent that I have taken it upon myself throughout the last few years to run things by people very close to me of great life and professional experience.*

The fact that the course provided a forum where Muslim leaders of the future could meet each other, interact and discuss issues of importance to them was also a key achievement of the course. A female participant told us:

*One of the big things that I think the Muslim community in Australia is missing is that sense of leadership or those really strong leaders and so it's really important to have the foresight into developing a group of Muslim leaders who are all connected with each other and bringing them all together in a forum like this and getting them to interact with each other and to share ideas and that sort of thing. It makes a bigger difference than you would think, just creating that network of leaders and strengthening that core within the Muslim community in Australia I think is extremely important.*

Perhaps most importantly, the course demonstrated that helping young Muslims develop leadership skills can lead to unanticipated opportunities. The young Muslim male we spoke to went on to run in local council elections shortly after completing the course as an independent candidate. Although he had always been interested in such challenges, the course provided the encouragement and support to take advantage of that opportunity. What was important to him, however, was not simply politics, but the opportunity to make a difference, whatever the field:

*Definitely it's a passion. But look, so much politics as I often say – and this is really hard to explain to people – but for me it's more of an opportunity – wherever an opportunity to make a difference comes, I'll take it. So if it's in politics it's in politics. If it's in diplomacy, if it's in involvement with the United Nations, if it's involvement on a local organisation level – whatever it might be, I'll take it, rather than sort of say, 'Well, look, politics is my path and I want to be the minister for this or that.' It's more like well, wherever the opportunity arises to make a difference, I'm going to take it.*

## CHALLENGES

There appear to have been few downsides with this course. Although not discussed in negative terms, one of the things the participants did grapple to deal with was the diversity of views within the Muslim community that the course forced them to confront. For the twenty-year-old man:

*The main challenge was that I felt often that I was in a tussle and battle with myself and the ideas that were put forward by my fellow participants and even the ideas that were put forward by the presentations. So that was the challenge – I think a lot of the participants had that challenge – you know, being able to accept the ideas, the issues, the solutions that were put forward and discussed. I think that was the key. There were a lot of ideas and a lot of dialogue between the participants and the presenters. I think we all have a different perspective. That was the challenge for me and I'm sure it was a challenge for everybody else. Tacking those [ideas onto], filtering that into something that is constructive and that you can take as a person to implement as a leader in the community. I think most of us did that really well because some of us came from completely different – it's a perfect example of why you can't group the Muslim community – even though we came from different spectrums, we were able to engage and share those ideas and even though it was challenging, I think we were able to get something out of the program.*

It is interesting to note that this was reflected in the responses documented by the organisation's evaluation with sixty-two percent of participants agreeing that the program was thought provoking.

In addition, and although the provision of mentoring was found to be very valuable amongst the participants we interviewed, one female participant noted that greater advice and direction in locating and developing mentoring relationships would have been extremely helpful for those involved.

Further, there were some concerns raised by participants through the feedback that the length of the program needed to be extended as the two-day format sometimes meant that the information that was delivered seemed to be rushed.

#### ORGANISATIONAL AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

The course was run three times over two years (2008 and 2009) with funding under the National Action Plan. Long term funding to continue the program is something that course co-ordinators are currently considering although they are optimistic about the possibilities. Dr Hass Dellal reflected on a future role for the course's graduates:

*We've now got an alumni and it's about sustaining it. I'm hoping to rerun these programs in a different way or reintroduce them to a new audience of young people who are totally isolated and marginalised to help develop their leadership qualities and skills so that they have an opportunity to participate and be engaged. Particularly those young people who have been seriously disenfranchised - I will use the alumni graduates as mentors. So funding and resources are always an issue, but I believe that if the will is there, and the interest is there, you can produce results and find the resources.*

#### MAIN CONCLUSIONS

This was a positive initiative. Both the participants we interviewed who both spoke highly of it. It is an important example of a leadership program for young Muslim Australians that facilitates further engagement in community work, media, politics and the public sphere. In addition to young Muslims who are active in the Muslim community, this initiative also appealed to Muslim Australians who had not previously worked closely with their own communities. This initiative provided opportunities for women to train in leadership roles.

The program demonstrates the capacity to promote political participation amongst young Muslims, like the alumnus who went on to run as an independent in council elections in Sydney.



## CASE STUDY: 'BELIEVE, ACHIEVE & INSPIRE' LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

### INITIATIVE DETAILS

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Organisations:</b> | Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth (FAMSY)<br>Victoria University            |
| <b>Contact:</b>       | Craig Dent<br>Federation of Australian Muslim Youth<br>PO Box 451 Newport VIC 3015           |
| <b>Email:</b>         | <a href="mailto:contact@believe-achieve-inspire.org">contact@believe-achieve-inspire.org</a> |
| <b>Funding:</b>       | Independent  |

### DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

Launched in 2009, this program was designed in collaboration with Victoria University to provide comprehensive leadership development course for future community leaders. It is a multi-streamed, tertiary accredited professional and Islamic based leadership development. It is unique amongst leadership courses of this type in that participants who complete the course successfully receive a Graduate Certificate in Management from Victoria University. Craig Dent explained:

*There are two streams to the program, which run in parallel. The academic stream delivered by Victoria University as our current academic provider is taught in classroom, small group, and large group scenarios along with individual-based work. The second stream, delivered by FAMSY [Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth], covers a range of topics and is delivered by recognised subject experts.*

The course objectives are to:

- explore social, economic and environmental issues, with a ten-year horizon
- canvass a variety of issues, with a focus on the coming decade, and work with your peers to decide on what to tackle within and for a community, how to do it, and why
- explore and challenge your own values, philosophies, prejudices and beliefs, with the help of experienced program leaders
- build trust, rapport and networks between people with different world views
- learn about how community resources work, so you understand how to seek out opportunities and resolve challenges communities face.

### CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

The program has been successfully run with demonstrable achievements and is now in its second year of operation.

Program Chair and co-founder Craig Dent told us:

*Students of the program have gone on to be active within the community, workplaces and personal lives utilising the knowledge and experiences gained whilst undertaking the program. We have past students of*

*the program involved in this program this year, which is great. We have even had students change their professional careers, which has been really amazing, one past student has recently been quoted in a public forum stating that “This program changes lives”. This is such a powerful statement; to see that from a previous year’s student is really powerful.*

In addition to the political, civic and community dimensions of the course, the completion of a diploma in management has been viewed by both coordinators and participants as a key strength. To one participant:

*It’s unique, because it does give you a diploma, and essentially that’s the component through Victoria University... you do it over the weekend and you end up with a Diploma in Business Management and Leadership. So that, by itself, is a good thing, because with then the degree, you come up with a better understanding of what it requires to run your own business, or everything that’s related.*

Another aspect of this course that sets it apart from other types of leadership courses is the long-term nature of the outcomes it sets out to achieve. Participants are made aware that they are walking towards goals within a ten-year horizon. Craig Dent said:

*One of the reasons behind this is the purpose of the program itself, which is to develop future leaders. You cannot develop future leaders in the vacuum of today, or yesterday for that matter. It has to be about the future. We tackle the issues of today and those emerging particularly those that need to be confronted within the 10-year horizon.*

*I think leadership styles themselves along with the meaning of leadership, will continue to evolve and may well be very different in ten years to what it is today.*

The broad Islamic and academic structure of the course was very popular with participants. They also found the focus on civic participation and citizenship enhanced their ability to take on political questions:

*I think that was the main goal that I had when I started the course – it was just looking at up-skilling in terms of being better able to manage projects, to have a better general awareness in terms of leadership skills and in terms of project management, time management and team management. The course really delivered on that – especially team management. It also covered a lot of different areas that I hadn’t even contemplated before looking at the course which were really interesting and awe-inspiring in the sense of looking at citizenship from the time of Plato till now, looking at sustainability, looking at corporate responsibility and accountability – corporate accountability – things like that. They’re far beyond what most project managers would look at.*

This participant felt that what made the difference for him was being able to understand the background of the Australian political system and the concept of citizenship in ways that enabled him to think differently about the role of Muslims in Australia.

*I’ve never had the opportunity to do something like that. History is always amazing when you know and are able to question because it is a big topic of discussion in Australia politics. The ... Muslim community has been targeted ... If you comprehend the history of it then you’re better able to understand the issues involved in it and that’s something that’s never been offered before. I haven’t been exposed to it ever before. I’m pretty sure that in our community a lot of people have also not been exposed to it.*

For another participant, one of the most important aspects of the course was learning that leadership was about motivating others. In addition, it enabled him to think differently about how Muslims can become politically engaged within the Australian context and to run courses for Monash University's Islamic Student Society on how Muslim students can become more involved in Australian politics:

*Obviously, they [Muslims] are a minority here in Australia so if they want to get more involved and have a bigger say in how the society should be working as well, that's where I come in. I have an understanding now of what it takes to interact with politicians, and on the other hand, from the other side, I also know how to voice the common Muslim opinion to the politicians, because that doesn't always get heard by the general Australian audience, because if you look at TV or newspapers, it's one monologue, constantly: Muslims are bad and not good for Australia.*

Course participants had maintained their networks beyond the course's conclusion and, at the time of interview, many continued to meet regularly. One reported:

*We've set up an ongoing meeting every month. I've likened it to a director's meeting where you have coaching from other company directors and you all get together and support each other ... Even though we're involved in different organisations and different programs, we get together on the first Monday of every month in the city and have dinner and go and do something fun. Maybe bowling, maybe go and watch a movie or something like that and then have an opportunity to cross-integrate across different community programs or community areas or projects. You know, give each other advice, or talk about whatever is bothering us. It's been really rewarding and fulfilling.*

## CHALLENGES

One of the participants noted that the course content was challenging for some of the participants because it demanded that they think differently. However, other than the question of securing funding to run future programs, there were not many challenges to speak of and the course was very well regarded by past participants that we interviewed.

*Sustainability of the program in its current form is indeed a challenge, which will continue despite the efforts to mitigate it unless the Australian Government gets on board and supports the program. I recently had the opportunity to meet with Congressman Keith Ellison in the United States, he was the first Muslim elected to the US congress. An amazing individual and someone who's taken an interest in this program.*

## ORGANISATIONAL AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

The question of funding is the key issue facing the parties involved in designing and implementing this program. As the initiative has not received any government funding to date, it relies entirely upon being able to generate income through fund-raising activities and sponsorship from various organisations. Further, the university component of the course is not currently funded through any student educational scheme so this is an added cost incurred by the host organisations. Craig Dent said he would:

*Love to say the Australian government [had given us funding], but I can't!, it is disappointing. It is a large and ambitious program; it is an expensive program to offer to students ... We have fund-raisers during the course of the year and, again, coming back to the projects, one of the project teams last year took on what seems quite simple but is extremely challenging that is, fundraising. They have now run two fundraisers for the program ... One of those fundraisers they have run has just been in the last month, so well after they completed the program their work continues, which is important. We are fortunate to have other community organisations who have for the second consecutive year provided financial support. We have a great group of sponsors that have provided funding during 2009 and again, thankfully, have signed up for 2010.*

*We also enter, where appropriate, award programs that provide some [financial] relief ... It is a difficult way of doing it. Students themselves contribute less than 7% of the course costs.*

## MAIN CONCLUSIONS

This was a unique initiative amongst leadership programs of its kind in providing an academic accreditation to participants. Further, the extent of integration between the academic and the Islamic teachings seems to have been developed far more than with many other leadership courses.

This course has been highly praised by past participants for providing an academic accreditation within an Islamic framework as well as providing participants the opportunity for future oriented professional development.

## CASE STUDY: 'LEARN TO LOBBY YOUR LOCAL POLLY' WORKSHOP

### INITIATIVE DETAILS

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Organisations:</b> | Muslim Women's National Network Australia<br>Auburn Mosque   |
| <b>Contact:</b>       | Jamila Hussain<br>Secretary, Muslim Women's National Network Australia<br>PO Box 213 Granville NSW 2142; |
| <b>Email:</b>         | <a href="mailto:info@mwanna.org.au">info@mwanna.org.au</a>   |
| <b>Funding:</b>       | Independent  |

### DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

The Muslim Women's National Network Australia ran a 'Learn to Lobby Your Local Polly' workshop at Auburn mosque on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2004 in the lead-up to the federal election. The workshop targeted Muslim citizens, and in particular Muslims who had completed the settlement process but were still new to the country. The workshop was attended by around twenty people. The Australian political system was explained, as were the different functions of state and federal governments and which areas were managed by each.

The presentation went on to explain how citizens could bring their opinions and concerns to the attention of decision makers in Parliament. Techniques that were discussed in the workshop included calling the offices of the leaders of the political parties at Parliament House and asking to speak to the Chief of Staff, writing letters to the relevant local, state and federal Ministers and Senators, and writing letters to both local and national newspapers. The workshop also made suggestions on how to frame a letter to make it more likely that it would be published.

The system of dealing with correspondence in government departments was also explained. The workshop explained that the reason Muslims should ring, write or email their local members is because that is the only way that those members will know about the concerns of their constituents.

One of the reasons why the MWNNA felt it was important to organise this workshop was due to lack of knowledge about the Australian political system amongst many Muslims, many of whom are newly arrived. According to Jamila Hussain:

*From what we've been able to find out, there's a huge ignorance: not only among Muslims, there is among other people too. We thought we'd try to run just a seminar, afternoon program, which we did in the annexe to Auburn mosque. And we disseminated it widely – we had PowerPoints explaining the process....And we got maps of the electoral divisions in New South Wales and set about to explain how it all worked.*

The lack of knowledge about the Australian political system in the Auburn area makes it all the more difficult for local residents to understand exactly what they can and can't expect from their local representatives. One elected member of Auburn council confirmed that the problems associated with the low level of active understanding of the political system in this area:

*I see myself as a facilitator ... A lot of people don't understand the role of elected representatives, whether they're from local, state or federal ... especially in this community – don't forget it's a lower socioeconomic area. Education is low, so obviously they don't understand the pure role of what council does. So I saw myself as a facilitator between community groups and council. Of course you come up with issues every now and then that are good and sound at the time, and there's a lot of things I've initiated.*

### CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

The workshop presenter and convener viewed the workshop as reasonably successful. It provided a forum where those who were interested in the political process could get more information and have their questions answered. The presenter noted that one of the key success factors was ensuring that the information was comprehensible to the participants:

*I think it went well. I tried to make it as simple, as clear as possible, not too difficult, so that it was basic information [from which] you'd be able to understand exactly where everything was coming from...I think it was successful. People reacted very positively, asked good questions. And whether or not they actually did what they wanted to do afterwards, I can't tell because I didn't do any follow-ups!*

The workshop presenter agreed that there is something to be gained from running initiatives of this kind more formally, and on an ongoing basis:

*People need to know the rules of the country they're living in. We can't – I've said this before, but we can't just live like sheep and just following along the way without actually participating. We need to be active citizens, no longer to just be passive and waiting for things to be handed across. We need to do a lot more, and I think there's potentially a lot of people who are interested in becoming more participative in societies.*

### CHALLENGES

Despite being reasonably well advertised in the local area, only an average sized audience attended. Jamila Hussain reflected:

*Unfortunately we didn't have a very big roll-up, and of those who did roll up, most of those were quite well-informed and interested anyway, so they probably didn't learn anything.*

Perhaps because of the low level of attendance, one of the workshop conveners, who was also active in a leafleting campaign for the local elections, felt that, despite the workshop, most people in the area did not really understand the political system:

*I was just amazed, just handing out 'how to vote' cards and talking to people, how little some people knew. They didn't have a clue. And there is a huge need for just basic civics education: why you vote, how the political system works, what the electorates mean, and you know, the proportional voting system and [so on].*

Recent migration was a significant factor inhibiting affecting the ability of voters of Muslim background in the area to become more actively involved. In addition, Muslim women's involvement was affected by fear of being associated with 'politics'. Jamila Hussain summarised:

*I think the majority of people, especially fairly recent migrants, have their major concerns: getting a job, getting a house, looking after their family, taking the kids to school – just the everyday concerns ... Women tend to say, 'Well you know, we'll come along and raise funds for an orphanage in Niger, or something like that'; but try to get them interested in what's happening*

*on the political scene, and it's 'Oh, you know, we're not interested in politics.' But it's the same in the wider community; it's really hard to get people interested in politics. And by the way, I'll just make a statement that I don't belong to any political party, and I never have.*

## ORGANISATIONAL AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

Although the workshop was not necessarily intended to be an ongoing activity, it has been successfully developed outside of its original context.

In addition, it is worth noting that a similar education program is now being run by Auburn council in conjunction with Auburn Diversity Services. Rather than a single event, the council runs weekly workshops on the political system which are widely publicised in the Auburn area. Although the local government funding for these workshops is a significant variation from the independently funded 'Learn to Lobby your Local Polly' workshop, attendance continues to be the major issue. According to an organiser:

*Look, the first time there were a few. I was there at the beginning. I had to speak. I can't remember the figures. Probably seven, eight people, and they advertise really well, these people, but they said one particular group normally comes late....about fifty of them will come in towards the end and they'll have to hold it again.*

## MAIN CONCLUSIONS

- This was seen to be a positive initiative by those involved in its organisation and an initiative for which there is a clear need.
- The organisation of similar programs by local councils demonstrates that in areas with a higher number of migrants from newly arrived communities there may be greater need for such programs.
- The initiative gave participants to ask questions that they may otherwise not be able to simply because they would not know where to address those questions or how to find the relevant information.

## CASE STUDY: YOUNG MUSLIM LEADERSHIP NETWORK

### INITIATIVE DETAILS

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Organisations:</b> | Citizenship Foundation   |
| <b>Contact:</b>       | Naqeeb Ahmed<br>63 Gee Street, London EC1V 3RS   |
| <b>Email:</b>         | <a href="mailto:info@citizenshipfoundation.org.uk">info@citizenshipfoundation.org.uk</a> |
| <b>Funding:</b>       | Citizenship Foundation   |

### DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

The *Young Muslim Leadership Network* (YMLN) is a program targeting young Muslims between 16 and 21 years of age that is administered by the Citizenship Foundation UK in collaboration with Muslim Youth Helpline, Three Faiths Forum, British Muslims for a Secular Democracy and Young Muslims Advisory Group. Participants come together to discuss and explore social issues affecting them and their communities, in particular, questions of alienation, discrimination, Islamophobia and the lack of civic participation. The young people are encouraged to investigate the causes of these problems by talking to people in power or influence. They are then given the opportunity to produce media of their own in campaigns for change.

The program was launched in October 2009. The discussion sessions have been running since November 2009 with three groups – two based in London and one in Birmingham. The groups meet on a monthly basis with plenary sessions for all three together once every six months.

In short, the overall approach of the YMLN can be summarised by its ‘three phase strategy’ of ‘identification, research and production.’ In the ‘identification’ part of the process, it is the young people themselves who are asked to identify social policy issues of concern to them. In the past, this process has brought a wide range of issues to the fore including, discrimination, alienation, Islam's portrayal in the media, Islamophobia, political participation and education. In second ‘research’ phase of the process, group members are given the tools to investigate some of the causes behind the issues while simultaneously exploring ways to improve the situation. Young people are also given the opportunity to discuss the issues raised in phase one with people in power and influence such as politicians, journalists, academics, lawyers and the police. In the final ‘production’ part of the program, participants produce media resources of their own based on information researched and collected in phases one and two. These resources have included video documentaries, information booklets and workshop materials. Although primarily aimed at peers and older members of the Muslim community, it is envisioned that these materials will also be beneficial to teachers, youth workers and policy makers.

### CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

YMLN was setup to provide young people an opportunity to address the social problems within a democratic framework. Issues that were felt to be of particular concern included:

- Widespread misunderstanding of many aspects of Islam by fellow Muslims and by the mainstream society.
- Negative portrayal of Muslims and Islam in the media.
- Lack of civic participation by Muslims in areas like school and college councils.



The program implemented its own evaluation through participant feedback. The feedback forms provided participants the opportunity to answer a set of questions about their experiences of the project. Of the feedback forms that we were able to view, participants were strongly in agreement that the project met its objectives. Overwhelmingly, the most rewarding aspect of the project that participants remarked upon was the opportunity to meet others and establish networks. They nominated:

*Having been able to meet such enthusiastic, enterprising, outspoken young people and, even more certainly, the wonderfully dedicated, selfless leaders. To be in the stages of creating an unprecedented document, too, feels very promising.*

The project also enabled and empowered young people to identify and act upon issues of concern in positive ways. Project Officer Naqeeb Ahmed says that this is one of the most valuable aspects of the project:

*I believe YMLN has given young British Muslims a safe space to express their views and opinions without the fear of ridicule or criticism. Moreover, YMLN has given the young people a chance to explore social problems and to create a media resource for one of the problems. For example, the Birmingham group have decided to tackle the issue of barriers to participation and as part of their research they have spoken to a local senior West Midlands police officer and Clare Short, a former cabinet Minister in the Labor government.*

Although the majority of respondents who completed the feedback had prior experience of civic participation, most still felt that the program provided them with the knowledge to think about engagement in new ways. Comments included:

*It's upped my personal engagement simply because I got involved... I've sat with Clare Short, filmed/interviewed other key political figures.*

*Well it's definitely made me more keen to want to work with and for the Muslim community- not only to improve our image in the eyes of the non-Muslim public, but also because I feel like I ought to be making my own contribution to the Muslim community itself.*

The ultimate success of the program, says Ahmed, will be when the three groups produce media resources about a social issue they decide to focus on.

## CHALLENGES

In providing a forum where young people can tackle issues of concern to them by taking practical steps to find solutions, the program provides a powerful model for empowering youth towards greater participation. However, Ahmed notes that as with any program that encourages greater engagement and participation, it does not always reach those who are most disengaged:

*I believe YMLN is a powerful engagement program in that it provides a platform for young people to discuss issues of importance to them. Additionally, it allows for a safe like-minded environment where young people can discuss issues without fear or criticism. However, YMLN has fallen short of engaging with people who would have otherwise not participated. Instead, YMLN has attracted individuals who are already engaged in society. I believe this will exacerbate the dilemma of increasing the gap between those who are engaged (empowered) and disengaged in society. This is a widespread issue amongst many engagement programs and is not solely confined to YMLN.*

The feedback completed by participants also appears to suggest that many who were involved in the program had prior experience with civic engagement programs and civic engagement. Some of the participants had been very involved in political and civic engagement prior to the initiative:

*I am active member in Young Muslims, UK. I set up a Politics Environment and Global group with a few others for Bradford Youth Service. I regularly hound my local MP over stuff I don't like, he even knows my name now.*

Another mentioned that civic engagement was a requirement for a program of study:

*A Global Action Plan group called Climate Squad (steering group member). Within the International Baccalaureate diploma for which I study all are obliged to perform at least 200 hrs of engagement activities.*

Several of the participants had been involved in mentoring programs prior to the initiative:

*I am a part of the School council and I am also a peer mediator at school. I also go to Manningham Mills, in Bradford every fortnight for a project that is called Mannigham Youth Talks. I am also a part of the SHM Foundation which is based in London, this is a project that involves looking closer into politics.*

Another participant had previously had some engagement with youth programs and student politics:

*I used to volunteer weekly at a youth club on a deprived council estate, before I moved to Manchester to begin my degree studies. I also took part in various initiatives whilst President of the Students Association at my sixth form college.*

Further, Muslim political participation is not simply a matter of whether Muslims are participating in the political arena or not but of *how* they participate and in *which areas*. One of the things that the project sought to address was Muslims' greater interest in international rather than domestic issues. By doing so, it also challenged, resisted and diminished Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism. Another of the issues facing course participants was the lack of political literacy and participation skills that could effectively bring about change. However, project officer Naqeeb Ahmed had not seen any evidence so far to suggest that participation in this program has led to greater political participation, or involvement in the recent UK election.

*I have no knowledge of YMLN members being involved in the 'Get Out and Vote' campaign. We do have a number of participants who are politically active with mainstream parties; there is no evidential correlation between their political participation and YMLN involvement.*

Another of the issues that the project coordinators have sought to address is the low levels of attendance. Although 40 participants are registered, only about 15 are actively participating on a regular basis. Ahmed attributes the low attendance to various reasons, including travel from outside of London for some of the participants and irregular meeting times.

*NA: I believe we have experienced low numbers for the following reasons; (1) the meetings are on a monthly basis which may have lead to a lack of motivation. (2) Due to travel, since some members were recruited from outside London and Birmingham. (3) Prioritising other commitments as the group meetings take place on a weekend. Finally, based on the surveys (I've had back from the participants) the low attendance could have been due to the slow nature of the project. For example, they meet once a month for three hours, discuss social issues, and then not meet again for a month – this may have de-motivated them.*

## ORGANISATIONAL AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

This program received funding under the UK government's 'Prevent Strategy'. To date there have been no problems with funding but it is not certain whether government funding will continue for this initiative.

## CONCLUSIONS

This program has the potential to deliver great results by empowering young Muslims to take an active role in identifying and changing issues of concern to them.

It also has the potential to be effective in terms of political participation as in addition to policy development aspects of the program, participants have the opportunity to improve their political literacy and participation skills.

## CASE STUDY: NASIHA ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP PROGRAM (ACP)

### INITIATIVE DETAILS

Organisations: Nasiha Education Foundation  
Contact: [www.nasiha.co.uk](http://www.nasiha.co.uk)  
Funding: Bradford Council

### DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

Nasiha Foundation's *Active Citizenship Program (ACP)* was developed by a team working with Bradford Council for Mosques, Islamic scholars in the UK and numerous Imams and teachers. The initiative arose from a series of meetings and conferences the need for young British Muslims to access clear and coherent Islamic teachings which could better help them to understand their faith as citizens and their responsibilities in modern day Britain.

The program was developed over three phases. In the first phase, the manner in which ideas about citizenship could be taught in mosques and madrassas was conceptualised and number of scholars were commissioned to research Islamic traditions related to citizenship concepts. It was decided that the resources produced should have an Islamic foundation following the mosque and madrassa tradition of lesson delivery that begins with a verse of the Quran. In the second, drafting and development phase of the ACCEPT, guidance notes were collated on interpretation and Islamic traditions. Finally, through consultation with imams and with the community, various drafts were refined until a successful pilot program had been completed.

The teaching materials for the ACP form a rich database of online information. The teachings are aimed at improving the life skills of young people and giving them a positive outlook on the importance of diversity, cohesion and a sense of common purpose. Lesson titles span from celebrated Islamic concepts to citizenship subjects. Overall, the ACP presents an enriched Islamic perspective on citizenship values that are sourced from authentic Islamic traditions. Summaries of some of the lessons are set out below:

#### **Anti-Social Behaviour**

This lesson looks at common activities associated with anti-social behaviour and how Islamic teachings, alongside the prevailing customs of British society, disapproves of such conduct.

#### **Diversity, Tolerance & Humanity**

This lesson explains how Islam embraces diversity as God's plan and how respect and tolerance is celebrated.

#### **Sanctity of Life and Protecting the Rights of Citizens**

This lesson teaches about the Sanctity of Life as a universal principle for humanity and student's learn why life is sacred and why it is important to protect the rights of all citizens in Islam.

#### **Making a Positive Impression**

This lesson focuses on the importance of developing qualities for presentation and exemplifying good public behaviour.

## Community Work and Elections

This lesson teaches the importance of doing voluntary or involuntary work in the community and of maintaining a good relationship with non-Muslims and people of other cultures. It helps students understand the contribution made by the Prophet and his Companions on community affairs.

### CRITICAL SUCCESSES FACTORS

Although it was not possible to conduct independent interviews with course conveners and participants, Nasiha's ACP lessons appear to have been very successful and past participants and community leaders have praised the project. Its website quotes Bradford scholar Shaykh Irfan Shah Musharafi:

*Nasiha Citizenship Lessons are a guidance and an essential tool to teach young Muslims about their responsibilities in the UK and how to become good citizens from an Islamic perspective.*

Mick Walker, head of citizenship and religious education at the majority-Muslim Nab Wood school, near Bradford, said:

*Nasiha lessons help teachers in mainstream schools to tackle difficult and sensitive subjects. They also provide a positive impression of how Islam can teach values of citizenship in Madrassas which are similar to what is being taught in school.*

To a student participant:

*The best part of Nasiha Citizenship lessons are that they encourage you to debate in the lesson. The Quranic verses and hadith help us to understand that we should respect all communities.*

The course also caught the interest of the media in the UK and internationally. The New York Times wrote:

*One of the virtues of the curriculum in Bradford in applying Mr. Brown's vision, according to his aides, is that it is taught by forward-leaning imams and is based on matching messages from the Quran to everyday life.*

BBC News said:

*The tools Nasiha has put together shows 'how their faith encourages them to work and participate within the fabric of British society'. Lesson titles like Making a Positive Impression; Good Muslim, Good Citizen; and Community Work and Elections interweave teaching from the Quran with practical citizenship. (Foregoing quotations from <http://www.nasiha.co.uk/nasiha-63-AboutNasihaACP.html>)*

From the information we were able to gather about this initiative it was clear that many, both politicians and members of Britain's Islamic community, wished to see the Nasiha program continue. It had made a positive impression on young people and provided advice on issues of community and social importance.

Hamza Khan, a law student and youth leader who had run Nasiha Active Citizenship classes with young people, described the lessons as:

*A mixture of positive messages giving good advice where necessary. The lesson on 'Friendship' gives you an insight to be balanced and critical and to avoid bad company. But it also teaches you to trust Islamic knowledge and teaching from qualified sources. In today's times this is important because you don't fall into the trap of those who want to misinterpret your faith. You can have really good discussions in each lesson. I have to applaud Nasiha on their effort on guidance notes, they were a joy to read and gave you confidence when delivering a lesson.*

## CHALLENGES

One of the challenges that the course appears to have been addressed successfully in this course is giving young Muslims in Britain give a clear sense of direction in relation to citizenship and civic duties from an Islamic perspective. Another youth leader, medical student Shiraz Ali, said:

*I know that the Nasihah materials are supported by many scholars including Mufti Hasan Raza and this gave me encouragement that the teaching and messages in the lessons are there for all to benefit. I've obviously benefited myself hugely by reading and familiarising myself with the lessons and guidance notes. My sessions always started informally, we identified the Islamic teachings in the lesson and then we contextualised our discussion by introducing a citizenship dimension. I think it is important that the citizenship lessons are rich in Islamic sources because this gives students a better insight to what their faith represents.* (Foregoing quotations from <http://www.nasihah.co.uk/nasihah-48-YouthLeaders.html>)

## CONCLUSIONS

ACP has been used successfully as part of a supplementary school curriculum in mosques and madrassas to promote the values of active citizenship within an Islamic framework. The lessons have also been used in mainstream schools, for both citizenship and religious education programs, where teachers (who are not necessarily Muslim) have found the lessons important for reference when teaching about citizenship and about Islam.

## CASE STUDY: ENGAGE – GET OUT AND VOTE CAMPAIGN

### INITIATIVE DETAILS

- Organisations:** ENGAGE
- Contact:** <http://www.iengage.org.uk/>  
<http://www.getoutandvote.info/>
- Funding:** Not for profit organisation, independently financed through charitable donations.

### DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

ENGAGE describes itself as a not for profit company working towards enhancing the active engagement of British Muslim communities in British national life, particularly in the fields of politics and the media. Its stated goal is to promote greater media awareness, political participation and civic engagement among British Muslims. ENGAGE aims to achieve this by:

- Running seminars around Britain for Muslims on how to engage productively with the media and politics
- Training Muslims to effectively respond to derogatory and inflammatory news stories through providing media resources and training
- Organising forums for journalists to interact with local Muslim communities ensuring greater access to the Muslim grass roots
- Working with other Muslim and non Muslim organisations to ensure Islamophobia is regarded as socially unacceptable as anti-Semitism and other forms of racism and xenophobia
- Highlighting the work of journalists and other public figures that undermine social cohesion in Britain and foment anti-Muslim prejudice
- Encouraging voter registration and civic participation in British Muslim communities
- Providing information and commentary on aspects of British politics that relate to British Muslim interests. For example, the implications of the conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition, or information on voting patterns of key MPs representing British Muslim electorates, and information on key legislative debates and issues.
- Provides information on how to lobby MPs, including contact details.

For the UK elections held on 6 May 2010, ENGAGE launched a campaign entitled “Get Out and Vote!” It included a YouTube clip with Muslim scholars explaining why Muslims should vote; links to fatwahs and khutbahs on why Muslims should take part in elections; and practical tips for promoting engagement. A checklist for organising hustings, for example, included lining up party representatives well in advance, having voter registration and party membership materials (for all parties) available on the spot and arranging quick and appropriate media follow-up.

The campaign also emailed all candidates, asking for their responses on ‘issues of importance not only to British Muslims, but also to wider society’, posting their answers online. The areas canvassed were:

1. *Anti Discrimination & Islamophobia*
2. *Climate Change & the Environment*
3. *Crime & Security*
4. *Education & Muslim Faith Schools*
5. *EU Policies & EU enlargement*
6. *Foreign Policy & Counter Terrorism*
7. *LaborMarket Participation & Income Equality*

- 8. Prevent [a controversial government program to limit violent extremism]
- 9. A Responsible Media
- 10. Voter Apathy & Disengagement

Training sessions for volunteers to encourage Muslim voting were supplemented by an online toolkit, offering such suggestions as when and how to distribute leaflets at a mosque, doorknocking and offering lifts to polling stations in Muslim areas on election day and tips for media contact.

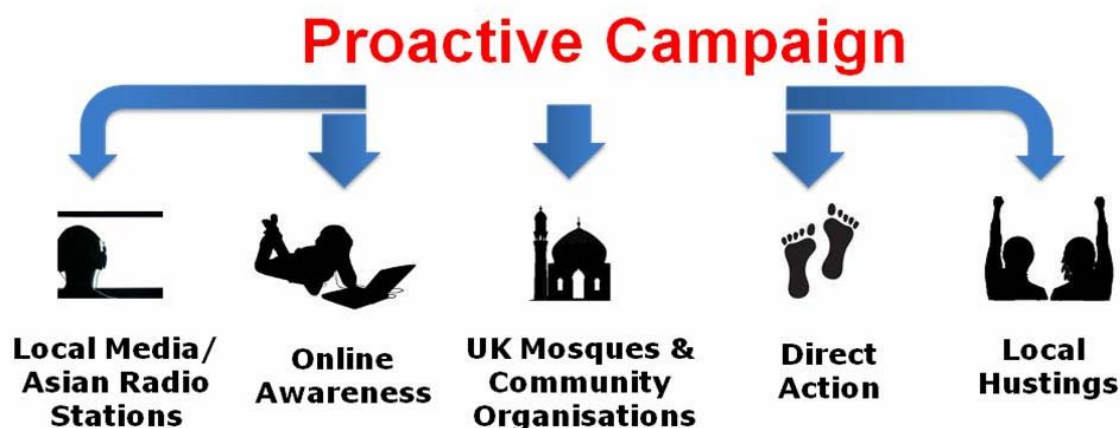


Figure 5: Graphic from the UK 'Get out and Vote' campaign, illustrating the group's strategies to mobilise British Muslims to vote in the 2010 election. <http://www.getoutandvote.info>

## SUCCESSSES

The total number of Muslim MPs doubled in the 2010 election, bringing the total to eight, including, for the first time, three Muslim women. Labor finished with six Muslim representatives, the other two being Conservatives. The available information does not allow us to gauge the extent to which these improvements were attributable to ENGAGE; however, we note that new Muslim candidates were particularly successful in electorates where the 'Get Out and Vote' campaign was most active. Numbers of Muslim candidates also increased, with Muslims representing more than one major party in several electorates. In addition to noting Muslim successes, the 'Get Out and Vote' website also hailed the lower-than-expected vote for the British National Party, which ran a consistent and outspoken anti-Muslim campaign.

'Get Out and Vote' attracted coverage not only in Asian and mainstream UK media, but also overseas. ENGAGE's online resources included statements from Canadian and US Muslim leaders; in turn, its success may inspire similar campaigns elsewhere.



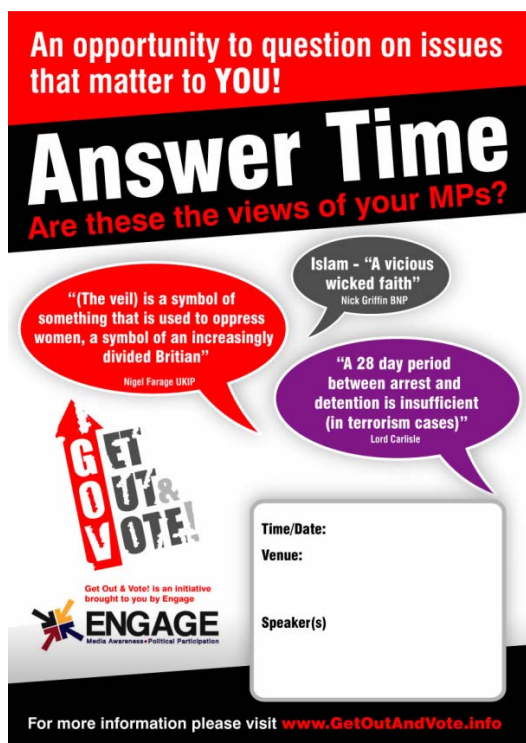


Figure 6: Poster from the Get Out and Vote campaign, UK 2010

## CHALLENGES

'Get Out and Vote' devoted considerable online effort to addressing reasons why Muslims might be discouraged from voting. It specifically addressed fears that voting might be haram, but also worked to counter voter apathy. In addition to linking to fatwahs, khutbahs and YouTube statements from religious authorities, the website also featured articles addressed to an imaginary Muslim who thinks:

*So I get it. Honestly. I know voting is Islamically the right thing to do. It is not haram, let alone kufr.*

*I even know that not bothering to vote is stupid, as it will amplify the votes of others, and some of these votes will be going to parties pushing anti-Muslim agendas. But despite my 'getting' these key points, I'm still stuck. Why? Because I'm not sure as to which candidate I should be voting for.*

*I know of course this is my choice to make. I know, in theory, I should study the policies of both the candidate as well as the party they represent and then decide which one appeals most.*

*But I am a typical British Muslim who lacks the time and inclination for all this hard work. If truth be told politics is actually very boring, and I would rather watch paint dry than read a party manifesto.*

The UK Parliament's first-past-the-post electoral system is notoriously difficult for minority candidates, which can lead to voter apathy among groups who expect their vote to have little impact. 'Get Out and Vote' worked to minimise this effect, first by emphasising the fact that the UK's Muslim voters tend to be concentrated in certain electorates (its highlighted list of 'Top 50' Muslim constituencies) and second through its range of voter education and 'direct action' strategies (eg offering lifts to polling places on election day).

The wide range of online resources and detailed level of analysis in the 'Top 50' electorates has considerable financial implications for any attempt to reproduce the program in Australia.

## CONCLUSION

The UK 2010 elections occurred in the midst of considerable anti-Muslim sentiment, both in the UK and across Europe, with the Swedish minaret decision and the French and Belgian moves to ban the niqab gaining substantial coverage in the UK campaign. That, despite this, the number of Muslim members in the House of Commons doubled, with Muslim representatives in both major parties, suggests that 'Get Out and Vote' was part of a successful mobilisation effort.

Further analysis will be needed to determine with any certainty the campaign's effect on Muslim voter turnout and on the election result.

One might suppose that Australia, with compulsory voting, would have less need for a voter mobilisation campaign like 'Get Out and Vote'. However, our research has underlined the extent of non-participation by recent migrants, including Muslims, in Australia. Australian non-voting strategies include failing to present at a polling place, claiming an exemption, deliberate informal voting, donkey voting or voting for a candidate not expected to win. Each of these could be addressed using the range of strategies demonstrated by 'Get Out and Vote'.

Moreover, 'Get Out and Vote' encourages other forms of participation than voting, including volunteering, joining a party, hosting a meet-the-candidates forum and writing media releases. Our research has demonstrated the powerlessness which many Australian Muslims experience in relation to their capacity to make a difference on these fronts, but also the extraordinary results which some have been able to achieve once they gain the skills to undertake such activities. A campaign along the lines of 'Get Out and Vote' might well assist in mobilising Australian Muslims who are reluctant to take part in a structured leadership program but would like to have a greater say in Australian politics.

## CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

---

### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

#### DIVERSE SOCIAL LOCATIONS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

- Formal political participation of Muslims elected to office in Australian parliaments was limited to two state (NSW & Victoria) upper house MLCs.
- Local government, particularly in NSW, showed a much stronger occurrence of Muslims in elected office. They tended to be clustered in areas where most Muslims live. The local nature of the voter base, and the lack of mainstream media interest made it easier to be pre-selected and elected at the local level.
- There are a number of impressive Muslim influentials working in the public sphere often crossing roles such as academia, journalism, opinion writers in major newspapers, and sometimes comedy.
- Traditional community leaders working in established community peak bodies remained influential, mainly because of their institutional status as ‘official’ community leaders.
- However there were also a number of individuals who had found influence through their work in the community sector who had effectively made use of available mentors and networks to find a path to political and policy influence. Especially those working with women and youth issues, and those working in multicultural (rather than ethno-specific) organisations. These tended to represent more diverse voices than the traditional community leaders.
- Online forums for political expression and mobilisation were increasingly important for the younger generation.

#### COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POLITICALLY ACTIVE

- Family support played a significant role. Important background features included whether their family had a history of political engagement before migration, and family environment, such as a parent who read the newspaper and engaged in ‘dinner table’ political discussion; and parents who encouraged civic engagement among their children.
- Many mentioned having strong family role models – particularly women, who had often been inspired by strong, leadership focused female relatives.
- Cultural background came up especially in terms of the kind of political environment and political system people came from. For example, several respondents of Lebanese background mentioned coming from a community where politics was always discussed.
- Gender was significant, but whether or not it was a limitation was related to specific family and cultural contexts (for example, being female was less of an obstacle to political participation for Lebanese women who were educated in Australia, and a greater one for Iraqi women who arrived as refugees).
- Female converts were more represented amongst politically active women than Muslim women from migrant and refugee backgrounds.
- Newly arrived migrants (especially if they arrived as refugees) were less likely to be politically active, although, in some cases, refugees who arrived as young children were more active in adulthood than their parents.
- Community support was important; for example, a specific community’s gender mores could influence women’s political involvement.

- More education, especially at university, meant higher levels of participation.
- A strong sense of identity and belonging within the wider community led to increased confidence about speaking on Australian politics and social issues.
- In some cases, local (and less often international) political factors may have propelled them to become involved in politics. For some, a particular issue or perceived injustice led them to consider paths to take action.

#### MAIN POLITICAL INTERESTS OF THE POLITICALLY ACTIVE

- Equality and fairness for all, rather than privileging a single group (eg Muslims).
- Diversity in the issues people felt were important – many (especially, those in local government) felt that the areas of most importance were local and specific to their communities rather than larger, national or international ones.
- Changing negative perceptions and stereotypes of Muslims was a common theme.
- Human rights in Australia and overseas.

#### BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

- Some feared political involvement because of attitudes in their country of origin.
- Parents from politically repressive countries of origin often feared for their politically active children.
- Focus on Muslim community was seen as disabling – particularly negative media attention.
- Newer arrivals possibly perceived the lack of a large Muslim presence in the political system to evidence of lack of Muslim engagement.
- Lack of trust and loss of confidence in government.
- Pessimism about what can be changed and cynicism about the political system generally.
- Some social and cultural factors, eg the need to avoid settings where alcohol is consumed, need for halal food; some women found hijab-wearing, or declining to shake hands, made the necessary social interactions awkward.
- Perception among a small number of Muslims that voting is anti-Islamic.
- Lack of receptiveness and inclusive practices by main political parties, or mainstream forums that facilitate political and policy influence.
- General lack of interest in or knowledge of politics and the Australian political system. This was not confined to Muslim communities; it reflects both general trends and a particular lack of knowledge among culturally and linguistically diverse communities, due to cultural and language constraints.

#### IMPACT OF GENDER, ETHNICITY, CLASS AND GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

- Men from communities who had a longer history of migration were the most active; females from these communities were also active to some extent.
- The least active were women from newly arrived communities (eg Iraqi women).
- Access (geographical location) to services, initiatives or programs played a significant role in whether people would access it. For example, Victoria fared better in terms of the scope of services and funding available for programs.
- Income and economic mobility also contributed to whether people were involved in community work but did not seem a significant factor; that is, people from lower socio-economic backgrounds could still be active if other factors were permitting.

## EXISTING PROGRAMS IN AUSTRALIA

- Very few programs were explicitly aimed at increasing the political participation of Muslims.
- Mainly what we identified was a mix of leadership and civics education type programs.
- Australia is very well represented in terms of leadership programs for young Muslims compared to the UK and the US
- Australia fared less well in terms of civics education or political participation programs – UK had some successful examples of such programs (Nasiha, ENGAGE Get Out and Vote).
- Some small civics education programs were funded through local government in Australia – eg Auburn Council.
- Some small civics education programs funded through local government in Australia – does not appear to be comprehensive; eg Auburn council
- The Australian Electoral Commission runs electoral information and education campaigns targeted high culturally and linguistically diverse electorates, most of which have high numbers of Muslim Australian voters. Australian Electoral Commission campaigns have bi-lingual educators, including Arabic speakers, and produce education materials in key community languages.
- Two groups had previously run political educational and mobilisation campaigns leading up to the 2004 and 2007 elections. However funding was scarce, and the scale and impact was thus minimal.

## TACKLING THE PROBLEM: WHAT WORKS & AREAS FOR FOCUS

- Civics education should be strengthened at school level and in communities where culturally and linguistically diverse groups of Muslim background live. For new arrivals, think about the timing of civics education – if it is too early in the settlement process the information won't be useful to them and will be quickly forgotten (JS1410301; RS213)
- Long term and renewable government funding is needed for successful initiatives and organisations that have provided successful initiatives.
- Perceived 'heavy handed' government interventions create resistance. For example, programs funded under the NAP were seen negatively by some sections of the community. However the funding provided under this program was welcomed and did facilitate a number of very good initiatives. A less controversial 'banner' needs to be found to deliver funding.
- Great caution should be exercised in government-initiated programs that could be construed as singling out Muslim communities. When specific circumstances justify a Muslim-specific program, the relevant communities need to be adequately consulted in advance and possible adverse effects fully assessed.
- Broad-based programs need to be inclusive of Muslims and to encourage Muslim participation. At the most basic level, this includes considerations such as provision of halal food and prayer facilities.
- Ongoing effort needs to be directed towards eradicating negative views of Muslims in the media, including workshops on how Muslims can effectively seek redress for media imbalance and counteract negative portrayals of Muslims.
- Programs should take account of the need to restore Muslim communities' confidence in government. For example, when government departments undertake consultation, they should report back to the communities involved, including about policy changes.
- Methods of disseminating information and talking about participation should include new and non-traditional mediums, including new technologies.

## CHAPTER 8: RECOMMENDATIONS

---

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENT

1. Consultations aimed at increasing political participation should include not only ‘official’ community leaders representing main community and religious peak bodies, but also ensure a **diversity of voices** – in terms of gender, ethnicity, generation, geography. An example is the Muslim Community Reference Group: although its context and concept were controversial, the spread of representation on was a good example of diverse voices, old and new, participating in the political process.
  - 1.1. Consultation needs to **clearly value participants’ contribution**, so that it is not felt to be simply tokenistic. Need to demonstrate that their advice is taken seriously.
  - 1.2. This includes, but is not limited to, **feedback by policy makers** to consultation groups on how their advice has or has not impacted on policy or funding and why.
  - 1.3. Consultation needs to be **efficient**, to avoid the often-reported impression that Muslims are endlessly asked to volunteer their time in order to be consulted about things on which their opinions are already known. An example of good practice in this respect was the NAP-sponsored collaborative consultation involving co-operation between numerous community groups and different research teams (including the present authors). Given that simultaneous projects were examining related research questions and often seeking to interview the same people, the collaborative approach meant interviewees were able to give maximum information with minimum intrusion on their time and resources.
2. Support greater accessibility and availability of **existing and proven successful leadership programs**.
  - 2.1. **Expand the Australian Multicultural Foundation Young Muslim Leadership program** beyond Victoria, rather than rely on interstate participants to ‘fly in fly out’.
  - 2.2. Add a component **on political participation** to existing **leadership programs**: civics, the Australian system of government, the workings of the public service, and strategies to influence policy development.
  - 2.3. Where possible, leadership programs should work to **establish networks and mentoring relationships**, and provide for ongoing engagement of participants.
  - 2.4. Taking into account geographical and demographic considerations, leadership programs should, in principle, **share information and evaluations, pool resources, and develop articulated pathways** so that programs dovetail rather than compete.
3. Ensure sufficient **consultation** (noting 1 above) on any programs or initiatives targeted at the Muslim community.
4. Consider the possibility of gathering opinions of local **Islamic scholars** on issues like voting and political obligations (eg Nasiha in the UK), and **working with them** to disseminate Muslim perspectives on related issues.

5. Consider **women-only workshops** on civics education, leadership and political participation in some areas as some women may not wish to attend mixed sessions, especially in the light of criticisms within their own communities.
6. Consider **cross-cultural** approaches rather than interfaith.
7. Ensure programs **restore the confidence** of the Muslim community in government and political processes.
8. Funded programs should, with some exceptions, **avoid singling out Muslim communities**, in a way which suggests they alone have a 'problem'.
9. Actively recruit and engage a **diversity of Muslims** for multicultural programs so they are equally included.
  - 9.1. Consideration should always be given to whether it is a **lack of inclusiveness on the part of mainstream organisations** or programs, or structural problems, that deter/s Muslims from participating (rather than some deficit that exists among Muslim communities).
10. Ensure that funded multicultural or joint Muslim and non-Muslim programs encourage and **provide facilities and make provision for Muslim participation** (eg halal food, prayer facilities, etc).
11. Ensure adequate funding for grass-roots community programs that **prepare and enable Muslims from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds** to participate in mainstream programs and events.
12. Strengthen and broaden **civics and citizenship education**, particularly at school level and in local communities.
  - 12.1. Encourage **parent involvement** in political education programs for children.
13. Re-introduce political education in the **late post-settlement phase**. The settlement phase is stressful and focused on everyday survival. Ensure community organisations are funded to provide programs later in the settlement process, for example, leading up to citizenship test. If it is too early in the settlement process the information won't be useful to them and will be quickly forgotten.
14. Explore **non-traditional ways to disseminate information and engage communities**. Important to consider how these might be used effectively (for example, don't just expect young people to watch a YouTube clip to 'inform' them if they feel they have nothing to gain from it). Consider mixed methods of engagement – online, hustings, well thought through and researched campaigning, engagement, information gathering and dissemination.
15. Disseminate information on how Muslims can effectively seek redress for biased **media reporting** and counteract negative portrayals of Muslims.
16. Expand and extend **mentoring and networking** opportunities for young Muslim leaders, and build programs that embed opportunities for these to occur.
  - 16.1. Be aware of the **networking possibilities** of being involved not just in one's own ethnic or religious organisation, but in multi-ethnic organisations and forums, as well as mainstream ones. Participation in multiple forums is important, and strategies should encourage this.
17. Facilitate networking among up and coming and existing non aligned **Muslim influentials**, which reflect gender, ethnic and generational diversity, include past leadership program participants and draw participants from different levels of government.

18. Consider using these networks as a **diverse database of Muslim leaders and opinion makers** for mentoring and communications, and to complement existing public service and media relationships with official representatives of Muslim institutions when undertaking policy review and consultations.
19. For leadership programs aimed at increasing political influence of Muslim, consider targeting young Muslims involved in University clubs for Muslim students, as well as Muslims enrolled at universities generally. Note that these are potential future leaders and well placed to become political and community 'influentials'.
20. Ensure adequate funding to reach out to other states, to include representation from and run programs outside of Victoria. Some of the most influential programs and organisations targeting **multiculturalism are centred in Victoria**. Examples include organisations such as Australian Multicultural Foundation and Federation of Ethnic Community Councils of Australia. Much of their representation and consultation takes place in Victoria, and programs they run tend to be focused there.
21. Produce **targeted educational strategies** tailored to culturally and linguistically diverse groups in localities which have high levels of informal voting (for example, drawing on the existing Indigenous Electoral Participation Program).
22. Consider auditing **mainstream and non ethno-specific multicultural forums** that already have policy and political influence to identify where Muslims and other culturally and linguistically diverse groups are underrepresented, facilitating pathways for their inclusion.
23. Support **capacity building for diverse young people** so that they are prepared to enter these types of forums (eg youth parliament) rather than being 'parachuted' into potentially alienating situations.
24. Establish, actively recruit for and promote **registers of qualified individuals** from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds appointable to boards, authorities and high level advisory committees (for example, drawing on precedents to increase the representation of women such as the Queensland 'Register of Nominees', the NSW Register of Boards and Committees, the Victorian Women's Register, and the national NGO 'Women on Boards').
25. Support the role of all levels of government, municipal associations and other sectors in facilitating political participation.

## OTHER RECOMMENDED ROLES AND DIRECTIONS

### LOCAL

Local governments could, with support:

1. Promote and run sessions to encourage underrepresented culturally and linguistically diverse communities to educate them about, and encourage them to run for councils, with support from other levels of government and possibly via state associations.
2. Develop further **materials to promote running for councils** (for example along the lines of the NSW State Government publication 'Becoming a Councillor', and similar resources in other states).
3. Actively disseminate materials on running for councils through mosques, Muslim community organisations, Muslim online forums and community opinion makers and influentials.



4. Given significant under-representation of Muslims there, focus resources on a **community engagement program in Victoria**, drawing on the sessions and materials, to encourage greater and more diverse participation of Muslims in local government.
5. Support a **mentoring program** to twin existing councillors with politically-compatible aspiring councillors of Muslim background.

### THIRD SECTOR (NGOs / COMMUNITY SECTOR/EDUCATION)

The third sector can continue **successful programs**, with funding body support. In doing so it should in particular consider the strengths of existing programs as follows:

1. The **'Leadership Australia – A new generation'** program -
  - 1.1. Its skills focus, attention to ongoing alumni engagement, and facilitation of mentoring and networking opportunities.
  - 1.2. Its youth focus, including efforts to involve disenfranchised youth with leadership potential.
  - 1.3. The potential for extension of this kind of program to older age groups, for example including Muslims who have shown leadership potential in their professional lives. Some potential influentials do not get to the stage of being ready for leadership or political participation until they have some years of professional experience, for example, in a university, or a public service role.
  - 1.4. The value of including higher level professional leadership and political skills training, similar to the EMILYS list 'Empowering the Community Sector' program, which covers topics such as: Introduction to Lobbying; Election Campaigning for a Cause; Progressive Debate Framing; Managing the Media. Other relevant skills might include: becoming an opinion maker; Canberra visits (to understand the political process and meet politicians); sessions with public servants on policy development; political advocacy; entering politics and running for office.
  - 1.5. The potential to make such programs available in different national centres, rather than relying on 'flying in and flying out' of the Victorian base. This is particularly important to facilitate the participation of young people whose parents are uncomfortable with them travelling alone, as well as of women and men with family.
2. The **La Trobe Leadership Training for Young Muslims'** study tour to Parliament House, along with strengths identified in the Leadership Australia - A new generation program which are also applicable to it.
3. The **Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth 'Believe, Achieve & Inspire' Leadership Program –**
  - 3.1. The value of providing participants with a university diploma. Incorporating this into programs gives participants something very concrete to use in their professional advancement.
  - 3.2. Its grounding in Islamic values.
4. The potential of current and future **media skills training** that engages Muslim communities to move focus from simply providing comment to journalists, to becoming an opinion maker: how to write and publish opinion pieces.

5. The **potential for all programs to extend** to other non-Muslim culturally and linguistically diverse communities with similar needs and issues, for example through a body to run co-ordinated activities under the general banner of **increasing the participation of ethnic minorities in Australian politics**.

## ELECTORAL SYSTEM

**International models** for making electoral districts more representative should be considered.

For example, the classic discussion of diversity and political representation is Anne Phillips, *The Politics of Presence* (Oxford University Press 1998). Phillips analyses the USA's practice of **redrawing electoral boundaries** to achieve '**race-conscious districting**' as one way of enhancing the prospects of ethnic minority candidates in single-member proportional systems. The move was justified on an interpretation of the 1965 *Civil Rights Act* as implying the right of ethnic minorities to be represented by a candidate of their own choosing.

## POLITICAL PARTIES

Through the forums detailed above, it would be possible to work **with and within the main political parties** to develop strategies to enhance ethnic minority participation in Australian political life, in particular, providing pathways in the major parties for culturally and linguistically diverse party members with political aspirations.

Australia is a long way behind other nations in recognising that political representation should reflect the diversity of the population. Indeed, both Canada and the UK collect and compile data each elections on the participation of minorities in elected office. See for example the UK research paper: <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons/lib/research/briefings/snsg-01156.pdf>

Innovative ideas to increase diversity in Australian parliaments could be reviewed as part of considering reforms.

For example, in 1998, Australian political scientist John Uhr proposed that 'Parliament should introduce legislation to require parliamentary parties to account through the Australian Electoral Commission for their schemes for gender equity against appropriate parliamentary guidelines, at the risk of losing public funding.' Uhr points out that the Australian system has tended:

*to treat political parties as private organisations, although they are, in fact, public bodies registered with the Electoral Commission.*

The Electoral Commission can enforce certain standards of conduct upon parties, with access to public funding an important lever. As Uhr explained:

*Political parties are eligible to receive a public subsidy based on their share of the vote received and, of course, successful candidates and parties receive all manner of public support, including personal salaries, staff costs and office expenses. Parliament sets the terms and conditions of accountability required of participating parties.*

If these are violated, the parties have to pay back their public subsidy.

Parliament's oversight is through the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. Uhr, considering means for boosting the proportion of women in Parliament, suggested that 'gender equality of opportunity' in the parties should be 'an additional eligibility test'. His proposal was based on the *Affirmative Action (Equal Opportunity for Women) Act 1986*, which required employers of over one hundred people to report annually to the Affirmative Action Agency on their efforts to improve the

representation of women in their workplaces. Those that failed to report, or had made insufficient progress, were named in Parliament.

Following a review, the Act was renamed the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999* and some of its provisions were weakened, including by removing the requirement for non-complying employers to be named in Parliament. Against a background of weakening political protections for women's equality with men in the workplace (Summers 2003), it is not surprising that Uhr's proposal to compel political parties to observe comparable requirements to those imposed on businesses were never pursued.

However, Uhr's promising suggestion could well be adapted to increasing ethnic diversity. Reminding parties that they are beholden to taxpayers and that they are expected to achieve certain public goods might be attractive in a period of high voter cynicism about party processes.

## EVALUATION OF PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

As the strategies proposed above are diverse, it is difficult at this stage to suggest a detailed evaluation model. As many of these activities have a capacity building focus designed to assist participants towards future leadership roles, indicators need to encompass short, medium and long term outcomes. Also, some kinds of impact are diffuse, requiring in-depth qualitative research to supplement numerical measures. Final methodology would depend on the intervention model in question; however, analysis should include pre- and post-intervention assessment to track change over time, and participants should also be asked to what extent they attribute their subsequent successes to having participated in a particular program.

Indicators of success could include:

### **For individual participants in leadership programs:**

- Establishing long-term mentoring relationships.
- Establishing deep and effective professional, community, and political networks.
- Maintaining a sense of self-efficacy in relation to politics and policy change.
- Having effective debating skills.
- Being visible in committee, advisory and consultation roles.
- Moving into leadership or other politically influential positions.
- Participating in formal political activities.
- Muslim politicians being confident to identify as Muslims and engage the Muslim community.

### **In Muslim communities:**

- Reduced informal voting in top twenty Muslim local government areas.
- Increasingly positive discourse in Muslim communities about voting and political participation.
- Increased perception that political participation can have an impact on policy.
- Muslims active in local, state and federal politics.
- Muslims in influential public service roles.
- Political mobilisation leading up to state and federal elections.
- Politically-engaged Muslims represent diverse ages, genders, ethnicities and locations.

### **In Muslim organisations:**

- Organisation leaders come from diverse ages, genders, ethnicities and locations.
- Connections between Muslim organisations.
- Connections with multicultural and mainstream organisations and forums.

- Activities designed to increase Muslims' political participation.
- Cooperation on successful activities, rather than 'reinventing the wheel'.
- Diverse Muslim and minority voices in consultation and policy development.
- Being represented in policy development and consultation.

**In multicultural and mainstream organisations, including government:**

- Programs being deliberately inclusive of minorities, including Muslims.
- Growing participation by Muslims in multicultural and mainstream forums and organisations.
- Activities designed to increase the political participation of ethnic minorities.
- Muslims visibly involved in political parties.
- Increasing numbers of Muslims preselected to run for local, state or federal seats, including winnable seats.
- Strong internal leaders advocating minority participation.
- Activities that increase political participation by minorities being funded sustainably.
- Increasing numbers of individuals reached through such activities.
- Feedback available to relevant organisations on their impact on policy consultations.

**In the media and wider society:**

- Diversity of Muslim voices and opinions represented in mainstream media.
- Fair coverage of minorities in, or running for, political office.
- Improving mainstream perceptions of minority politicians.
- Muslim politicians confident in identifying as Muslims.
- More Muslims elected to political office.

**EVALUATING INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVES**

In addition to a global evaluation of the impact of the overall strategy mix, individual initiatives require specifically tailored evaluations. Each initiative recommended has a particular focus, and will have different measures of success, impact and diffusion specific to them. The report authors felt it best to wait and see what components the final intervention strategy would include, rather than designing detailed evaluations for hypothetical programs at this stage.

**ONGOING MONITORING AND REFINEMENT**

The strategies recommended will have short, medium and long term impacts and their measures will differ accordingly. A longitudinal approach is recommended. Individual elements/programs in the strategy need to be evaluated separately, and these evaluations may form the basis of ongoing refinement and development, which will in turn feed into the refinement of the overall strategy.

Further, the above indicators will need to be refined and defined in terms of short, medium and long term impacts. Until component elements of the overall strategy are settled upon, it is not possible at this stage to provide this level of temporal detail in the indicator framework.

## APPENDIX ONE: AUDIT OF INITIATIVES

---

The following listing represents the results of an audit undertaken into programs, projects and initiatives that aim to enhance the political participation of Muslims. Programs with this specific aim were rare to non-existent in Australia, thus, we expanded the scope of the audit to include broader mentoring and leadership programs.

In addition to those outlined in more detail below, there were a number of other programs for which we could not source further information. These appear in a table at the end of this document (to be added).

Not included here are more general campaigns such as voter education campaigns run by the Australian Electoral Commission which target culturally and linguistically diverse (culturally and linguistically diverse) electorates, many of which, as is discussed in chapter two, are also electorates with the largest numbers of Muslim residents.

While neither of the major political parties had programs to specifically engage Muslim, or even diverse political participants, the Greens have held engagement forums for Muslim communities in the past.

### INITIATIVE TITLE: SAWT NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF MUSLIM WOMEN VOICES OF WOMEN

**Organised by:** Canberra Islamic Centre

**Contact Details:** Centre 221 Clive Steele Ave, Monash, ACT 2905; Web: <http://voices.org.au>

**Funded by:** Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security)

**Territory:** ACT

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2006-2008

**Number of Participants Involved:** 100+

**Target Group:** Muslim Women

**Project Description:** This was a major event that brought together Muslim women from around Australia to promote their positive participation, representation and well-being both in their own communities and within wider Australian society. Forums presented at the conference included women and Islam, media, health, education, safety, and leadership. The conference provided Muslim women from diverse backgrounds an opportunity to participate and to showcase their achievements to a wider audience. It also provided them an opportunity to meet other successful women, role models, as well a forum to have the voices of ordinary Muslim women heard. A two-day conference for Australian Muslim women was held to explore ways in which Muslim Women can be further empowered to participate in public life both within the Muslim community and in wider Australian society.

The conference included a mix of speakers, discussion forums, and workshops on a range of issues facing Muslim women. Speakers in the 2006 conference included Muslim academics like Shakira Hussein and Alia

Imtoul. Speakers in the 2008 conference included Islamic lawyer Jamila Hussein, lecturer Susan Carland , writer Randa Abdel Fattah and police officer Maha Sukkar.

**Successes and Challenges:** The conference succeeded in bringing positive attention to the role of Muslim women in Australian society and in generating wider public interest in the varied and diverse professional, cultural and social backgrounds of Muslim women.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** The conference provided participants with an opportunity to give feedback on their experiences and this was generally very positive.

## INITIATIVE TITLE: THE AUSTRALIAN MUSLIMS EDUCATION AND MENTORING PROJECT

**Organised by:** Al Amanah College, NSW

**Contact Details:** 55 Speed Street, Liverpool NSW 2170 Australia; Email: [alamanah@optushome.com.au](mailto:alamanah@optushome.com.au)

**Funded by:** Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security)

**State:** NSW

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2005-2006

**Number of Participants Involved:** N/A

**Target Group:** Muslim community

**Project Description:** This project was aimed at building Muslim community capacity to respond to extremism issues through leadership development. Education and communication strategies were designed to address misunderstandings about Islam and to better inform both Muslim and non-Muslim communities that Islam is against extremism. The project also aimed to assist the Muslim community to construct an 'Australian Muslim identity'.

**Successes and Challenges:** N/A

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** N/A

## INITIATIVE TITLE: 'DID YOU KNOW?' THE ROLE, POSITION AND RIGHTS OF AUSTRALIAN MUSLIM WOMEN' PROJECT

**Organised by:** Muslim Women's National Network of Australia

**Contact Details:** PO Box 213 Granville NSW 2142; Email: info@mwanna.org.au

**Funded by:** Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social cohesion, Harmony and Security)

**State:** NSW

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2007-2008

**Number of Participants Involved:** N/A

**Target Group:** Non-Muslim Australians and Muslim men and women

**Project Description:** This project was designed to address the misinterpretation and misapplication of Islam which affects the role, position and rights of Australian Muslim women. The project recognised the responsibility women have in the family structure and in the transfer of beliefs and practices to youth.

This project funded the printing and national distribution, as well as on-line publication, of the "Did You Know" book. This book aims to address the misinterpretation and misapplication of Islam as it affects the role, position and rights of Muslim Australian women. The book is for wide distribution across Australia through schools, universities, public libraries, migrant resource centres, government departments and federal, state and local politicians.

**Successes and Challenges:** The availability of this material as a downloadable PDF on the Muslim Women's National Network website has ensured both wide distribution and ease of access. However, access to hardcopy of the book is restricted outside Islamic organisations. Challenges include changing misconceptions both amongst Muslims who have misunderstood certain cultural and ethnic practices as belonging to Islam and amongst non-Muslims

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** N/A

## INITIATIVE TITLE: ACROSS MY BRIDGE

**Organised by:** Beyond Empathy Ltd

**Contact Details:** Email: admin@beyondempathy.org.au

**Funded by:** Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security)

**State:** NSW

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2007-2008

**Number of Participants Involved:** 100+

**Target Group:** Young Muslim Australians and other young people from culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous backgrounds

**Project Description:** Across My Bridge was an arts intervention project aimed at building and strengthening relationships between young people from Muslim backgrounds, support agencies and the wider community, principally in the Auburn local government area. The range of experiences and opportunities proposed were designed self esteem, build relationships with wider community and act as catalysts for their positive re engagement in their community. The project was conceived of by Saeed Khan.

The Beyond Empathy project focused on:

- Engaging new ways for support workers to connect with and engage young people who are outside the standard support agency network and can't be reached by more mainstream means
- Changing how young people see themselves and their future; helps them develop relationships; and build self confidence
- Developing forums for young people to develop vocational skills.
- Connects young people with relevant support services so they are able to participate in society and realise vocational and life goals.

**Across My Bridge** was an innovative and responsive project that was designed to provide young people from the Muslim community with a 'stepping stone into the mainstream'. Participants were introduced to alternative approaches that encouraged them to recognise their unique place in Australian society.

**Successes and Challenges:** **Across My Bridge** provided opportunities for a new generation of young people from the Muslim community, their families, local emerging artists, community support workers and individuals who may be recognised as leaders in their communities by building bridges between people of different faiths and cultures. One participant went on to run his own hip hop sessions with other young people. Another at risk young person engaged in the film making process and found employment after completing Year 10.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** Young people who completed the evaluations reported highly positive changes in their day to day interactions with teachers and other people in authority as a result of the support process they received throughout the program.



## **INITIATIVE TITLE: ART-SLAM21**

**Organised by:** Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations Include

**Contact Details:** PO BOX 1013, Strawberry Hills, NSW; Email: info@fair.org.au

**Funded by:** Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security)

**State:** NSW

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2007-2008

**Number of Participants Involved:** N/A

**Target Group:** Marginalised Muslim Australian youth aged 15-26

**Project Description:** The young people were equipped with skills in leadership, assertiveness, communication and decision making to build a stronger sense of identity and self-esteem, enabling them to cope with negative stereotypes and discrimination, and to become positive role models involved in the activities of the wider communities.

The project included: Stand up Islam (comedy workshops); Cursive Connections (Arabic calligraphy classes), the Green Roomi (celebrating the poetry of Rumi through workshops), The Art of Leadership (mentors, rappers, and performers come together with selected youth in two day leadership and mentoring workshops), Faith Ways (eight inter-temple/church/mosque/art gallery walks); and Art-Slam (a major art event showcasing Muslim youth art to be held at the Museum for Contemporary Art).

**Successes and Challenges:** The project provided young Muslims with effective opportunities for expression in the public arena.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** N/A

## INITIATIVE TITLE: WOMEN SPEAKING TO WOMEN

**Organised by:** Al Zahra Muslim Women's Association Inc

**Contact Details:** 9/11 Wollongong Rd Arncliffe NSW 2205

**Funded by:** Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security)

**State:** NSW

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2008

**Number of Participants Involved:** 15

**Target Group:** Muslim women

**Project Description:** This project trained Muslim women as public speakers and provided volunteering and employment pathways to increase the opportunities for them to become involved in community activities. Women were given opportunities to work with the Smith Family VIEW clubs as an opportunity to increase the awareness of the issues faced by Muslim women on a daily basis among the wider mainstream community, especially women who have had no contact with Muslim women in the Sydney region. The project will establish a partnership with the National Breast Cancer Foundation in order to provide speaker training and to assist in establishing a speakers' bureau. It is expected the project will provide volunteering and employment pathways and increase the opportunities for Muslim women to become involved in community activities.

**Successes and Challenges:** The project was enabling because it provided non-Muslim women to meet Muslim women and for Muslim women to be in capacity building roles.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** N/A

## INITIATIVE TITLE: HELPING HAND – YOUTH VOLUNTEERING PROJECT

**Organised by:** Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations Include

**Contact Details:** PO BOX 1013, Strawberry Hills, NSW; Email: info@fair.org.au

**Funded by:** Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security)

**State:** NSW

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2008-2009

**Number of Participants Involved:** 10

**Target Group:** Young Muslims

**Project Description:** This project was designed to encourage active participation in mainstream social and community based activities to lessen feelings of isolation and marginalisation. The project promoted volunteering among Muslim youth and included a National Service Providers Symposium. The one day symposium introduced volunteers and organisations to young Muslims, raised awareness of the functions of the organisations and the range of volunteering activities available. The symposium was preceded by presentations in five high schools to raise awareness of the importance of volunteering among Muslim and other youth. Four volunteering field trips were organised for selected young people from the schools to visit a service provider or community organisation and experience the work they undertake.

**Successes and Challenges:** A mentoring program with the Centre for Volunteering enabled young Muslims to be placed with mainstream organisations as volunteers. The success of the program was also represented in the production of a newsletter.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** N/A

## INITIATIVE TITLE: FORUM TO DEVELOP AN ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

**Organised by:** Minaret College

**Contact Details:** 1 Birch Street, Springvale, Victoria, 3171; Email: admin@minaret.vic.edu.au

**Funded by:** Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security)

**State:** VIC

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2005-2006

**Number of Participants Involved:** N/A

**Target Group:** N/A

**Project Description:** This forum brought together key stakeholders to discuss a tertiary program in Islamic Leadership. The aim is for the Islamic Leadership Program to produce knowledgeable and viable leaders from within Australian Muslim communities who could relate Islam to the Australian context.

**Successes and Challenges:** N/A

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** N/A

## INITIATIVE TITLE: MY DRESS, MY IMAGE, MY CHOICE

**Organised by:** Eve and Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV)

**Contact Details:** 161 Victoria Parade, Collingwood, Vic 3066; Email: saara@eveconsulting.com.au

**Funded by:** Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security)

**State:** VIC

**Time Period of the Initiative:** since 2001

**Number of Participants Involved:** 200+

**Target Group:** Non-Muslim Women

**Project Description:** “My dress, My image, My choice” is a women only community education event, with the intention of bringing Muslim and non Muslim women together to increase harmony and understanding about Muslim women and Islam in general in today’s political climate.

This interfaith community event was designed to bring together Muslim and non-Muslim women in a relaxed environment and initiate person-to-person contacts and friendships between women of different faiths and cultures and break down stereotypes of Muslims. The project was aimed at building capacity within local communities to conduct similar events and build interfaith bridges.

The project was supported and funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship for two years. Through this support the show was able to travel outside Victoria to various cities around Australia such as Brisbane, Sydney, Adelaide and Tasmania.

**Successes and Challenges:** “My dress, my image, My choice” has had overwhelming success both within Melbourne and across country Victoria. Performances have been held in Doncaster, Richmond , Box Hill, Brunswick , Springvale, Rowville, Mornington, Hawthorn and many more. Regional Victoria has shown particular interest in this program and has been invited to attend places such as Shepparton, Colac and Cobram, with some regions being invited a second time. The program has been conducted at girl's only schools as part of the cultural and religious studies syllabus. Finding adequate funding at the end of the government sponsorship period has been one of the challenges.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** Surveys conducted showed 98% positive response from participants at the events.

## INITIATIVE TITLE: YOUNG AUSTRALIAN MUSLIM OF THE YEAR PROJECT AND AWARD (YAMY)

**Organised by:** Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV)

**Contact Details:** Islamic Council of Victoria, 66 Jeffcott St, West Melbourne; Email: admin@icv.org.au

**Funded by:** Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security)

**State:** VIC

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2005-present

**Number of Participants Involved:** 800+

**Target Group:** Young Muslim between 14-19 years of age

**Project Description:** The Young Australian Muslim of the Year Project and Award aims to recognise the efforts of young people in contributing to the Australian community. Young Australian Muslim of the Year project supports the development of positive role models for Muslim Youth and recognises and celebrates existing role models. This project highlights the importance of contributing to the Australian community through personal achievement and community service.

The award is unique in that it places the emphasis on the individual's ability to contribute their skills, talent and time to the community, as opposed to recognising the individual for their skill or talent only. The YAMY award was initiated in 2005 by Muslim Community Cooperative Australia (MCCA) to facilitate the development of community mindedness in young Australian Muslims and to provide an opportunity to recognise the philanthropic and altruistic efforts of many young Muslims. During this time, 38 young Australian Muslims were recognised for Outstanding Community Service Achievements through the YAMY awards.

**Successes and Challenges:** Conferences organised during the project were used to motivate young people to align their strengths with community services related activities. The YAMY award also helps in bringing about a positive change about the perception of Muslim youth as an integral part of the wider Australian society.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** N/A

## INITIATIVE TITLE: SELF-ESTEEM, IDENTITY, LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY (SILC) – FOR WOMEN WORKSHOPS

**Organised by:** Islamic Women’s Welfare Council of Victoria

**Contact Details:** 169 Fitzroy Street, FITZROY 3065; Email: [iwwcv@vicnet.net.au](mailto:iwwcv@vicnet.net.au)

**Funded by:** Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security)

**State:** VIC

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2006-2008

**Number of Participants Involved:** Around 150 participants for each workshop

**Target Group:** Muslim women living in Shepparton, Cobram, Coburg, Broadmeadows, Brunswick, Glenroy, Carlton, Fitzroy, Newport and Dandenong.

**Project Description:** This project was designed to increase participation by Muslim women in their own communities and the broader Australian community through workshops which provide information and training in leadership, study skills, parenting and family issues. SILC provided opportunities for Muslim women to develop their self-confidence and sense of well-being as they enhance their strengths and leadership skills. On completing one or more of the workshops, participants will have the capacity to support other women, both formally and informally or serve as resource persons, mentors or leaders to the community if they choose to do so. Women may also access the SILC workshops solely to enhance their awareness of issues that are important to them.

Women are able to choose from any or all of the following streams- General Leadership, Leadership in Education & Skills, Leadership in Parenting, Leadership against Domestic Violence. Each module will provide Muslim women key frameworks that support them in recognising their rights and role as community members in the context of Australia. These frameworks include human rights, Islamic writings, citizenship rights and gender justice. IWWCV is a community welfare organisation established and managed by Muslim women for Muslim women. Their belief is that any meaningful change in the status of Muslim women is to be achieved through the improved situation of Muslim women individually and collectively. To this end, the Council developed the SILC initiative which lies at the heart of IWWCV’s commitment to increase women’s participation and voice in their community.

**Successes and Challenges:** The workshops have helped Muslim women in their participation in wider Australian society and their interactions with non-Muslims. Enhanced awareness of the Australian context has been a great success of the project.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** Feedback on the workshops was overwhelmingly positive.

## INITIATIVE TITLE: LEADERSHIP AUSTRALIA – A NEW GENERATION

**Organised by:** Australian Multicultural Foundation

**Contact Details:** Level 1, 185 Faraday Street, Carlton VIC 3053; Email: info@amf.net.au

**Funded by:** Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security) and Victorian Multicultural Commission

**State:** VIC

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2008-2009

**Number of Participants Involved:** 45

**Target Group:** Young Muslim Australians

**Project Description:** This project was designed to deliver leadership and mentoring skills program to young Muslim Australians drawn from each state and territory in order to assist young Australian Muslims in developing and strengthening their ability to play an active role in the community. The program commenced with a three day intensive training program held in Melbourne before participants returned home to work on individual projects with the support of a local mentor.

‘Leadership Australia - A New Generation’ involved workshops on leadership styles, social inclusion, mentoring skills, public speaking, communication skills and conflict resolution, issues affecting Muslim youth like isolation, discrimination and stereotyping, working with the media, as well as creating opportunities for participation in community activities/events and engagement with the wider community. The training involved leaders and experts from various sectors including corporate, community, government and philanthropy.

Following the training program, the participants consulted with steering committee members to initiate and undertake a public presentation at one or more public forums. This involved speaking at a function, meeting or broader community forum about issues on Islam that will educate and engage participants to increase their understanding. These presentations could be to groups such as Rotary and Lions club s churches or schools.

**Successes and Challenges:** The program was a very successful example of how support and mentoring for young Muslims generated a wide variety of opportunities for social inclusion and engagement with the wider community. As well as work on community projects and media related events, some participants went on to be politically active.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** Responses from feedback was very positive and past participants highly recommend this program.



## INITIATIVE TITLE: BRIDGING THE GAP

**Organised by:** Australian Multicultural Foundation

**Contact Details:** Level 1, 185 Faraday Street, Carlton VIC 3053; Email: info@amf.net.au

**Funded by:** Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security)

**State:** VIC

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2008-2009

**Number of Participants Involved:** Approximately 50

**Target Group:** Muslim men from the Iraqi community in Shepparton, the Somalia community in Flemington and the Lebanese in Dandenong.

**Project Description:** The aim of this project was to re-establish the confidence between older Muslim men or community leaders and younger Muslim men from new and emerging communities, so that the younger men are empowered to become representatives on behalf of the community. The project addressed the breakdown of relationships and marginalisation of young people. The project aimed to reduce marginalisation by empowering young men and elders within their communities and the wider Australian community.

Working with facilitators and coordinators from the three communities was essential to the success of the project. Coordinators employed from within the communities were able to access the community and identify youths and elders who would benefit from and contribute to the program. Furthermore, when the focus groups were held, having facilitators they, respected, who spoke their language, and who understood their culture and faith, meant that participants were more comfortable opening up and talking about the issues they face in their families, as youths, as fathers, and as elders in Australia.

**Successes and Challenges:** The issue of disconnectedness between older and younger Muslim generations is a real issue that has been identified through NAP community consultations. The project promoted the NAP objectives by encouraging the emergence of young Muslim men as leaders to be respected / accepted by their community and for the young leaders to become actively involved as leaders within their own communities. Developing the confidence of the younger generation, has given them increased capacity to become actively involved in the broader community.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** Feedback received indicates that this was a successful project that brought together diverse parts of the Muslim community and empowered young men from those communities to participate in the wider Australian community.

## INITIATIVE TITLE: MUSLIM WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

**Organised by:** Brimbank City Council

**Contact Details:** PO Box 70, Sunshine, VIC 3020; Email: info@brimbank.vic.gov.au

**Funded by:** Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security)

**State:** VIC

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 5 weeks in 2010

**Number of Participants Involved:** 13

**Target Group:** Muslim Women aged 17-35

**Project Description:** This was a joint initiative between the Brimbank City Council and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Women from eleven different countries met for three hours a week to discuss community issues and learn skills to run projects to benefit the local area. Topics covered included leadership, confidence building, political and legal structures and services; communication skills, public speaking and media and human rights and equal opportunity.

As part of the political program, the women met with the Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs James Merlino and Greens MP Colleen Hartland at Parliament House. The program included guest speakers from government departments, not for profit organisations, advisory groups and private industry.

**Successes and Challenges:** The program provided women from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to engage in activities that would benefit their communities and the community at large. The program also provided these women the opportunity to work on council community programs and take part in speaking presentations at school.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** N/A

## INITIATIVE TITLE: BACK OUT: JOURNEY TO THE HEART

**Organised by:** Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory

**Contact Details:** Shop 15 Malak Shopping Centre, Malak Place Malak; Email: admin@mcnt.org.au

**Funded by:** Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Part of the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security)

**Territory:** NT

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2007-2008

**Number of Participants Involved:** 16 each year

**Target Group:** Muslim and Indigenous disadvantaged young men aged between 13-18

**Project Description:** This project involved two youth leadership camps in the Northern Territory (one in Darwin and one in Alice Springs). The aim of the camp was to provide a team building experience and spiritual journey in the outback where the young men are put through a rigorous 4 day leadership program. Participants developed skills in leadership and mentoring, as well as gaining self-confidence and life skills through the five day camps.

**Successes and Challenges:** The camp was able to build leadership and self-confidence skills in the participants. One participant, who described the camp as 'a great success', said that he 'learned new leadership skills, way to get around the folks, trusting others, believing in yourself and working as team.'

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** Feedback was provided by the participants in the camps and the material is available suggests that the participants were satisfied and felt that the camp had accomplished its objectives.

**INITIATIVE TITLE: 'LEARN TO LOBBY YOUR LOCAL POLLY' WORKSHOP**

**Organised by:** Muslim Women's National Network and Auburn Mosque

**Contact Details:** Mrs Jamila Hussein PO Box 213 Granville NSW 2142; Email: info@mwanna.org.au

**Funded by:** Self-funded

**State:** NSW

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 31 July, 2004

**Number of Participants Involved:** 20

**Target Group:** Muslim citizens, newly arrived Muslim migrants

**Project Description:** A series of information sessions that including an introduction to the political system, information on local members, lobbying and letter-writing.

**Successes and Challenges:** There was a good turnout for the workshop. The interest in the Australian political system meant that the event was well attended within the area where it was advertised. Funding and resources meant that it was limited to one local government area.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** N/A

## INITIATIVE TITLE: DISCUSSION GROUP FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

**Organised by:** Australian Arabic Community Welfare Centre (Bahnin Al-Minya)

**Contact Details:** 98 Auburn Road, Auburn 2144; PO Box 877, Auburn 2144; Email: bhanin@bigpond.net.au

**Funded by:** Australian Arabic Community Welfare Centre (Bahnin Al-minya)

State: NSW

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2007-2010

**Number of Participants Involved:** 20

**Target Group:** Senior citizens of Arabic speaking backgrounds

**Project Description:** These informal workshops for senior citizens of Arabic speaking backgrounds provided them with information and opportunities for discussion on a number of issues including government, assertiveness training and lobbying.

**Successes and Challenges:** Many of the participants had problems with English and benefited greatly by being able to talk openly about issues affecting them to others in Arabic.

**What evaluation** (if any) was conducted: N/A

## INITIATIVE TITLE: INFORMATION SESSIONS ON THE AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

**Organised by:** Auburn Council Chambers and Auburn Diversity Services

**Contact Details:** Civic Place, 1 Susan Street, Auburn NSW 2144; PO Box 118, Auburn 1835;  
Email: auburncouncil@auburn.nsw.gov.au

**Funded by:** Auburn Council

**State:** NSW

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2009

**Number of Participants Involved:** Unlimited

**Target Group:** People in the Auburn local government area; particularly from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

**Project Description:** Auburn Council has hosted a number of information sessions on local, state and federal politics in Australia with guest speakers.

**Successes and Challenges:** These sessions have been in demand and relatively well attended by local residents.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** N/A

## INITIATIVE TITLE: PERSONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

**Organised by:** Affinity Intercultural Foundation

**Contact Details:** PO Box 496, Auburn NSW 1835, Australia; Email: info@affinity.org.au

**Funded by:** Affinity Intercultural Foundation

**State:** NSW

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2009

**Number of Participants Involved:** 15 male and 15 female

**Target Group:** Young males and females between 18-25 years of age

**Project Description:** This course is designed to develop independence by educating participants in self evaluation, how to lead oneself, changing habits, finding a direction for life and how to leverage these in establishing and maintaining successful human relationships at home, in the workplace and society.

- The program has provided guidance and instruction for young people including information on:
- Meeting a prominent business leader from the corporate world
- Meeting a famous person to learn the road to success
- Taking part in a three staged course program including personal leadership
- Being involved in real life projects and experiences to develop practical skills.

**Successes and Challenges:** This program has assisted the young people who participated to develop their talent and realise their ambitions in becoming active in community work and the business sector.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** The organisation has conducted its own evaluation through participant feedback and this has been very positive.

## INITIATIVE TITLE: YOUTH SUPPORT NETWORK

**Organised by:** Auburn Community Development Network

**Contact Details:** PO Box 265 Auburn NSW 1835; Email: admin@acdn.org.au

**Funded by:** Auburn Youth Centre, Auburn Council and Auburn Diversity Services

**State:** NSW

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2009

**Number of Participants Involved:** Approximately 30

**Target Group:** Young people from the Auburn area aged between 12 and 25

**Project Description:** This initiative came out of a youth leadership camp in 2008. It is designed for young people to engage and advocate on the issues that affect them. As part of the network, participants have the opportunity to train as 'Youth Ambassadors' and represent their views to a number of local, government and community authorities.

**Successes and Challenges:** The co-ordination of this program through key service providers in the Auburn area has ensured its relevance and ease of access to young people in this area.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** N/A



## INITIATIVE TITLE: ETHNIC YOUTH COUNCIL

**Organised by:** Spectrum Multicultural Services

**Contact Details:** 251 High Street, Preston Vic 3072

**Funded by:** Office for Youth, State Government

**State:** VIC

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2007-2009

**Number of Participants Involved:** 20

**Target Group:** Young people aged 15 to 25 years

**Project Description:** The Ethnic Youth Council was a group facilitated by Spectrum consisting of young people aged 15 to 25 years who were passionate about becoming leaders in their communities and representing their peers in addressing issues faced by young Australians, particularly those from migrant and refugee backgrounds

**Successes and Challenges:** To date, the achievements of the program include:

- Victoria's Multicultural Awards for Excellence 2009  
Participation in the Rotary Youth Leadership Award (RYLA) seminar
- VMC Refugee Recognition Record 2006 - 4 members received the award
- "Go With Da FLOW" program, involving training provided by Metropolitan Ambulance Service, Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Victoria Police, Youthlaw and Spectrum
- "Freedom of Art" Expo
- Participation in YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament 2007
- Participation in Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme
- Continuing representation at various local, national and international conferences and forums on issues specific to culturally and linguistically diverse youth
- Girls' Indoor Soccer program for ages 12 to 25 - Fridays from 4pm at Merrilands Community Centre

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** N/A

## INITIATIVE TITLE: LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM FOR YOUNG MUSLIMS

**Organised by:** La Trobe University/Islamic Council of Victoria

**Contact Details:** Larry Marshall, Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University; Email: [dialogue@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:dialogue@latrobe.edu.au)

**Funded by:** Government of Victoria and the Commonwealth Government through the Regional Communities Outreach Program of DFAT

**State:** VIC

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2007-2010

**Number of Participants Involved:** 20 each year

**Target Group:** Young Muslim men and women between 18-30 years of age

**Project Description:** A course designed to empower young Muslim men and women and help them to reach their full potential as citizens and future leaders. Participants are trained to engage confidently and creatively with all levels of government, business, academia, the professional world, the media, and religious and community organisations.

Over three months the young leaders were exposed to a wide range of learning opportunities, each carefully integrated with the others. Participants were challenged intellectually, culturally and psychologically. A conscious attempt was made to develop their knowledge and other skills through lectures, workshops, debates, role play, interviews, assignments. To this was added an extensive program of meetings with leaders drawn from most facets of Australian society: business, media, religion, politics, law.

**Successes and Challenges:** The program enabled young men and women interested in community work, political involvement or other activities with a leadership capacity to engage effectively in the activities and areas they are working in.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** The program requests participant feedback on completion. Participant views on the course have been overwhelmingly positive.

## INITIATIVE TITLE: AUSTRALIAN MUSLIM VISION

**Organised by:** Islamic Council OF Victoria (ICV)

**Contact Details:** Post Office Box 622, Coburg 3058; Phone: 03 8300 8026

**Funded by:** Self-funded

**State:** VIC

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2010

**Number of Participants Involved:** Unlimited

**Target Group:** Muslim Australians

**Project Description:** The aim of this program is to train Muslims to contribute to developing a just, harmonious and multicultural society by engaging in environmental, social, spiritual and political concerns. There are five main focus areas: (1) relationships and networks with politicians, community organisations and local government (2) participation in community needs and issues, (3) establishing a positive leadership that can interact with all levels of the community, (4) develop a larger community consciousness through education, and (5) engage in the wider Australian community.

**Successes and Challenges:** This program will be run for the first time this year.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** N/A

## INITIATIVE TITLE: BELIEVE, ACHIEVE & INSPIRE'

**Organised by:** Federation of Australian Muslim Youth and Victoria University. Sponsored by Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, Human Appeal International, World Assembly of Muslim Youth, Australian Islamic Mission

**Contact Details:** Craig Dent, Federation of Australian Muslim Youth,

PO Box 451 Newport VIC 3015; Email: [contact@believe-achieve-inspire.org](mailto:contact@believe-achieve-inspire.org)

**Funded by:** Fund raising and sponsorship

**State:** VIC

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2009- 2010

**Number of Participants Involved:** 50

**Target Group:** Young Muslim Males and Females

**Project Description:** This program was designed in collaboration with Victoria University to provide comprehensive leadership development course for future community leaders. It is a multi-streamed, tertiary accredited professional and Islamic based leadership development.

**Successes and Challenges:** The broad Islamic and secular structure of the course has been highly popular with participants. The focus on civic participation and citizenship has also been noted by participants as having expanded their ability to take on political questions.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** Feedback from course participants has been very positive.

## INITIATIVE TITLE: YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND MENTORING PROGRAM

**Organised by:** Youth Fusion (division of Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations)

**Contact Details:** PO BOX 1013, Strawberry Hills, NSW; Email: info@fair.org.au

**Funded by:** Self-funded

**State:** NSW

**Time Period of Initiative:** 2006

**Number of participants involved:** Approximately 100 at each event

**Target Group:** Young Muslim male and female

**Project Description:** Youth Leadership and Mentoring Program (under the guidance of internationally esteemed scholar Sidi Naeem Abdul Wali (from the USA) is a series of short certificate courses on Islam including In the Footsteps of our prophet, History of the Hijab, Arabic morphology, Media for Muslims, Resolving conflicts the fun way, Muslim awareness about Drugs and Alcohol, An overview of Islamic history, Introduction to Islam and more. Islamic Youth camps and weekend Deen Intensives/retreats are also conducted. The aim is to preserve the civil liberties and protect religious and social rights of Muslims, reduce religious bigotry and ignorance about Islam, simultaneously promoting involvement and active participation of Muslims within the broader spectrum of Australian society. The Youth Leadership and Mentoring program is also designed to empower young Muslims, to provide them with the skills and knowledge to integrate into mainstream society, and leadership capabilities which will eventually see them working effectively with other Australians in all fields. Youthfusion is about self-reassertion and free expression self-identity. It is about self-confidence and comfort in knowing that youths are valued members of society. It is about securing a safe and stable future for youths and ensuring the inculcation of mutual respect in the community regardless of faith or ethnicity. It has a FITRA centre which is open to youth and adults alike. It also has an internet cafe, Islamic library, games area, all within 3 minutes walk from Auburn station.

**Successes and Challenges:** People who have gone through the program developed a sense of direction, as well as began to understand the qualities of being an empowered Muslim in Australia. Programs such as these have a strong potential to bring about positive change in the Muslim community. Challenges include breaking the mould of people's perception of Islam and making them understand the forward looking and empowering aspects of the religion.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** Positive feedback from participation; via surveys, direct feedback and by email.

## INITIATIVE TITLE: ISLAM AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION PROJECT

**Organised by:** School Development Support Agency (SDSA)

**Contact Details:** Maurice Irfan Coles 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Alliance House, 6 Bishop Street, Leicester LE1 6AF; Phone: +44 116 299 5939

Email: [contact@theiceproject.com](mailto:contact@theiceproject.com); Web: <http://www.theiceproject.sdsa.net>

**Funded by:** Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Communities and Local Government (Part of the Prevent Strategy)

**Country:** United Kingdom

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2008-2009

**Number of Participants Involved:** Unlimited

**Target Group:** Muslims of school age

**Project Description:** The project team has taken the national citizenship program of study that UK schools use and added the Islamic guidance. Our approach is essentially to teach citizenship values through the Islamic perspective. Our overarching conclusion is clear: citizenship values and Islamic values are broadly compatible. Indeed all participants agreed that to be a good Muslim is to be a good citizen. An evaluation of the first phase of the project was carried out by the Institute of Community Cohesion.

The School Development Support Agency is a not-for-profit company that set up partnerships and projects that improve outcomes for children and young people.

**Successes and Challenges:** The 44 lessons (22 for Key Stage 2; 9-11 year olds and 22 for Key Stage 3; 11-14 year olds) in the curriculum come with guidance and with a series of questions and answers designed to provide a better understanding of citizenship values. The number of madrassah teachers, scholars and imams involved in this project has been enormous and a range of Sunni and Shi'a scholars and teachers offered guidance and critical insights in the development phase. The key to the success of the program has been the active involvement, guidance and material approval by a wide range of UK Muslim communities. Every lesson, every Quranic quote, every hadith used has been discussed, piloted and finally approved by a range of Britain's finest scholars. Ease of access to course and support materials has been ensured through the provision of a separate website for the course.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** Some evaluation material is available about the development phase of the project.

## INITIATIVE TITLE: ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP PROGRAM OF STUDY (ACP)

**Organised by:** Nasiha Education Foundation

**Contact Details:** Web: <http://www.nasiha.co.uk>

**Funded by:** Nasiha Education Foundation

**Country:** United Kingdom

**Time Period of the Initiative:** Online, Unlimited

**Number of Participants Involved:** Unlimited

**Target Group:** All Muslims and Non-Muslims

**Project Description:** Active Citizenship Program of Study (ACP) has been developed by Nasiha through a joint effort of many Imams and teachers. Islamic traditions related to values of citizenship were researched and analysed. The resources were then developed and a community consultation process resulted in amendments and further enrichment. Nasiha ACP lessons are now often referred to as Islamic citizenship in the curriculum.

Active Citizenship teaching materials are aimed at improving life skills of young people and to give them a positive outlook on the importance of diversity, cohesion and a sense of common purpose. Lesson titles span from celebrated Islamic concepts and QCA citizenship subjects. The natural theme for the Nasiha ACP is to present an enriched Islamic perspective on citizenship values that are sourced from authentic Islamic traditions. The design of NCP lesson's approach best conforms to the already prevailing culture of teaching pedagogy in Islamic faith centres where beginning a lesson or a discourse with a verse of the Quran, followed by Prophetic traditions is the norm.

The modules of the online program include Diversity, Tolerance and Humanity, Good Muslim Good Citizen and Community Work and Elections.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** It has not been possible to obtain information on the extent of the evaluation carried out. However, responses to the program have been very positive. Mick Walker, Head of Citizenship and RE, said that 'Nasiha lessons help teachers in mainstream schools to tackle difficult and sensitive subjects. They also provide a positive impression of how Islam can teach values of citizenship in Madrassas which are similar to what is being taught in school.' A student of the course, Usaid Zeb, student, 'The best part of Nasiha Citizenship lessons are that they encourage you to debate in the lesson. The Quranic verses and hadith help us to understand that we should respect all communities ...'

INITIATIVE TITLE: YOUTH LEADERS

**Organised by:** Nasiha Education Foundation

**Contact Details:** Web: <http://www.nasiha.co.uk>

**Funded by:** Nasiha Education Foundation

**Country:** United Kingdom

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2009-2010

**Number of Participants Involved:** Unlimited

**Target Group:** Young Muslims over 16 years of age

**Project Description:** Nasiha encourages young people who possess skills, education and maturity to help students in their local mosque and madrassa. Many post-16 students and graduates have been using Nasiha resources in their local mosques and madrassas. They have managed to deliver stimulating and interactive lessons to students. Discussions about faith, identity and citizenship have been vibrant and this kind of input and interaction can help many young Muslims to have access to positive role models so they can achieve a successful balance between celebrating their faith and living and thriving in Modern Britain.

**Successes and Challenges:** Participants have benefited from the resource materials that have been made available and which they access easily. Law student Hamza Khan said that the material provided him with Islamic knowledge and teaching from qualified sources. He said, 'In today's times this is important because you don't fall into the trap of those who want to misinterpret your faith. You can have really good discussions in each lesson. I have to applaud Nasiha on their effort on guidance notes, they were a joy to read and gave you confidence when delivering a lesson.'

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** It has not been possible to obtain information on the extent of the evaluation carried out. However, responses to the program are positive. Student Iram Ashfaq said, 'during my sessions I thought it was important to focus on the Islamic teachings first and then bring out the citizenship values – I think this way round was helpful as the students did not feel the subjects were foreign to a mosque or madrassa environment.'



## INITIATIVE TITLE: YOUNG MUSLIMS LEADERSHIP NETWORK

**Organised by:** Citizenship Foundation

Contact Details: Website: [www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk](http://www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk)

**Funded by:** Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Communities and Local Government (Part of the Prevent Strategy)

**Country:** United Kingdom

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2009-2010

**Number of Participants Involved:** Unlimited

**Target Group:** Young Muslims between 16 and 21

**Project Description:** The YMLN is administered by the Citizenship Foundation but works in collaboration with consultants from; Muslim Youth Helpline, Three Faiths Forum, British Muslims for a Secular Democracy and Young Muslims Advisory Group.

Young people come together to discuss and explore social issues affecting them and their communities. During the project the young people investigate the causes of the social problems by talking to people in power or influence before producing media of their own in campaigns for change. The kinds of issues they address include; alienation, discrimination, Islamophobia and the lack of civic participation.

YMLN members meet regularly on a monthly basis, in two groups in London and one in Birmingham. YMLN has a three phase strategy incorporating elements of identification, research and production. Phase one, is allowing the young people to identify social policy issues of concern to them. This is an ongoing process and has brought a wide range of issues to the fore including, discrimination, alienation, Islam's portrayal in the media, Islamophobia, political participation, education and so on. In phase two, group members will attempt to investigate some of the causes behind the issues while simultaneously exploring ways to improve the situation. This process will be enhanced by allowing young people to discuss the issues raised in phase one with people in power and influence such as politicians, journalists, academics, lawyers and the police.

In phase three the participants will produce media resources of their own based on information researched and collected in phases one and two. The resources they produce may include video documentaries, information booklets and workshop materials. These will be primarily targeted at their peers and the older members of the Muslim community however, they will be beneficial to teachers, youth workers and policy makers.

**Successes and Challenges:** After the joint meeting in October 2009, the three groups have been meeting to pursue social issues of concern to them. These include:

- Widespread misunderstanding of many aspects of Islam by fellow Muslims and by the mainstream society.
- Negative portrayal of Muslims and Islam in the media.
- Lack of civic participation by Muslims in areas like school and college councils.

Participants will then have an opportunity to communicate their findings and disseminate the information in a range of media, including social networking sites, and to carry out some peer-to-peer activities plus some training work with teachers and youth workers. In addition, they will contribute towards compiling resources

for teachers, youth workers and their Muslim peers to help build better knowledge of the issues themselves, greater mutual understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims in positions of power and responsibility and improve awareness of social and political processes in this country.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** N/A

## INITIATIVE TITLE: UNHEARD VOICES: POWER AND PARTICIPATION

**Organised by:** Joseph Rowntree Foundation

**Contact Details:** The Homestead, 40 Water End, York, YO30 6WP, UK

**Country:** United Kingdom

**Time Period of the Initiative:** 2009-2010

**Number of Participants Involved:** N/A

**Target Group:** Black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, disabled people's movements, older people

**Project Description:** The focus of this program was on empowering different groups of people who are excluded from society or have limited power, influence and opportunities to contribute their views on decisions that affect their lives, families and communities.

The program seeks to find the most effective ways for them to:

- have their views listened to and taken seriously;
- talk about their experiences;
- develop their capacity to participate, both individually and collectively.

The first project of this program was called 'Power Tools' and it was a joint work between the Carnegie UK Trust and Joseph Rowntree Foundation that looked at a range of approaches that groups might use, and testing how useable and viable these are.

**Successes and Challenges:** N/A

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** N/A

## INITIATIVE TITLE: YOUTH LEADERSHIP TRAINING

**Organised by:** Karimia Institute

**Contact Details:** Bobbersmill Community Centre 512 Berridge Road West, Bobbersmill Nottingham England NG7 5JU; Web: <http://www.karimia.fortnet.co.uk>

**Funded by:** Karimia Institute and participant fees at £500 per participant

**Country:** United Kingdom

**Time Period of the Initiative:** Six months in 2010

**Number of Participants Involved:** N/A

**Target Group:** Young Muslims between 16-30 years of age

**Project Description:** This leadership training program is for young Muslims who want to serve their communities. They are introduced to qualities of leadership, given skills needed for working with community organizations and organizing events and projects

Young people are encourage to gain lifelong skill & strategies for learning and achieving goals, develop relationships with respected and successful community workers enabling them to learn from their inspirations, value, commitment, success and mistakes. Participants are also provided training with practical experience to help the wider community and develop self awareness of their own potential and becoming responsible leaders

**Successes and Challenges:** N/A

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** N/A

## INITIATIVE TITLE: FEMALE ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP RESEARCH NETWORK

**Organised by:** St Antony's College, University of Oxford

**Contact Details:** Web <http://users.ox.ac.uk>

**Funded by:** N/A

**Country:** United Kingdom

**Time Period of the Initiative:** Unlimited

**Number of Participants Involved:** Unlimited

**Target Group:** N/A

**Project Description:** This research network is an outgrowth of a conference held in October 2009 at St Antony's College, University of Oxford on contemporary female Islamic authority, *Women, Leadership and Mosques: Changes in Contemporary Islamic Authority*. The conference focused on the growing number of women active teaching, preaching, interpreting scriptures, or leading prayer in mosques or madrassas around the world.

The network is open to scholars studying any aspects of female religious leadership in Islam, and therefore includes topics outside the conference's purview, for instance, the reinterpretation of Islamic scriptures by women who are primarily active outside of mosques and madrassas.

Network members study Islamic communities around the world and are active in a wide variety of disciplines, including Islamic Studies, Women's Studies, Development Studies, Anthropology, Sociology, Political Science, History and Area Studies. They are based at universities around the world, including in the United Kingdom, United States, Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and Asia.

**Successes and Challenges:** The large response to the call for papers for this conference made it clear that academic interest in this topic is high and increasing, and also that academics working on this topic are divided by an unusually large number of disciplinary boundaries. A virtual network with a mailing list is an ideal way to connect scholars interested in this topic.

**What evaluation (if any) was conducted:** N/A

## APPENDIX TWO: PROFILES OF SELECTED POLITICAL & ACADEMIC COMMENTATORS

---

### ABDULLAH SAEED

Prof. Abdullah Saeed was born in the Maldives and holds degrees from Australia and overseas. He has a BA in Arab/Islamic Studies from Saudi Arabia, MA in Applied Linguistics and PhD in Islamic Studies from the University of Melbourne, Australia. In 1993, he joined the then Department of Asian Languages and Anthropology at the University of Melbourne as a Lecturer, rising to Senior Lecturer in 1996 and Associate Professor in 2000. He was appointed Sultan of Oman Professor of Arab and Islamic Studies in 2003.

Prof. Saeed has taught Arabic and Islamic Studies at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Among the subjects he teaches are: Great Texts of Islam: Qur'an; Muslim Intellectuals and Modernity; Great Empires of Islamic Civilization; Islamic Banking and Finance; Qur'anic Hermeneutics; Methodologies of Hadith; Methods of Islamic Law; Religious Freedom in Asia; Islam and Human Rights; and Islam and Muslims in Australia.

He is involved in interfaith dialogue between Christians and Muslims, and between Jews and Muslims, and is a frequent and popular lecturer. He travels widely and has visited several times, for instance, North America, Europe, Middle East, South Asia and Southeast Asia. He has a wide range of professional and research relationships around the world.

#### WEBSITE

<http://www.abdullahsaeed.org/>

#### COMMENT

The Australian

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,20650767-601,00.html>

#### MAJOR PUBLICATIONS

Muslim Communities in Australia (UNSW Press 2001)

Others listed on his website.

## AMEER ALI

Dr Ameer Ali is currently a Lecturer in Economics at the Murdoch Business School. A Visiting Fellow at the School since 2004, Dr. Ali has previously been a Senior Lecturer in Economics at the Universities of Brunei Darussalam and Western Australia, and was formerly a Lecturer in Economics at Murdoch University (1980-86). He is a graduate of the University of Ceylon, the University of Western Australia, and the London School of Economics. A widely-published academic writer, Dr. Ali has a special interest in the economic and socio-economic development of Islamic societies, in contemporary relationships between Islam and politics, and in the Muslim diasporas in Australia and the West. He is the author of *From Penury to Plenty: Development of Oil Rich Brunei, 1906 to Present* (1996), and since 1999 has been an Associate editor of the *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*. Ameer Ali is a former President (2002-2006) of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils and Chairman of Prime Minister's Muslim Community Group, and is the current Vice-President of the Regional Islamic Dawa Council of Southeast Asia and the Pacific (RISEAP).

### WEBSITE

<http://www.mbs.murdoch.edu.au/dirs/9153.html>

### COMMENT

Interview on The Religion Report – ABC Radio – 11 October 2006

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/religionreport/stories/2006/1760378.htm>

## ALIA IMTOUAL

Dr Alia Imtoul is a Lecturer in the School of Education at Flinders University (Australia). She writes about religion and faith identities of Muslims in Australia, the intersections of race, gender and religion, and the institutionalisation of racism relating to religious minorities. She is the co-editor (with Basia Spalek) of *Religion, Spirituality and the Social Sciences* (2008, Policy Press) and the co-author (with Shakira Hussein) of 'Challenging the myth of the 'happy celibate' (forthcoming, *Contemporary Islam*). She is also the author of "De-Orientalising Methodologies: towards an articulation of a research agenda for working in/with Muslim communities", *Beyond the hijab debates: new conversations on gender, race and religion* (forthcoming 2009) Eds. Tanja Dreher and Christina Ho, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne.

### WEBSITES

<http://bioknowledge.flinders.edu.au/alia%20imtoul-bio.pdf>

<http://www.flinders.edu.au/eht/education/staff-list/alia-imtoul.cfm>

### COMMENT

Interview, Reflections and Insights: The Gender, Violence and Protection Workshops and Forum, in *Borderlands journal*, VOLUME 8 NUMBER 1, 2009

### MAJOR PUBLICATIONS

Religious Racism and the Media: Representations of Muslim Women in the Australian Print Media

<http://www.chloe.uwa.edu.au/outskirts/archive/volume13/imtoul>



## SHERENE HASSAN

Sherene Hassan is the vice-president of the Islamic Council of Victoria. To this date she has conducted over 500 information sessions on Islam to diverse audiences ranging from the Flying Fruit Fly Circus School to the Australian Federal Police. She is heavily involved in interfaith dialogue and is one of the media spokespeople for the Islamic Council of Victoria. In 2005 she was elected chairperson of the Jewish Christian Muslim Association Conference Committee.

In February 2007, she was the recipient of an award for excellence in community service; presented by FaCSIA (Department of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) and in December 2007, Sherene was selected by the Age newspaper as one of Melbourne's 100 Most Influential People.

Formerly a chemistry and physics teacher, Sherene is married with four children.

### COMMENT

'Islamophobia is a disease', Sherene Hassan, Herald Sun, 20 June 2007

## AZIZA ABDEL-HALIM

Aziza Abdel-Halim, AM, is the President of the Muslim Women's National Network of Australia (MWNNA), an academic, well-respected teacher and accomplished public speaker. Her contribution to the Australian community has not gone unrecognised. She is a very proud recipient of the Order of Australia Medal and in 2005 she was chosen to be a member of the Prime Minister's Muslim Community Reference Group. She is described by *The Australian* as "Australia's most prominent female Muslim leader" (21/3/2007).

The Muslim Women's National Network of Australia (MWNNA) began as a community centre where Aziza and her husband taught Arabic and English lessons. These days the MWNNA still sponsors language classes, however it also provides support and sisterhood between Australian Muslim women of all ethnic backgrounds. This has become increasingly important to women who feel demonized in the current political climate. The network has taken on the important role of representing the views of Muslim women to the media, federal, state and local government. Aziza and other members of the network also regularly organise cross cultural and interfaith events to educate the wider community about Islamic issues and break down the barriers to social harmony.

### MAJOR PUBLICATIONS

*Did you know? : refuting rigid interpretations concerning the position of women in Islam and Muslim's interaction with non-Muslims* – Downloadable from: <http://www.mwnna.org.au/didyouknow.pdf>  
Excellent source on other prominent men and women thinkers and activists (see end of book)

Article on Federation of Ethnic Community Councils of Australia website  
[http://www.fecca.org.au/Snapshot\\_200705\\_01.cfm](http://www.fecca.org.au/Snapshot_200705_01.cfm)

## HANIFA DEEN

HANIFA DEEN is Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Muslim Minorities at Monash University. An award-winning Australian author of Pakistani-Muslim ancestry who writes narrative nonfiction and lives in Melbourne, Deen has held a number of high-profile positions in a career spanning twenty-three years in human rights, ethnic affairs, and immigration, including: Hearing Commissioner with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission of Australia; Deputy Commissioner of Multicultural Affairs Western Australia; and a Director of Special Broadcasting Services (SBS) Corporation. She now works full-time as a writer, which she sees as “the perfect medium for a woman with an irreverent tongue, a maverick-Muslim perspective on life, and a passion to subvert stereotypes wherever they lurk”.

She has described how one of her grandfathers was a Kashmiri who jumped ship in Melbourne, while the other was a Punjabi hawker who came in the wake of the Afghan camel drivers, who helped to facilitate access to the Australian interior. Her non-fiction books have focused on issues concerning Muslims. Her first book, *Caravanserai*, portrayed the lives of Australian Muslims. Her second book, *Broken Bangles*, focused on Muslim women in South Asia (Pakistan and Bangladesh). *The Crescent and the Pen* described the journey of Taslima Nasreen, the author of the controversial novel *Lajja* ("Shame"), after she fled Bangladesh for Europe.

### COMMENT

The Age - A hatred of Islam will not aid reform

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/opinion/a-hatred-of-islam-will-not-aid-reform/2007/05/31/1180205422227.html>

ABC Radio National: The Ark - Travels Among Australian Muslims

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/relig/ark/stories/s949099.htm>

### MAJOR PUBLICATIONS

A Question of Boundaries: A Close Encounter with Victoria's Vilification Law – Centre for Muslim States and Societies UWA

[http://www.cmss.uwa.edu.au/fulbright\\_symposium/ms\\_hanifa\\_deen](http://www.cmss.uwa.edu.au/fulbright_symposium/ms_hanifa_deen)

## IRFAN YUSUF

Irfan Yusuf (born 1969 in Karachi, Pakistan) is a New South Wales-based lawyer with a practice focusing on workplace relations and commercial dispute resolution. He is also a regular media commentator on a variety of social, political, human rights, media and cultural issues. He has appeared on local and national radio and TV in Australia and New Zealand. His opinion pieces and book reviews have been published in over 15 national, metropolitan and regional newspapers in Australia, New Zealand and Brunei. He was winner of the 2007 Iremonger Award for Writing on Public Issues

He is associate editor of AltMuslim.com, and is also a regular contributor to Crikey.com.au, NewMatilda.com and Malaysiakini.com. He also is a regular speaker and has delivered seminars for organisations such as the Australian Homeland Security Research Centre and the Institute of Public Administration of Australia.

### MAJOR PUBLICATIONS

*Once Were Radicals: My Years As A Teenage Islamo-Fascist*, 2009. Allen & Unwin.

### COMMENT

Sydney Morning Herald

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/society-and-culture/muslimphobia-is-so-entrenched-that-its-gone-beyond-a-joke-20100429-twes.html>

ABC Online

<http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/stories/s2895960.htm>

Online Opinion Author

<http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/author.asp?id=3933>

New Matilda

<http://newmatilda.com/contributor/2952>

Unleashed

<http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/stories/s2071037.htm>

Webdiary

<http://webdiary.com.au/cms/?q=blog/267>

The Age Opinion Online

<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/by/irfan-yusuf>

AltIslam

[http://www.altmuslim.com/a/a/c\\_iyusuf](http://www.altmuslim.com/a/a/c_iyusuf)

Main Blog

<http://madhabirfy.blogspot.com/>

## MOHAMAD ABDALLA

Dr Mohamad Abdalla is the Founding Director of the Griffith Islamic Research Unit (GIRU), Brisbane, Australia; Director of the Queensland node of the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies, Australia's leading Islamic studies centre, a multi-million dollar centre funded by the Australian Federal Government; Senior Research Fellow at the Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance, Griffith University, one of the premier research centres in Australia; Associate Investigator with Australia's first Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence in Policing and Security; and Convenor and Senior Lecturer of subjects including: Islamic Law in a Changing World, Great Texts of Islam and Islam and The Making of Europe. Additionally, he was the Chairperson of the Queensland Government Muslim Community Reference Group , an advisory group to the Queensland State Government; Vice-president and spokesperson for the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC), Australia's leading Islamic religious organisation; and Acting Imam of the Kuraby mosque in Brisbane, Australia.

### WEBSITE

<http://www.griffith.edu.au/arts-languages-criminology/griffith-islamic-research-unit/staff/dr-mohamad-abdalla>

### MAJOR PUBLICATIONS

Rane, Halim, Ewart, Jacqui & Abdalla, Mohamad (eds.). Islam and the Australian News Media. (Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2010).

### COMMENT

ABC Radio National – The Religion Report 30 March 2005

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/relrpt/stories/s1339992.htm>

ABC Radio National – The Religion Report 28 March 2007

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/religionreport/stories/2007/1883247.htm>

## SAEED KHAN

Saeed Khan was born in Khanpur (NWFP) Pakistan on July 19 1966, and is the eldest son of a famous Union leader Abdul Bashir Khan , known for winning land rights for the people of Khanpur (NWFP) during the 1970s construction of Khanpur Dam. Saeed Khan holds a Masters in Management and an MBA (E-Business Management) from the University of Technology, Sydney and works in IT Management. He has lived in Sydney for over 20 years. He was a young General Secretary of the Pakistan Association of Australia from 1999-2001 and for many years campaigned for refugee rights and multiculturalism.

### COMMENT

<http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/author.asp?id=4444>

- 1- Pakistan- cultural terrorism and the rise of Taliban
- 2- Embracing a moderate Islam
- 3- Moderate Muslims locked out
- 4- A Real Test of Diversity

<http://www.chowk.com/writers/1651>

- 1- Aussie Values: Save us the embarrassment!
- 2- Australia's Muslim youth -- A Battle for their Hearts and Minds

## SHAKIRA HUSSEIN

Dr Shakira Hussein is undertaking a McKenzie postdoctoral fellowship on Muslim women, gendered violence and racialised political discourse. She completed her PhD at the Australian National University and is a regular media contributor on issues including gender, multiculturalism and Islam. Her research interests focus on the issues of gender, Islam, South Asia, and Muslims in Australia.

### COMMENT

#### Online Opinion

<http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/author.asp?id=4101>

#### New Matilda

<http://newmatilda.com/taxonomy/term/3827>

Conference Paper 2008 (audio) - "Veiling/Unveiling and Intergenerational Transitions Among Muslim Women in Australia"

<http://www.nceis.unimelb.edu.au/event/conference-08-shakira-hussein-veilingunveiling-and-intergenerational-transitions-among-muslim->

#### ABC TV

Should the Burka Be Banned? <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/bigideas/stories/2009/04/24/2552001.htm>

ANU Debate: Should we ban the burka?

[http://www.anu.edu.au/discoveranu/content/podcasts/should\\_we\\_ban\\_the\\_burka/](http://www.anu.edu.au/discoveranu/content/podcasts/should_we_ban_the_burka/)

## SUSAN CARLAND

Susan Carland is a lecturer in politics at Monash University. She was Australian Muslim of the Year in 2004. Her PhD thesis at Monash is entitled "How are Australian and American Muslim women redefining leadership roles within their Islamic traditions and communities?" Married to Waleed Aly, she was also a panellist on the Salam Café program which screened on Channel 31 community television, and in 2009 on SBS TV.

### MAJOR PUBLICATIONS

*No space for racism : young people's voices and recommendations*, by Susan Carland and Kavitha Chandra-Shekran. Footscray, Vic. : Western Independent Young People's Network, [in association with] Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria, DIMIA, Living in Harmony. 2003.

### COMMENT

#### ABC Q&A

<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/qanda/txt/s2521155.htm>

#### Andrew Bolt's response

[http://blogs.news.com.au/heraldsun/andrewbolt/index.php/heraldsun/comments/did\\_carland\\_come\\_clean\\_with\\_qa/](http://blogs.news.com.au/heraldsun/andrewbolt/index.php/heraldsun/comments/did_carland_come_clean_with_qa/)

#### The Age (Interview)

<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/04/04/1081017035193.html>

#### Sydney Morning Herald: 'Just listen and you will learn'

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/just-listen-and-you-will-learn/2007/08/24/1187462523685.html>

#### Brisbane Times 'Muslim feminists deserve to be heard'

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/opinion/society-and-culture/muslim-feminists-deserve-to-be-heard-20100127-mywf.html>



## WALEED ALY

Waleed Aly (born in Melbourne in 1978) is an Australian lawyer, journalist, academic and rock musician. In the past, he has been a member of the executive committee of the Islamic Council of Victoria and has also served as the Council's head of public affairs. He is a frequent commentator on Australian Muslim affairs. In 2008, he was selected to participate in the Australia 2020 Summit. His rise to prominence, however, has been as a young, articulate spokesperson for the Australian Muslim community, and is due to his considered commentary on human rights and multiculturalism within Australian society. His journalistic interests range more broadly. Soon after Aly completed his law degree he spent a year as a legal associate of one of Australia's most senior Family Court judges. Through this work he saw the devastating effects of violence against women. As a result he has written a number of articles on this issue. He writes on topics ranging from politics and religion, to community and sport. His writing is much respected and in 2005 he won a Walkely Award Commendation. He is also a commentator on radio and television current affairs programs. He speaks on issues concerning Australia's Muslim community and the relationship between Islam and western values. Aly is a sought-after public speaker. He was one of 40 Australians selected as a youth leadership delegate to the Future Summit in Melbourne in 2005. In August 2005, Aly was honoured by being asked to address the Australian Davos Connection's Leadership Retreat, where key issues facing Australia are considered. Aly spoke to an audience that included federal ministers, state premiers, chief executives from Australia's top 100 companies, as well as leading academics and community leaders. He is married to Susan Carland.

### WEBSITES

Monash University Politics Staff: <http://arts.monash.edu.au/politics/staff/waly.php>

Biography (from Aust Gov site): <http://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au/cce/default.asp?id=15569>

### MAJOR PUBLICATIONS

People Like Us, How Arrogance is dividing Islam and the West by Waleed Aly, 2007. Picador Australia

### COMMENT & MEDIA APPEARANCES

The Age 'The Future of Conservatism can be found in its past'

<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/politics/future-of-conservatism-can-be-found-in-its-past-20100312-q3z7.html>

The Monthly: <http://www.themonthly.com.au/user/215>

Q&A 1 Oct 2009

[http://www.abc.net.au/tv/qanda/txt/s2695716.htm?clip=rtmp://cp44823.edgefcs.net/ondemand/flash/tv/streams/qanda/qanda\\_2009\\_ep27.flv](http://www.abc.net.au/tv/qanda/txt/s2695716.htm?clip=rtmp://cp44823.edgefcs.net/ondemand/flash/tv/streams/qanda/qanda_2009_ep27.flv)

Islam vs Democracy: <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/fora/stories/2008/05/20/2250123.htm>

Online Opinion Author

<http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/author.asp?id=3617>

Enough Rope

<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/enoughrope/transcripts/s2331612.htm>

Sydney Morning Herald 'Just Listen and you will Learn'

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/just-listen-and-you-will-learn/2007/08/24/1187462523685.html?page=fullpage>

## TANVEER AHMED

Dr Tanveer Ahmed is a psychiatry registrar and writer. He is a former television journalist who currently writes a regular opinion column for the Sydney Morning Herald related to political and social affairs. He is also a visiting fellow for the Centre for Independent Studies. He often appears on radio and television, including ABC's 'Q and A' program, SBS's 'Insight', the 'Sunday' program and has been a regular expert on 'Sunrise'.

He is an appointee to the Advertising Standards Board, the advisory council to the Smith Family Board and is a previous national representative for junior doctors with the Australian Medical Association. In 2009, he was chosen as one of the most influential men under the age of 40 by Men's Style magazine and by a PM's committee in 2006 as one of a hundred future leaders of Australia.

He also has a lighter side and has previously performed comedy, making the finals of Australia's biggest amateur comedy competition: RAW. He once played the co-cost in the gameshow, 'National Bingo Night'. He has also appeared on the Brains Trust of the game show 'The Einstein Factor'.

Tanveer was born in Bangladesh and arrived in Australia aged five. He was raised in western Sydney and was educated in Sydney Grammar School and Sydney University, where he studied arts and medicine. He is married to a senior public servant and has a two year old daughter.

### COMMENT

Sydney Morning Herald opinion writer page:  
<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/by/tanveer-ahmed>

Full list of opinion pieces and media appearances on his website at:  
<http://www.tanveerahmed.com.au/?cat=1>

### The Australian

Islam must face its uncomfortable truths

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/opinion/tanveer-ahmed-islam-must-face-its-uncomfortable-truths/story-e6frg6zo-1111113871804>

Islam can modernise and remain relevant

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/opinion/tanveer-ahmed-islam-can-modernise-and-remain-relevant/story-e6frg6zo-1111112436219>

## APPENDIX THREE: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES (DE-IDENTIFIED)

| Code Name       | City      | Interview Type | Political Party (if any) | Organisation                               | Additional Details                     |
|-----------------|-----------|----------------|--------------------------|--|--|
| Participant #1  | Melbourne | Face-to-face   | N/A                      | Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre           |  |
| Participant #2  | Melbourne | Face-to-face   | Greens                   | Islamic Council of Victoria                | Ran for election but unsuccessful      |
| Participant #3  | Melbourne | Face-to-face   | N/A                      | Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria     |  |
| Participant #4  | Melbourne | Face-to-face   | N/A                      | Islamic Council of Victoria                |  |
| Participant #5  | Melbourne | Face-to-face   | Labor                    | Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre           | Emily's List<br>Has not run for a seat |
| Participant #6  | Melbourne | Face-to-face   | N/A                      | Victorian Arab Social Services             |  |
| Participant #7  | Melbourne | Face-to-face   | N/A                      | Monash University                          | Salam Café Panelist                    |
| Participant #8  | Melbourne | Face-to-face   | N/A                      | Monash University                          | Salam Café Panelist                    |
| Participant #9  | Melbourne | Face-to-face   | N/A                      | Monash University                          |  |
| Participant #10 | Sydney    | Face-to-face   | N/A                      | muslimvillage                              |  |
| Participant #11 | Sydney    | Face-to-face   | N/A                      | UTS  | Muslim Women's National Network        |
| Participant #12 | Sydney    | Face-to-face   | Greens                   |  | Ex-councillor (2004)                   |
| Participant #13 | Adelaide  | Telephone      | N/A                      | Flinders University                        |  |
| Participant #14 | Melbourne | Telephone      | N/A                      | Islamic Council of Victoria                |  |
| Participant #15 | Sydney    | Face-to-face   | N/A                      | Affinity Intercultural Foundation          |  |
| Participant #16 | Sydney    | Face-to-face   | N/A                      | Affinity Intercultural Foundation          |  |
| Participant #17 | Sydney    | Face-to-face   | N/A                      | Affinity Intercultural Foundation          |  |
| Participant #18 | Sydney    | Face-to-face   | N/A                      | Australian Arabic Community Welfare Centre |  |
| Participant #19 | Sydney    | Face-to-face   | N/A                      | Muslim Women's National Network            |  |
| Participant #20 | Sydney    | Face-to-face   | N/A                      | Muslim Women's National Network            |  |
| Participant #21 | Sydney    | Face-to-face   | Labor                    | Auburn Council                             | Mayor                                  |

|                 |                       |              |                  |   |  |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|---|--|
| Participant #22 | Sydney                | Face-to-face | N/A              | Bahnin Al-Minya   |  |
| Participant #23 | Brisbane              | Telephone    | N/A              | Federation of Muslim Students and Youth                                 |  |
| Participant #24 | Sydney                | Face-to-face | N/A              | Al-Zahra College  | Principal                                |
| Participant #25 | Sydney                | Face-to-face | Greens           | Auburn Council  | Councillor                               |
| Participant #26 | Sydney                | Telephone    | Labor            | Liverpool Council   | Councillor                               |
| Participant #27 | Sydney                | Face-to-face | Liberal          | Liverpool Council   | Councillor                               |
| Participant #28 | Canada                | Face-to-face | Canadian Liberal | Canadian Liberal Party  | Liberal candidate                        |
| Participant #29 | Canada                | Face-to-face | Canadian Liberal | Canadian Parliament   | Member of the Canadian House of Commons  |
| Participant #30 | Sam Alamaki<br>Sydney | Telephone    | Independent      | Student; LaTrobe Leadership Program participant                         | Ran for council elections in Hurstville. |
| Participant #31 | Melbourne             | Telephone    |                  | Australian Multicultural Foundation – Leadership Australia Co-ordinator |  |
| Participant #32 | Melbourne             | Telephone    |                  | AMF – Leadership Australia Participant                                  |  |
| Participant #33 | Melbourne             | Telephone    |                  | AMF – Leadership Australia Participant                                  |  |
| Participant #34 | Melbourne             | Telephone    |                  | Latrobe Leadership Program Co-ordinator                                 |  |
| Participant #35 | Melbourne             | Telephone    |                  | Latrobe Leadership Program participant                                  |  |
| Participant #36 | Melbourne             | Telephone    |                  | Latrobe Leadership Program participant                                  |  |
| Participant #37 | Melbourne             | Telephone    |                  | Latrobe Leadership Program participant                                  |  |
| Participant #38 | Melbourne             | Telephone    |                  | Latrobe Leadership Program participant                                  |  |
| Participant #39 | Melbourne             | Telephone    |                  | Federation of Muslim Students and Youth Leadership Program Co-ordinator |  |
| Focus Group 1   | Sydney                | FG           |                  | Campsie Community Consultation  |  |
| Focus Group 2   | Sydney                | FG           |                  | Campsie Community Consultation  |  |
| Focus Group 3   | Sydney                | FG           |                  | Arabic Welfare Organisation Auburn                                      | Run in Arabic                            |
| Focus Group 4   | Sydney                | FG           |                  | Settlement Services Organisation Auburn                                 | No participants.                         |

## APPENDIX FOUR: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

---

### MUSLIM ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

1. What party are you with, if any?
2. How long have you been in parliament (or on council)?
3. Do your colleagues (and party leadership) know that you are a Muslim Australian?
4. Would you say your colleagues are comfortable with your religious identification?
5. And your electorate?
6. Is your religion something you downplay?
7. Does your being a Muslim Australian help or hinder you in your elected role?
8. Would you say that you feel you are representing Muslim Australians in your role?
9. What inspired you to enter politics?
10. What kinds of things have you achieved in your role?
11. What kinds of things would you hope to achieve in the future in this role?
12. What barriers do you feel you might face in achieving these goals?
13. Could you tell us a bit about how you got to where you are? How did you work your way up to a point where you could stand for election?
14. Did you find obtaining pre-selection a challenge?
15. As a Muslim Australian elected representative, are there any special challenges you face?
16. What advice would you have for a young Muslim Australian interested in entering politics?
17. Do you have some ideas about what kinds of strategies or programs might increase the political participation of Muslim Australians?

## COMMUNITY LEADERS & INFLUENTIALS

1. Would you describe yourself as a 'community leader', or as an influential Muslim Australian?
2. Defining political participation as including both formal political involvement, as well as participation in public life as a community leader, journalist, opinion maker, organiser, lobbyist or activist, business leader, neighbourhood organiser or advisor etc: Who among the Muslim Australian communities would you name as influential in the political and public sphere?
3. As a Muslim of some influence could you tell us a little about your journey to this position?
4. What barriers or obstacles, if any, did you face along the way?
5. What kinds of things assisted your progress towards becoming an active political voice among Muslim Australians? (eg: particular individuals, situations, organisations etc)
6. What kinds of issues do you engage with? Which are most urgent to advance debate and action on in your mind?
7. What advice would you give to a young Australian Muslim hoping to make a difference in the political or public sphere?
8. Beyond formal political election, what would you say are some of the diverse social locations and forums through which Muslim Australians are able to advance their aims politically (eg: local council consultative committees, a journalist or opinion piece writer, national consultation group, community leader...)
9. Speaking more generally, what are some of the ways Australia's Muslim communities mobilise to gain access to political power and advance causes and issues of concern?
10. How successful are these strategies?
11. Do you have suggestions for government or non-government initiatives or programs that might enhance political participation (formal and informal) among Muslim Australians? (Particularly those that engage youth and women?)
12. Do you know of any such programs or initiatives present or past, in Australia or overseas?

## SMALL COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

1. As a small community organisation, do you feel your voice is heard amidst some of the larger or more prominent politically active Muslim- Australians?
2. Defining political participation as including both formal political involvement, as well as participation in public life as a community leader, journalist, opinion maker, organiser, lobbyist or activist, business leader etc: Who among the Muslim Australian communities would you name as influential in the political and public sphere?
3. What issues most concern you and your organisation in terms of influencing the public and political agenda? (locally and nationally?) Which are most urgent to advance debate and action on in your mind?
4. What barriers or obstacles, if any, have you faced in achieving influence and a political 'voice'?
5. What kinds of things have assisted or might assist your progress towards becoming an active political voice among Muslim Australians? (eg: particular individuals, situations, organisations etc)
6. What advice would you give to a young Australian Muslim hoping to make a difference in the political or public sphere?
7. Beyond formal political election, what would you say are some of the diverse social locations and forums through which Muslim Australians are able to advance their aims politically (eg: local council

consultative committees, a journalist or opinion piece writer, national consultation group, community leader...)

8. Speaking more generally, what are some of the ways Australia's Muslim communities mobilise to gain access to political power and advance causes and issues of concern?
9. How successful are these strategies?
10. Do you have suggestions for government or non-government initiatives or programs that might enhance political participation (formal and informal) among Muslim Australians? (Particularly those that engage youth and women?)
11. Do you know of any such programs or initiatives present or past, in Australia or overseas?

## ACADEMIC AND OTHER INFORMATIVE SOURCES

Academics, elected representatives, and other key sources will be contacted by phone, in person or telephone, and asked to assist us by:

1. Identifying key literature on Muslim political participation
2. Their views on best strategies to promote political participation among Muslim Australians,
3. To tell us about any actual strategies or activities in Australia or overseas that they know of.

## REPRESENTATIVES OF INITIATIVES (CO-ORDINATORS AND PARTICIPANTS)

Could you give us some details about ..... initiative/program/strategy?

1. What was it called?
2. When did it occur?
3. Who was involved in organising it? How was it organised?
4. Who funded it?
5. Who were the participants?
6. What were its successes?
7. What were its challenges?
8. How successful would you say it was in meeting its aims?
9. Do you have other suggestions for government or non-government initiatives or programs that might enhance political participation (formal and informal) among Muslim Australians? (Particularly those that engage youth and women?)
10. Do you know of any such programs or initiatives present or past, in Australia or overseas?

## BUREAUCRATS & POLICY MAKERS

Bureaucrats and policy makers will be asked to discuss their particular policy areas and how they see programs and strategies to enhance Muslim Political Participation articulating with their portfolio, and with other levels of government of which they have knowledge.

## APPENDIX FIVE: REFERENCES

---

Abdel-Fattah, R. *Does My Head Look Big in This?* Sydney: Pan Macmillan 2005

Affinity Intercultural Foundation, 'Personal Leadership',  
<<http://www.affinity.org.au/index.php/educational/60-personal-leadership.html>>, accessed 20 September 2009

Aly, W., *People Like Us: How Arrogance is Dividing Islam and the West* Sydney: Picador Australia 2007

Ata, A., *Us and Them: Muslim-Christian Relations and Cultural Harmony in Australia* Brisbane: Australian Academic Press 2009

Australian Electoral Commission. 'Analysis Of Informality In Werriwa During The March 2005 By-Election'. Canberra: Australian Electoral Commission.  
[http://www.aec.gov.au/pdf/research/papers/paper8/research\\_paper8.pdf](http://www.aec.gov.au/pdf/research/papers/paper8/research_paper8.pdf), accessed 20 May 2010

Australian Electoral Commission, 'Research Report 7 - Analysis of Informality During the House of Representatives 2004 Election' Canberra: Australian Electoral Commission  
[http://www.aec.gov.au/pdf/research/papers/paper7/research\\_paper7.pdf](http://www.aec.gov.au/pdf/research/papers/paper7/research_paper7.pdf) Accessed 20 May 2010.

Australian Federal Police, 'Liaison with Muslim Community Members and Leaders',  
<[http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial\\_discrimination/unlocking\\_doors/docs/audit.pdf](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/unlocking_doors/docs/audit.pdf)>, accessed 10 September 2009

Australian Federal Police, 'Islamic Awareness Workshops',  
<[http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial\\_discrimination/unlocking\\_doors/docs/audit.pdf](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/unlocking_doors/docs/audit.pdf)>, accessed 10 September 2009

Ayers, J. W. and C. R. Hofstetter, 'American Muslim Political Participation: Religion and Conventional Activity following 9/11', paper presented at the Western Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Las Vegas, NV, 2007

Bard, Kevin. "Muslim Legislative Representation in Western Democracies" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Western Political Science Association, San Diego, California, 2008.  
<[http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p238079\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p238079_index.html)>

Barreto, M. and K. Dana, 'Is Islam Compatible with the West? Muslim Political Participation in America', Paper presented at the American Political Science Association annual conference, Boston, MA, 2008

Best, S. and B. Krueger, 'Analyzing the Representativeness of Internet Political Participation' *Political Behaviour* 27 (2) 2005 pp 183-216

Bouma, G., 'Cultural Diversity, Religious Plurality and Government Policy in Australia' in J. Hinnels (ed) *Religious Reconstruction in the South Asian Diasporas*. London: Palgrave Macmillan 2007 pp 173-91

Brett, J. and A. Moran, *Ordinary People's Politics: Australians Talk About Life, Politics and the Future of their Country* Melbourne: Pluto 2006

Choudhury, T., *The Role of Muslim Identity Politics in Radicalisation (A Study in Progress)*, London: Department for Community and Local Government 2007



Crowley, J., 'The Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities' *International Political Science Review* 22(1) 2001 pp 99-121

Deen, H., *The Jihad Seminar* Perth: UWA Press 2008

Department for Communities and Local Government. 'Evaluating local PREVENT projects and programs', <[www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)>, accessed 24 September 2009

Department for Communities and Local Government, 'Empowering Communities', <<http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/preventingextremism/communityleadershipfund/>>, accessed 24 September 2009

Department for Communities and Local Government, 'Young Muslim Advisory Group', <<http://www.ymag.opm.co.uk/about>>, accessed 24 September 2009

Department for Communities and Local Government, 'Faith Leaders and Workers Project: Evaluation Report', <[www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)>, accessed 25 September 2009

Düvell, F., 'Active Civic Participation of Immigrants in the United Kingdom', Country Report prepared for the European research project POLITIS, 2005, <<http://www.uni-oldenburg.de/politis-europe>>, accessed 16 May 2010

Edmunds, J., 'Generational Experience and Political Participation: Young British Muslims', paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Montreal 10 August, 2006 available online at [http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p104423\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p104423_index.html), accessed 28 September 2009

Erebus Consulting Partners, *Evaluation of the Discovering Democracy Program, 2000-2003* Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training, 2003

Fahmy, E., 'Civic Capacity, Social Exclusion & Political Participation in Britain: Evidence from the 1999 Poverty & Social Exclusion Survey', paper presented at the Political Studies Association Annual Conference, University of Leicester, 15-17 April 2003

Faist, T., 'States, Markets, and Immigrant Minorities: Second-Generation Turks in Germany and Mexican-Americans in the United States in the 1980s', *Comparative Politics* 26(4) 1994 pp 439-460

Fear, J., *Under the Radar: Dog-whistle Politics in Australia*, Australia Institute Discussion Paper 96, September 2007

Fieldhouse, E., & D. Cutts, 'Mobilisation or Marginalisation? Neighbourhood Effects on Muslim Electoral Registration in Britain in 2001' (Report), *Political Studies* 56(2) 2008 pp 333-354

Fielding, S., & A. Geddes, 'The British Labor Party and "Ethnic Entryism": Participation, Integration and the Party Context', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 24(1) 1998 pp 57-72

Flew, T., & J. Wilson, 'Citizen Journalism and Political Participation: The Youdecide project and the 2007 Australian Federal Election', in *Creating Value: Between Commons and Commerce – proceedings of the conference of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation*, Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, Brisbane, 2008

Fridkin, K. et al, 'On the Margins of Democratic Life: The Impact of Race and Ethnicity on the Political Engagement of Young People', *American Politics Research* 34(5) 2006: 605-626

Gani, M. and G. Urbas, 'Alert or Alarmed? Recent Legislative Reforms Directed at Terrorist Organisations and Persons Supporting or Assisting Terrorist Acts', *Newcastle Law Review* 23 (8) 2004, pp 31-6

Hanberger, A., 'Policy and Program Evaluation, Civil Society, and Democracy', *American Journal of Evaluation*, 22 (2) 2001, pp 211-28.

Hirschkind, C., *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*, New York: Columbia UP 2006

Hopkins, N. and V. Kahani-Hopkins, 'Identity Construction and British Muslims' Political Activity: Beyond Rational Actor Theory', *British Journal of Social Psychology* 43 (3) 2004, pp 339-356

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Ismaʿ—Listen: National Consultations on Eliminating Prejudice Against Arab and Muslim Australians*, Sydney: HREOC Publications Unit 2004

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 'Police & Arabic Media Partnership', <[http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial\\_discrimination/unlocking\\_doors/docs/audit.pdf](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/unlocking_doors/docs/audit.pdf)>, accessed 12 September 2009

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 'National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security', <[http://www.humanrights.gov.au/partnerships/comm\\_partnershr.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/partnerships/comm_partnershr.html)>, accessed 22 September 2009

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 'Police and Arabic Speaking Support Group', <<http://www.humanrights.gov.au>>, accessed 22 September 2009

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 'Living Spirit—Muslim Women's Project 2006: A dialogue on human rights and responsibilities', <[http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial\\_discrimination/livingspirit/1.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/livingspirit/1.html)>, accessed 10 September 2009

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 'Protective Security Intelligence (PSI) and the Islamic Community', <[http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial\\_discrimination/unlocking\\_doors/docs/audit.pdf](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/unlocking_doors/docs/audit.pdf)>, accessed 11 September 2009

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 'Community Partnerships for Human Rights—Working with Muslim Communities', <[http://www.humanrights.gov.au/partnerships/comm\\_partnershr.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/partnerships/comm_partnershr.html)>, accessed 21 September 2009

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 'Community Partnerships for Human Rights – Working with Muslim Communities', <[http://www.humanrights.gov.au/partnerships/comm\\_partnershr.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/partnerships/comm_partnershr.html)>, accessed 21 September 2009

Husic, E., 'Islam and Australian Politics: Can a Muslim Get Elected to Parliament During a War on Terror?' address to The Sydney Institute, 19 October 2005

Jacob, A., 'Asian American Political Participation: Research Challenges for an Emerging Minority', *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39(1) 2006 pp 103-6

Jacobs, D., K. Phalet and M. Swyngedouw, 'Associational Membership and Political Involvement Among Ethnic Minority Groups in Brussels', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30(3) 2004, pp 543-559

Jamal, A., 'The Political Participation and Engagement of Muslim Americans: Mosque Involvement and Group Consciousness', *American Politics Research*, 33 (4) 2005, pp 521-44

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Conviction With Compassion: A Report on Freedom of Religion and Belief*, Canberra: Parliament of Australia 2000

- Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 'Immigration, Faith and Cohesion', <<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/immigration-faith-and-cohesion>>, accessed 12 September 2009
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 'Political Recruitment: How Local Parties Recruit Councillors', <<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/political-recruitment-how-local-parties-recruit-councillors>>, accessed 12 September 2009
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 'In My Name: A Collection of Muslim Women's Voices', <<http://www.jrf.org.uk/film/in-my-name-women>>, accessed 10 September 2009
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 'Muslim Men's Talk about their Life in UK', <<http://www.jrf.org.uk/film/in-my-name-men>>, accessed 11 September 2009
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 'Unheard Voices: Power and Participation', <<http://www.jrf.org.uk/work/workarea/unheard-voices-power-and-participation>>, accessed 12 September 2009
- Jupp, J., and Australian National University Democratic Audit of Australia, *How Well Does Australian Democracy Serve Immigrant Australians?* Canberra: Australian National University 2004  
<<http://democratic.audit.anu.edu.au>>, accessed 16 May 2010
- Klausen, J., *The Islamic Challenge: Politics and Religion in Western Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005
- Klofstad, C., 'Talk Leads to Recruitment: How Discussions about Politics and Current Events Increase Civic Participation' *Political Research Quarterly* 60(2) 2007, pp 180-191
- Kolig, E. and N. Kabir, 'Not Friend, Not Foe: The Rocky Road of Enfranchisement of Muslims into Multicultural Nationhood in Australia and New Zealand', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 26: 3 2008, pp 266 — 300
- Kolukirik, S., & S. Toktas, 'Turkey's Roma: Political Participation and Organization' *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, 5 2007, pp.761-777
- Kymlicka, W. *Liberalism, Community and Culture* Oxford UP 1991
- La Trobe University Centre for Dialogue, 'Leadership Training for Young Muslims', <<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/dialogue/projects/muslim-leadership/index.html>>, accessed 21 September 2009
- Lapp, M. 'Ethnic Group Leaders and the Mobilization of Voter Turnout: Evidence from Five Montreal Communities' *Canadian Ethnic Studies Journal* 31(2) 1999, pp 17-41
- Leighley, J. & A.Vedlitz, 'Race, Ethnicity, and Political Participation: Competing Models and Contrasting Explanations' *Journal of Politics* 61(4) 1999, pp 1092-2014
- LeRoux, K., 'Nonprofits as Civic Intermediaries: The Role of Community-Based Organizations in Promoting Political Participation', *Urban Affairs Review* 42(3) 2007, pp 410-422
- Liogier, R., *Une Laïcité "Légitime": La France et ses Religions d'Etat*, Paris: Entrelacs 2006
- Maddox, M., *For God and Country: Religious Dynamics in Australian Federal Politics* Canberra: Department of the Parliamentary Library 2001
- Maddox, M., *God Under Howard: The Rise of the Religious Right in Australian Politics* Sydney: Allen & Unwin 2005

Manning, P., *Us and Them: A Journalist's Investigation of Media, Muslims and the Middle East* Sydney: Random House 2006

McFarland, D. and R. Thomas, 'Bowling Young: How Youth Voluntary Associations Influence Adult Political Participation' *American Sociological Review* 71(3) 2006, pp. 401-425

Mayo, M. and A. Rooke, 'Active Learning for Active Citizenship: Participatory Approaches to Evaluating a Program to Promote Citizen Participation in England', *Community Development Journal* 43 (3) 2008, pp 371-81

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *National Assessment Program—Civics and Citizenship Years 6 and 10 Report 2007* Melbourne: MCEETYA 2009

Morrell, M., 'Citizens' Evaluations of Participatory Democratic Procedures: Normative Theory Meets Empirical Science', *Political Research Quarterly* 52 (2) 1999, pp 293-5

Morsi, Y. and A. Little, 'Liberalism and identity construction for young, educated. Muslims in Australia', paper presented at the Australasian Political Studies Association annual conference, Macquarie University, Sydney, September 2009

Nasiha Education Foundation, 'Active Citizenship Program of Study', <[http://www.nasiha.co.uk/lesson-resources-listing.php?id\\_project=5](http://www.nasiha.co.uk/lesson-resources-listing.php?id_project=5)>, accessed 22 September 2009

Open Society Institute, *Muslims in Europe: A Report on Eleven EU Cities*, Budapest: Open Society Institute (At Home in Europe Project) 2010

Owen, A. et al., 'Democracy, Participation, and Life Satisfaction' (Report) *Social Science Quarterly* 89(4) 2008, pp 987- 1005

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, *Review of Security and Counter Terrorism Legislation* Canberra: Parliament of Australia 2006

Phillips, A., *The Politics of Presence* Oxford: Clarendon Press 1998

Ricketts, A., 'Freedom of Association or Guilt by Association: Australia's New Anti-Terrorism Laws and the Retreat of Political Liberty' *Southern Cross University Law Review* 6 2002 133

Runnymede Community Study, 'British Moroccans: Citizenship in Action', <<http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/BritishMoroccans-2009.pdf>>, accessed 10 September 2009

Runnymede Trust, 'Right to Divide? Faith Schools and Community Cohesion', <[www.runnymedetrust.org](http://www.runnymedetrust.org)>, accessed 20 September 2009

Saeed, A., 'Muslims in the West and their Attitudes to Full Participation in Western Societies: Some Reflections' in Levy, G. and T. Modood (eds) *Secularism, Religion and Multicultural Citizenship* Cambridge UP 2009, pp 200-215

Sanchez, G., 'The Role of Group Consciousness in Political Participation among Latinos in the United States', *American Politics Research* 34(4) 2006, pp 427-450

Sawer, S. & G. Zappalà (eds), *Speaking for the People: Representation in Australian Politics* Melbourne University Press 2001

Security Legislation Review Committee, *Report of the Security Legislation Review Committee* 5, Canberra: Parliament of Australia 2006

- Sinno, A., 'Recommendations for Western Policy Makers and Muslim Organizations' in A. Sinno (ed), *Muslims in Western Politics* Indiana University Press 2009, pp 278-288
- Sinno, A. (ed.), *Muslims in Western Politics* Indiana University Press. 2009
- Smart, N., *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World's Religious Beliefs*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1996
- Smock, D. (ed), *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, Washington: United States Institute of Peace 2002
- Stolle, D., M. Hooghe and M. Micheletti, 'Politics in the Supermarket: Political Consumerism as a Form of Political Participation' *International Political Science Review* 26 (3) 2005, pp 245-269
- Summers, A. *The End of Equality: Work, Babies and Women's Choices in Twenty-First Century Australia* Sydney: Random House Australia 2003.
- Togebly, L., 'It Depends ... How Organisational Participation Affects Political Participation and Social Trust Among Second-Generation Immigrants in Denmark' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30(3) 2004, pp 509-529
- John Uhr, *Deliberative Democracy in Australia: The Changing Place of Parliament* Cambridge University Press 1998 p 237
- Uslaner, E., 'Trust and Social Bonds: Faith in Others and Policy Outcomes Reconsidered' *Political Research Quarterly* 57(3) 2004 pp 501-507
- Verba, S., K. Schlozman and H. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*, Harvard University Press 1995
- Wise, A. & Ali, J (2008) *Muslim-Australians and local government [electronic resource] : grassroots strategies to improve relations between Muslim and non-Muslim-Australians : final research report*. Canberra: Department of Immigration and Citizenship
- Walzer, M., 'Shared Meanings in a Poly-Ethnic Democratic Setting: A Response', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 22(2) 1994 pp 401-5
- Wong, J., P.-T. Lien, & M. Conway, 'Group-Based Resources and Political Participation among Asian Americans', *American Politics Research* 33(4) 2005 pp 545- 476
- Yusuf, I., *Once Were Radicals: My Years as a Teenage Islamo-Facist* Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2009
- Zappalà, G., *Four Weddings, a Funeral and a Family Reunion: Ethnicity and Representation in Australian Federal Politics* Canberra: Department of the Parliamentary Library, 1997
- Zappalà, G., 'Challenges to the concept and practice of political representation in Australia', Research Paper No.28 (1998-99), Information and Research Services, Dept. of the Parliamentary Library, Parliament House, Canberra, June 1999