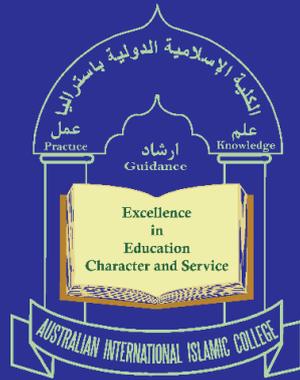


Australian International Islamic College



VOLUNTEERING IN THE SERVICE OF HUMANITY AND SELF SACRIFICE

**Launch of
Certificate III in Active Volunteering
VET (Vocational Educational Training)**

**by
Imam Abdul Quddoos Azhari**

22 July 2020

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah the beneficent the most merciful

الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على أشرف الأنبياء والمرسلين

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today. I would also like to pay my respects to Elders past and present.

Respected Chairman Mr Mohammed Sukkarieh, Principal Mrs Harman, Ms Susanne Fletcher, (Head of VET and Careers), Haji Habib Jamaal (Islamic Council of Queensland, President), invited guests, visiting students, learned teachers, panel discussion members and students

Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuhu

It is with great pleasure and honour I am here to say a few words about volunteerism. Preferring others, to oneself, volunteering in the service of humanity, and self-sacrificing for the comfort of others.

Volunteerism is playing an important role in the development and advancement of any society and everywhere in the world. All of this was through the efforts of selfless volunteers. Thousands of churches, Salvation Army, welfare outlets, hundreds of mosques, hospitals, orphanages, age care, primary and secondary schools and academies have all been achieved through the great contribution of volunteers.

Every community have obtained these and many more achievements according to the efforts and selfless sacrifice of their community's volunteers.

In Brisbane among the Islamic community during the seventy's there was only one purpose-built mosque, which is the Holland Park Mosque. I had the privilege to be the Imam of that mosque for a number of years and another three churches converted into mosques. Today by the grace of Almighty Allah, we have more than 30 mosques in Southeast Queensland and many schools, academies, madrasas, many welfare associations, human aid outlets and women welfare groups. All these were through the efforts of volunteers.

Darul Uloom Islamic Academy of Brisbane, Brisbane Muslim School, and Australian International Islamic College volunteerism played an important role in achieving these institutions and facilities.

Hundreds of volunteers spent thousands of hours planning, physically working, providing and preparing food and preparing facilities, none of which would have been achieved without the hard work and efforts of the volunteers.

All the Prophets (Peace be Upon Them) were volunteers. They emphatically stressed the need for volunteerism. Islam encourages its followers to voluntarily share their time, wealth, knowledge and act of kindness with others irrespective of their religion, culture, class or creed.

Al Quran says: (Sura 59:9), 'He had given to the refugees and given them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their own lot. And those saved from the selfishness of their own soles, they are the ones that achieved prosperity'.

The reason for the revelation of this ayah is stated in the following hadiths:-

Narrated by Abu Hurairah (RA), 'A man came to the Prophet (SAW). The Prophet sent a messenger to his wives to bring something for the man to eat but they said that they had nothing except water. Allah's apostle said, "Who will take this person and entertain him as a guest?" A Sahaba (companion) said "I", so he took him to his wife and said to her, "entertain generously the guest of Rasulallah". The wife said, "We have nothing except the meals for our children". The husband said, "Prepare your meal, light your lamp and let your children sleep". She prepared the meal, lit her lamp, made her children sleep, and stood up pretending to mend her lamp. She turned off the lamp and both of them pretended to be eating, but they really went to bed hungry. In the morning, Nabi Mohammed (SAW) informed the Sahaba that Allah was pleased with his actions the previous night.

The technical meaning of volunteerism is offering ones money, time and service for the benefit of others, for the sake of the Almighty.

Here we note that one is not called a volunteer unless one fulfils two important conditions, they are:

1. To act freely, that is to do something for the benefit of others based on one's free will. In the light of this condition, it is clear that volunteering should not be made mandatory.
2. To perform an action seeking Allah's pleasure should always be the primary motive for helping others. This however does not mean that a volunteer should not reap tangible rewards for his services. A little money given to a volunteer may ease his burden, for example, he may use it for his transport or family.

It is also to be noted here that volunteerism is a beautiful loan to Allah to which he promises a great reward.

Al Quran says in (*Surah 73:20*). 'Establish regular prayer and give regular charity and loan to Allah a beautiful loan, and whatever good you send forth for your soul you shall find it in Allah's presence'.

Keeping in mind the ongoing discussion of the description of volunteerism one can assert that a volunteer is someone who contributes his money, time and is willing to help others without receiving financial remuneration or material benefits for their work, but they hope for Allah's mercy and blessings. This means that the ultimate of a volunteer is not to earn fame, respect or reward from people, but only to receive Allah's Rahmah.

When we talk about volunteerism and helping others over oneself and self-sacrifice, I would like to quote here an important incident. On the day of the battle of Yarmuk Sayaddina Huzayfah al-Adawi says. 'I went out to find my uncle on the battlefield. I had with me a container of water, I said to myself that if he had some life left in him, I would quench his thirst and wash the dirt from his face. Suddenly I came across him and he was going in and out of consciousness. I asked him if he wanted me to give him some water. He nodded his head, suddenly he heard another wounded man in the distance calling in pain, so my uncle indicated for me to go and tend to him. I went to him and saw that he was Hisham the brother of Amar Bin Al Ass. As I came to him and asked if he wanted me to give him some water. Suddenly we heard the sound of another man calling out in the distance in pain so he indicated for me to go and tend to him. I came to find him and found that he had already died, so I went back to attend to Hisham only to find he had died as well. Then I rushed back to attend to my Uncle only to find that he too had died. Hadith (Al Baihaqi)

Imam Ghazali referring to this hadith noted that the highest degree of generosity is al-ithar, which is to donate ones wealth despite ones need of it (al Ghazali, m.d., p2022)

Mr Chairman Mohammed Taher Sukkarieh, Honourable Principal Mrs Harman, Haji Habib Jamaal (ICQ President) Ms Susanne Fletcher, Mrs Rhonda Scullen discussion panel members, learned teachers and my dear students. As we have seen, volunteerism in the service of humanity is vital for any community and society growth and development. It is an undeniable fact that the tireless volunteers have played a very important role in the Australian society.

It is very clear the benefits of volunteering are huge, not only does it provide with many skills such as deep self-confidence and improvement of ones self-purpose, but it also improves mental and physical health, which in turn gives you a sense of happiness and belonging. It also can give you opportunities to meet with new people and have meaningful interactions that could gain you lifelong friends, which in this society is challenging to come by. Most importantly, as many of you know, volunteering is an unmatched experience to show potential employers that you can take initiative and that you are willing to use your own time for the improvement of this world and all around you; by using skills like problem solving, communication, teamwork, planning and organisation.

It should also be very clear from the above discussion that seeking Allah's pleasure should be the primary motive in volunteering ones times, money and goods to help others. Helping others is the means to attain Allah's pleasure. For volunteers the best motivation and realisation are very vital that true self-improvement can only take place after self-assessment.

We aim to be our own harshest critic and strongest competitor. You must stay within your objectives, within your vision, within your direction. In volunteerisms, the ultimate importance is given to the visions, objectives and end goal.

At every level, we keep in mind about our vision, our objectives and the purpose of our volunteerism that keeps us awake when others sleep. That keeps us going when others stop and that keeps us together when others fall apart. To be truly productive volunteers we must make every moment, discussion and steps in accordance with achieving the vision and objectives. When we get this right Allah's blessings and Barakat pours forth like the heavy rain on the baron plain.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our school Principal and the Head of Vocational Education and Career coordinator Susanne Fletcher and Rhonda Scullen and other support staff involved for their effort in launching the VET and Careers course Certificate III in Active Volunteering into our school. It is encouraging to note the future of our VET program:

- Access funding initiatives to increase AICC offerings
- Source Training solutions in demand by community
- Courses to be underpinned by Islamic beliefs and culture
- Review program – increase qualification scope
- Review RTO (Registered Training Organisation) structure 2023

It is very nice to note that Australian International Islamic College is the first Islamic school in Australia to offer this Certificate III in Active Volunteering.

I would like to conclude with the famous saying of John. F. Kennedy who have been quoted to have said to the American people, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country".