

## **Religion and law Roundtable Project**

HREOC is currently in the process of establishing the steering group and, to date, those who have accepted our invitation to join the steering group include:

Jamila Hussain, Islamic Law Lecturer of the University of Technology Sydney; Professor Greg J Reinhardt of the AIJA and Hass Dellal Executive Director of AMF and Chair of the University of Melbourne, Centre for Islamic Law and Society

The purpose of the project is to conduct a national roundtable dialogue over a period of two days, that includes members of the judiciary, key legal sector representatives and training bodies, academics and community members to explore issues around the interface between religion and the law. These issues have both human rights, ethical, as well as practical implications for the administration of law.

The focus of the project is on canvassing and building knowledge and is a significant opportunity to review the issues, establish a network, and set the agenda for further action in research, professional skills enhancement and consultation.

The final paper aims to reflect and incorporate the views expressed by participants, with emphasis being on building evidence and defining different positions in this important area.

Any future actions that may be taken by HREOC relating to religion and the law would be undertaken as a separate process.

International and national research is increasingly identifying complexities associated with cultural and legal pluralism and intersections with the law and legal process.

Within an Australian context, recent attention has been focused on the extent to which the Australian legal system, particularly the judiciary, should be expected to be responsive to demands for accommodation of some aspects of various religious traditions, while also ensuring the protection of other fundamental human rights, such as that of equality.

While proposing to deal with such issues generally, the intent is to have a principle focus on the issues for Muslim communities; this will be reflected in the drafting of papers, structuring the program, and inviting the participants.

HREOC will be working with Maria Dimopolous of Myriad Consulting, who is a lawyer, has extensive experience working in family law courts, and has a strong consultancy history working with culturally diverse communities (including Muslim communities), community organisations, government agencies and the law.

This proposed national roundtable objectives are to:

- build strategic partnerships with and between the judiciary, members of the legal community, religious community leaders, and professional bodies, specifically in relation to the issues associated with religion and the law
- identify ways in which the judiciary, and the courts more generally, respond to issues of religious diversity, in particular issues for Muslim communities

- increase the positioning of the issue (interface between the law and religion) on the agenda of those responsible for administering courts of law, as well as interpreting law and delivering justice at strategic and community level.

### **Draft Timeline**

June/July 2008

- Preliminary issues paper.–
- Pre-event consultation,
- Agenda planning & preparation

September/October 2008

- Roundtable meeting conducted

November 2008

- Final Report

For more information please feel free to contact me on the below e-mail

Kind Regards

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