



20 March 2012

**MUSLIMS AUSTRALIA**  
AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF ISLAMIC COUNCILS INC.

*Hand in hand for a brighter Australia.*

The peak body for Australian Muslims  
A.R.B.N 002 757 155

[www.afic.com.au](http://www.afic.com.au)

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- Halal Certification & Accreditation
- Muslims Australia Magazine
- Islamic Schools Projects
- Zakat & Charitable Services
- Imams & Religious Services
- Da'wah Work
- Interfaith Dialogue
- Political Advocacy

**MEMBER STATE COUNCILS**

Muslims NSW Inc.  
Islamic Council of VIC  
Islamic Council of QLD  
Islamic Council of WA  
Islamic Council of SA  
Islamic Council of ACT  
Islamic Council of NT  
Islamic Council of TAS  
Islamic Council of Christmas Island

**MEMBER SOCIETIES**

Over 100

**To: Chairmen of State Councils  
Islamic Societies in Australia**

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Islam

*Assalamo alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh,*

On the eve of the upcoming AFIC Congress I feel it is my duty to correspond with the members of AFIC as the outgoing President. One of the key and most important functions that will be undertaken at this Congress will be to elect a group of people to take this organization forward. The key purpose of this communication is to appeal to the electorate of AFIC to consider carefully who you all elect to the executive of Muslims Australia (AFIC).

Having shouldered the responsibilities as the President for the last five years I can safely say that Muslims Australia (AFIC) of 2012 is a far different organization than the one I joined.

From a national organisation that only had some 70 societies and councils as members, we now have over a hundred members and growing steadily. Not only have we reached out to some of the established and major organisations in the large cities who have now joined or rejoined Muslims Australia, a lot of the rural and regional societies are also now members.

While in 2007 we were only doing some halal certification for local consumption, we now have secured our halal certification status again for all overseas countries, and in the case of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia after some 20 years of being locked out.

In 2002 we had only three schools with close to 2,000 children, we can now boast eight schools in all major cities and states with over 5,000 students and growing at a steady pace.

*Hand in hand for a brighter Australia.*

Muslims Australia (AFIC) is consulted by the Federal Government on a regular basis on various matters affecting Australian Muslims such as education, refugee intake and settlement, ritual slaughter and animal cruelty issues, migration intake numbers and policy, multiculturalism, Islamic finance and Sharia implications, and many other matters. Muslims Australia (AFIC) in the recent past has been invited to appear before Joint Parliamentary hearings on various matters.

Media engagement is now a serious part of Muslims Australia activities. Relationships with all of the other faith communities and the many activities from time to time that come out of this also are important roles that the executive and other partners in the Muslim community play.

Advocacy on behalf of the Australian Muslims has been a major platform of Exco. From securing burial facilities in most locations of Australia and especially in rural and regional areas to approvals for mosques and schools and fundraising for various mosques projects and charities and natural disasters locally and abroad have been undertaken. Political maturity of the Muslims, engagement in the Census exercise, and working with the various youth groups and organisations representing women and the elderly have been some of the hallmarks of our work.

The executive committee during my term took the view not to always reinvent the wheel, so to speak, and be opposed to the many other organisations serving the Muslim community, but to work with them and support them to better serve the Muslim community. This was divergent from the AFIC of the past but I believe this opened many doors for AFIC members and the Muslims of Australia generally and has benefitted all, including opening Muslims Australia (AFIC) to the shortfalls of our operations in serving the community and the many opportunities that are out there to better serve and represent the community, not only Muslims but all Australians.

In all of this the State Councils played a significant role. There was great cooperation with the State Councils on the whole and major achievements were realised. Muslims Australia together with the State Councils and societies entered into some previously uncharted areas like political advocacy and engagement with political parties. Major achievements were realised like producing for the first time leaflets and booklets on halal, treatment of Muslim patients, (with the booklet produced by ICQ and ICV/AFIC leaflet being copied by USA health authorities), booklet on mosques and halal restaurants, marriage celebrants and Muslim graveyards.

Muslims Australia commenced producing magazines every three months and an annual report. Weekly email bulletin and news releases kept both members and Muslims generally abreast of the topical issues.

### **Muslims Australia (AFIC) Going Forward**

The question that one needs to ask of the candidates up for election is if they are fully committed to serve in the positions they are putting their hands up for. This means being able to get on a plane or in a car at extremely short notice of a few hours only at times, to have a meeting with an important Minister, overseas delegation, some important halal customer, or possible customer, an interfaith heads crises meeting due to some major event happening locally or overseas needing an immediate response. Yes, some of these would be able to be handled remotely, but there are many issues that just needs a face to face presence. Like any major business, Muslims Australia (AFIC) is now a major operation.

Yes, we need to seek and appoint a CEO or General Managing. But this has been a difficult exercise to find the ideal person who can be compensated appropriately to best serve the growing needs of the present organisation, and one that has lateral ideas to further take Muslims Australia towards the many opportunities that are out there and various partners willing to engage with Muslims Australia (AFIC).

But in the mean time, do we have candidates who if elected are willing to openly speak up for the interests of Australian Muslims on the media and against the government and politicians even if it means possibly jeopardising their own employment positions. Can they travel interstate and even overseas at short notice if “summoned” for some urgent meeting?

Having been the President for five years, I can say that I have been often disappointed when some senior members of the team could not travel when given weeks of notice for important engagements which fell in their portfolios, let alone at short notices of two or three days. One can understand if this happens once or twice over five years, but if they are just not able to travel during working week days, then they should refrain from assuming these positions and let some one willing, committed and qualified to do this work. Some of these meetings have been with Bank Managers, government ministers, overseas important delegations, Ambassadors, auditors and the like.

If these same brothers are now putting their hands up for election to these same very important positions, and the possible other holders of the other senior positions would be in the same or worse position with their work, family or physical location then it gives me great pains to contemplate what the fate of Muslims Australia (AFIC) would be going forward.

We are now an organisation with an annual recurrent budget of around \$50 million and a combined recurrent and capital budget of around \$90 million and with assets of over \$150 million dollars when our subsidiaries are also considered. It has been mentioned to me that AFIC has a cash flow problem. This is sheer scare-mongering on the part of a few, as AFIC has injected over \$2.6 million in our school in Perth that is owing to AFIC, over \$2.5 million in our school in Melbourne that is owing to AFIC and over \$1.5 million to our school in South Australia and similar amounts in Brisbane and Canberra. All of these funds are recoverable as and when these schools become cash flow positive, as has been the case with Malek Fahd Islamic School.

I am being told by senior people in the State Councils and some of the candidates themselves that “AFIC will go slow” in the next three years. No good reason is being given for this except for the availability of time and commitment of the individuals putting their hands up for elections to senior positions. There is a window of opportunity available at present that cannot be missed. AFIC must continue in a vigorous way with its work, taking and always minimising the risks. Nothing will have been achieved if we did not act ambitiously. There is no truth that AFIC or its schools are in financial or other problems.

Yes, due to the recent unfounded media allegations, audits of the operations of our schools are being undertaken. Having discussed this with senior people in the Federal Government and the NSW Government, they are all very happy with our operations and the open and transparent structure of AFIC with elections and accountability. No criminality or fraud has been detected and *Alhamdulillah*, on the contrary some major achievements and grants have been approved for some of our schools in the last few months. Our Schools are operating normally despite attempts by a few people to create fitna and calling for the removal of the children and the closing of the school. Some of these people are travelling interstate to find something, anything negative about our schools. Despite what you hear from some of these people no one from any Police Authority in any part of Australia has contacted any of our schools in relation to the so called police investigation. One would expect that if there was anything seriously wrong and investigation was commenced then the first people that the police would contact would be the Principals of the Schools and other senior officials. Three months and more have passed and no Police has made any contact with anyone in our Schools. It is such a pity that some current members of the AFIC Exco are looking forward and hoping that some of our schools will close. These members have never made any positive contribution for AFIC or its schools and continue to create fitna for purely personal reasons motivated by their egos.

The governments want to be exhaustive in their approach to these audits which I as the President fully welcome as this gives us a launching pad to continue with

opening new schools to serve the demands of the growing community of Australian Muslims whilst the opportunity presents itself for us to do this. Of course we will need to be mindful of the detail of how we do this and the relationship between the school entities and AFIC from an accounting and legal perspective and the accounting firm of KPMG has been engaged to advise us on the model going forward.

This is one of the positive outcomes of this media exposure and one that we embrace as from time to time it is good to have an independent outside organisation come in and scrutinise our operations in detail.

The recently released Gonski report on Review of Funding for Schooling also indirectly endorses on page 46 exactly what AFIC has been doing with our 8 schools and its funding and operations. Whilst not a **System (as defined by the Federal Govt)** as yet, we have been utilising the funds from our schools in opening new schools and the head of the Block Grant Authority in Queensland also endorsed this vision of ours. I urge you all to read this report in its entirety, but if nothing else then please do read the Executive Summary, Recommendations and page 46.

As members of AFIC you have a responsibility to ensure that your Council and the AFIC Exco operating in a transparent and democratic way. While at present you may not have a direct vote in the election of AFIC Officials, I am sure you know your rights and obligations that those who are casting the vote are doing so in consultation with the general members. I do not need to remind you all of the 2006 elections and the resultant court cases and the coup of 2008 which all resulted in financial losses of over \$2 million and the shame that Australian Muslims had to endure.

By all indications and the feed back I am getting now there is all the intention by the community wishing to move forward. This can only be achieved by electing a good team of people with the vision, experience, commitment and time to serve Muslims Australia and the community. We now need members in the Exco who are fully committed with time and energy to work as a good team in an open and cooperative manner to progress on the many mainstream activities of Muslims Australia (AFIC). The incoming Exco will also need to embrace some of the new initiatives such as Baitul Mal, IDB and other foreign government scholarships, funding from overseas organisations for our schools, mosques, media and political engagement and maturity of Muslims on many other fronts.

I am sure that I have made not some but many mistakes. I could have slowed down and done very little or nothing and this way I would not have made any mistakes. But, I believe that it is important for leaders to move forward showing

leadership which I attempted to do. No one will or could stop those who want to work ...

Finally, I want to thank everyone for the support, encouragement, guidance, criticisms, whatever small and big. May Allah swt reward you all and may He continue to give us all the opportunity and ability to continue in the service of Islam until our last breath!

I am more than happy to provide any details if this will assist any member society or Council. My contact details are [president@afic.com.au](mailto:president@afic.com.au) and phone 0409 775 102.

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Wassalam  
Yours brotherly



Ikebal Adam Patel,  
*National President and CEO Muslims Australia - (AFIC) 2007 - 2012*