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REPORTER ANGELA RANKE



MUSLIM MESSAGE: NEARLY A QUARTER OF BRISBANE'S 12,500 MUSLIMS LIVE IN KURABY, WHICH IS HOME TO ONE OF THE CITY'S BIGGEST MOSQUES. REPORTER **ANGELA RANKE** WENT ALONG TO FRIDAY PRAYERS TO OBSERVE THE RITUAL

Promoting peace among Australians

EVERY Friday afternoon at about 1pm, Muslims from Kuraby congregate at the local mosque for their biggest day of prayer.

On this particular Friday in late September about 700 people have gathered at the Beenleigh Rd site, drawn together by their faith and the adhan, or call to prayers, which is broadcast through speakers around the mosque.

Mariam, a young Muslim woman my age, has a headscarf and robe ready for me when I arrive, which I slip on before heading into the prayer room.

Inside I see a small room packed full of women, some of whom are performing the prayer ritual. Others are kneeling in bare feet.

There are no men in sight. They have a large room upstairs where

the Imam stands on a structure much like a pulpit and delivers his message, which is transmitted via speakers throughout the mosque.

Today's lecture by Imam Mohamad Abdalla is about the pilgrimage to Mecca, which is happening around the world at this time.

Imam Abdalla encourages the worshippers to focus on the spiritual aspect and meaning of the journey rather than the external formalities and rules.

"The ultimate purpose of Haj is to reform us as individuals, to make us people who can contribute to societies and if anyone thinks they cannot contribute to a society such as Australia then remember, Muslims were able to flourish in contexts that were much less multicultural."



PRAYER SESSION: Women worship at the Kuraby Mosque.

After the prayer I ask Imam Abdalla what he meant by his comments.

"Sometimes there's a feeling that maybe it's difficult to live in a country like Australia because the culture is different or one cannot necessarily practise his or her faith," he said. "This is incorrect really. These are feelings that perhaps people have developed through various acts

of racism and prejudice so they begin to feel a lack of a sense of belonging."

Imam Abdalla said Muslims could achieve a sense of belonging by developing their spiritual strength.

But, he said, cultivating a tolerant community was a two-way street and the wider Australian community, including media, had a role to play as well.