

# The Passing of a Quiet Legend

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On Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> Feb 2013 (Rabbi-Uth-Thaani 1434 AH), came the passing and Janaazah of Al-Hajj Mohamed Tomoum (Born Cairo, Egypt 1935).

Prior to migration to Australia, Mohamed Tomoum was a documentary film director and producer and was commissioned by the Egyptian government to make documentaries on different subjects, including Muslims in different countries.

Whilst in the United States of America, he met Mary Donohoe working at the United Nations (UN). Mohamed Tomoum was working in the banking/financial sector of American Express (AMEX) as well as a consultant of Arabic and translation matters within the organisation. They travelled to Australia as a married couple and settled in Brisbane where Mohamed Tomoum was employed with the Commonwealth Bank and remained employed there for close to 20 years until his retirement.

In the meantime, the couple had four children - three girls and one boy:

- Fatima – General Manager Aftersales for Toyota/Lexus – UAE and first female General Manager. Masters degree in Japanese. Fluent in Arabic, Japanese and French. Married to Hany El Khafief. Head of events and officiating for Tennis Emirates, a division of the UAE Government.
- Sarah – Bachelor degree in Early Education. Education consultant for the London Borough of Islington, specializing in early years education.
- Maria – Manager of RBS Morgan Stockbroking Brisbane – Bachelor of Social Sciences. Married and a proud mother of a new born baby Sofia.
- Yousef (Joseph) – Marine Claims Manager and Shipping/Transport Consultant. Bachelor of Arts in International Relations, Brisbane. Has travelled the world, consulting on international shipping and containerization.

Alhamdulillah, Mr and Mrs Tomoum have equipped their four children with private education and as well, brought them all up with a good Islamic education. They also managed to keep them in close contact with the family roots in Egypt, travelling to the Homeland on a regular basis.

Mohmed Tomoum completed his first Hajj in 1992.

Hj Tomoum was absolutely devoted to his family, and stood by them in good times and in bad.

In the last two years, Hj Tomoum suffered from ill health, which was the cause of his passing; always saying that it is the wish of the Almighty Allah (SWT) and it is better to suffer here on Earth than later.

Throughout all his time in Australia, Hj Tomoum was totally committed to the Muslim community; his involvement of helping establish the West End Mosque, served on the committee in its infancy and later became President of the society which he served for 10 years (other various positions were held for 15 years) and therefore served the community for 25 years.

- President of the Islamic Council of Queensland (ICQ) – Served various positions from committee member to President (over a 10 year period)
- Committee member of Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) in the early 1990s. On the committee with Hj Yusuf Hussein

In 1992, with Brisbane growing and needing an Islamic School, Hj Tomoum was in charge of getting the community together, working as a team combined, to take a proposal to AFIC for support to establish a school in Brisbane.

In 1993, AFIC agreed to support the proposal for an Islamic School and the whole Islamic community of South East Queensland got behind the project. The initial land purchased by AFIC at Greenbank was too far out of town, so AFIC said find your own land suitable and we will support the project. Meanwhile, the team led by Hj Tomoum found the land at Karawatha and petitioned the State Government for the land of 15 acres. The State government had to wait 12 months for any government body wanting the land, if no department wanted it then we could purchase it directly from the State Government and they would issue the school license.

In 1994, the State Government advised we needed to wait until June 1995 before a final decision was at hand. With this being confirmed, the school team led by Hj Tomoum petitioned the State Government for a temporary license to start in a portable building at Rochedale Mosque. This was achieved and started at Rochedale Mosque with 30 children in the month of January 1995.

Hj Tomoum was the initial Chairman of the school with the overall support of the entire Muslim community and AFIC.

In the end of May 1995, the Premier of Queensland, Wayne Goss, challenged Hj Tomoum that if we could establish a school at Karawatha in 30 days by the first of July 1995. We had a meeting in the last week of May 1995 and the challenge was accepted, the Deen Brothers and families guaranteed that this site would be ready to accommodate the governments challenge. With this in mind, the entire site works had been completed by the Deen Brothers Company with Hj Tomoum on site every day to inspect the progress. Previously purchased buildings (that were the main construction offices and post office at Sanctuary Cove purchased by AFIC via Hj Abdul Rahman Deen), were sitting and waiting for its new home.

- All earthworks were completed by the second week
- All plumbing and septic system and water were completed in the third week
- All site offices positioned by Deen Brothers were also completed in the third week
- All electricals and concreting were completed by the fourth week
- End of June, the assembly shed finished and concreted, all under the supervision of the Chairman Hj Tomoum with the entire Muslim communities working day and night to complete the challenge

On the 30<sup>th</sup> June 1995, the Minister for School and Education and his Department Head came to inspect the work, expecting to see only minor work carried out. To their amazement, the school was in its finishing touches with all the madressa children laying the turf and top dressing, etc. the final painting and installing of the air conditioning as well was being done, making it one of the first fully air conditioned schools in Queensland, which later became a requirement for all new schools.

Hj Tomoum and the school committee had met them and they were totally amazed at the speed and progress of the whole school set up and advised the Premier that it is all good to go. Immediately, the Premier approved the sale of the land and the certificate to operate the school on an official basis. Following that, the first week of July 1995, the official opening of the Primary School took place and the school was up and running and immediately enrolments started to flow. Hj Tomoum served for 10 years as Chairman of the school and at a later stage served as Deputy Chairman for 5 years.

In 2007, a new team came to AFIC and put in a new committee which saw the hard working team that started the school from its inception had been dismissed due to internal politics of AFIC. From 1995-2007, the school had grown from 30 students in Primary to 750 students in total being 500

Primary and 250 Secondary (approx.). This is whilst the involvement of Hj Mohamed Tomoum, he was also totally involved in the day to day running of the school and was on the fulltime committee and was on the teachers' selection panel along with the Principal as well as Hj A R Deen and Hj S Sabdia.

Since that time, Hj Tomoum still took an interest in the school even though he was not on the board or the committee. Regularly he was contacted by teachers, students, past and present, as well as others involved in the school to assist and ask of his advice on many aspects of the school. After his involvement with the school, he maintained close connection with ICQ and matters pertaining to AFIC including continuous community and religious involvement.

Hj Tomoum was also heavily involved with the Halal meat certification over 20 years and advised to Muslim countries of the Middle East for involvement with the Australian Halal industry.

He worked for the Department of Immigration and Centrelink as an Arabic interpreter both ways (translations and interpreting) after his retirement from the Commonwealth Bank.

He helped develop the Queensland government 'White Paper' for settling Muslim immigrants into Queensland and was involved as a community leader in assisting their settlement.

He was on constant call to government departments, both State and Federal, in assisting immigrants and interpreting as well as consulting on a religious basis for achieving good outcomes for all concerned.

He worked with the Queensland government and facilitated trade with the Middle East in a culturally and religiously appropriate manner to create a harmonious methodology between trading partners. Most of this was done on a voluntary basis to achieve good outcomes for future prosperity of all concerned.

Maria, the youngest sister, recently gave birth to a girl, being the first grandchild of Hj Tomoum and family and he had great pleasure in seeing the baby.

In conclusion, this is a short synopsis of a man committed to his religious beliefs, working for the betterment of his family, his community and Islam on a continuous basis until his passing days.

In writing this, I have known Hj Tomoum as one of the most honourable and easy going persons I have ever met and I have worked with him constantly for over 30 years in all aspects of his involvement in Brisbane and it is a very sad time and occasion for the whole Islamic community and we all feel sorrow for his wife and family and pray that Allah (SWT) will grant him Jannatul Firdaus (highest level of Paradise) Insha Allah (God Willing) and may his family have Sabar (patience). Ameen

Written by Hj Abdul Rahman Deen