

## If Its Meant to Be, Its up to Me: Youth Keen to Become Positive Ambassadors of Islam

Can you sense a revolution? There is something in the air! Young Muslims seem excited to take the lead in becoming agents of change. Thanks to enthusiastic community input into a promising new MYServices youth leadership development initiative, there seems to be excitement in the air, an increased sense of optimism to take 'building bridges' to a whole new level.

Recently MYServices invited young Muslims, community leaders, educators, Imams and interested citizens to tell us what they think an ideal Muslim youth leadership development program should look like. The community response was outstanding! Young people in particular expressed a lot of enthusiasm for such a program, with many believing that developing leadership qualities is not an option, but a duty for all Muslims.

Not prepared to settle for mediocre passivity, Muslim youth seem determined to challenge the current image of Islam in mainstream society through personal development, that is, by 'becoming the change, they want to see'.

"When my mum or sister is abused in the street, I want to be able to keep my cool," a 17 year old Kuraby Mosque-goer says. "I know I have to be very careful in how I respond to discrimination because people will judge Islam by my reaction."

"It's not easy at all," he confesses, "your first instinct tells you to punch him and teach him a lesson, but it's also my chance to prove that the negative stereotypes about Muslims are wrong."

Some young Muslims hope the initiative will equip them with skills to educate others about their beliefs and give them the confidence to identify themselves as proud Aussie Muslims.

"I don't wear the hijab all the time because I fear for my safety, but I want to feel comfortable wearing it in public places," a 14-year old Australian International Islamic College student told us.

"I want to be able to tell people, 'Look mate, I am an Aussie Muslim, and I am safe. You don't need to be scared of me because I'm Muslim, I won't blow up the mall.'"

Following the findings of the survey, the *Ameer* and *Ameera* Youth Leadership Development programs aim to equip youth with specific leadership skills they have demanded, which will enable them to better deal with the challenges they face as young Australian Muslims.

Over an intensive weekend workshop, aspiring young Muslim leaders will learn leadership qualities of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), goal-setting, giving dawah, confidence-building, public speaking skills, conflict resolution, anger management and interpersonal skills. Participation in all sessions is ideal; however participants can choose not to attend some sessions. Upon completion, young leaders will put on building bridges community project or event, using the leadership skills learned.

The *Ameer* Leadership Development Program for young men will be held on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> and Sunday the 16<sup>th</sup> of November, and the *Ameera* Leadership Development program for young women will be held from Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> November, both from 9am – 5pm, Insha'Allah.

Email [info@myservices.net.au](mailto:info@myservices.net.au) to register your interest, with 'Make me a leader!' in the subject line. You will then be informed of the registration process.

*"Let there arise among you a band of people inviting to all that is good and just, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong and unjust. They are the ones to attain felicity." ~ Qur'an 3:104*

Well, here we come. Let the revolution begin.