

The Conference of Australian Imams

With contributions from Muslim leaders, women and youth

COMMUNIQUE

17 September 2006

“Help you one another in virtue, righteousness and piety.” Qur’an 5:2

The role of Imams is multi-dimensional. The Imams recognize the important role they play in inter-communal relations and that they are confident that with the support of their boards, the government and the community at large they can meet the needs of the Islamic community.

The Imams have condemned all forms of terrorism, hatred and extremism in the past and will continue to do so.

The Imams are committed to assist the wider community to understand Islam and the Australian Muslim community better. In order to achieve this and other goals they have identified the following skill enhancements.

- Effective communication skills including training in the use of the English language where needed
- Media and political leadership in the community
- Broader knowledge of the Australian society, culture and legal system and politics
- Deepen their understanding of the diversity within the Muslim community and ways in which they could engage in inter- and intra-faith dialogue

In order to achieve these goals and to create possibilities for the current and future generations of Australian Muslims to get training, they supported the idea of the National Centre for Excellence in Islamic Studies. This would be open to both Muslim and non-Muslim students interested in deepening their understanding of Islam and Muslim cultures, societies, heritage, architecture etc. However, they wanted to ensure that this Centre would not exclude the possibility of future younger Imams accessing other educational options overseas.

They supported the idea of a national structure representing the Muslim religious / community leaders. Two options were explored:

- a) national board of religious leaders (imams)
- b) national board of religious and community leaders.

This board will be an inclusive one bringing together the Muslim communities. It is envisaged that such a structure could deal with some of the following:

- Islamic legal issues
- Imam accreditation
- Advice on the training needs of current/future religious leaders
- Representation of the Muslim community at a national level.

A steering committee that is inclusive and representative of Australian Muslims should be established to explore how this will work.

Australian Muslims recognised the need to have more engagement with the wider community by actively holding events such as mosque open days and interfaith and intercultural dialogue. However there were some concerns that the nature of anti-terrorism laws deters engagement of Muslims and non-Muslims with each other.

The Imams recognise the importance of engaging Muslim youth and women in their institutions and addressing the ongoing needs of their respective communities.

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