



about Australia

engaging with Australia's Muslim communities

- Australia is one of the world's most successful multicultural societies and is built on parliamentary democracy, the rule of law and a market economy. Today, Muslims represent an increasingly important part of Australia's varied and modern society.

Australia's diverse Muslim communities

Australia's Muslim communities form a diverse group drawn from more than 120 countries. The 2006 Census recorded the total population of Australian Muslims at more than 340 000 people, of whom more than one-third are born in Australia. They are a valuable and vibrant part of the social and cultural fabric of all our states and territories. Second and third generation Australian Muslims are playing a vital role in bringing newly arrived Muslims from many cultural, national and linguistic backgrounds into the family of Islam in Australia.

There are approximately 140 mosques and prayer rooms in Australian cities and country towns. Some are at public facilities such as airports, universities and hospitals. As part of their community integration, none of Australia's mosques broadcast amplified calls to prayer. Instead, prayer times are widely published, including on the Internet. Larger mosques and Islamic centres provide services for their communities such as youth activities, sport, cultural advice for new arrivals and other social activities. Halal food stores and restaurants are also found in many Australian cities.

Muslim Australians have made important contributions in a wide range of social, economic, cultural, religious and educational endeavours. However, in the recent global social and political environment, threats to social cohesion, harmony and security have emerged. The Australian Government is responding to these challenges by encouraging continuing dialogue with Muslims and other community groups.

Promoting dialogue and generating understanding

Australia embraces people, religions and languages from every corner of the world and the Australian Government is committed to promoting tolerance across the community. The National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security was developed in 2005 and 2006. The National Action Plan was informed by a number of community consultation processes, including input from a specially established Muslim Community Reference Group, as well as the Muslim Youth Summit process held throughout Australia from December 2005 to May 2007.

The purpose of the National Action Plan is to reinforce social cohesion, promote harmony and support national security by addressing isolation and marginalisation in the community which can make individuals vulnerable to anti-social and destructive ideas. Its major focus areas are education, employment, integrating communities and enhancing national security.

Activities funded under the National Action Plan include projects in the community such as leadership and mentoring skills for young Muslims, arts workshops linked to other groups in the community (one project involves comedy, rap and poetry), interaction between young Muslims and non-Muslims in regional areas, cross-cultural workshops to change prevailing stereotypes of Islam and women, publication of a book addressing misinterpretation of Islam, and sports programs which encourage links between young Muslims, Indigenous Australians, other minority groups and the wider community.

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission runs programs to promote social cohesion and counteract discriminatory views and intolerance towards Muslim Australians. One of these programs develops partnerships between Muslim communities and police services. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship manages a nation-wide Harmony Day celebration in March each year, which brings people together to promote Australian values and celebrates community participation. It is a day to understand and commit to the benefits of living in a country that embraces common values of respect, fairness, participation and acceptance.

Working together

Consultation with young Muslim Australians is a vital part of the government's strategy to increase cultural understanding and combat intolerance. Youth events are bringing together a range of young Australian Muslims to discuss issues of concern and possible solutions.

Many non-government organisations undertake activities aimed at improving understanding of Islam in the community. These organisations include:

- the Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews, which provides opportunities for the national bodies of each faith to come together to build understanding and harmony in the Australian context
- the Australian Partnership of Religious Organisations (APRO) of which the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils is a member. APRO connects religious groups with multicultural and migrant groups—an example of how faith and ethnic communities can work collaboratively in Australia
- the Centre for Dialogue at La Trobe University in Melbourne and the Islamic Council of Victoria which, with support from the state government, have established a workshop for young Muslim leaders to meet decision-makers and develop their advocacy skills.

Australia is also working with other nations to encourage mutual respect, understanding and cooperation among different religions and cultures. For example, Australia has fostered regional interfaith cooperation

through involvement in the Regional Interfaith Dialogue as a co-sponsor with Indonesia, New Zealand and the Philippines.

In December 2009, the Parliament of the World's Religions will be held in Melbourne. Muslim delegates will be among the 8000–12000 people expected to attend. As a multifaith, multilingual and multicultural city, Melbourne is an ideal place to hold the world's largest interfaith gathering.

Further information

Department of Immigration and Citizenship
www.immi.gov.au

Attorney-General's Department
www.ag.gov.au

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity
Commission
[www.humanrights.gov.au/partnerships/
index.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/partnerships/index.html)
www.latrobe.edu.au/dialogue/projects

[www.dfat.gov.au/facts/muslims_in_
australia.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/facts/muslims_in_australia.html)
www.dfat.gov.au/facts/religion.html

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