

# MEDIA guide:

## ISLAM AND MUSLIMS IN AUSTRALIA



Australian Government

Department of Immigration and  
Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs



ISLAMIC WOMEN'S WELFARE COUNCIL of Victoria Inc.

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An Australian Government Initiative

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## FOREWORD

FOR most Australians, the primary source of information on Islam is the media. Historically, issues associated with the migration and integration of Muslims into Australia society have not attracted much media attention. Previously, global conflicts involving Muslims were generally understood in terms of nation states rather than religion, and in many instances such conflicts did not warrant detailed coverage because they had no foreseeable impact on Australia. However, the political environment has radically altered in the past decade and journalists are now compelled to cover the religious angle in reporting on Muslims and the Muslim world. This guide is a response to this new environment and aims to assist journalists accurately report issues related to Islam and Muslims. However, it is not intended to provide a definitive account of either.

The Muslim community is highly diverse, with significant practical, socio-political and theological differences among different sectarian and cultural groups. This makes reporting on Muslims complex and generalisations unworkable, especially for Australia's diaspora Muslims. Nonetheless there appears to be recurrent themes and issues that emerge in the Australian media's coverage of Islam and Muslims. The guide discusses interpretations of Islamic sharia law or custom that might conflict with Australian law, for example, with regard to punishments prescribed under Sharia law for various activities. Discussion of these issues should in no way be taken as endorsement of any action contrary to the laws of Australia. The content and form of this guide developed from a series of consultations with journalists from print, visual and electronic media. We also received considerable input and guidance throughout the development of the manual from our advisory committee, who all made a valuable contribution.

We have attempted to shed light on the very basics of Islam as well as the extraordinarily controversial and complex areas of Islamic law that many journalists have grappled with in attempting to report on the dynamics of the 'Islamic world.' Clearly, we have been ambitious in our vision by attempting to contend with as many issues as possible. However, this guide should be viewed as one of many instalments that Australian Muslims have made in facilitating a working relationship between media and Muslim communities. There is still much work to be done on correcting the prevailing misconceptions about Australian Muslims.

Much has been written about Muslims and the clash of civilisations, and although this guide has not been specifically developed to address this confrontational view of relations between Muslim and non-Muslims, we hope it will go some way to elucidating the diverse, vibrant and ever changing nature of Muslims and the communities and theologies they build.

In conclusion, there were two essential motivating factors in the Council's development of this guide. Firstly, for many Muslims residing in Australia the question and indeed the possibility of their acceptance into Australian society is profoundly connected to how the media portrays their place in Australia. Whether or not this is a legitimate association or a reasonable burden the media ought to shoulder, it is the lens by which most Muslims in Australia see the work of journalists. From this perspective, we hope this guide contributes to accuracy and fair reporting. Secondly, the absence of Muslim women in the coverage of Islam and Muslims is as striking as it is unjust. The capacity and role of Muslim women exceeds comments on the hijab or issues of gender oppression. It is crucial that women's expertise be recognised in all matters relating to Islam and their contribution should be sought beyond the 'women's perspective' approach. Until the role of women is acknowledged, it will not be possible to understand Muslims or Islam.

Joumanah El Matrah

# THE ISLAMIC WOMEN'S WELFARE COUNCIL OF VICTORIA

Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria is a community welfare organisation established and managed by Muslim women for Muslim women. The Council was established in 1991, as a non-religious organisation reflecting the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and sectarian diversity of Muslim women living in the state of Victoria.

The Council is founded on the belief that meaningful change in the status of Muslim women is to be achieved through the improved situation of Muslim women individually and building their capacity collectively. To this end, the Council aims to facilitate Muslim women's full participation and integration into Australian society by:

- developing and delivering programs and services to meet the needs of Muslim women in a manner consistent with their values and that of their community;
- empowering Muslim women through information, skill development, support and advocacy;
- promoting social justice, access and equity in the provision of services to Muslim women,
- contributing to the development of knowledge about Muslims at all levels of government, amongst professionals and within the general community;
- promoting the complexity and diversity of Muslim women's identities, and building an interconnectedness between women through increased awareness of their common and diverse challenges;
- promoting women's right to equality, justice, and self determination as envisaged by Islam; and
- working to eliminate discrimination against Muslim women both within their community and in the broader social, economic and political spheres of Australia

The Council's work has been well recognised by various levels of government, the service system and by the community. Current work priorities of the Council include:

- settlement of newly arrived women into Victoria
- poverty and housing
- violence against Muslim women
- capacity building and leadership development
- education and training
- economic participation

The Council works toward these priorities by:

- providing a generalist and housing support service;
- undertaking a community education campaign on citizenship and Australian law;
- providing parenting education sessions;
- leadership development of Muslim women (3 year community education campaign);
- identity development and communication skill development among young women;
- research into school retention rates among young Arab and Muslim young women;
- working against racial, religious and gender based crimes and vilification against Muslim women; and
- lobbying and advocacy on behalf of Muslim women.

# **THE ROYAL MELBOURNE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (RMIT)**

Located in Melbourne, Australia, RMIT University's School of Applied Communication offers undergraduate degree programs in Journalism, as well as graduate qualifications. RMIT programs are recognised by those working in the news media industry and by journalism academics around the country.

The program is taught by lecturers with extensive professional experience, and equipped for students to produce print and online journalism. Students take part in daily live radio bulletins for community radio, and weekly current affairs programs for community television. Most RMIT Journalism graduates find work in the news media within six months of graduating.

The RMIT Journalism program supplied editorial support in the preparation of this media guide. The program invited the Islamic Women's Welfare Council Of Victoria to conduct a seminar for RMIT students about how minority groups were portrayed in the news media. The RMIT Journalism program supports the aim of the Council to encourage fair, accurate and responsible reporting of minority issues by providing comprehensive information to counter racial and ethnic stereotyping in the media.

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

As this guide is designed specifically for media outlets, we focus on topics considered to have news value or issues which have attracted controversy within the media. The issues addressed in this guide, especially in the *Sharia Law and controversy* and the *Muslim women's* sections are highly contentious in nature and have had a divisive effect on the global Muslim community. It is important to note that the practices and views outlined in this guide are not intended to reflect the concerns or views of Australian Muslims, the guide specifically addresses Australian Muslims concerns and experiences in section four. All topics in this guide have been selected solely for the purpose of informing media outlets of the diversity of views among Muslims on those specific topics and to shed light on the complexity of issues currently reported on by the media.

This guide discusses aspects of Sharia law and cultural and religious customs that might conflict with Australian law and norms, discussion of these issues should in no way be understood as an endorsement of those practices or any practice contrary to Australian law. This is especially the case in relation to the rights of women in Islam and freedom of faith.

Since we are summarising complex debates, in most instances we would recommend further reading. There are some basic concepts of Islam that are common to all sects and schools of law. The guide begins by providing an overview of these concepts, moving on to a discussion of Islamic law and significant debates on Islamic issues among Muslims and non-Muslims today. The final section discusses the status of Muslims around the world, focusing on Australia and Victoria. All information in this guide has been gathered from sources provided in English and often accessible via the internet, and comprehensive referencing has been provided when further information is required. We have utilised English language sources to enable further research and to demonstrate the breadth of resources available and easily accessible in English.

We have endeavoured to represent as accurately as possible the diversity of views within the Islamic world. Our choice of contacts for further information in each chapter reflects this diversity. However, as the Council is an institution working to further the rights of Muslim women, we have clearly specified which individuals and organisations we consider to be more “traditional” or “conservative”, particularly in relation to women’s rights. While none of these individuals or organisations promote harm, their views are sometimes used to undermine perceptions as to the designated status of women in Islam and therefore Muslim societies. It is also important to note the complexity of labelling individuals or organisations under the rubric of conservative, moderate, progressive or radically conservative. Individuals or organisations may be conservative on some matters but progressive on others. Furthermore, some individuals reject labelling such as conservative or progressive, believing there is only one correct view of Islam and many other incorrect views. This debate as to whose interpretation and practice of faith is the most authentic is to be found in all religions. We have excluded from our list the radically conservative because it is our view that their interpretation of Islam contravenes both the ethical standards of the vast majority of Australian Muslims and the spirit of Islam itself.

The list provides contact details of experts in the field of Islam, Muslims or associated areas of concern. For the most part, the contact list is based on level of expertise, but we have also included moderate leaders and practitioners of Islam in their area of expertise. It is important to note that the Council has no association with many of the contacts and organisations included in the contact list, nor are any of the views outlined here necessarily endorsed by those on the contact list nor by the project’s Advisory Committee. Finally, there are many individuals and organisations who would have been valuable additions to our contact list; unfortunately limited resources made it impossible for us to complete a definitive registry of experts.

# SECTION 1: THE BASICS OF FAITH

## GENERAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

THE following ideas and statements are uncontroversial among the vast majority of Muslims.

### 1.1 Islam

ISLAM was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (whose name will be followed by the initials PBUH, standing for “Peace Be Upon Him”, a common blessing given to him by Muslims) just outside the city of Mecca (or Makkah), which is part of the modern kingdom of Saudi Arabia, around AD 610.

The Arabic word Islam is derived from the root *aslama*, which means “to submit”. In this context it means to submit one’s self to the will of God (“*Allah*” in Arabic). The Arabic word *salaam* (peace) is also derived from this root. Muslim means one who submits to the will of God.

Islam traces its lineage through Judaism and Christianity. It therefore acknowledges and pays respect to all of the prophets of the Old Testament and names Jesus as the most beloved of the prophets. However Jesus is not regarded as divine, as he is by Christians. Islam does not support the doctrine of the Trinity which regards Jesus as the eternal Son of God, but rather as a prophet of God. Muslims believe that the message given to Muhammad is not a new revelation but rather one that has been revealed progressively over time, that commenced with the Jews, continued to the Christians and finally to the Muslims. Jews and Christians are described as “People of the Book” in the Qur’an because they are considered recipients of the same revelation of the One God.

Islam’s relationship with Judaism and Christianity is complex; on one hand it reiterates and supports many of the beliefs and practices of both religions, on the other it introduces new doctrines and significantly different practices. Nevertheless, the similarities between the monotheistic faiths surpass their differences.

Abraham is considered to be the ancestor of both Arabs and Jews. Born in the region we call Iraq today, he travelled through Egypt and Palestine. His wife Sarah travelled with him, while his concubine and the mother of his first son was an Egyptian woman, Hagar. She and her son Ismail (or Ishmael) were exiled into Arabia, and Arabs trace their ancestry to Ismail. From Sarah’s son Isaac, Jews trace their descent through the 12 tribes of the Israelites.

**For more information on the early history of Islam, refer to:**

- Abdullah Saeed
- Fethi Mansouri
- Forum On Australia’s Islamic Relations
- Islamic Women’s Welfare Council Of Victoria
- Islamic Council Of Victoria
- Farid Esack (international)

**For more information on the relationship between the Abrahamic faiths, refer to:**

- Joseph Camilleri
- Australian Multicultural Foundation
- Desmond Cahill
- Karen Armstrong (international)

**For more information on interfaith dialogue, refer to:**

- Islamic Council of Victoria
- Muslim Women's National Network Australia
- Australian Multicultural Foundation
- Affinity Intercultural Foundation

## 1.2 Prophethood

ACCORDING to Islamic belief, God revealed his message for mankind to Muhammad (c. 570–632) and other prophets, including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus (Peace be Upon Them). It is an article of faith among the vast majority of Muslims that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the final prophet chosen and sent by God to mankind as His messenger.

It was at the age of 40, while meditating in a cave called Hira, just outside Mecca, that Muhammad (PBUH) is said to have received his first revelation from God, announced to him by the archangel Jibril (or Gabriel). This event is dated around AD 610.

Although Islam believes in a line of prophets beginning with Adam, the first man, it did not adopt from Christianity the belief that Jesus was the son of God because Muslims believe that God is indivisible. Muslims believe Muhammad (PBUH) was mortal and while some miraculous events took place in his life, they are not generally attributed to him.

Muhammad (PBUH) is not only important as the source of Qur'anic revelation, but also as the source of many of the cultural and religious practices of Muslims today. In the early days, the history of the Prophet's (PBUH) life, his behaviour, deeds and sayings were memorised by his companions and passed on orally, forming the foundation for the *sunna*, the behaviour of the Prophet (PBUH) (see section 2.3).

**For further information on the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), refer to:**

- Abdullah Saeed
- Sheikh Fehmi
- Sheikh Isa
- Karen Armstrong (international)

## 1.3 The Qur'an

THE Qur'an is the holy scripture of Islam. It comprises the complete collection of revelations by God to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), beginning around AD 610 and ending with Muhammad's death in AD 632.

The word Qur'an literally means "that which is recited", because the revelations received by Muhammad (PBUH) were repeated verbatim by those around him. Although there are differing views, many Muslims believe the Qur'an was finally put into written form around AD 650.

The Qur'an contains 114 chapters (or *surahs*) written in Arabic, using both allegorical and prescriptive approaches to revelation. Its structure is not chronological nor is it ordered according to the importance or theme of revelations. As with other religions, there are various approaches to the interpretations of the text.

**For an overview of various interpretations, refer to:**

- Abdullah Saeed
- Jamila Hussein
- Farid Esack (international)
- Khalid Abou El Fadl (international)
- Riffat Hassan (international)

**For a more conservative or traditional view of the Qur'an, refer to:**

- Sheikh Isa
- Islamic Research Foundation (international)
- Al Huda International (international)

## 1.4 The five pillars of Islam

THE key duties required of Muslims form the five pillars of Islam. Although not all Muslims may undertake them, or may place differing levels of importance upon them, most will recognise them as duties of a Muslim.

### \* *Bearing witness (Shahada)*

The fundamental concept in Islam is the oneness of God. This monotheism is absolute. The Arabic word “Allah” translates to “God” in English. This is the only translation of the English word “God”. “Allah” is the same word used for “God” by Christian and Jewish Arabs in the Bible, before Islam, and is not a different God than the one worshipped by the other two main monotheistic religions, Judaism and Christianity. Muslims bear witness to the oneness (Tawhid) of God and to the fact that Muhammad is his messenger. Tawhid denotes the centrality, unity and indivisibility of God as well as the belief that everything in the universe is created by God. The oath taken by a Muslim, in the presence of witnesses, is “I bear witness that there is no deity but God, I bear witness that Muhammad is God’s messenger.”

### \* *Prayer (Salat)*

Muslims are required to perform prayers in a prescribed manner five times each day before sunrise (*Fajr*), around midday (*Dhuhr*), in mid-afternoon (*Asr*), at sunset (*Maghrib*) and at nightfall (*Isha*).

The ritual of prayer involves prescribed genuflections, prostrations and prayers, which are recited facing in the direction of Mecca. This direction is known as the *qibla*. Although prayer is a requirement specified in the Qur’an, its details (the number of prayers and their manner) were established by the Prophet (PBUH).

In Muslim countries, prayers are announced at the required time by a call to prayer from the mosque. Before prayers, Muslims are required to perform ritual ablutions, which include washing the face, hands, arms and feet. This ritual is called *wudu* (or *wadhu* or *waḥḥoo*).

### \* *Almsgiving (Zakat)*

An obligatory religious tax, *zakat* is generally estimated at 2.5% of a Muslim’s annual savings and is to be used to assist the poor and needy.

As with prayers, although *zakat* is clearly specified in the Qur’an, its details were fixed by the Prophet (PBUH) and in later interpretations. This is different from voluntary charity which is at the discretion of the individual.

### *\* Fasting (Sawm)*

All Muslims who have reached puberty are required to observe the ninth month of the lunar year, *Ramadan*, as a period of fasting. Muslims whose health permits are required to abstain from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual intercourse from dawn to dusk.

Women who are lactating, menstruating or pregnant are exempt from fasting, as are travellers. Those who do not fast during Ramadan are required to compensate either by fasting when they can or through contributing to charity. In Muslim countries, some businesses close for all or part of the day during Ramadan to ease the burden of fasting.

### *\* Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj)*

All Muslims are required to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime if they are physically and financially able to do so. Pilgrims participate in special rites held there during the 12th month of the lunar calendar.

Muhammad instituted this requirement, modifying an existing pre-Islamic custom, to emphasise sites significant to God and Abraham. The rituals of the Hajj were established by the Qur'an and the Prophet (PBUH).

In pre-Islamic times, Mecca had been a destination for pilgrims but its shrines served many different gods. The Prophet (PBUH) removed idols from Mecca in order to make it the qibla, or focus of Muslim faith.

## **1.5 Imams**

ISLAM does not have a hierarchy of clergy nor any intermediaries between God and the individual, as in some other faiths. There is no overarching authority to establish or forbid religious practices or interpretations of scripture.

An imam is a person who leads the congregation in prayer. He is not a priest. There is no ordination and no sacraments or rites which only a religiously qualified person can perform. Imams may be married and have families like any other Muslim.

In theory, any respectable person with sufficient religious knowledge can act as an imam, and in cases where a mosque is left without a formally appointed imam, a member of the congregation can fulfil the function as necessary.

Imams tend to be people who have undertaken religious studies, at an Islamic university such as al-Azhar in Egypt. In some Muslim countries, imams and other mosque officials are appointed, paid and supervised by the government and may be expected to support the government in its policies. This is increasingly the case in countries where governments define themselves as Islamic.

In other countries, religious scholars may gain supreme political power and dictate not only the moral and religious code of the country but also select who can stand for elections and how government is to operate.

In many countries, imams are appointed by local mosque committees which pay their salary, and they have no relationship to the operations of the state. In sects that do not have a tradition of attending mosques, imams operate as teachers and counsellors and live off donations from their community.

In Australia, imams frequently find themselves called upon to act as community counsellors and arbiters on questions of religious law, community representatives and welfare officers as well as prayer leaders. At times, this has caused significant problems for Muslim communities and for imams, because they are forced to respond to issues for which there is no religious precedent or in which they do not possess expertise.

There is no official training institute for imams in Australia and no system to regulate the teachings and conduct of imams. While the absence of a hierarchy is one of the liberating aspects of Islam, it also means different imams may preach widely varying forms and interpretations of the faith, and this can prove bewildering for anyone trying to understand Islam in Australia, much less globally. At times it has also created conflict among Muslims.

Muslims have developed various models and traditions on the role of imams in an increasingly complex world of diaspora communities and Islamic states. In Australia, where Muslims come from a multitude of countries and religious traditions, there has not been agreement among the Muslim population as to what role imams will play and if a formal Islamic structure will represent Muslims. Generally, imams have provided some form of leadership for their respective ethnic/sectarian communities or their immediate geographical community.

In 1990 the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils chose Sheikh Taj al-Din al-Hilali as the *Mufti* of Australia to federally represent all Muslims. However, many state Islamic organisations and individual Muslims disputed the development of such a position on theological, cultural and political grounds. The nature of the opposition is quite complex, but it is important to note that at this time many Muslims in Australia do not support the establishment of a formal overarching Islamic figurehead.

### **Amina Wadud leads Friday prayers**

IN MARCH 2005, a professor in the US, Amina Wadud, became the first Muslim woman to lead mixed Friday prayers. The service was organised by a group of activists, journalists and scholars who hoped to encourage discussion about the centuries-old tradition of separating men and women during congregational prayer, and reserving the role of prayer leader, or imam, for men. “The issue of gender equality is a very important one in Islam, and Muslims have unfortunately used highly restrictive interpretations of history to move backward,” Ms Wadud said before the service started. Many Muslims angrily denounced a mixed-gender Islamic prayer service led by a woman in New York as a violation of their religion, while others praised the action as a historical breakthrough.

**For further information on Imams, refer to:**

- Islamic Council of Victoria
- Islamic Women’s Welfare Council of Victoria
- Kuranda Seyfi Seyit
- Al Ghazzali Centre
- Board of Imams Victoria
- Khalid Abou El Fadl

## 1.6 Events and festivals

THERE are many events and festivals that Muslims celebrate based on the Islamic lunar calendar, founded in AD 622 when Muhammad and his followers escaped from Mecca to the city that became known as Medina. This event is called the *Hijra* (migration) and so the calendar is called *Hijri* and is often denoted by the initials AH (Anno Hegirae, Latin for “years of the Hijra”).

Months of the Islamic Calendar		
1. Muharram	5. Jumada al-Awwal	9. Ramadan
2. Safar	6. Jumada al-Thani	10. Shawwal
3. Rabia al-Awwal	7. Rajab	11. Dhu al-Qadah
4. Rabia al-Thani	8. Shaaban	12. Dhu al-Hijja

*Note: Due to different transliterations of the Arabic alphabet, other spellings of the months are possible.*

The Islamic lunar calendar is approximately 11 days shorter than the Gregorian solar calendar, which is why the Gregorian dates for Islamic festivals move by roughly that amount each year. The following are common celebrations to the great bulk of Muslims:

### \* *Ramadan*

The month of fasting in which the Qur’an was originally revealed. Ramadan is a very festive time in many Muslim countries, especially at dusk, when the fast is broken. In some countries, daily requirements such as work are altered to ease the burden of fasting from dawn to dusk. In Western countries, some Muslims may find fasting more difficult and isolating as it is not supported by the social system.

### \* *Eid ul Fitr*

The completion of the period of fasting is marked by Eid ul-Fitr (the festival of breaking the fast) and is traditionally announced at the sighting of the new moon. During this time, there is celebration and gifts of new clothes or money are given to children. In some Muslim communities, the celebration continues over a period of two or three days.

### *\* Eid al-Adha*

Eid al-Adha, or the festival of sacrifice, symbolises Abraham's reprieve from sacrificing his son to God. This festival occurs at the end of Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) and Muslims typically celebrate by slaughtering either a goat, cow or sheep and donating food to those who cannot afford to eat well and undertaking other charitable acts.

### *\* Ashura*

Ashura is an important historical date for all Muslims, but is commemorated mainly by Shias. Ashura falls on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Muharram (the first month of the Islamic calendar), marking the day on which the massacre of many important members of the Prophet's (PBUH) family, and particularly his grandson, Hussein, occurred. Shias typically hold mass processions to remember and sometimes re-enact the brutal killings, which can involve penitential rites such as self-flagellation. The whole month is considered important, but the first 10 days, during which the massacre occurred, are the most significant. Some Sunni's commemorate Ashura by fasting on the day.

### *\* Eid Milad al-Nabi*

The Prophet's (PBUH) birthday falls on the eve of the 12th day of Rabi' al-Awwal, the third month of the Islamic calendar.

### *\* Laylat al-Qadr*

Lailat al-Qadr, often translated into night of greatness, commemorates the night in which the Qur'an was revealed in its entirety to the Prophet (PBUH). This night is considered by many to be one of the holiest nights of Ramadan. The precise date of this event is unknown, but Muslims generally observe the last 10 days of Ramadan by additional pray, especially at night.

**For further information on the Islamic calendar, events and festivals, refer to:**

- Islamic Council of Victoria
- Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria
- Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC)
- Victorian Arabic Social Services
- Board of Imams

## **1.7 Halal and haram food**

Islam places certain restriction on the consumption of certain food and drink. It is generally believed by Muslims that these restrictions are based on the harm that certain foods may cause to the body.

Foods that are specifically prohibited (haram) are:

- Meat from a swine in all its forms, including its fat.
- Intoxicants (alcohol, drugs). Some Muslims will avoid medicines containing alcohol if they can.
- The flesh, offal, fat and other by products of animals that have died other than at the hand of a Muslim or using Islamic rites, or that are strangled or have been slaughtered through beating.
- Faeces and urine, placental tissue, blood.

For food to be halal (allowed), the following are to be observed:

- All the raw materials and ingredients used are also halal.
- Halal animals have been slaughtered according to Islamic rites.
- The act must be performed by a mentally sound Muslim who has severed the blood and respiratory channels of the animal, using a very sharp cutting tool such as knife.

**For further information on halal food, refer to:**

- Islamic Council of Victoria
- Board of Imams
- Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC)

## 1.8 Finance

THE majority of Muslims believe that interest is prohibited to them. However since its inception the global banking sector has been based on interest. In response to this dilemma, wealthy Muslims began to pioneer small-scale Islamic banking projects which avoid the use of interest. The success of some of these projects, plus the demand for such services, led to the establishment of Islamic banks in the 1970s, which have since spread to all corners of the Muslim world.

Some Islamic countries, such as Pakistan, Iran and Sudan, have attempted to change their whole financial systems to more Islam-oriented models. Even in societies which do not have a Muslim majority, like the USA, Britain, Denmark and Australia, there are Islamic financial institutions. A large number of traditional banks, have opened “Islamic” branches to serve their Muslim clientele.

**For further information on Islamic finance and banking, refer to:**

- Abdullah Saeed
- Robert Rice
- Islamic Council Of Victoria
- Australian Federation Of Islamic Councils
- Al Ghazzali Centre

## SECTION 2: APPLICATION OF FAITH

### SOURCES OF DIVERSITY AND DEBATE

WHILE some of the diversity within the Muslim community comes from ethnic, cultural, regional and linguistic differences, some variation has also emerged from the historical development of Islam itself.

#### 2.1 Sects

THE major sectarian division in Islam is that between the Sunnis and Shias. Sunnis form about 85% of the global Muslim population and Shias (or Shiites) most of the remaining 15%.

The Sunnis (who call themselves “the people of tradition and community”) are often considered to be the mainstream in Islam, following the example of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the four Caliphs (or deputies, successors to Prophet Muhammad as rulers of the Muslim community) after his death. The Shias (who call themselves “the people of the house”), on the other hand, are often seen as diverging from the mainstream.

It would be more correct to say that both groups formed because of Ali, Muhammad’s son-in-law and cousin, and the question of his right to succeed the Prophet (PBUH) as leader. The Shias believe that Ali should have become the Caliph upon the Prophet’s (PBUH) death; the Sunnis believe other leaders within the Prophet’s (PBUH) immediate circle (Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman) were more suited for leadership. Later, however, especially around the time of Uthman (or Osman)’s caliphate, political differences arose and many Muslims grew disenchanted with the Caliph and accused his reign of giving rise to elitism. This led to the assassination of Uthman and the first major civil war between Muslims. Ali became the last of the 4 Caliphs.

Over time, these splits have expanded into social, political and theological differences. The main beliefs and principles of Islam remain the same in both streams.

Over the years, further sub-sects have developed within these two overarching sects, such as the Ismailis within the Shia sect. It is difficult to do justice to the breadth of sectarian differences within Islam and their individual practices. The majority of Muslims in Australia are Sunni, but there are also significant populations belonging to the Shia, Alawi, Alevi, Ismaili, Druze, Bohra and Ahmedi sects. The diversity that now exists extends not only to theological differences but also to cultural ones. For example, until recently the *Alevis* (a sect within Islam) of Turkey and the *Alewis* of Lebanon and Syria were considered to be the same sectarian group; however, recent studies suggest that they may actually be very different both historically and theologically.

It is important to note that some minority Islamic sects have faced substantial persecution from mainstream Islam in Muslim countries. As a result, some sects do not always identify themselves with mainstream Muslims or Islam. Similarly, many mainstream Muslims do not accept some of these groups as Muslim. In Pakistan, for example; the government has pronounced the Ahmedis (who believe that there was a prophet after Muhammad (PBUH), their founder Mirza Ghulam Ahmed) non-Muslims, despite the fact that Ahmedis themselves identify as Muslims.

Significant Shia minorities exist in Lebanon, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Saudi Arabia. Shias form the majority in Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq and Bahrain.

## 2.2 Sufis

SUFISM is not a sect within Islam. Sufis are Muslim mystics and are represented in all Islamic schools of thought and many Muslim sects. They are renowned for their love of poetry, song and dance dedicated to God. Many Sufis believe that Sufism is about the internalisation of faith and see external piety as a lesser brand of faith, while other Sufis believe that there are two doors to God, one by the heart (their approach) and one by the law (standard religion's approach). Both are held to be equally valid, but suited to different individuals.

Sufis believe in following the Prophet's (PBUH) mysticism, aiming to lead a life of piety and rejecting worldly pleasures. Their practices include meditation and recitation of prayers or incantations of their own formulae. Interest in Sufism in the West has largely followed a pattern of "new age" interest in religious mysticism, such as the Kabbalah in Judaism, Krishna consciousness from Hinduism and Gnosticism in Christianity. The most famous of the Sufis are the whirling Dervishes of Turkey.

**For further information on Islamic sects, refer to:**

- Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria
- Islamic Council of Victoria
- Victorian Arabic Social Services
- Paul White
- Abdullah Saeed
- Fethi Mansouri
- Khalid Abou El Fadl (international)

## 2.3 Hadith and Sunna

IN ADDITION to the Qur'an, Muslims seek guidance to varying extents from the *hadith* and *sunna*. The sunna is said to be the normative behaviour of the Prophet(PBUH), and the hadith is the documentation of the sunna. Although there is a distinct difference between sunna and hadith, many Muslims treat them as synonymous. Hadiths may include recommendations on the reconciliation of disputes, prescriptions for prayer and charity, on business, on gender relations, education, hospitality, etc.

The important hadiths are considered to be those that reinforce Qur'anic doctrines and principles. However, some Muslims rely heavily on hadiths to emulate the Prophet (PBUH) in very specific ways, such as wearing beards in his style, favouring nuts and seeds and dates because the Prophet (PBUH) enjoyed them. Reliable hadiths form a body of regulations, directives and guidance for Muslims. For many Muslims, they are second only to the Qur'an in religious matters.

The hadiths were first transmitted orally but, like the Qur'anic revelations, were written down over time. They were assembled from the recollections of the companions of the Prophet (PBUH), and were recorded in writing a considerable time after his death. Some authors believe

they were compiled 100 or 200 years later. In the Prophet's (PBUH) lifetime it had been necessary to validate one's repetition of a hadith by naming those who first heard it directly from the Prophet (PBUH), who they narrated to hadith to, and who in turn that person narrated to. After the Prophet's (PBUH) death, acceptable hadiths underwent this type of verification by identifying the 'chain of narrators'. Over the course of time, thousands of hadiths appeared which were not authentic or could not be reliably attributed to the Prophet (PBUH). In the 9th century AD, this "science" of verification was formalised to establish the authenticity of hadiths and to record them reliably. Strong hadiths are considered to be those with a full chain of truthful and reliable narrators. Medium strength hadiths are those with honest and reliable narrators but with a broken chain of narrators and weak hadiths are considered to be those with a broken chain of narrators and unreliable narrators.

It is now commonly accepted by scholars that when corpus of hadiths were collected and standardised, some of the hadiths which were included were weak or forged. In relation to women it appears that the process of verification and standardisation failed, because many of the hadiths which were antagonistic and derogatory to women and could not be verified were nevertheless maintained and even promoted as the Prophet's (PBUH) observations and behaviour towards women.

According to Sunni Islam, there are six canonical collections of hadith literature. These were first compiled in the second and third Islamic centuries (i.e., 700 AD through 800 AD). Two of the most famous collections are by scholars known as al-Bukhari and Muslim. Shia Islam incorporates these canons alongside its own collection of hadiths.

**For detailed information on the process of collection and standardisation of hadiths and their authenticity refer to:**

- Jamila Hussein
- Abdullah Saeed
- Board of Imams
- Islamic Council Of Victoria
- Islamic Women's Welfare Council Of Victoria
- Asma Barlas (international)
- Women Living Under Muslim Law (international)
- Sisters in Islam (international)

## 2.4 Reasoned interpretation, literalism and imitation

*IJTIHAD* in the early period of Islam was tremendously important. Ijtihad is a technical term of Islamic law and means the process of making a legal decision by independent reasoned interpretation of the various sources of law, namely the Qur'an and hadiths. The opposite of ijtihad is *taqlid*, imitation.

In early Islam ijtihad was a commonly used practice by scholars. From the period the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD, the importance of ijtihad diminished and came to be seen as unwarranted, although not all scholars agree that this occurred. Several reasons are cited for this so-called "closing of the gates of ijtihad". It is thought that jurists feared for the survival of Islamic civilisation because of growing division among Muslims in their understanding of Islam. Jurists were concerned that such diversity would eventually lead to the fragmentation of the *ummah* (Muslim

community) and decided that unity of the ummah was more important than the proliferation of different schools of thought. Some jurists were also of the view that all the questions and ambiguities that needed to be discussed and resolved had adequately been covered by the main schools of Islamic thought and law. In essence it is believed that several leading scholars successfully argued against the right of Muslims to interpret their religion, thus ensuring that all explanation and application of Islamic law from then on, was confined to an imitation of earlier opinions, views and practices.

Over the past century, side by side with the literalist movement and imitation advocates, Muslim scholars and thinkers have resumed interpretative work and continue to argue for the need to resume the process of *ijtihād*, because they believe modern issues cannot be understood and resolved based on interpretations and laws developed by scholars centuries ago. These arguments are not always accepted by members of the Muslim community, because many continue to believe in the completeness and perfection of the Sharia as it stands. Thus, while some Muslims are pushing for further interpretation and reform, there is also a strong movement towards a traditionalist reading of Sharia and the Qur'an.

**For information in support of further Ijtihad, refer to:**

- Abdullah Saeed
- Sisters in Islam (international)
- Asma Barlas (international)
- Fatima Mernissi (international)
- Farid Esack (international)

**For an alternative view (which may be described as traditional or conservative) refer to:**

- Sheikh Fehmi
- Sheikh Isa

## 2.5 Sharia

*SHARIA* for many Muslims is Islamic law, which covers acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for Muslims. Sharia may be translated as “path” or “road”. It is not strictly a code, but a combination of a number of sources of Islamic learning, the foremost source being the Qur'an. The hadiths are complementary sources and help support and elaborate verses of the Qur'an that may not have been explained in detail. Jurists have also developed other tools over time to facilitate their understanding of the Qur'an and hadiths.

During his lifetime, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was the uncontested spiritual and political leader of the Muslim community. Muslims generally sought his advice on issues of faith and practice as they arose. Upon his death, Muslims continued to discuss newly emerging issues with the immediate followers of the Prophet (PBUH) and then with the emergence of scholars known as the *ulama* (“learned ones”). In the centuries after the emergence of Islam, the ongoing discussion and debate led to what is now referred to as Islamic law and the legal system of various Muslim countries. For the first two centuries of Islam, the realm of the Muslim community expanded through conquest. The Muslim world absorbed diverse cultures and territories and the gradual conversion of the inhabitants of those territories produced an explosion in ideas and schools of thought. This diversity contributed significantly to the

emergence and further development of a range of disciplines such as law, theology, literature and philosophy.

As in the process of ijihad an influential group of jurists in the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD curbed ongoing interpretive development of Sharia. However, in past century, jurists and scholars resumed the interpretative approach to the Qur'an in light of the needs and challenges of living in a modern society.

A majority of Muslims believe that in a Muslim nation, Sharia should form the basis of the law by which society is organised and governed. However what constitutes Sharia and how it is to be applied is a source of much debate. Many Muslims consider the Sharia to be divine law, based on the teachings of the Qur'an. According to this view, any opposition to the Sharia is blasphemous. Yet many other Muslims believe that the Sharia itself is not the word of God, but the interpretative work of scholars and therefore cannot be considered sacred because it was socially constructed in the centuries after the death of the Prophet (PBUH). The debate can also be understood as one between advocates of a conservative sometimes, literal approach to religion in which the practice of religion should never change versus the progressive approach in which the evolving nature of religion comes from ongoing interpretation of the sacred text and other works. As with all debates, there are many people who are in middle of these two sides or who do not wish to enter the debate at all.

**For a general overview of the Sharia and its application in various countries, refer to**

- Abdullah Saeed
- Jamila Hussein
- Khalid Abou El Fadl (international)
- Chandra Muzaffar (international)

**For a progressive view of the Sharia and its application, refer to:**

- Islamic Women's Welfare Council Of Victoria (as it relates to women)
- Farid Esack (international)
- Asma Barlas (international)
- Tariq Ramadan (international)
- Sisters in Islam (international)
- Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation (international)
- Shirkat Gah (international)
- Women Living Under Muslim Law (international)

**For alternative views (which may be described as traditional or conservative) on the Sharia and its application, refer to:**

- Sheikh Fehmi
- Sheikh Isa
- Islamic Research Foundation (international)

## 2.6 Sharia law and controversy

THIS section reviews areas of Sharia law and practice that have attracted significant media attention and controversy, we have therefore given a brief account of the laws and their practice. The following areas are not issues of concern for Muslims residing in Australia and should not be viewed as the practices or beliefs of Australian Muslims, nor are Australian Muslims advocating for the introduction of such practices or laws.

Australians are free to worship and practice culture and traditions, within the law. This means that Australian law, made by parliaments and the courts, prevail over the exercise of traditional or religious practices. The rule of law is a fundamental principle of our society, binding on all people in Australia.

Some practices outlined in this guide, including some practices endorsed by some interpretations of Sharia law and practices concerning the rights of women in Islam, are contrary to Australian law. Such practices are illegal and unacceptable in Australia.

### *Apostasy*

*RIDDA*, or apostasy, refers to a renunciation of the Islamic faith or to conversion from Islam to another religion, which is forbidden in Islam. According to a large body of Islamic scholars, apostasy is punishable by law when it manifests in such a way as to damage the community. According to some scholars, apostasy carries the death penalty. Other scholars, however, claim that there are no grounds for the death penalty for apostasy. They base their opinion on the following arguments:

- \* The death penalty for apostasy is not mentioned anywhere in the Qur'an;
- \* The basis for the death penalty for apostasy is a saying of the Prophet (PBUH) that is not generally considered part of the more reliable collections of his sayings;
- \* It is explicitly stated in the Qur'an that "there is no compulsion in religion" (Surah: 2, Ayah: 256).

The novelist Salman Rushdie was accused of ridda for his novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988). This is because many elements of the novel, and especially the title, are offensive to some Muslims. The fatwa against Rushdie proved highly controversial among Muslims because the Ayatollah Khomeini, then the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, did not comply with Sharia standards in issuing the fatwa and many Muslims found his actions reprehensible. A number of key Muslim writers opposed the fatwa, including, 127 Iranian intellectuals exiled under the Ayatollah's reign.

The charge of apostasy has been used on a number of occasions against Muslim thinkers to silence dissent. The last famous example of this is Nawal El-Saadawi in Egypt.

**For more information on apostasy, refer to:**

- Abdullah Saeed

## *Jihad*

JIHAD is an Arabic word which comes from the root *jahada*, which means “to strive”. It can refer to internal struggle to attain perfect faith, or an external struggle against injustice and oppression through non-violent or violent means. Today, however, the word is often understood only in a very narrow militaristic sense.

The notion of jihad developed from various instructions in the Qur’an, however, throughout history Muslim scholars have further refined and expanded its meaning. This has resulted in an array of definitions of jihad and a proliferation of rules to govern its application.

The notion of jihad as an internal struggle or as a peaceful struggle against injustice derives from a hadith in which the Prophet (PBUH) described the greatest jihad as against one’s inner demons and desires. Many scholars have suggested that the source of this hadith is weak, however this notion of jihad continues to feature in the theology and in the street meaning for Muslims as an alternative meaning to jihad as warfare.

The idea of jihad as warfare derives from permission given to the Prophet (PBUH) for defensive warfare after his migration from Mecca to Medina failed to stop attacks against him and his followers by his adversaries in Arabia. The Qur’an directives on jihad do not allow Muslims to initiate fighting and if their enemies seek peace, Muslims are obliged to cease fighting. The Qur’an itself does not refer to jihad as a method to convert people to Islam, in fact it specifically refers to peaceful co-existence with non-Muslims and that there is no compulsion in religion. In part because of the Qur’anic prohibition of conversion by force, many scholars argue that Islam has no notion of holy war and further, that many Muslims and non-Muslims have conflated “holy war” with “just war” theory akin to that of some Christian doctrines.

From the 8th to the 11th century AD, scholars attempted to develop an authoritative understanding of jihad based on Qur’an and hadith references. It was in this period that some jurists proposed the idea of jihad as a form of warfare to establish rule over non-Islamic states. It was also in this period that some jurists supported the notion of jihad against dissidents within the Muslim community. It was predominantly in this period that the following rules developed:

- \* Only the head of an Islamic state could declare jihad;
- \* Those against whom war was declared were to be given adequate warning;
- \* Adversaries who did not fight and fell under Islamic rule received protection, but were required to pay a tax if they did not convert;
- \* Civilians were never to be harmed or killed, nor was their property to be damaged.

Parallel to the state-managed jihad described above, jurists also developed a “defensive” jihad provision for individuals who did not come under the protection of an Islamic state and found themselves or their community under attack. This form of jihad existed for extraordinary circumstances and very few rules were developed for its regulation and application. The consequence has been that individual Muslims have been able to define their rules of engagement to suit ideological objectives. This limited body of work by early jurists, although not

developed for today's situation, has been crucial to groups fighting occupation and others seeking to mobilise Muslims.

The early work on jihad and its application to war eventually waned, without a definitive set of rules for the Muslim community to inherit. What is important to note here is that the issue of jihad has been continuously discussed and debated by jurists and there continues to be significant differences on interpretation and accepted set of rules. Even in the modern period the way in which jihad is used or misused by groups has been a matter of disagreement and controversy.

**For an overview of Jihad, refer to:**

- Abdullah Saeed
- Damien Kingsbury
- Khalid Abou El Fadl (international)
- James Johnson Turner (international)

### *Is terrorism jihad?*

LIKE the vast majority of Muslims globally, Australian Muslims and their community organisations in Australia, strongly condemn terrorist acts. The recent development and use of terrorism by Muslim groups is complex. It is important to note that terrorism developed prior to the use of the term jihad to describe it.

The views of Muslims vary considerably on what constitutes jihad in today's context. Much of this diversity evolves from differences in opinion, both scholarly and on the street, as to what constitutes a threat to Muslims, how resistance is to be defined and what forms of resistance are acceptable. There is also debate over whether nationalist struggles, such as those in Chechnya and Aceh, meet the requirement for jihad.

Groups who commit terrorist acts make two points: firstly, they are defending themselves as Muslims or defending Muslims unable to defend themselves. Secondly, that whether or not their strategies fit neatly within the guidelines of jihad, they are hopelessly overpowered by their adversary and do not have the resources to carry out conventional forms of warfare. Many Muslims sympathise with individuals in these circumstances, but continue to reject any suggestion that the killing of civilians is acceptable.

Muslims tend to be less sympathetic to groups who state they are fighting for the liberation of Muslims globally and therefore direct their campaigns internationally. It is important to note that these groups generally target civilians (Muslim and non-Muslim) as a matter of course.

**For further information on the use of terrorism by Muslims, refer to:**

- Damien Kingsbury
- Shahram Akbarzadeh
- Khalid Abdul Fadl (international)
- James Turner Johnson (international)

For information on nationalist struggles in which terrorism has been used, refer to regional experts list in the Listings section at the back.

## *Unlawful sexual conduct*

*ZINA*, is specifically unlawful sexual intercourse; but generally understood as any sexual relations engaged in by a man or a woman outside of marriage. This is strictly prohibited in the Qur'an and carries with it specific punishments. According to the Qur'an, the consequences for proven and convicted cases of unlawful sex are:

\* 100 lashes for both men and women convicted of adultery.

\* A person found guilty of fornication shall only be married to another person who is also guilty of such acts.

Basing their opinion on hadiths, some jurists support an additional punishment for adultery of stoning to death, although it has no basis in the Qur'an and was a pre-Islamic practice.

Provision for stoning to death exists in a number of Muslim countries , but are not applied.

According to the Qur'an, in order to accuse someone of zina, a person must produce four eyewitnesses to the actual act, meaning that it would practically have to be committed in public. The absolute importance the Qur'an places on the provision of proof is demonstrated by the fact that any accusation of zina made without proof are reproached in the strongest words, and constitute a serious crime and is punishable in Islam. In those countries where there are reports of people, almost always women, being accused of adultery, this procedure is never followed and generally those accused have been forced to confess (sometimes through torture), subverting the state's responsibility to prove that the act took place.

Overwhelmingly those arrested and convicted for adultery are women, and it has been suggested by Muslim scholars that states have increasingly used the charge of zina to silence political dissent.

### **For views against stoning to death for unlawful sex refer to:**

- Sisters in Islam (international)
- Women Living Under Muslim Law (international)
- Islamic Research Foundation International (international)

### **For an alternative view (which may be described as traditional or conservative or literalist), refer to:**

- Islamic Research Foundation
- Al Huda International

### The Amina Lawal Case

In 2002, Amina Lawal was sentenced to stoning to death by a Sharia court in the state of Katsina in Nigeria. She had allegedly confessed to having had a child while divorced. Under the new Sharia-based penal code, which applies to Muslims only, pregnancy outside of marriage constitutes sufficient evidence for a woman to be convicted of adultery. The man named as the father of Lawal's baby reportedly denied having sex with her and the charges against him were discontinued. Lawal did not have a lawyer during her first trial, when the judgement was passed. She filed an appeal against her sentence with the help of Muslim women lawyers hired by a Nigerian women's rights group, but a Sharia court of appeal upheld the sentence of death by stoning. Amina's lawyers, filed another appeal and in September 2003 she was freed on the grounds that neither the conviction nor the confession were legally valid because Amina has not been given sufficient time to prepare her defence.

## Polygamy

IN ISLAM, monogamy is the usual form of marital contract. Theoretically, however, Muslim men are permitted to have more than one wife (to a maximum of four). Men's right to practice polygamy while a woman can only have one husband at a time is set out in the Qur'an.

Some Muslim countries have outlawed polygamy, (e.g. Tunisia and Turkey) while others accept it only under very limited conditions (e.g. Pakistan). Polygamy is in fact advised against even in the Qur'an. A key requirement is that a man must treat all his wives equally. The Qur'an follows up its permission for polygamy with a warning that equity in a polygamous arrangement is impossible and God looks down on inequity.

It is commonly believed that polygamy was allowed because of a very specific historical situation. Some scholars have suggested that, due to wars throughout the Prophet's (PBUH) time, women significantly outnumbered men, and in 7th century AD Arabian women simply could not work and financially support themselves. In addition, pre-Islamic Arabian society allowed men an unlimited number of wives and it was believed that polygamy would increase women's access to men and financial security while limiting how many women men could marry (and, therefore, providing no financial security to women). It has also been suggested by scholars that permission for polygamous marriages only exists when men are considering marrying widows or orphaned young women of marriageable age, and was never an option for men in other circumstances.

Even in 7th century AD Arabia, a woman could insist at the time of her marriage that her husband enter into agreement that he not practice polygamy. The breaking of this contract constituted grounds for an annulment of marriage by the woman.

Many Muslim women's organisations have worked towards the eradication of polygamy because it is their view that polygamous marriages generally leave women vulnerable to emotional, social and economic insecurity and distress.

*Note: Technically, the term polygyny is more correct here as it refers only to men's practice of taking on more than one partner, while polygamy is gender-neutral. However, we have used polygamy because it is in wide usage.*

**For further information on polygamy as a sanctioned practice during the time of the Prophet (PBUH), but not appropriate in the modern context, refer to:**

- Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria
- Women Living Under Muslim Law
- Sisters in Islam (international)

**For an alternative view (which may be described as traditional or conservative or literal), refer to:**

- Al Huda International(international)
- Islamic Research Foundation (international)

## **2.7 Islam and the state: Islamisation**

ISLAMISATION of the State is a term which describes the process by which communities, political groups and countries seek to accord primary significance to the perceived values and laws of Islam (see Sharia) as the laws of the state. This phenomenon is recent and attributed to various independent movements fighting against colonial rule by different countries.

It is argued by scholars that the present appeal of Islamisation lies in the belief that it is an opportunity to regain an authentic Islamic identity lost through colonisation. It has also been suggested that Islamisation has a mass appeal for Muslims as an antidote to the corrupt and dictatorial regimes that have often risen in the wake of the withdrawal of colonial powers.

Groups that identify themselves as engaged in the process of Islamisation can vary considerably in their ideology and approach. Currently there is the perception that Islamists endorse violent struggle, but this is not always the case. Islamists are to be found on both the right and left of the political spectrum and advocate pacifism as well as violent resistance.

Many scholars, such as Muzaffar, believe that the process of Islamisation has not brought Muslim nations that have adopted it any closer to the Qur'anic ideal of a just and compassionate society.

Islamisation has been especially devastating for women and minority groups who are not only often excluded from the political and public domains, but are also subjected to harsh limitations or even abuse in the cultural and educational spheres. Most importantly, Islamisation has created an elite who either through theological credentials or political force, insists their interpretation of Islam is the only legitimate one. Criticism and opposition have become increasingly dangerous where these elites exist.

While some Muslims passionately support the move toward an 'ideal' Islamic state, for others the concept of Islamisation is highly problematic.

In some polities (e.g. Indonesia, Algeria, the Palestinian Authority), Sharia is not the primary guide for the development of legislation and government policy, while others (e.g. Malaysia, Syria, Pakistan) have enshrined it in their legal codes and constitutions to varying degrees or

limited it to religious courts with jurisdiction over family law, some succession and moral matters. There are only a handful of countries (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Sudan, until recently Afghanistan); where some version of the Sharia constitutes significant parts of the law.

**For further information on Islamisation, refer to:**

- Chandra Muzaffar (international)
- Aurat Foundation (international)
- Shirkat Gah (international)

## SECTION 3: ISLAM AND WOMEN

THERE are as many similarities as differences across Muslim societies in different contexts. Every country has its own history and culture which mediates its practice of Islam, this varies in time and is subject to the political, social and economic changes within the country and sometimes globally. Because of this, it is important to establish the specific geographic and sectarian contexts of women's rights and oppression rather than referring generally to them as "Islamic". What may be considered Islamic in one Muslim context may be totally unheard of in another.

It is therefore important to analyse women's oppression beyond Islam, even when the application of Islam is a contributory factor. In many places and within many communities, women's rights have been greatly eroded over time and today many women do not enjoy the basic rights awarded to them by Islam as more and more misogynistic interpretations of the faith have taken hold.

Islam emerged at a time when women occupied a marginal position in Arabian society. In this context, the Qur'an's teachings were considered a source of liberation for women and many men strongly opposed the development of women's rights. Many verses of the Qur'an address both men and women, providing a strong sense of identity to women who had had little voice in the community. In addition, the Qur'an explicitly reproaches those who believe that women are inferior to men and instructs men time and time again to treat all women with dignity, respect, kindness and justice.

In part, the use of Islam to oppress women has been the catalyst for its utilisation to liberate women by seeking alternative readings of the Qur'an and other Islamic texts. Although women have been the primary reformers and scholars of a more gender equitable reading of Islamic texts, Muslim scholars and activists interested in a more progressive or justice driven reading of Islam see women's rights as essential to their work and have contributed significantly to women's rights. The Qur'an lays out fundamental rights for women and these have been crucial to the promotion of Muslim women's rights.

### 3.1 Rights awarded to women in Islam

#### *Respect and dignity*

THE Qur'an frequently refers to respect and justice for all people. Men in particular are instructed to treat women with love, kindness and respect. Several hadiths emphasise the importance of awarding women their full rights. Many hadiths also condemn men who treat women harshly or with disrespect, who violate their rights or who use or defame them.

#### *Marriage rights*

MUSLIM women have the right to choose their husbands or to reject any suitors. They cannot be married before the prescribed age (which varies according to culture, country and Islamic school of law) or without their consent. They have the right to a dowry that is theirs to dispose

of as they please, and to include in their marriage contract other demands, including restrictions they may wish to place on their husbands, such as a prohibition of further wives. Muslim women are not required to take their husbands' names, although the colonial influence in many Muslim countries has resulted in this Western practice being adopted widely. Despite these rights being clearly articulated, there have been many instances in which Muslim women have had these rights withheld or have had to fight for them.

**Marriage by choice without the consent of the guardian –  
Pakistani woman wins case**

IN PAKISTAN in 1996, in a high-profile case, the parents of a young woman called Saima Waheed attempted to have her marriage declared invalid by the courts as it lacked their consent. Waheed spent almost a year in a women's shelter, and her husband spent several months in jail while the court decided whether the couple were legally married. In 1997, in a historic ruling, the High Court declared that a Muslim woman did not require the consent of her parents or guardians to enter into marriage. In a 26-page statement, the court stated that "The consent of the *wali* (guardian) is not required and an adult and sane Muslim female can enter into a valid *nikah* (marriage contract) of her own free will."

### *Parenting rights*

THE role of the mother is encouraged and greatly respected for women. One of the most famous sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is "Heaven lies under the feet of the mother". According to one hadith, when asked who the most respected person in one's life should be, the Prophet (PBUH) answered that the first, second and third person to be most respected was the mother. The importance attributed to mothers is further demonstrated in Islamic custody law, where in the event of divorce the mother generally will receive the custody of her children, especially when they are young.

The importance attached to motherhood is taken by some Muslims to mean that women belong solely in the home and that their only meaningful responsibility is to take care of their families. This interpretation has no basis in the Qur'an. In fact, the Qur'an requires both men and women to pursue knowledge and contribute towards the creation of a just society.

### *Divorce rights*

IN ISLAMIC law, divorce has always been legal for both men and women no matter which party initiates it. However, legally acceptable grounds for divorce vary considerably across cultures, sects and legal schools. Generally, a woman may apply for divorce on a number of grounds and if her case is considered valid by the court she is granted a divorce. If insufficient grounds exist as deemed by the Courts, but the woman still wishes to divorce her husband, she may initiate divorce proceedings under the category known as *khul or kbula* (this is not available in all Muslim countries). Many Muslim countries and communities continue to withhold women's right to divorce, so that many women cannot be religiously or legally divorced without their husband's consent.

If a woman includes the right to divorce in her marriage contract, then she can divorce her husband without recourse to the courts. However in Muslim communities, it has been far more culturally acceptable and easier for men to initiate divorce proceedings than women for whom it is often fraught with difficulties.

### *Child custody rights*

WHERE divorce proceedings involve what are deemed young children, usually seven and under for boys and nine and under for girls (though this may vary significantly across cultures), the mother has the right to full custody. After this, the father has the right to custody if he so desires. If the children are in their teens, they have the right to decide who they wish to live with.

Whichever parent the children are living with, visitation rights are granted to the other parent. Fathers remain financially responsible for their children throughout, even if the mother should remarry.

### *Education*

IN MORE than one passage of the Qur'an, Muslims are counselled and reminded of their obligation to gain knowledge. Reliable sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) support the importance of education for men and women. In addition, there are several examples in Islamic history of women who were educated and even scholars, and who were well known and respected for this knowledge and their ability to impart it to others.

Islam's unambiguous support for education has been important to efforts to improve national literacy levels in many countries.

**United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2004) statistics on women's literacy in Muslim-majority countries:**

Country	Female literacy (%)	Male literacy (%)
Kuwait	79	84
Malaysia	83	91
Saudi Arabia	66	84
Iran	69	83
Indonesia	81	92
Egypt	43	66
Morocco	35	61
Pakistan	31	59
Sudan	45	69
Bangladesh	29	52
Yemen	24	67
Turkey	93	76
Eritrea	66	59
Oman	60	80

## *Economic rights*

WHETHER married or single, a Muslim woman has the right to earn her own money, own property and run a business. There is no injunction forbidding or restricting women from being employed. It is important to note that Islam states that the space of the home belongs to women, not that women belong to the space of the home. As a clear example of this right, the Prophet's (PBUH) first wife, Khadija, owned and ran her own business and before their marriage, the Prophet (PBUH) was one of her employees for many years. In Islam, a woman's possessions before marriage do not automatically transfer to her husband. She has the right to independent ownership and full rights over all money she earns herself, including the dowry she receives upon marriage.

A Muslim woman also has the right to inheritance, although her share is half that of any brothers she may have. Islamic scholars have argued that this distinction reflects the social and economic circumstances of the early Muslim period. Generally, only men are obliged to provide for their natal families as well as their wives and children, whereas women may use their money as they please. Even when a woman is financially better off than her husband, technically, it is he who must provide for her and the family.

## *Political rights*

ALTHOUGH this aspect of women's rights has been ignored by many historians, Islamic history demonstrates that Muslim women were encouraged to participate politically during the time of the Prophet (PBUH), that many did undertake various forms of political activism with the sanction of Islam. Muslim women's right to vote and elect their leaders is demonstrated by the fact that the Prophet (PBUH) was instructed in the Qur'an to receive pledges of allegiance from the women before he became the accepted leader of the Muslims. Women were also consulted on who should become leader of the Muslims after the death of the Prophet (PBUH).

The Qur'an does not mention maleness as a criterion for people to become judges or leaders; yet in many Muslim-majority and/or Islamic countries this is a controversial issue. In some Muslim countries (eg. Pakistan, Turkey, Bangladesh and Indonesia), Muslim women have become chief executives and even prime ministers. Recently, some scholars have advocated for women to be considered for religious leadership positions

There is much diversity in women's political participation in Muslim-majority countries. In some Muslim-majority countries women attained the full franchise early in the nation's development (e.g. Turkey) while others did not grant this right until much later (e.g. Kuwait). Some Muslim-majority countries have no women as ministers (e.g. Saudi Arabia), some do not have any women in their parliaments either. On the other hand, other Muslim-majority countries (e.g. Tunisia, Eritrea and Pakistan) have comparable numbers of women in their parliaments to many Western nations. Voting rights are also being campaigned for in Saudi Arabia. Both Pakistan and Turkey have had women prime ministers.

## The granting of full voting rights for women

Country	Year full voting rights were granted to women
Russia	1918
Turkey	1930
France	1944
Indonesia	1945
Pakistan	1947 (year of inception)
India	1950
Lebanon	1952
Ethiopia	1955
Tunisia	1959
USA	1920
Australia	* 1902
Iran	1963
Bangladesh	1972 (year of inception)
Kuwait	2005

Note: *In 1962 the right to vote in federal elections was granted to Australian Aboriginal women who, together with Australian Aboriginal men had been specifically excluded from the franchise in Australia by the Commonwealth Franchise.*

Source: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/suffrage.htm>

[http://womenshistory.about.com/od/suffrage/a/initl\\_timeline.htm](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/suffrage/a/initl_timeline.htm)

## 3.2 Islamic feminism

AS IMPORTANT as it is to understand the rights that have clearly been given to Muslim women, it is also important to recognise that key gender differences exist in Islamic law in economic, divorce and testimony rights. For example:

- \* A woman's inheritance is half of her brother's;
- \* A man is obliged to financially support the family, while a woman does so only by choice;
- \* A man can divorce his wife by pronouncing it three times, while a woman must go to court;
- \* A man can, technically, take four wives; a woman cannot have more than one husband at a time;
- \* When giving evidence on financial matters in court, one man is considered equal to two women in testimony.

There are four main explanations for these differences. The first, offered by those inclined to more literal and/or conservative interpretations of the Qur'an, is that these differences exist because women are essentially inferior to men. The second argument holds that although men and women are equal, the Qur'an recognises that they are different in some ways and that these differences in rights reflect their different needs and natures. Thus, for example, a woman's inheritance is half that of her male sibling, this is because women are not obliged to financially

support their families and they are perhaps not as well suited to this responsibility as their male counterparts. A third argument is that based on the belief that the interpretations of scripture have from the very beginning been male oriented and incorrect. The fourth argument contends that those verses are epoch-specific and that as social conditions have changed, so should Muslims' approaches to these matters.

In addition to the basic differences in the provision of rights there are also a number of verses in the Qur'an, which have been used to perpetuate the belief that men in Islam are considered superior to women. One particular verse, for example, states, that God has appointed men *qawamma* over (*superior to or guardians of or protectors of or a degree above*) women. The second part of the verse explains that this is so because they (men) have been "given more" and are entrusted with the responsibility of financially supporting women and children. Many scholars have interpreted this to mean that men are superior to women because they are *a degree above women* and because they have been *given more*. Other scholars vehemently reject translations that define *qawamma* as *superior or a degree above* and strongly challenge the notion that Islam attributes a superior status to men over women. These scholars assert that the '*given more*' refers only to physical strength or financial means/resources. They interpret that verse as reflecting the gender dynamic of Arabia at that time which gave men the responsibility of physically protecting and providing food, shelter and clothing for their families. In their view this does not extend to superiority or advantage over women simply because they are male. Many scholars have argued that in today's society, physical strength is no longer a prerequisite for meaningful employment and status in society, nor are men any longer the sole breadwinners in fact in many Muslim communities, women are the primary earners for their families. Therefore men no longer have more resources, in terms of physical strength or financial resources than women and, therefore, are not above women in society. In addition to this, the Qur'an specifically states that spiritually men and women are considered equal.

As with Western feminism, Muslim women have been actively involved in analysing the power relations and structures that dominate their lives. Early Islam witnessed the installation of a broad range of human rights for women Muslim which were eroded soon after the death of the Prophet (PBUH), when the existing patriarchal structures of the time were reasserted. This demolition of rights is the foundation from which Muslim women legitimise their push for reform in Islamic practice.

There is now a growing movement of Muslim women willing to speak out and demand the rights given to them by Islam both at an individual and collective level. This movement seeks not only to re-establish rights already awarded in the early Islamic period but also to establish those rights as the foundation from which other rights can develop to facilitate women's progress in current societies. Due to the failure over time of Islamic leaders, governments and individual men to guarantee women these rights and to adhere to the original principles of Islam, more and more Muslim women are establishing themselves as Islamic scholars and leaders in their communities.

### 3.3 Muslim women's issues

Australians are free to worship and practice culture and traditions, within the law. This means that Australian law, made by parliaments and the courts, prevail over the exercise of traditional or religious practices. The rule of law is a fundamental principle of our society, binding on all people in Australia.

Some practices outlined in this guide, including some practices endorsed by some interpretations of Sharia law and practices concerning the rights of women in Islam, are contrary to Australian law. Such practices are illegal and unacceptable in Australia.

#### *Domestic and sexual violence*

Like other women, Muslim women around the world experience sexual and domestic violence. Although feminist wisdom suggests that domestic violence occurs at comparable levels across all societies, it is commonly assumed that violence against women is more acceptable in Islamic societies. Muslims and non-Muslims alike have used certain verses from the Qur'an to support their argument that violence towards women is at least acceptable if only as a last resort in Islam.

However, time and again, the Qur'an urges harmony, love and respect between a husband and wife. Many sayings attributed to the Prophet (PBUH) deal directly with the issue of domestic violence and clearly instruct men to treat their wives with love and to not inflict any violence on them. Some religious scholars have, however, interpreted certain verses from the Qur'an to mean that a husband is allowed to hit/tap his wife gently with a *miswaak* (akin to a toothbrush) if she misbehaves in a serious manner and he has tried all other means to resolve the conflict. However, this verse is highly contested in that other scholars have translated the word for "hit" or "tap" differently or have argued that this was a symbolic example in the Qur'an and was not meant to be understood in its literal sense. The main point here is that even the most conservative and literal translation of these verses does not allow beating of any kind or under any circumstances.

Unlike many other issues, the majority of Muslims do not subscribe to the view that Islam promotes or condones domestic violence, there are Muslims, however, who view domestic violence as a private matter. In view of this, the process of working and advocating against domestic violence has been a fairly straightforward process from the Islamic perspective and Muslim women activists and reformers have used Islam in this regard. The response to domestic violence varies considerably across the Islamic world with some countries tolerating domestic abuse, while others have enshrined in law men's right to violence against women. Other countries such as Tunisia and Egypt have actively legislated to prevent and punish domestic violence offenders.

## Domestic Violence laws

IN TURKEY, a law on the Protection of the Family aims to protect victims of domestic violence by permitting the filing of an order for protection by or on behalf of a victim. The victim, a relative, neighbour or friend may file such a request with the public prosecutor. A justice of the peace may then issue an order for protection by passing one or more of the following rulings or take any other measures that are deemed appropriate:

- \* Not to use violence or threatening behaviour against the other spouse or children (or another member of the family living under the same roof);
- \* To leave the dwelling shared with the spouse or children and not to approach the dwelling occupied by the spouse and children or their place of work;
- \* Not to damage the property of the spouse or children (or of others living under the same roof);
- \* Not to cause distress to the spouse or children (or others living under the same roof) using means of communication;
- \* To surrender a weapon or other similar instruments to the police;
- \* Not to arrive at the shared dwelling while under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicating substances, nor use such substances in the shared dwelling.

Any spouse who fails to comply with the order may be sentenced to a prison term.

In Kuwait, a victim of domestic violence may file a complaint with the police and request that formal charges be brought against the abuser. In practice, however, even with documented evidence of the abuse (such as hospital reports, eyewitness accounts, and social worker testimony), police officials rarely take into custody perpetrators of domestic violence. An abused woman may petition for divorce based on injury, but the law provides no clear legal standard as to what constitutes injury, and a woman must provide at least two male witnesses (or a male witness and two female witnesses) to attest to the injury committed.

Certain provisions of the Kuwaiti penal code even reduce or eliminate penalties for violent crimes committed by men against women. So even in the rare instances where abusive husbands are convicted, they rarely face severe penalties. Typically, husbands accused of domestic abuse must pay a nominal fine and sign a pledge of good conduct. Police officials typically regard domestic violence as a private family affair and are reluctant to bring such cases to the attention of higher investigative authorities.

## *Female genital mutilation or genital cutting*

FEMALE genital mutilation or cutting is practiced by Muslims and non-Muslims mainly in Africa, but also in some communities in the Middle East and Asia. It has no basis in Islamic teaching. Islam has often been implicated because it is said that the Prophet (PBUH) did not outlaw it as a practice, and some believe that in one instance advised a practitioner on how much of the genitalia should be cut without inflicting harm. A vast majority of Muslims believe that the

Prophet (PBUH) provided recommendations in order to curb the practice and minimise the harm on women.

**For further information on female genital mutilation, refer to:**

- Working Women's Health
- Family and Reproductive Rights Education Program

### *Honour killing*

In some countries around the world, especially Muslim majority countries mainly in Middle East and South Asia, women may be murdered or severely injured by family members for suspected involvement in illicit relationships (i.e. outside of marriage). This stems from the view that women's sexual conduct determines the status and honour of a family within their community. Honour killings are, thus, a socio-cultural phenomenon, but one which is further reinforced through seriously erroneous understandings of Islam. Interestingly, although both men and women are forbidden from engaging in unlawful sexual relations outside marriage, honour killings are limited only to women.

Islam does not refer to family honour nor the killing of individuals who undermine perceived notions honour or family integrity, but some Muslims have justified honour killing because of Islam's strong prohibition of any sexual relations outside of marriage. A number of Muslim jurists in certain countries may justify its occurrence and understand it as a crime of passion or one committed in response to grave or sudden provocation, both of which are Western legal concepts used to reduce the sentences of those found guilty of committing such crimes. First, Islam does not recognise grave or sudden provocation as a defence to murder nor does it recognise the right of individuals to dispense punishment for unlawful sexual conduct or zina.

Muslim women and human rights activists have been working to eradicate this practice for a long time and have had varying levels of success, best demonstrated by the current level of national concern in Pakistan regarding a number of high profile cases.

## Honour killing laws

According to Sheikh Atiyah Saqr, former head of the [al-Azhar University Fatwa Committee](#) (one of the oldest and most prestigious in the Muslim world):

“The so-called “honour killing” is based on ignorance and disregard of morals and laws, which cannot be abolished except by disciplinary punishments”.

Yet legislative provisions allowing for partial or complete defence in that context can be found in the penal codes of many countries:

According to the penal codes which allow for honour crimes, such as those listed below, a man who kills his wife or other female relative may receive a reduced sentence if he demonstrates that he committed the crime in response to a socially unacceptable sexual relationship conducted by the victim. For example, while the penal code stipulates that murder is punishable by either a life sentence or the death penalty, if a defendant can prove it was an honour crime, the sentence is commuted to one to seven years imprisonment.

Parts of the Jordanian and Syrian penal codes state that a man who finds his wife or female relative committing adultery, and kills, wounds, or injures one of them, is exempted from any penalty. This has twice been put forward for cancellation by the government, but was retained by the Lower House of the Parliament.

Under Kuwaiti penal law, men who kill female relatives in so-called "honour crimes" serve a maximum three-year sentence and are not prosecuted for murder

An article in Morocco’s penal code states that violence even to the extent of murder by a husband towards his wife and the accomplice is excusable if the husband surprises them in the act of adultery.

In Turkey, laws have been changed to prohibit family members committing honour crimes from being able to claim “provocation” as an excuse and therefore of receiving lighter sentences.

In Pakistan, honour killings are supposed to be prosecuted as murder, but in practice police, courts and prosecutors often ignored the law. After intensive advocacy by women’s rights organisation, in 2004, Pakistan's Senate approved a bill, strengthening the law against so-called honour killings. However, women’s rights activists have criticised the bill on the grounds that it does not go far enough and that it still contains several loopholes for perpetrators of the crimes. Recently, the debate over a new and amended bill has been reopened in the National Assembly.

Source: *Wikipedia: The free encyclopedia (online)*

## *Child/forced marriage*

Child and/or forced marriages continue to be practiced across the Islamic and non-Islamic world. For Muslims, this practice is often justified on Islamic grounds because traditional Islamic practices and legal texts allowed individuals upon reaching puberty to marry and consummate the marriage. However, even at the time of the Prophet (PBUH), puberty was considered the minimum, technical requirement; it was not the primary factor when contemplating marriage of children. Unfortunately, however, some Muslim families focus only on this minimum technical

aspect of the marriage. As a result many young Muslim girls across the world, including Australia are pressured and sometimes forced into marriage because they are technically of marriageable age.

Generally, parents believe they are acting in the best interests of the child, especially in countries where the economic burden of children is heavy or in circumstances where they are concerned about the child's cultural environment and where there is a great deal of community pressure to marry children young.

Like honour killings and domestic violence, child marriages have been on the agenda of Muslim women's' and human rights' organisations and reformers.

Child marriage
<p>The legal minimum age of marriage for girls is 18 under international conventions and most countries are signatories to these conventions and generally adhere to this age limit or are close to it. However, child marriage occurs in many countries around the world, some of which are Muslim-majority countries.</p> <p>In Mali:</p> <p>Two-thirds of the girls are married by 18, and 39% by 15. Sixty-three percent of married girls age 15-19 have already given birth, and one in ten gave birth before age 15. Eighty-six percent of married girls have not received any education, compared to 62% of their unmarried peers, and nine out of ten married girls aged 15-19 cannot read at all.</p>

Note: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) states that the marriage of a child has no legal effect, and a person is considered to be a child until the age of 18 (Convention on the Rights of the Child).

**For an overview of Muslim women's rights in Islam, refer to:**

- Jamila Hussein
- Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria
- Riffat Hassan
- Muslim Women's League
- Muslim Women's National Network of Australia

**For progressive views of Muslim women's rights and Islamic feminism, refer to:**

- Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria
- Muslim Women's National Network of Australia
- Women Living Under Muslim Law (international)
- Sisters in Islam (international)
- Riffat Hassan (international)
- Asma Barlas (international)
- Tariq Ramadan (international)

**For alternative views of women's rights (may be described as traditional or conservative or literal), refer to:**

- Al Huda International (international)
- Islamic Research Foundation (international)

**For further information on various forms of violence against women and Islam, refer to:**

- Islamic Women's Welfare Council Of Victoria
- Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service
- Jamila Hussein
- Muslim Women's League
- Sisters in Islam (international)

### **3.4 Modesty and segregation**

Islam emphasises developing a sense of balance, moderation and control in relation to basic human drives and desires. Modesty is part of this process and both men and women are prescribed to be modest in behaviour, thought and physical appearance, especially regarding the opposite gender.

Many Muslim women understand sexual modesty as being aimed at avoiding sexual objectification and sexual harassment. The extent to which this modesty manifests in Muslim's style of dress and its form, depends on a number of factors such as personal choice and interpretation, socio-political context, the traditions of various families, communities and sects and laws.

Like any other religious community, the Muslim community worldwide is not homogenous and there is a diversity of views regarding the interpretation of Islamic doctrines.

Many Muslims believe that attire designed to conceal all or certain parts of the female body is recommended by Islam as a means of practicing modesty for women. In addition to this, veiling has come to represent for many women a commitment to God and Islam beyond the required prescription for modesty. Other Muslims do not believe that in modern society veiling is the only path to modesty nor that it is necessary to be a believing Muslim.

The hijab (head scarf covering at least the hair) is the most commonly visible expression. Although there are various cultural appropriations of the hijab, its literal meaning is 'curtain' or 'barrier', and was originally used in the home of the Prophet (PBUH) to protect the privacy of the female residents there from the constant stream of visitors.

In another part of the Qur'an, the Prophet's (PBUH) wives were also advised to cover their heads when in public so that they could be recognised as the Prophet's (PBUH) wives and thus, protected from harassment by other men. This was an important demarcation because in the Prophet's (PBUH) time, many women lived in slavery and were, thus considered sexual property by men.

Another verse in the Qur'an asks Muslim women to pull their existing head coverings (since the covering of the head was a pre-Islamic practice) over their chests. Some Muslims interpret this verse to mean that Muslim women were asked to extend the head covering over their chests, while others understand it as asking women to start covering their chests instead of their heads.

Other more rare and concealing forms of veiling are:

- chador; long scarf which completely covers women's hair and body,
- nikaab; veil that also covers all or part of the face,
- burqa; all encompassing robe that covers the head, face and body down to the ankle.

In Australia, dress code remains a matter of choice for many Muslim women but it is difficult to draw conclusions about Muslim women around the world. The hijab has become a ready political symbol and the question of whether or not women should be allowed to wear it has become a highly politicised issue rather than a matter of personal choice. In many anti-colonial countries and revivalist groups and movements, particularly in Middle Eastern, North African, and Central Asian countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and Iran, the full covering for all women (chador) is mandatory. On the other hand, in some Western or Muslim countries, such as Turkey, Tunisia and France laws exist to curb the use of the hijab in public offices and even schools. In addition, some individual families and groups may also force women to dress in certain ways. The question of the use of veiling to oppress women therefore is difficult to answer without an analysis of the context in which Muslim women live.

#### **The hijab in some Muslim countries**

Turkey's and Tunisia's bans on the hijab are enforced by the State through various mechanisms. Turkey places a ban on wearing the hijab in many public places, including schools and offices and this extends to students as well as professionals. Tunisia's government also prohibits the wearing of hijab in public places and offices.

In Iran, it is mandatory for women to wear a hijab, which in the Iranian context refers to a head scarf and a long dress that covers the whole body, in all public places and government offices.

Saudi women are required to wear an abaya (a large, black cloak, worn either loose or flowing or wrapped around the body) and a veil for the face.

This concept of segregation has evolved from notions of modesty and the limitations placed on sexual relations outside of marriage. Segregation has come to be practiced in Muslim communities at almost every level of interaction. However, the Qur'an, hadiths and many historical facts clearly indicate that gender segregation did not exist during the Prophet's (PBUH) time. For example, one of his own wives, Khadija was a well-known businesswoman, requiring her to interact with many men outside her own family. In addition, one of his other wives, Ayesha is said to have participated in council meetings and in the community generally. Many women of the time attended prayers and religious meetings together with men and many fought side by side with men during wars. Further, it is argued by many scholars that if Islam had meant

for there to be gender segregation, it would not have urged them both to be modest in front of one another. To what extent segregation is adhered to depends largely on individuals, families, communities and countries. In Australia, this practice is not common, however the Islamic schools and colleges will usually segregate boys and girls within the same classroom.

**For further information in support of women's interpretation of modesty and veiling, refer to:**

- Islamic Women's Welfare Council Of Victoria
- Sara Sabbagh
- Sisters in Islam (international)

**For alternative views (may be described as traditional or conservative) on the hijab or full veiling, refer to:**

- Al-Huda International (international)
- Islamic Research Centre (international)

# SECTION 4: MUSLIMS IN AUSTRALIA

## 4.1 Overview

THE first settlement of Muslims in Australia began in the 1860s, with the arrival of Afghan cameleers. With the end of the camel transport industry in the 1920s and the restrictions imposed by the White Australia immigration policy, the process of Muslim migration stopped temporarily, resuming in the 1960s and 1970s when large numbers of Turkish and Lebanese migrants arrived. In the last three decades, many Muslims have entered Australia under the Refugee/Humanitarian Program, fleeing state-based persecution or protracted forms of civil unrest and civil war. Many other Muslims have migrated to Australia through the Family Migration Stream.

The precise number of Muslims in Australia is unknown, because many Muslims do not register their religion for fear of persecution, a lack of understanding of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' data collection procedure or because they do not identify with mainstream Islam. The number of Muslims registered by the ABS is 281,578 Australia-wide. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001). They make up the third largest religious group in Australia, behind Christians and Buddhists. Over the last decade, there has been a significant increase in the number of Australian Muslims, with the population almost doubling between 1991 and 2001.

Australian Muslims are a culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse community. Around two-thirds were born overseas in countries such as Lebanon, Turkey, Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Pakistan, Indonesia, Iraq, Bangladesh, Iran, Fiji, Cyprus, Somalia, Egypt and Malaysia. Less than 20% of Australian Muslims were born in Middle Eastern or Arab countries.

Muslims belong to diverse language groups, speaking Arabic, Turkish, Farsi, Bosnian, Indonesia, Bengali, Malay, Dari, Albanian, Hindi, Kurdish and Pashtu. Most Australian Muslims are Sunni but there is a significant minority of Shias and smaller numbers of Bektashis, Ahmedis, Alawis, Alevis and Druze.

There are a range of organisations providing religious, educational and welfare services to Australian Muslims. There are some 85 mosques around Australia, about 25 Islamic schools and, about 70 imams. There are also a number of Islamic societies in each state and territory, providing welfare services to Australian Muslims. There is, however, no single spokesperson representing the interests of all Muslims, because of the diversity of the community. A number of Muslims access ethno-specific organisations for assistance, such as migrant resource centres.

There is no single model for Muslim community organisation in Australia. Many organisations exist to provide support to their immediate community members in the form of social events. Other organisations have a purely religious purpose, but do not undertake further works for the public good. Other organisations work towards the integration of their communities into Australian society and to improve the wellbeing of their communities. Generally these organisations are social welfare providers and may receive government funding to undertake this work.

It is important to note that although many organisations have formed to provide some form of service to their community or to act as a crucible for the promotion of particular form of Islam, the influence and support of these organisations can be difficult to gauge. Organisations can

operate for a long period of time without significant community support and resources, indeed without the awareness of the vast majority of community members, as is the case with Sheikh Mohammad Omran who came to the attention of a majority of Muslim community members following the media coverage.

## 4.2 State snapshots

The Islamic community in Australia was, in 1964, only a very small community of Turkish, Arab, Bosnian, Fijian Indian, Pakistani and some smaller ethnic groups, which were too small to form any larger body or community such as Indonesian and Chinese. There were, however, enough people concerned about preserving their faith to begin a loose federation of the various communities across the country. The Australian Federation of Islamic Societies (AFIS) was formed and this small organisation administered the affairs of the community, especially in terms of raising money to build mosques and schools.

By 1974 the Pakistani community, with the help of AFIS, built the first mosque (in Surry Hills) in Australia since the post war immigration boom. This was swiftly followed by the purchase of an old church in Erskineville (in Sydney) which became the Turkish community's first mosque. These mosques catered for the small communities which existed in and around Redfern and South Sydney. The first plane loads of Turkish migrants were housed in hostels around Zetland and the inner city. These communities in the early eighties moved out to western suburban centres such as St Marys, Mt Druitt, East Lakes and Auburn. The Indo-Pakistani community also moved out to Rooty Hill and Blacktown. Today there are two large mosques in Mt Druitt which was built by the Turkish community and in Rooty Hill built by the Indo-Pakistani community.

A group of Muslims became involved in high level issues and formed the peak body called the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC). This was based on a three-tier structure of the federal council, state councils (9 councils including Christmas Island and Canberra) and local societies. The original aims of the body indicated a wide sphere of influence especially in areas of halal certification, mosques, schools, and youth. The capacity of any one organisation to represent all Muslims nationally is a controversial and much debated issue among Muslim communities (see Imams, section 1.5).

### *New South Wales*

Organisations which have originally operated in close connection with AFIC, but have in time become independent bodies are The Islamic Council of NSW (ICNSW) and the Supreme Islamic Council of NSW (SICNSW).

One of the largest Muslim migrant communities to emerge in Sydney was the Lebanese community. They congregated in Canterbury-Bankstown and built their first mosque in Lakemba in 1975. The Lebanese Muslim Association (LMA) manages the affairs of the mosque ranging in services from funeral and burial services to Arabic and Quran lessons. These were the primary services provided by other associations and mosques. They were largely unskilled first generation Muslims who could not speak English with any fluency. The leader of prayers at the mosque is Sheikh Taj Al din Al Hilali, of Egyptian origin.

The past decade has seen many groups operating alongside the community but not directly involved with the peak bodies. In general these small groups have limited effect, representation and capacity, but are nonetheless important to the community. Often, however, they receive a great deal of media coverage which magnifies the perception that they are an important part and parcel of the mainstream Muslim community.

It must be stressed that by far the largest and most silent majority are the mainstream Sunni Muslims. They simply follow the teachings of their school of thought, they practice the five pillars, try to eat halal and avoid haram, and they attend the mosque as they can. They are not members of any organisation or society. As in all religions, there is a large number of Muslims who do not undertake daily practices, such as prayer or fasting in Ramadan. These are commonly referred to as nominal Muslims or sometimes secular Muslims.

## *Victoria*

Likewise in Melbourne, the first emerging communities were led by Cypriot Turks, Lebanese, Egyptians and Turks. The Albanians and Bosnians were also very active in forming associations. It was not until the early 80's that schools were established and a number of Mosques were built. Sheikh Fehmi Naji El-Imam was one of the pioneers in Melbourne (migrated in the 50's) and is currently the senior figurehead based at Preston Mosque. The Islamic Council of Victoria is also a strong institution that provides a number of services to the Islamic community. In the past decade a number of women's organisations have emerged providing urgently needed services for women. We have also witnessed a new wave of migrants originating from Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan in the past decade. The needs of these emerging communities have been focused on settlement, welfare, employment and English training. In addition to settlement and general welfare, the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria has actively led initiatives on community education and development and against violence against women.

Islamic community relations in Melbourne have been slightly smoother and to this day there is only one Islamic council. There are also a number of Islamic schools which all have produced high achievers with excellent academic results. The Turkish community has produced two schools in Melbourne, in addition newer schools such as King Khalid College and Minaret have developed into large and prestigious institutions.

The Islamic Co-ordinating Council of Victoria has also become a strong performer in Halal certification and overseas trade with the Middle East and South East Asia. There are over 30 mosques in Victoria.

## *Western Australia*

The Muslim community in Perth is ironically much older than those of Sydney or Melbourne, although far smaller in number. The early Afghan cameleers settled in Perth and in 1905 built the Perth Mosque. This mosque is still used by the new generation of Muslims in Perth.

Broadly speaking, the community is dominated by South Africans, Turks, Lebanese and Indonesians. There are also emerging groups of Somalians and Iraqis.

There are four main mosques with a number of smaller centres. The main mosques are situated in Mirabooka, Perth, Thornlie and Marylands.

The University of Western Australia (UWA) and Curtin University have a number of Muslim scholars who are also active within the community. The current president of AFIC is situated in UWA. The Islamic Council of Western Australia (ICWA) acts as the peak body for Muslims in Perth. The large success story for Perth is the Australian Islamic College which has over 2000 students and three campuses. There are three more Islamic schools in Perth. Otherwise, like in most states there is a Muslim Women's Association.

Muslims in Perth are quite integrated into the mainstream society and West Australians seem to have readily accepted Muslims, new and old alike. This could be attributed to the long history of relations which started with the early Afghan and Pakistani migrants in the 1800s.

## *Queensland*

Brisbane is another situation where Muslims have integrated well into the broader community. There are less than 10,000 Muslims in the whole state and much of the activity is run by the Islamic Council of Queensland. However, there is a strong presence of individual Muslims who work on a variety of matters ranging from welfare, halal certification, women's issues and academia. Most have some affiliation with the Council.

The new force in community issues is the Islamic Research Centre which is partly funded by Griffith University and the Islamic community in Brisbane. The centre is run by Muslim academics and has its own media centre. The Kuraby mosque which was burnt down in 2001 after the September 11 attacks in the US, has now been rebuilt and is a focal point for the community's activities. The oldest mosque is in Holland Park and was built by the Indo-Pakistani community in the late 70's.

There are a number of Muslims living in the Sunshine Coast, Mackay and Rockhampton.

## *South Australia*

In Adelaide for many years there has been no central body and therefore the community has been generally disparate. The oldest mosque in Australia is situated in Little Gilbert Street and was built in 1880. There are a number of smaller organizations which run educational facilities and welfare groups. The main women's organization is the Muslim Women's Association of South Australia.

There are as in other states large populations of Lebanese, Turks (in Murray Bridge), Afghans, and the largest community of Uygur people (Turkic people from Western China) in Australia. The community is very small and still developing its institutions. The Islamic College of South Australia is now 5 years old and there is an Islamic centre in Park Holme and a small community school.

## *Tasmania*

The Islamic Society of Hobart is very small. It is one of the members of the AFIC system and holds the same voting power as Sydney and Melbourne. The community is small, but they established an Islamic Sufi library which was deliberately burned down and many valuable books were destroyed.

## *Canberra*

A vibrant and professional group of Muslims reside in Canberra. The Islamic Society of Canberra is an important member of AFIC. Outside of this system is the Canberra Islamic Centre which has built its own premises fully equipped with a sports hall and a prayer centre, the largest Islamic library in Australia, a radio studio, an art gallery and functions centre. The group is actively involved with interfaith, media and political lobbying. There is also a new mosque in North Canberra.

## *Darwin*

The Islamic Society of Northern Territory is a very small group of Muslims numbering under 500. They are actively involved in interfaith and media. The community is mainly a mixture of Indo-Pakistani, Indonesian and some Chinese Muslims.

## *Small and Independent Action*

There are many interesting although fairly small groups of concerned Muslims who are generally well educated and come from an eclectic mix, including many converts. These groups run their own shows and are involved at grassroots levels of the community. Their activities range broadly from welfare, women and education to interfaith and *da'wah* (talking about religion) and media and audio-visual material on Islam.

**For further information on the structure of the Muslim community and community leaders, refer to:**

- Muslim Women's National Network of Australia
- Islamic Women's Welfare Council Of Victoria
- Omeima Sukkarieh
- Abdullah Saeed
- Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations (FAIR)

**For a more detailed listing of community organisations in Australia, refer to:**

- Islamic Council of Victoria
- Australian Federation of Islamic Councils
- Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations (FAIR)

***Note: A basic listing of organisations is available at the back of this manual***

## 4.3 Issues for Muslims in Australia

THE range of difficulties and barriers Muslims face in Australia varies considerably. Muslims who have recently migrated to Australia will experience significantly different challenges than those who have resided in Australia for a decade or longer. Some of the barriers Muslims experience upon arrival in Australia and their settlement include:

- Limited English-language skills - a difficulty in itself but one that creates secondary disadvantages in locating employment, housing and other necessities.
- Homelessness - the housing situation for newly-arrived immigrants can be precarious upon their arrival, but also well into their settlement period.
- Income - immigrants who have come from war-torn countries experience considerable difficulties securing any form of employment. Immigrants who have overseas qualifications face a significant battle to have their qualifications recognised and many must undergo retraining if they are to have any chance in the labour market.
- Muslim communities face higher levels of unemployment and are, on average, economically disadvantaged compared to other Australians. They are more likely to work in blue-collar occupations, even though they have a very similar educational profile to other Australians.
- Gaining access to and understanding the educational sector in Australia is a struggle for many communities. Families struggle to organise schooling for children and themselves. Schooling is not only made difficult by limited English-language proficiency, but in some instances humanitarian entrants may have no history of schooling because of civil strife in their country of origin. Schooling is further made difficult by periods of unstable housing or unemployment.
- Health service utilisation is generally low and immigrants often have little awareness of preventive health and screening programs.
- Lack of understanding of and access to mainstream services and systems, which may facilitate the process of settlement and integration into Australia.
- Fear and mistrust of the legal system and police - often a result of experiences in their country of origin, while some communities have had negative interactions with the system in Australia.
- Lack of family and kinship networks and difficulty building new networks isolate communities and leave them prone to other forms of disadvantage and social concerns.
- Geographic isolation - an increasingly common phenomenon as many Muslims settle in rural Australia.
- Post-traumatic stress due to experiences of torture and trauma significantly impact on families as they attempt to settle and integrate into Australia.

- Long-settled communities find it hard to assimilate recent migrants and to reconcile political and cultural differences between themselves and newly arrived migrants.
- Racism – xenophobia has always been an issue for Muslims like other immigrants who have arrived in Australia. Unfortunately, racial and religious intolerance of Muslims has become entrenched, particularly in response to some of the high profile cases involving Muslims. This issue is covered in more detail below.

**For an overview of Muslims in Australia, refer to:**

- Abdullah Saeed
- Fethi Mansouri
- Shahram Akbarzadeh
- Islamic Women’s Welfare Council of Victoria
- Islamic Council of Victoria
- Australian Federation Of Islamic Councils
- Forum on Australia’s Islamic Relations
- Omeima Sukkarieh

**For further information on issues faced by Muslims in Victoria and Australia, refer to:**

- Abdullah Saeed
- Fethi Mansouri
- Islamic Women’s Welfare Council of Victoria
- Islamic Council of Victoria
- Muslim Women’s National Network Australia
- Victorian Arabic Social Services
- Australian Lebanese Welfare Inc
- African Australian Welfare Council of Victoria
- Dalal Smiley
- Samina Yasmin

**For further information on migrants and multiculturalism, refer to:**

- Kevin Dunn
- Scott Poynting
- Greg Noble
- Ghassan J. Hage

NOTE: Information on the services available to migrants and humanitarian settlers in Australia can be found at [www.immi.gov.au/settle/index.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/settle/index.htm). Information on the Australian Government’s anti racism initiative can be found at [www.harmony.gov.au](http://www.harmony.gov.au)

## 4.4 Media representation of Muslims

MEDIA representation of Arab and Muslim communities has long been of concern and a source of much distress among Australian Muslims. It is clear some media outlets and journalists have portrayed Muslims accurately and sensitively; it is also clear the great majority of Muslims feel that the representations of Australian Muslims has been problematic. SEVEN concerning characteristics of Muslims' portrayal have been identified:

- A constant association between Islam, Muslims and conflict/violence. Since the attack on the United States on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, this triangle has been articulated as Muslims-Islam-Terrorism.
- The frequent identification of race/religion when the story is about individuals of the Islamic faith. In many instances such references are not relevant to the story and run counter to journalistic code of conduct.
- The stereotypical representation of Muslims; for example images of Muslim women will generally depict them as veiled, despite the fact that a significant number of Muslim women do not use any form of veiling. Similarly, Muslim men are regularly portrayed as bearded while the majority are not. The representation of Muslim men in the media typically runs a narrow gamut from conservatism, misogyny and violence to militancy and terrorism. Muslim women are typically portrayed as submissive, oppressed and abused. In general, Muslims appear to be portrayed exclusively through their religion as a one-dimensional identity (e.g. portrayed as kneeling in prayer, hijab issues, halal food, etc.), and are otherwise largely invisible from the media.
- Absence of Muslims in the media as speakers on issues of concern and their relative absence as experts, even on issues in which Muslims might be actively involved. Connected to this is the overuse of key organisations or public figures on all issues about Islam, even when those individuals/organisations do not necessarily have sufficient expertise on the issue in question.
- The diversity of Muslim life is not adequately represented; this includes issues of sectarian and ethnic diversity, but also diversity in ideology and other forms of political affiliation.
- Inaccurate reporting. There have been numerous instances in which communities have been frustrated by the misinformation or misrepresentation of issues associated with them. Some of these instances have been minor, but others have been quite significant.
- Muslims and Islam appear in the media only to the extent that they are assumed to be of interest to a non-Muslim audience, whether as a threat, object of concern or as an object of exotic interest and curiosity. Further, Muslims in the media are typically required to act in their own defence, to respond to and often apologise for issues put on the agenda by mainstream media. Very rarely are they represented in their own terms as presenting issues and stories that most concern them.

In 2004, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) consulted with Arab and Muslim communities in Australia. Throughout their consultations, both men and women associated increasing racist violence and racial and religious vilification with media coverage of Islam or Muslims and world events.

This association has been identified by other community organisations across Australia. There are numerous examples, anecdotal, research-based and academic (Manning, 2004; Poynting et al., 2004) clearly demonstrating a prejudiced and distorted image of Muslims and Islam, perpetuating and further consolidating stereotypes that have been harmful to the community.

This has led to the further alienation of communities from media outlets, but perhaps more importantly a mistrust of the bodies which regulate them, such as the Australian Press Council and Australian Broadcasting Authority. It is important that a serious investigation be made of the impact of media reporting on groups, be they Muslim or non-Muslim. Recently, numerous reports have recommended programmes to bridge this gap by improving the relationships between Muslim Australians, journalists and regulators (Anti Discrimination Board, 2003; HREOC, 2004; Dunn, 2004). Some organisations representing Muslims such as the Islamic Women's Welfare Council or the Muslim Women's National Network Australia have also worked towards improving these relations.

There are a significant number of resources available, developed by journalists to promote and facilitate fair and appropriate reporting. It is the view of the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria that these should suffice to assist some of the current difficulties in media reporting.

**For further information on the media representation of Muslims in Australia, refer to:**

- Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations (FAIR)
- Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria
- Islamic Council of Victoria
- Nasya Bahfen
- Paula Abood
- Tanja Dreher
- Omeima Sukkarieh
- Eman Riman
- Sarrah Sabbagh
- Peter Manning
- Fethi Mansouri
- Maher Mughrabi
- Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Journalism

**Here are some resources we have found useful:**

All Media Guide To Fair and Cross Cultural Reporting by Stephen Stockwell and Paul Scott, Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy, 2000.

These sites may be useful:

<http://www.ejc.nl/hp/rem/contents.html>

<http://www.nuj.org.uk/inner.php?docid=78>

[http://www.media-diversity.org/articles\\_publications/covering%20conflict.htm](http://www.media-diversity.org/articles_publications/covering%20conflict.htm)

[http://www.iwpr.net/home\\_index\\_new.html](http://www.iwpr.net/home_index_new.html)

## 4.5 Racial and religious vilification

MUSLIMS have frequently been targets of racial and religious vilification in Australia, and this has increased significantly since the attacks on the United States in September 2001 and other high profile events involving Muslims such as the gang rapes in Sydney, asylum seekers arriving on the Australian shoreline, Bali and London bombings. Anniversaries of these events have also placed Australian Muslims in the spotlight, and have linked them to images of threat, danger, violence, etc. This has been supported by Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's *Isma* project, 2004.

It is important to note that although a number of organisations have attempted to gather information about the nature and extent of the attacks against the Arabic and Muslim communities, there are no definitive reports or registry of attacks to date. There are a number of research works including *Isma* and Poynting and Noble's (2004) work commissioned by HREOC- and there is also work by Kevin Dunn (2003, 2004) at University of Sydney -on prejudice against Arabs and Muslims. This research has indicated that racial vilification against Muslims has taken many forms, but it has overwhelmingly been targeted towards women, especially those wearing the hijab.

Many Muslims have had their lives directly affected by racist violence or harassment, most victims experiencing unprovoked, 'one off' incidents from strangers on the street, on public transport, in shops and shopping centres or on the roads. The nature of these attacks has varied considerably but people have described verbal and physical attacks, with some attacks against property. Women have been spat on, had their hijab forcibly removed, been followed, verbally harassed and had bricks thrown through their windows or their windscreens damaged. The *Isma* project also cites many examples of prejudice toward Muslims and Arabs from people known to them in the workplace, at school, universities or colleges as well as discrimination in the provision of some government services.

The response of the affected communities has generally been one of withdrawal. Muslim women have become increasingly absent from public spaces and less likely to use public facilities, sometimes this has been on the advice of community leaders. Parents continue to intermittently keep their children, especially their daughters from school, and have restricted their mobility in an attempt to secure their safety. Community organisations and women's groups periodically cease their work and meetings.

For many women, the past three years have led to feelings of estrangement and a loss of trust not only in law enforcement agencies but also in community organisations they feel should be protecting them. The *Isma* project states that many newly arrived Arab or Muslim migrants and refugees report that the experience of prejudice has made it harder for them to negotiate the already difficult process of settling into a new country.

The result of this general climate is that many Muslims have come to feel increasingly alienated from the Australian society and experience a sense of distrust, fear and insecurity. This, in turn, affects their settlement and integration into Australia, further perpetuating their marginalisation.

**For further information on the racial and religious vilification of Muslims in Australia, refer to:**

- Equal opportunity Commission Victoria
- Fethi Mansouri
- Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria
- Islamic Council of Victoria
- Omeima Sukkarieh
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC)
- [http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial\\_discrimination/isma/report/](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial_discrimination/isma/report/)
- Kevin Dunn
- Scott Poynting
- Greg Noble
- Ghassan J. Hage
- Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations (FAIR)
- Victorian Arabic Social Services

## **4.6 Muslim women in Australia**

MUSLIM women in Australia face a range of barriers to their development:

- Economic dependence and financial insecurity;
- Women who have lost their husbands/families in the process of migration often learning to live without male/family protection and support for the first time. Many of these women have migrated as sole mothers and must adapt to Australia as they help their children to do so. This often contrasts sharply with the extended family arrangements for childcare and domestic life typical in many Muslim countries;
- Persistent sense of isolation, powerlessness and profound loss of confidence;
- Depression and anxiety or guilt about leaving home and the loss of home. Depression and anxiety associated with a failure of the settlement process and fear may dominate lives of many women and their children;
- Loss of family, extended network of kin, friends and other supports will markedly affect women's emotional and psychological wellbeing as well as impacting on their physical health;
- Limited mobility because of communication and/or lack of money and transport along with cultural constraints on their free movement invariably increases their sense of social isolation;
- Post-traumatic stress; torture and trauma. Humanitarian entrants are more likely to have suffered rape, sexual assault and sexually specific torture prior to their arrivals than other migrant women;
- Mental health services rarely used because of limited awareness and cultural stigma;

- Overseas-born battered women are significantly more disadvantaged than other victims of family violence. Overseas-born women are over-represented in domestic homicides. This disadvantage is often a result of the failure of services and shelters to provide information and options to immigrant women in ways that are accessible;
- Many immigrant women have minimal knowledge of the legal system's provision of remedy and protection to domestic violence victims;
- Migration experience can contribute to abuse in the home. In addition, violence tends to be treated with greater secrecy in diaspora communities in the early stages of their migration;
- Women who have married an Australian citizen and whose residency status is precarious do not speak out about violence because of fear of deportation;
- Problems for Australian Muslim women generally;
- High representation as users of crisis services;
- Poor representation in the tertiary education system;
- Under-representation in key community representative and advocacy bodies;
- Over-representation in media coverage and general public discourse on Islam and Muslims;
- Race and gender-based violence and victimisation;
- Limited information about educational and career pathways;
- Limited availability of information on the needs of Muslim women.

**For further information on Muslim women in Australia, refer to:**

- Islamic Women's Welfare Council Of Victoria
- Working Women's Health
- Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service
- Aziza Abdel Halim
- Samina Yasmin

NOTE: Information on the services available to migrants and humanitarian settlers in Australia can be found at [www.immi.gov.au/settle/index.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/settle/index.htm).

## 4.7 Muslims around the world

THERE are an estimated 1.2 – 1.4 billion Muslims worldwide. Muslims constitute a highly diverse population, living in every region of the world and belonging to many different cultures, ethnic and language groups. Muslims are the majority in 52 nations.

Of the total number of Muslims around the world, most live in South Asia (416 million), Sub-Saharan Africa (254 million), in the Middle East (252 million) and Southeast Asia (239 million).

There are also significant Muslim populations in Central Asia (76 million), Eastern Europe (21 million) and Western Europe (13 million), especially France, and North America (5 million). In the Balkans, the Muslim population is approximately 8 million, mostly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Albania (70% of the population) and Republic of Macedonia. There are 1 million Muslims in South America.

The 10 countries with the largest Muslim populations, in descending order, are:

- |               |                                   |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Indonesia  | approximately 213 million Muslims |
| 2. Pakistan   | approximately 156 million Muslims |
| 3. India      | approximately 129 million Muslims |
| 4. Bangladesh | approximately 127 million Muslims |
| 5. Egypt      | approximately 70 million Muslims  |
| 6. Turkey     | approximately 68 million Muslims  |
| 7. Iran       | approximately 67 million Muslims  |
| 8. Nigeria    | approximately 64 million Muslims  |
| 9. China      | approximately 39 million Muslims  |
| 10. Ethiopia  | approximately 34 million Muslims  |

Of these, only Egypt is an Arab country. Despite the prevailing popular perception, only 193 million of the world's Muslims - 15 to 18% of the global total - are Arabs.

*Taken from: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA, 2005), The World Factbook*

The following are all Muslim-majority countries:

90 – 100% of the population is Muslim	80 – 89% of the population is Muslim
Somalia	Uzbekistan
Mauritania	Turkmenistan
Maldives	Indonesia
Western Sahara	Bangladesh
Turkey	Syria
Iran	Guinea
Algeria	Kuwait
Afghanistan	Bahrain
Yemen	West Bank and Gaza
Tunisia	Kyrgyzstan
Oman	
Comoros	
Djibouti	
Morocco	
Iraq	
Libya	
Pakistan	
Saudi Arabia	
Tajikistan	
Jordan	
Qatar	
Senegal	
Azerbaijan	
Egypt	
Mali	
Niger	
Gambia	

Diaspora Muslim communities also exist in several Western countries:

United States	5.7 million
France	3 million
Germany	2.5 million
United Kingdom	1.5 million
Canada	500,000

*Taken from: Wikipedia: The free encyclopedia (online)*

# GLOSSARY

## **Arab/Arabic**

“Arabs” initially referred to people from Arabia, but with time the word has come to refer to those whose native tongue is Arabic and who identify as Arab. “Arabian” on the other hand refers to geographic Arabia (Arabian Peninsula, Arabian Sea). Not all Arabs live in Arabia, which is why countries where the majority of people are Arabs are referred to as the “Arab world” rather than the Arabian world. The Arabs are not a race because people from many different races may identify themselves as Arab based on their native tongue alone.

## **Burqa**

Two different items of traditional Muslim women’s clothing are known as a burqa, (sometimes misspelled as burka or burqua). One is a kind of veil which is tied on the head, over a headscarf, and covers the face except for a slit at the eyes for the woman to see through. The other, which is also called a full burqa or an Afghan burqa and occasionally called a chador, is a garment, which covers the entire body and face. The eyes are covered with a “net curtain” allowing the woman to see but preventing other people from seeing her eyes. Both kinds of burqa are used by some Muslim women as an interpretation of the hijab dress code, and the full burqa was compulsory under Taliban rule in Afghanistan.

## **Chador**

A chador is an outer garment worn by some women as part of the hijab dress code. A chador covers the wearer from head to toe, leaving only her hands and part of her face exposed. It is similar to a khimar, which is a round headscarf that leaves the face exposed but falls only to the waist. A chador that covers the face is more commonly called a (full or Afghan) burka.

## **Fatwa**

A fatwa is a legal pronouncement in Islam, issued by a religious law specialist on a specific issue. Usually a fatwa is issued at the request of an individual or a judge to settle a question where fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) is unclear. A scholar capable of issuing fatwas is known as a mufti.

## **Halal**

Halal is the Islamic term for “permissible”, similar to the Jewish kosher. The term is most commonly used in the context of Muslim dietary laws, especially where meat and poultry are concerned, to mean that animals have been slaughtered according to religious practice.

## **Haram**

Haram refers to anything prohibited by the faith. A variety of foods are considered haram including: the flesh of swine (pork), blood and animals slaughtered in the name of anyone but God, carrion, carnivorous animals with the exception of all fish and sea animals, and all intoxicants (specifically alcohol). Pork-derived products such as gelatine are also forbidden by many scholars. Colorants derived from insects such as carmine (made from the cochineal insect) are also considered haram.

## **Hijab**

Hijab is the word used in the Islamic context for the various practices of dressing modestly. It is often used, by both Muslims and non-Muslims, to refer to a form of headscarf.

## **Ijtihad**

Literally this means “personal effort” and refers to the application of common sense and human reason for the purpose of interpretation of Islamic laws to address issues not specifically dealt with in traditional sources. Such issues range from personal questions of faith to public matters of governance and law.

## **Imam**

Imam is an Arabic word meaning “leader”, and is usually applied to the leader of prayers in a mosque. The term has different connotations among Shias.

## **Inshallah**

Inshallah (or more correctly *in sha' Allah*) is a three-word Arabic phrase that literally means “if God wills it” and is used with the same sense as the English “God willing”.

## **Mujahideen**

Mujahideen is a plural form of mujahid the word for someone who engages in jihad. In the 1980s, this word became associated specifically in the media with the Afghans and volunteers from across the Muslim world fighting against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Much American coverage of the period gave the term mujahideen a very positive connotation and to avoid confusion with these “good” mujahideen, those who are fighting against perceived American hegemony are often termed “jihadis” or “jihadists” instead, even though the word “mujahideen” already exists.

## **Niqab**

A niqab is a veil that covers the face, worn by some Muslim women as a part of hijab.

## **PBUH**

“Peace Be Upon Him”, a common blessing recited upon pronouncement of a prophet’s name by Muslims. It is a statement of regard and respect for the prophets, usually stated after the Prophet Muhammad’s name.

## **Salaam**

The word salaam means peace. It is used as part of the traditional Muslim greeting, “Assalamu aleikum”, which means “peace be upon you”.

## **Ulama**

Ulama is the community of legal scholars of Islam and the Sharia. Their organisation and powers vary from community to community. They are most powerful in Shia Islam, where their role is

institutionalised, but where they are subordinate to the heirs of Ali and the hierarchy of mullahs. In most countries they are merely local authority figures. The ulama in most nations consider themselves to represent the consensus (or ijma) of the community of Muslims (or ummah), or to represent at least the scholarly or learned consensus.

### **Ummah**

Ummah is an Arabic and Islamic word that means community or nation. It is correctly used to mean the nation of the believers (Ummah al-Mu'mineen) in Islam, thus the whole Muslim world.

### **Other religious titles**

#### **Ayatollah**

This is a Shia title given to religious scholars of a certain rank. The selection for who can and cannot become an ayatollah is made by existing ayatollahs.

#### **Sheikh**

Some Arab states use the title sheikh for their rulers, but it is also used for certain religious figures and tribal chiefs.

#### **Mufti**

During the Ottoman Empire, the term mufti was used to refer to government officials. In present times, it is a Sunni title for a scholar, interpreter and instructor of Islamic law.

#### **Sayyid**

Sayyid (also spelt Syed) is the title used by some Muslims to indicate that they are the direct descendants of the Prophet's (PBUH) family. For women the title is Sayyida or Syeda.

#### **Haji**

Haji is a title used for people who have completed Hajj, the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca.

# LISTINGS

## Contacts referred to in the manual

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Email: [a.saeed@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:a.saeed@unimelb.edu.au)

Affinity Intercultural Foundation  
[www.affinity.org.au](http://www.affinity.org.au)

African Australian Welfare Council of Victoria  
Level 1, 233 Sydney Road  
Brunswick VIC 3058  
Tel: 3 9380 9156  
Fax: 3 9381 0701  
Email: [aawc@bigpond.com](mailto:aawc@bigpond.com)

Al-Ghazzali Centre for Islamic Sciences and  
Human Development  
P.O. Box L-14  
Mt. Lewis NSW 2200  
Tel: 2 9708 1539  
Fax: 2 9708 0293  
Email: [info@alghazzali.org](mailto:info@alghazzali.org)

Australian Federation of Islamic Councils  
(AFIC)  
P O Box: 7185 South Sydney Business Hub  
Alexandria NSW-2017  
932 Bourke Street  
Zetland NSW-2015  
Tel: 2 9319-6733  
Fax: 2 9391-0159  
Email: [admin@afic.com.au](mailto:admin@afic.com.au)

Australian Lebanese Welfare Inc.  
P.O. Box 228  
Brunswick 3056  
Tel: 39380-9536

Aziza Abdel Halim  
Muslim Women's National Network Australia  
P.O. Box 213  
Granville, NSW, 2148  
Australia  
Tel: 2 96396394  
Email: [info@mwnna.org.au](mailto:info@mwnna.org.au)

Damien Kingsbury  
Senior Lecturer, Deakin University  
School of Social and International Studies  
Faculty of Arts,  
Geelong campus at Waurn Ponds  
Mobile: 0439 638 834

Dalal Smiley  
Manager Multicultural Unit  
City of Darebin  
274 Gower St  
Preston 3072  
Tel: 3 8470 8888  
Fax: 3 9471 0204  
Email: [mailbox@darebin.vic.gov.au](mailto:mailbox@darebin.vic.gov.au)

Desmond Cahill  
Postgraduate Coordinator Multicultural  
PVC Design & Social Context  
Internat & Community Studies  
Building 37 Level 5 Room 30  
City Campus  
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology  
Tel: 39925 4981  
Email: [desmond.cahill@rmit.edu.au](mailto:desmond.cahill@rmit.edu.au)

Iman Rimani  
SBS Radio  
Melbourne  
PO Box 294  
South Melbourne Vic 3205  
Tel: 3 9949 2146  
Fax: 3 9949 3185

Equal Opportunity Commission, Victoria  
Level 3, 380 Lonsdale Street  
Melbourne  
Victoria 3000  
Tel: 3 9281 7111  
Toll free: 1800 134 142  
Fax: 3 9281 7171  
Email: [eoc@vicnet.net.au](mailto:eoc@vicnet.net.au)  
Website: [www.eoc.vic.gov.au](http://www.eoc.vic.gov.au)

Board of Imams  
Islamic Council of Victoria  
66-68 Jeffcott Street  
West Melbourne  
Tel: 3 9328 2067  
Fax: 3 9326 8634  
Email: [admin@icv.org.au](mailto:admin@icv.org.au)

Fethi Mansouri  
Associate Professor and Co-ordinator  
Middle Eastern language and culture studies  
Faculty of Arts  
Deakin University  
Burwood  
Victoria 3125  
Tel: 3 9244 3914  
Fax: 3 9244 6755  
Email: [fethi.mansouri@deakin.edu.au](mailto:fethi.mansouri@deakin.edu.au)

Family and Reproductive Rights Education  
Program (FARREP)  
The Royal Women's Hospital  
132 Grattan St  
Carlton  
VIC 3053  
Tel: 3 9344 2211  
Email: [farrep.program@rwh.org.au](mailto:farrep.program@rwh.org.au)

Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations (FAIR)  
PO Box 1013 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012  
Tel: 2 9708 5773  
Mobile: 0412 318 045

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Department of Anthropology  
University of Sydney  
NSW 2006  
Tel: 2 9351236  
Email: [ghassan.hage@arts.usyd.edu.au](mailto:ghassan.hage@arts.usyd.edu.au)

Greg Barton  
Associate Professor  
Centre: School of International and Political  
Studies  
Faculty of Arts  
Pigdons Road  
Geelong Victoria 3217  
Tel: 3 522 72588  
Email: [greg.barton@deakin.edu.au](mailto:greg.barton@deakin.edu.au)

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity  
Commission  
Level 8, Piccadilly Tower  
133 Castlereagh Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000  
Tel: 2 9284 9600  
General enquiries and publications: 1300 369  
711  
Fax: 2 9284 9611  
Website: [www.hreoc.gov.au](http://www.hreoc.gov.au)

Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service  
GPO Box 2905  
Melbourne 3001  
Tel: 3 9898 3145 public line  
Tel: 3 8415 1712 admin line  
Fax: 3 9898 1049  
Email: [iwdvs@infoxchange.net.au](mailto:iwdvs@infoxchange.net.au)  
Website: [www.iwdvs.org.au](http://www.iwdvs.org.au)

Islamic Council of Victoria  
66-68 Jeffcott Street  
West Melbourne  
Victoria 3003  
Tel: 3 9328 2067  
Fax: 3 9326 8634  
Email: [admin@icv.org.au](mailto:admin@icv.org.au)  
Website: [www.icv.org.au](http://www.icv.org.au)

Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria  
169 Fitzroy St. Fitzroy 3065  
Tel: 3 9419 7888  
Fax: 3 9419 3002  
Email: [iwwcv@vicnet.net.au](mailto:iwwcv@vicnet.net.au)

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Faculty of Law, Sydney University of  
Technology  
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Haymarket NSW 2007  
Tel. 2 9514 3422  
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La Trobe University  
Room 307 Social Sciences Building  
Tel: 3 9479 2698  
Fax: 3 9479 1997  
E-mail: [J.Camilleri@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:J.Camilleri@latrobe.edu.au)

Greg Noble  
Director, Acting, Centre for Cultural Research  
College of Arts, Education, and Social Sciences  
Parramatta Campus, Building Eba, Room G. 06  
Tel: 2 9685 9634  
Fax: 2 9685 9610  
Email : [g.noble@uws.edu.au](mailto:g.noble@uws.edu.au)

Kevin Dunn  
Senior Lecturer, Geography  
3007 The Red Centre, West wing  
Faculty of the Built Environment  
The University of New South Wales  
NSW 2052  
Tel: 2 9385 8283  
Fax: 2 9385 1558  
Email: [k.dunn@unsw.edu.au](mailto:k.dunn@unsw.edu.au)

Kuranda Seyfi Seyit  
Director, Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations  
PO Box 1013 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012  
Tel: 2 9708 5773  
Mobile: 0412 318 045

Maher Mughrabi  
Tel: 0410 273 961  
Email: [maher.mughrabi@hotmail.com](mailto:maher.mughrabi@hotmail.com)

Muslim Women's National Network Australia  
P.O. Box 213  
Granville,  
NSW, 2148  
Tel: 2 96396394  
Email: [info@mwanna.org.au](mailto:info@mwanna.org.au)

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P.O. Box 213  
Granville,  
NSW, 2148  
Australia  
Tel: 2 96396394  
Email: [info@mwanna.org.au](mailto:info@mwanna.org.au)

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Policy Research Officer  
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity  
Commission  
GPO Box 5218  
SYDNEY NSW 2001  
Tel: 2 9284 9829  
Email: [omeimasukkarieh@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:omeimasukkarieh@humanrights.gov.au)

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Independent Community Development Worker  
Tel: 0414 630 314  
Email: [safasaid@tpg1.com.au](mailto:safasaid@tpg1.com.au)

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Humanities and Social Sciences  
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Robert Rice  
Associate Professor, Economics  
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Tel: 3 9905 2429  
[Robert.rice@buseco.monash.edu.au](mailto:Robert.rice@buseco.monash.edu.au)

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology  
Applied Communication  
124 La Trobe Street  
Melbourne, Victoria 3000  
PO Box 2476V  
Melbourne, Victoria 3001  
Tel: 3 9925 2828 or email  
Email: [merle.walter@rmit.edu.au](mailto:merle.walter@rmit.edu.au).

Saara Sabbagh  
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Tel. 0402 528 645  
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Shahram Akbarzadeh  
Tel: 3 990 54280  
Fax: 3 990 52410  
Email:  
[Shahram.Akbarzadeh@arts.monash.edu.au](mailto:Shahram.Akbarzadeh@arts.monash.edu.au)

Sheikh Fehmi  
General-secretary, Board of Imams in Victoria  
Preston Mosque  
90 Cramer St, Preston  
Ph: 3 9470 5936

Sheikh Isa  
Imam  
Tel: 0402 555 202

Tanja Dreher  
Research Manager  
University of Technology Sydney Shopfront  
PO Box 123  
Broadway NSW 2007  
Tel: 2 9514 2900 or 2903  
Fax: 2 9514 2911  
Email: [tanja.dreher@uts.edu.au](mailto:tanja.dreher@uts.edu.au)

Victorian Arabic Social Services (VASS)  
74 Phillip St  
Broadmeadows 3047  
Tel: 3 9309 0055  
Fax: 3 8307 6656  
Email: [mail@vass.org.au](mailto:mail@vass.org.au)

Working Women's Health  
Ground floor, 192 High Street  
Northcote 3070  
Tel: 3 9482 3299 Fax 03 9482 3711  
Email [info@workingwomenshealth.asn.au](mailto:info@workingwomenshealth.asn.au)

## *International*

*Note: All the internet sites included in this list are based on organisations and individuals who are well-known for their work or expertise in their areas, nationally or internationally.*

Al Huda International  
2-A, 11th South Street  
Phase-2  
Defence Housing Society, Karachi  
Pakistan.  
Tel: 92-21-5896704  
Fax: 92-21-5383560  
Email: [info@alhudapk.com](mailto:info@alhudapk.com)  
Website: [www.alhudapk.com](http://www.alhudapk.com)  
Contact person: Dr Farhat Hashmi

Asma Barlas  
Professor, Politics Department  
Ithaca College  
312 Muller Center, Ithaca College  
Ithaca, NY 14850-7289  
Tel: 1-607-274-3557  
Email: [abarlas@ithaca.edu](mailto:abarlas@ithaca.edu)

Aurat Foundation and Information Service  
Foundation, Pakistan (APISF)  
Head Office  
6-B, LDA Garden View Apartments  
Lawrence Road, Lahore 54000, Pakistan  
Tel: 92-42-6306534, 6314382, 6372839  
Fax: 92-42-6278817  
E-mail: [apisf@brain.net.pk](mailto:apisf@brain.net.pk)  
Contact person: Executive Director, Ms Nigar Ahmad

Chandra Muzaffar  
President  
[JUST] International Movement for a Just  
World  
P.O. Box 288  
46730 Petaling Jaya,  
Selangor, MALAYSIA  
Tel: 603-7727-6386 / 7727-7387  
Fax: 603-7727-7389  
Email: [muza@po.jaring.my](mailto:muza@po.jaring.my) or  
[muza@streamyx.com](mailto:muza@streamyx.com)

Farid Esack  
Can be contacted through website:  
[www.uk.geocities.com/faridesack](http://www.uk.geocities.com/faridesack)

Fatima Mernissi  
Email: [fatema@mernissi.net](mailto:fatema@mernissi.net),  
[synergie\\_civique@hotmail.com](mailto:synergie_civique@hotmail.com)

Islamic Research Foundation  
56/58 Tandel Street (North)  
Dongri  
Mumbai 400 009  
India  
Tel: 23736875 (8 lines)  
Email: [zakir@irf.net](mailto:zakir@irf.net)  
Fax: 91-22-23730689  
Contact person: Dr. Zakir Naik  
Islamic Research Foundation International  
7102 W. Shefford Lane  
Louisville, KY 40242-6462  
USA  
Tel: 1 502 287-6262;  
Evening/Holidays: 1 502 423-1988;  
E-Mail: [IRFI@INAME.COM](mailto:IRFI@INAME.COM)  
Website: [www.irfi.org](http://www.irfi.org)

James Turner Johnson  
Professor  
Faculty of Religion  
72 Lipman Drive  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
Tel (732) 932-9637, (732) 932-9641  
Fax: (732) 932-1271  
Email: [jtj@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:jtj@rci.rutgers.edu)

Karen Armstrong  
[karmstronginfo@btopenworld.com](mailto:karmstronginfo@btopenworld.com)

Khalid Abou El Fadl  
Professor, UCLA School of Law  
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90095  
Tel: (310) 206 5401  
Email: [abouelfa@law.ucla.edu](mailto:abouelfa@law.ucla.edu)  
Muslim Women's League  
3010 Wilshire Blvd. Suite #519  
Los Angeles, CA 90010  
(626) 358-0335  
Email: [mwl@mwllusa.org](mailto:mwl@mwllusa.org)

Riffat Hassan  
Professor of Humanities & Religious Studies  
University of Louisville  
P.O. Box 17202  
Louisville, KY 40217 United States  
Tel: 1-502-852-6842  
Fax: 1-502-852-4002  
Email: [riffat@louisville.edu](mailto:riffat@louisville.edu)

Shirkat Gah  
208-Scotch Corner, Upper Mall  
Lahore  
Pakistan  
Tel: 92 42 5760764/5759372/5713718  
Fax: 92 42 5713714  
Email: [sgah@sgah.brain.com.pk](mailto:sgah@sgah.brain.com.pk)

Sisters in Islam, Malaysia  
No. 25 Jalan 5/31,  
46000 Petaling Jaya Selangor  
Malaysia  
Tel: 60 3 7960 6121, 7960 6122, 7960 4485  
Fax: 60 3 7960 4737  
Email: [sistersinislam@pd.jaring.my](mailto:sistersinislam@pd.jaring.my)  
Website: [www.sistersinislam.org.my](http://www.sistersinislam.org.my)

Tariq Ramadan  
Can be contacted through website:  
[www.tariqramadan.com](http://www.tariqramadan.com)

Women Living Under Muslim Law  
PO Box 28445  
London, N19 5NZ, UK  
Email: [wluml@wluml.org](mailto:wluml@wluml.org)

## General community contact listings

### Community organisations

*Note: The organisations listed in this section undertake some form of work with Muslim communities. In many instances, the Council has no connection to these organisations and may not necessarily endorse their views. In addition, the following organisations may not necessarily wish to have a media presence.*

#### **Al-Ghazzali Centre for Islamic Sciences and Human Development**

P.O. Box L -14  
Mt. Lewis NSW 2200  
Tel: 2 9708 1539  
Fax: 2 9708 0293  
Email: [info@alghazzali.org](mailto:info@alghazzali.org)

#### **African Australian Welfare Council of Victoria**

Level 1, 233 Sydney Road  
Brunswick VIC 3058  
Tel: 3 9380 9156  
Fax: 3 9381 0701  
Email: [aawc@bigpond.com](mailto:aawc@bigpond.com)

#### **Australian Federation of Australian Councils**

P O Box: 7185 South Sydney Business Hub  
Alexandria NSW-2017  
932 Bourke Street  
Zetland NSW-2015  
Tel: 2 9319-6733  
Fax: 2 9391-0159  
Email: [admin@afic.com.au](mailto:admin@afic.com.au)

#### **Arabic Council Australia**

Level 1, 194 Stacey St.  
Bankstown NSW 2200  
PO Box 1103,  
Tel: 2 9709 4333  
Fax: 9709 2928  
Email: [info@arabcouncil.org.au](mailto:info@arabcouncil.org.au)

**Australian Multicultural Foundation**

185 Farraday St. Carlton  
VIC 3053  
PO Box 538, Carlton South, VIC 3053  
Tel: 3 9347 6622  
Fax: 3 9347 2218  
Email: [info@amf.net.au](mailto:info@amf.net.au)

**Australian Lebanese Welfare Inc.**

P.O. Box 228  
Brunswick 3056  
Tel: 9380-9536  
Email: [alwinc@iprimus.com.au](mailto:alwinc@iprimus.com.au)

**Canberra Islamic Centre**

Australian National Islamic Library Project.  
PO Box 186  
Calwell ACT 2905  
Tel: 2 6292 1568  
Fax: 2 6292 1920  
Web: <http://www.islam-australia.org/>  
Email: [cic\\_anil@mail.austarmetro.com.au](mailto:cic_anil@mail.austarmetro.com.au)

**Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth**

22/2 Mason Street, Newport VIC 3015  
Postal: PO Box 451, Newport VIC 3015  
Tel: 0421 438 573  
Email [vic@famsy.com](mailto:vic@famsy.com)

**Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations**

PO Box 1013 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012  
Tel: 2 9708 5773  
Mobile: 0412 318 045

**Islamic Council of Victoria**

66-68 Jeffcott Street  
West Melbourne  
Tel: 3 9328 2067  
Fax: 3 9326 8634  
Email: [admin@icv.org.au](mailto:admin@icv.org.au)  
Website: [www.icv.org.au](http://www.icv.org.au)

**Griffith Islamic Research Unit (GIRU)**

Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance  
Nathan Campus, Griffith University  
170 Kessels Road, Nathan  
Brisbane, Queensland 4111, Australia  
Tel: 7 3735 5301  
Fax: 7 3735 6634  
Email: [m.abdalla@griffith.edu.au](mailto:m.abdalla@griffith.edu.au)

**Islamic Council of New South Wales**

405 Waterloo Road  
Chullora NSW 2190  
Tel: 2 9742 5752  
Fax: 2 9742 5665

**Islamic Society of ACT**

130 Empire Circuit  
Yarralumla, ACT 2600  
PO Box 612  
Civic Square ACT 2608  
Tel: 2 6273 0300

**Islamic Society of Northern Territory**

53-59 Vanderlin Drive  
Casuarina, NT 5792  
Ph: 8 8945 0390  
Fax: 8 8945 3031

**The Muslim Council of NSW**

PO Box 603  
Auburn NSW 2144  
6/101 Northumberland Road  
Tel: 2 9648 1070  
Email: [mcnsw@bigpond.com.com](mailto:mcnsw@bigpond.com.com)

**Islamic Council of Queensland**

PO Box 204  
Sunnybank Qld 4109  
Tel: 7 3349 1137  
Fax: 7 3349 1184

**Islamic Council of Western Australia**

7 Malvern Street  
Rivervale WA 6103  
PO Box 70  
Burswood WA 6100  
Tel: 8 9362 2210  
Fax: 8 9362 2210  
Email: [ghauri39@yahoo.com](mailto:ghauri39@yahoo.com)

**Islamic Council Of Tasmania**

166 Warwick St, West,  
Hobart, , AUSTRALIA  
Tel: 3 6234 6998

**Lebanese Muslim Association (LMA)**

Lakemba Mosque.  
84 Wangee Road  
Lakemba 2195  
Tel: 2 9750 6833  
Fax: 2 9759 8149

**Muslim Women's National Network  
Australia**

P.O. Box 213  
Granville,  
NSW, 2148  
Australia  
Tel: 2 96396394  
Email: [info@mwnna.org.au](mailto:info@mwnna.org.au)

**Supreme Islamic Council of NSW**

PO Box 678  
Baulkham Hills 1755  
Phone: 2 9319 2989  
Fax: 2 9319 2989  
Email: [supremeislamiccouncilnsw@yahoo.com](mailto:supremeislamiccouncilnsw@yahoo.com)

**Tasmanian Muslim Association**

166 Warrick St  
West Hobart, WA 7000  
Tel: 3 6234 6998  
Email: [tma@southcom.com.au](mailto:tma@southcom.com.au)

**Victorian Arabic Social Services (VASS)**

74 Phillip St  
Broadmeadows 3047  
Tel: 3 9309 0055  
Fax: 3 8307 6656  
Email: [mail@vass.org.au](mailto:mail@vass.org.au)

**Islamic Women's Association of  
Queensland Inc**

PO Box 1909 Sunnybank Hills QLD 4109  
Tel: 7 3272 8071  
Fax: 7 3272 8097  
Email: [iwaq@iinet.net.au](mailto:iwaq@iinet.net.au)

**Muslim Women's Association**

47 Wangee Rd Lakemba, NSW, 2195, Australia.  
Post: P O Box 264 Lakemba NSW 2195  
Phone: 2 9750 6916  
Fax: 2 9750 7913  
Email: [info@mwa.org.au](mailto:info@mwa.org.au)  
Web: <http://www.mwa.org.au/>

**Islamic Women's Welfare Association  
(IWWA)**

Suite 4, 180 Haldon Street  
Lakemba 2195  
NSW, Australia  
PO Box 430  
Lakemba 2195  
Phone: 2 9759 1675  
Fax: 2 9759 0024  
Email: [info@iwwa.org.au](mailto:info@iwwa.org.au)  
website: [www.iwwa.org.au/](http://www.iwwa.org.au/)

**Muslim Women's Association of SA Inc.**

1st Floor, Torrens Building  
220 Victoria Square  
Adelaide SA 5000  
Tel/ Fax: 8 8212 0800

*Islamic schools in Victoria*

*Note: for a listing of Islamic schools in other states,  
contact the state-specific Islamic societies/ councils.*

**Darul Ulum Islamic College**

Baird St. Fawkner 3060  
Tel: 9359 1477 / Fax: 9359 0692

**East Preston Islamic College**

55-57 Tyler St. East Preston 3072  
Tel: 9478 3323 / Fax: 9470 1255  
[epic@hotmail.com](mailto:epic@hotmail.com)

**Ilim College**

30 Inverloch Cres. Dallas 3047  
Tel: 9302 3770 / Fax: 9302 3771  
[www.ilimcollege.vic.edu.au](http://www.ilimcollege.vic.edu.au)

**Isik College**

Goulburn St. Broadmeadows 3047  
Tel: 9309 0388 / Fax: 9309 0377  
[isikcollege@hotmail.com](mailto:isikcollege@hotmail.com)

**Islamic Schools of Victoria Inc. (Werribee  
College)**

201 Sayers Rd. Hoppers Crossing 3029  
Tel: 9369 6010 / Fax: 9369 2276  
[www.wicv.org](http://www.wicv.org)

**King Khalid Islamic College of Victoria**

Secondary College  
56 Bakers Rd. Coburg North 3058  
Tel: 9350 4533 / Fax: 9354 4731  
Primary School  
653 Sydney Rd. Coburg 3058  
Tel: 9354 0833 / Fax: 9355 8768  
[www.kkic.vic.edu.au](http://www.kkic.vic.edu.au)

**Minaret College**

36-38 Lewis St. Springvale 3171  
Tel: 9574 0567 / Fax: 9548 4755  
[www.minaret.vic.edu.au](http://www.minaret.vic.edu.au)

**Mount Hira College**

396 Greens Rd. Keysborough 3173  
 Tel: 9701 8919 Fax: 9769 0644  
[www.mthira.vic.edu.au](http://www.mthira.vic.edu.au)

**Mosques in Victoria**

*Note: for a listing of mosques in other states, contact the state-specific Islamic societies/councils.*

**Afghan Islamic Society**

207 Liberty Pde. Heidelberg West 3081  
 Tel: 9459 2968

**Afghan Mosque of Victoria**

14 Photinia St. Doveton 3177  
 Tel: 9799 3212

**Al-Ansar Islamic Association**

PO Box 1286. Kensington 3031  
 Tel: 9376 3533

**Albanian Australia Islamic Society**

765 Drummond St. Carlton North 3054  
 Tel: 9347 6505 / Ah: 9690 7636

**Al Nur Mosque**

36 Studley St. Maidstone 3012  
 Tel: 9317 9201

**Albanian Muslim Society of Shepparton**

8 Acacia St. Shepparton 3630  
 Tel: 5831 8037

**Australian Bangladesh Islamic Council Inc.**

320-324 Huntingdale Rd. Huntingdale 3166  
 Tel: 9543 8037

**Australian Islamic Social Association**

Australian Headquarters  
 Inverloch Cres. Dallas 3047  
 Tel: 9302 3030

**Brunswick Branch**

660A Sydney Rd. Brunswick 3056  
 Tel: 9386 8423

**Dandenong Branch**

141 Cleeland St. Dandenong 3175  
 Tel: 9793 5838

**Bosnia Herzegovina Islamic Society**

18 Leonard Ave. Noble Park 3174  
 Tel: 9546 8089

**Broadmeadows Turkish Islamic Society**

45-55 King St. Broadmeadows 3047  
 Tel: 9359 0054

**Cypriot Turkish Islamic Society**

618 Ballart Rd. Sunshine 3020  
 Tel: 9363 6171

**Deer Park Mosque**

283-285 Station Rd. Deer Park 3023  
 Tel: 9310 8811

**El Sedeaq Islamic Society**

32-36 Elliott St. Heidelberg West 3081  
 Tel: 9440 8805

**Fatih Mosque**

31 Nicholson St. Coburg 3058  
 Tel: 9386 5324

**Fawkner Mosque**

Baird St. Fawkner 3060  
 Tel: 9359 1477

**Fitzroy Turkish Islamic Society**

144 Fitzroy St. Fitzroy 3065  
 Tel: 9417 5760

**Footscray Mosque**

30A Pickett St. Footscray 3011

**Footscray Mosque**

50 Raleigh St. Footscray 3011

**Heidelberg Mosque**

Cnr Lloyd & Elliot St. Heidelberg 3084  
 Tel: 9457 4624

**Islamic Association of Australia (Dandenong Mosque)**

10-12 Dalgety St. Dandenong South 3175

**Islamic College of Victoria Mosque**

201 Sayers Rd. Hoppers Crossing 3029  
 Tel: 9369 6010

**Islamic Council of Victoria (City Mosque)**

66-68 Jeffcott St. West Melbourne 3003  
 Tel: 9328 2067  
[www.icv.org.au](http://www.icv.org.au)

**Islamic Society of Melbourne**

**(Lysterfield/Easter Region Mosque)**  
 1273 Wellington Rd. Lysterfield 3156  
 Tel: 9752 9977

**Islamic Society of Victoria (Preston Mosque)**

(Omar bin Khattab Mosque)  
90 Cramer St. Preston 3072  
Tel: 9470 2424

**Keysborough Turkish Islamic & Cultural Centre**

396 Greens Rd. Keysborough 3173  
Tel: 9701 5919

**Manifold Heights Mosque**

45-47 Bostock Ave. Geelong West 3218  
Tel: 5224 2422

**Meadow Heights Mosque**

Hudson Circuit. Meadow Heights 3048

**Meadow Heights Mosque**

19A Meadow Heights Shopping Centre.  
Meadow Heights 3048

**Mildura Mosque**

49 Tenth St. Mildura 3500  
Tel: 5023 7662

**Mooroopna Mosque**

209 Mc Lennon St. Mooroopna 3629  
Tel: 5825 4755

**Newport Islamic Society**

(Bilal bin Rabah Mosque)  
1 Walker St. Newport 3015  
Tel: 9391 0449

**Reservoir Mosque**

111 Blake St. Reservoir 3073

**Springvale South Mosque**

68 Gransworthy St. Springvale 3171

**The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils**

66-68 Jeffcott St. West Melbourne 3003  
Tel: 9329 1228

**Thomastown Turkish Islamic & Education Society**

124-130 Station St. Thomastown 3074  
Tel: 9465 3526

**United Australian Islamic Cultural Centre**

46-48 Mason St. Campbellfield 3061  
Tel: 9309 7605

**United Islamic Cultural Centre of Australia**

1268 Heatherton Rd. Noble Park 3174  
Tel: 9706 9991

**United Migrant Muslim Association**

72 George Rd. Doncaster East 3109  
Tel: 9824 6491

**Western Thrace Islamic Council**

103 Union St. Prahran 3181

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## *Newspapers/magazines*

- Australia Fair Newspaper
- Salam Magazine
- Islamic Monthly Review

## *Regional experts*

- Southeast Asia: Greg Barton, Robert Rice
- Central Asia: Amin Saikal, Shahram Akbarzadeh
- South Asia: Amin Saikal, Samina Yasmin, Shirkat Gah
- Middle East: Fethi Mansouri, Amin Saikal
- North Africa: Fethi Mansouri

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