



Human Rights and Equal
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Living Spirit

A dialogue on human rights and responsibilities

**Report on HREOC's
Muslim Women's Project 2006**



Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

REPORT

on the

Muslim Women's Project 2006
A dialogue on human rights and responsibilities

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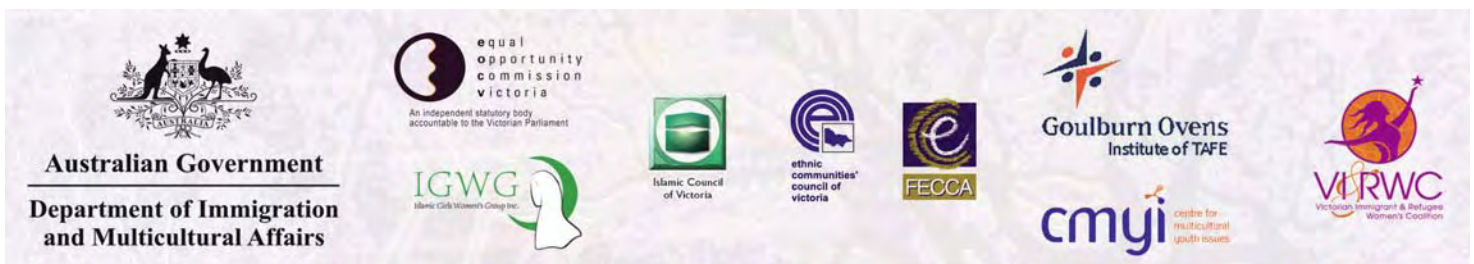
Acknowledgements

The Commission would like to thank the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria, our principal partner and collaborator in developing the forum.

The project was officially supported by the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia, the Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria, the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, the Islamic Council of Victoria, the Islamic Girls' and Women's Group, the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, the Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition and Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE. The support of all of these organisations was vital to the overall success of the forum.



ISLAMIC WOMEN'S WELFARE COUNCIL *of Victoria Inc.*



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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
DIMA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (currently known as the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIaC))
IWWCV	Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria
FECCA	Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia
ICV	Islamic Council of Victoria
IGWG	Islamic Girls' and Women's Group
CMYI	Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues
ECCV	Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria
EOCV	Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria
VIRWC	Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition
GOIT	Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE
MWNNA	Muslim Women's National Network of Australia
DAEC	Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

SILC	Self-esteem, Identity, Leadership, and Community Participation Project
VICSEG	Victorian Co-operative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups
VMC	Victorian Multicultural Commission
ECLO	Ethnic Community Liaison Officer
PRACE	Preston / Reservoir Adult Community Education

Foreword

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) developed a Muslim Women's Project 2006 to engage Australian Muslim women in a dialogue about human rights and responsibilities. The project culminated in a one day forum held on the 21st September 2006 in Preston, Victoria, called:

Living Spirit: Muslim women and human rights - participating in social change.



The *Muslim Women's Project* was developed in response to the findings of the 2004 Ismaḡ Report that found that the impact of racial and religious discrimination against Arab and Muslim Australians was most acutely felt by women.

Funded by the (then) Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) — now the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DlaC), HREOC embarked on a comprehensive consultation process with key stakeholders.

I am very pleased to present the project report setting out the aims, details of the forum, and issues and strategies identified during the project.

In addition, as part of the project, HREOC conducted a national audit of initiatives aimed at addressing discrimination and prejudice against Muslim women in Australia. A copy of the audit is now available alongside the electronic-version of the report on our website at www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/livingspirit/

I would like to invite you to send us information about any new initiatives or updates on ongoing projects. Please email a short paragraph, including your contact details, to community@humanrights.gov.au so that my staff can add this information to the audit. These updates will ensure that this resource is enhanced and developed into an even more comprehensive and current resource for all.

This project will feed into the future work that my team and the work I may undertake with Muslim women in the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Tom Calma'. The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Tom Calma
National Race Discrimination Commissioner

1. What is the purpose of this report?

In December 2005 the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) funded the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) to conduct the ***Muslim Women's Project: a dialogue on human rights and responsibilities*** (*Muslim Women's Project*).

This report provides DIMA with information about the process HREOC engaged in for the *Muslim Women's Project* including a summary of the issues identified throughout the process and the outcomes of the *Living Spirit Forum* in Preston, Victoria.

2. What is the *Muslim Women's Project*?

The *Muslim Women's Project 2006* was conducted by HREOC to engage Muslim Australian women in a dialogue about human rights and responsibilities. The project aimed to increase understanding among Muslim women about human rights principles and the laws for protecting people against racial, religious and gender discrimination in Australia. The project also aimed to identify further strategies to improve the capacity of individuals and communities to respond to discrimination and vilification, in particular racial and religious discrimination and vilification. See Appendix 1 for the project description.

3. What is the background to the project?

In 2003, HREOC commenced a project called *Ismaξ: National consultations on eliminating prejudice against Arab and Muslim Australians*. During this project the Commission consulted with over 1400 Arab and Muslim Australians around Australia. Participants described their experiences of racial and religious discrimination, vilification and abuse since the September 11 attacks in 2001 and the Bali bombings in 2002.

The *Ismaξ Report*, published in 2004, found that the impact of racial and religious discrimination against Arab and Muslim Australians is most acutely felt by women, in particular Muslim women wearing the hijab or other forms of religious dress. The report also found that most incidents raised in the consultations were not reported to police or other government authorities due to fear of victimisation; lack of trust in authority; lack of knowledge about the law and complaints processes; the perceived difficulty in making a complaint; and the perception that outcomes were unsatisfactory.

The biggest impacts reported by consultation participants, particularly women and young people, were a substantial increase in fear, for example of being attacked or abused; a growing sense of alienation from the wider community; and an increase in distrust of authority such as government or police.

Consultation participants throughout the *Ismaξ Project* expressed strong views about the need for more effective community action as well as government action to tackle anti-Arab and anti-Muslim prejudice and discrimination. *Ismaξ* identified several

strategies for addressing these issues, including improved networking between diverse community groups, stronger community leadership, and better education within communities as well as the broader public about issues affecting Arab and Muslim Australians, as well as providing greater support for individuals who were seen to be particularly at risk of discrimination and vilification (such as women, young people and newly arrived migrants and refugees).

Since the *Ismaξ Report* was published other events, such as the London bombings in July 2005, have taken place that are likely to exacerbate the discrimination and vilification being experienced by Muslims as identified in *Ismaξ*. These events have only increased the need to address such problems and to seek ways of promoting the common goals of harmony and understanding. (For more information about the *Ismaξ Project* visit www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/isma)

The *Muslim Women's Project* and *Living Spirit Forum* were developed in direct response to the findings of the *Ismaξ Report* and subsequent community consultations undertaken by HREOC and other government and non-government agencies including DIMA and the Engaging with Women Sub-Group that formed part of the Federal Government's Muslim Community Reference Group.

3.1 What were the aims of the project?

The project's primary aim was to conduct a forum which increases Muslim women's understanding about human rights and their access to and use of legal avenues for addressing discrimination and vilification in Australia.

Specifically the *Muslim Women's Project* aimed to:

1. Increase understanding among Muslim Australian women about human rights principles focusing on but not restricted to racial and religious discrimination and vilification.
2. Identify Muslim Australian women's human rights issues and knowledge of human rights and responsibilities.
3. Increase understanding among the non-Muslim community about Islam and what it is like to be a Muslim woman in Australia.
4. Improve access to legal and community remedies for discrimination and vilification.
5. Identify and develop further strategies to improve the capacity of individuals and communities to respond to discrimination and vilification.

3.2 What did the project consist of?

3.2.1 Consultations

As part of the project, HREOC consulted with key stakeholders, individual community members, government and non-government organisations in both Victoria and New South Wales from February to May 2006 to seek expert advice and feedback about the scope, objectives and implementation of the project. During this period 38 meetings were held in Victoria and 29 in NSW. Key stakeholders were consulted on the basis of their expertise on Muslim women's issues and/or who have worked on particular issues around the promotion and education of human rights and anti-discrimination laws, particularly racial and religious discrimination and vilification. The

meetings were a combination of both face to face and telephone meetings. See Appendix 2 for a complete list of the key stakeholders.

Participants in the consultations confirmed the need for a forum on Muslim women's human rights issues. In addition, participants felt it would be useful to hold a series of workshops separate to a forum for Muslim women in Victoria to increase their understanding of existing legal protections against racial and religious discrimination and vilification. These workshops have not been funded as part of this project.

3.2.2 Audit

As part of the project, although not directly funded by DIMA, HREOC conducted an audit of recent and current initiatives aimed at addressing discrimination and prejudice against Muslim women in Australia including research projects, programs, procedures, resources, strategies, materials, initiatives and events at a local, state and federal level across Australia and some international projects.

This audit was used to help identify gaps in the projects undertaken in this area, generate ideas and materials for the project and help ensure that the Commission did not duplicate work already undertaken. The audit could be used to inform future projects. The audit is intended to be a working document where new initiatives and programs can be added over time and cross-checked to avoid duplication.

The audit has been confined to initiatives which are aimed at addressing prejudice against Muslim women specifically, rather than initiatives which target other sections of Muslim communities, or which provide best practice examples of projects involving ethnic communities. However, as these other initiatives may prove relevant and useful to future projects, it is envisaged that these initiatives will also be collated for use in the future. The audit can be found at

www.humanrights.gov.au/race_discrimination/livingspirit/

3.2.3 Forum

On 21 September a one-day forum entitled '*Living Spirit: Muslim Women and Human Rights Forum – the right to participate in social change (Living Spirit Forum)*' was held in Preston, Victoria. The forum identified strategies to address racial and religious discrimination in particular, and promoted the common goals of harmony and understanding between Muslim and non-Muslims in Australia. See Section 4 for more details about the *Living Spirit Forum*, including a summary of the outcomes. The event was interactive and focused on Muslim women's understanding of human rights and responsibilities. The content and format of the forum were guided by the consultations and audit and were decided in consultation with key stakeholders.

The forum was restricted to one state, Victoria, due to limits in resources. It was promoted in all states and open to any women interested in attending from all over Australia.

4. 'Living Spirit': Muslim Women and Human Rights Forum – the right to participate in social change

4.1 Background to the *Living Spirit* Forum

The forum, entitled '*Living Spirit: Muslim Women and Human Rights Forum – the right to participate in social change*', was a one-day interactive event held at the Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre (DAEC) in Preston, Victoria on Thursday, 21 September 2006. It was developed and conducted by HREOC in partnership with the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria (IWWCV), thus enabling greater participation in the project from Victorian Muslim women.

The forum was officially supported by the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council (FECCA), Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria (EOCV), Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV), Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV), Islamic Girls' and Women's Group (IGWG), Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI), Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition (VIRWC) and the Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE (GOIT). The support of all of these organisations was vital to the overall success of the forum.

The forum program was designed around the key issues which emerged from the key stakeholder meetings and consultations. Many of these issues were similar to the issues identified in earlier research, consultation findings and other initiatives including HREOC's *Isma' Project*, DIMA's national Muslim Women's Forum 2004, *Sawt: Voices of Women* Conference – a two day conference organised by the Canberra Islamic Centre, consultations conducted through the Engaging Women Sub-Group of the Muslim Community Reference Group and other research conducted by academics, religious, community and non-government organisations. The list of the main issues identified through the *Muslim Women's Project*, including the *Living Spirit Forum*, is outlined below in Section 5.

The forum was designed to address the identified issues through workshops, in particular focusing on solutions and strategies. The forum was being planned and developed at a time when many Muslim women, particularly Arabic-speaking Muslim women, were coping with the realities of the war on Lebanon and its impact on many families. The Commission was informed that the mood in the Arab and Muslim Australian communities was one of tragic loss and despair. With this in mind, *Living Spirit* took a two-fold approach. It was firstly a celebration of the human and living spirit of women, especially in difficult times. Secondly, it addressed the importance of empowering women to actively participate in positive social change to help overcome feelings of despair, disempowerment and victimisation.

Many of the strategies are listed under their respective issues in the list outlined below in Section 5.

4.2 Aim of the *Living Spirit Forum*

With active participation in social change as the main theme, the forum suggested pathways forward for service providers, anti-discrimination agencies, community organisations, individuals and the broader community in general. More specifically, the forum aimed to:

- promote harmony and understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims
- develop strategies to combat religious and racial discrimination and vilification against Muslim women (which could include the development of targeted resources)
- explore points in common between human rights principles and Islam, in order to increase mutual respect, and
- increase understanding of legal protections against discrimination and vilification in Australia.

4.3 Participants

The forum was open to all women, Muslim and non-Muslim. Formal letters of invitation were sent out to all local, state and federal Members of Parliament in Victoria, across all political parties. Invitation letters were also sent to the state and federal Attorney-General, the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, the Minister for Women, all state and national multicultural and anti-discrimination agencies across Australia and major national, state and local key stakeholders. Flyers and other promotional materials were distributed widely by HREOC and other supporting organisations, including the IWWCV, through their existing networks and women's groups and featured in many newsletters and websites. Information was also distributed to various mainstream, local and ethnic media.

The forum was attended by over 140 women from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, including Muslim and non-Muslim women and girls. Participants were diverse in age, culture, religion, experiences and attitudes. Most of the participants were Muslim women home makers, primary, secondary and tertiary students, service providers, community workers, religious and community leaders, and professionals including psychologists and lawyers. Non-Muslim women included church leaders, police, community workers, service providers, anti-discrimination agencies, media, government representatives and individual community members. Over 30 of the participants were between the ages of 8 and 18 years. In addition to the participants, over 20 children attended the childcare provided on-site.

Most participants were from metropolitan Victoria with a few women from regional and rural Victoria, including Shepparton and Geelong. Women from South Australia, Canberra and New South Wales also attended the forum.

4.4 *Living Spirit Forum* overview

During the consultations, key stakeholders felt strongly that the forum should not duplicate previous conferences and forums and suggested that in order for the *Living Spirit Forum* to be successful, it needed to include the following key elements:

- be an effective way of making Muslim women's voices heard and be an avenue for Muslim women to express their concerns, needs and aspirations
- provide bridge-building opportunities to dispel myths about Islam and Muslim women
- provide a safe environment where women can speak out without fear and have an open and honest dialogue
- focus on empowering and building the confidence of Muslim women with information and opportunities
- engage Muslim women at grassroots level and not only target participants who often attend such events
- document the forum (through video or audio) for use in future work
- identify sites of discrimination, and focus on the practical ways of dealing and responding to such discrimination, vilification and abuse, and not just through information and education
- provide interactive, fun, participatory and practical workshops and activities
- use familiar community members and experts as facilitators
- provide transport, childcare and interpreters to address barriers of access and participation at such events.

Taking these suggestions into consideration, the forum was designed to be interactive and informative. See Appendix 3 for a copy of the program including details of the workshops. It includes the following features:

- an Indigenous Smoking Ceremony and traditional Welcome to Country by Joy Murphy, Senior Woman Elder of the Wurundjeri People
- a hypothetical plenary session called '*Righting the Wrongs: How would you respond?*' addressing the sets of policy standards that decision makers use to respond to incidents of discrimination and abuse
- a morning tea with politicians, hosted by Maria Vanvakimou MP, the local Member for the area in which the forum was held
- '*Why Women Matter*' Exhibition profiling achievements and contributions to Australia by ten Muslim women (see Appendix 4 for a copy of the ten profiles)
- the screening of '*Veiled Ambition*' and other DVDs
- an interactive drumming workshop during lunch

- a *Living Spirit Mural* – an opportunity for participants (children and adults) to write down their thoughts and ideas about the day about human rights, Islam or any of the topics on a canvas mural which has been donated to IWWCV
- plenary sessions focusing on human rights, Islam and confronting negative stereotypes and misconceptions. DIMA presented a combined session about *‘What’s available and how to get involved in projects that affect you’* – on existing and future state and community projects – and a closing session about *‘Participating in change’* – capacity building and empowerment – focusing on strategies for the future
- ten concurrent workshops (five in the morning and five in the afternoon to choose from). Workshops were facilitated using various styles including scenario-based role plays, café-style discussion and question and answer sessions. Two of the workshops were for young women only. The ten workshops topics included:
 - *‘My rights are your rights’* – human rights and young women
 - *‘Out of the shadows’* – human rights issues facing Muslim women
 - *‘A new world’* – what the new anti-terrorism laws mean to you
 - *‘How I can, NOT why I can’t?’* – why should I make a complaint and how to cope with crisis
 - *‘Lost in translation, found in respect’* – helping Muslim women cope with racial and religious discrimination and abuse
 - *‘Critical connections’* – freedom of speech vs racial vilification
 - *‘Image vs reality’* – how to answer the hard questions and our responsibility to combat negative stereotyping
 - *‘Race is just lines drawn on a map’* – understanding stereotypes for young women
 - *‘Educate a woman, educate a nation’* – the importance of combating negative stereotypes
 - *‘Creating possibilities’* – a conversation between generations about experiences of discrimination – how to make a difference together in your family, community and life.

The Masters of Ceremonies for the forum were Dr Helen Szoke, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Conciliator of the Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria, and Ms Voula Messimeri, Chairperson of the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia. Facilitators were mostly experts from Victoria and a few from New South Wales and South Australia. See Appendix 5 for a copy of the speakers’ and facilitators’ biographies. Childcare was available throughout the entire day with two qualified childcare workers who organised interactive and fun activities with the children.

The forum was followed by a closing dinner held at the local Café Umut to mark the end of the forum and celebrate the beginning of Ramadan. Over 70 participants and their families attended the dinner.

The *Living Spirit Forum* was documented on video, which will be used by HREOC for future reference as well as segments of it being used as part of a possible future resource. In addition photographs were taken on the day. See Appendix 6 for a copy of some of the photos.

4.5 Evaluation of the *Living Spirit Forum*

During the *Living Spirit Forum* feedback forms were distributed among participants. The feedback form asked the participants to rate various aspects of the forum using numbers from 1 to 5, where 5 was extremely satisfied and 1 was extremely dissatisfied. Participants were asked to rate categories ranging from relevancy of topics to the quality of childcare facilities. Over a third of participants completed the feedback forms and from these the Commission signalled a few majority trends on the basis of the completed questionnaire.

An overwhelming majority of participants were extremely satisfied or satisfied with the speakers, the issues and relevancy of the topics addressed. A similar majority felt extremely satisfied or satisfied with the range of topics covered by the forum. A more mixed response was given to the hypothetical discussion which took place, although more than half of the respondents remained extremely satisfied with the hypothetical. The purpose of the hypothetical was for panellists, which included a newspaper reporter, a school principal, religious leader, a Muslim woman, a supermarket manager, police and a politician, to highlight best practice procedures, policies and other responses to incidents of racial and/or religious discrimination.

Most importantly the workshops were overwhelmingly rated as useful, with only 10% providing either no answer or rating the workshop as ok or not useful. Most participants were also very positive about the meeting of new people and networking opportunities during the forum. The ratings in relation to the provision of information about the forum indicated room for improvement in the marketing and distribution of information prior to the conference.

Comments arising from the workshops were predominantly positive: participants wrote that they had enjoyed the information provided, the discussions during the workshops and the meeting of new people through the workshops. Most respondents would have liked to have more time for the workshops. The allocated time for workshops and the advertising of the forum were the two main areas of improvement mentioned by respondents. Many respondents expressed an interest in contributing further to the development of strategies to deal with issues discussed during the forum and wanted follow up to the forum.

The feedback from the partners, key stakeholders and official supporters after the event was very positive. Most participants want further information about the outcomes of the *Muslim Women's Project* and the *Living Spirit Forum* particularly. Emails after the forum came flooding through, with feedback such as '*Thank you for organising a wonderful and informative event!*' and '*It was one of the most innovative, interesting, creative and informative, not to mention interactive conferences we have been to in a long time!!*'

Since the completion of the forum there has been interest from key stakeholders in other states such as South Australia, New South Wales and Western Australia. The Women's Law Centre of Western Australia has formally written expressing interest in organising a *Living Spirit Forum* in Perth. The Women's Law Centre is seeking funding for a forum in Western Australia. It is intended that the forum take place some time within the next year.

5. What were the issues identified throughout the project that affect Muslim Australian women and what were some of the suggested strategies to address each issue?

The following issues and strategies were identified by participants in the *Muslim Women's Project* both during the ongoing consultation process and at the *Living Spirit Forum*. Some of the issues identified are also being faced by Muslims generally and by Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities. Where strategies have been suggested and developed to address an issue, these have been outlined in relation to their corresponding issue below.

The following list of issues and strategies is not comprehensive and includes only the main issues identified. Action Sheets were developed as an outcome from some of the workshops at the forum. These can be used as resources for particular areas of action, including for young people and women, employers and service providers. They are noted as *Actions* under their respective issues and the Action Sheets are attached to this report.

5.1 Knowledge, understanding and practical application of human rights

Issues

- Human rights tended to be discussed by the participants in the forum at a practical level rather than a conceptual level. Generally, participants had a good understanding of human rights issues, noting justice, equality, freedom of speech, food, shelter, water, freedom to practice religion and respect for others as being some of their human rights concerns. Many of the Muslim women attending the forum and consultations had experienced or knew people who had experienced some form of discrimination. Although participants knew this was a violation of human rights, many were so used to experiencing such mistreatment they felt resigned to the belief that very little could be done about it under current human rights and anti-discrimination laws. Significantly, many believed the law was not there to protect everyone.
- Generally, young women had a greater sense of injustice about the discrimination they were experiencing than older women. However, they had less knowledge about the laws.
- Some participants found it difficult to understand human rights concepts such as rights and responsibilities.
- There is a particular lack of knowledge and understanding of the legal framework around equal opportunity, anti-discrimination laws and complaints mechanisms amongst newly arrived migrants and refugees.
- Participants felt that Islam and human rights principles were largely compatible and played a major role in Muslim women's lives. Many workshop participants believed that Islam provided them with more human rights than the

international laws based on the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The application of human rights within Islamic practices and beliefs was more practical. However, young women particularly noted that the correlation between Islam and human rights was both positive and negative. For example, the 'sad face' of human rights in relation to Islam (as depicted in one of the workshops) includes the lack of employment opportunities for women wearing a hijab and a lack of friends. Such issues are not prominent in the public debate. On the other hand, the 'happy face' of human rights in relation to Islam included Muslims being proud of who they are, the practice of religious festivals, mosque visits and tours.

Suggested strategies

- Use forums such as the *Living Spirit Forum* as a platform for future discussion about anti-discrimination laws and human rights to ensure that these remain in the public sphere, especially in consideration of the existing climate of fear and ignorance which leads to discrimination.
- Lobby for an Australian Bill of Rights and for more plain language versions (English and other languages) of domestic and human rights and anti-discrimination laws so they are easily accessible, easy to understand and apply to everyday life. These can be used as resources in future workshops and should be developed in consultation with communities, including women and young people.
- Hold more events such as the *Living Spirit Forum* dedicated to issues faced by young women. Such events should be local community-based events.

Action

Action Sheet 1 – ‘How can you practically apply and promote human rights in your life?’ (Appendix 7)

5.2 Experiences of racial and religious discrimination, vilification and abuse

Issues

- Muslim women continue to experience racial and/or religious discrimination and abuse, mostly due to being readily identified as being Muslim or because of their name, colour or dress. Although these experiences varied greatly amongst the community, the 'war on terror' and local events such as the Cronulla riots in Sydney were seen by Muslim women as indicators of their increasing vulnerability to incidents of racial and religious discrimination and abuse. Many participating Muslim women had either experienced discrimination or knew of women who have had some negative experiences because of their religion or race.

- Experiences of discrimination, vilification and abuse occurred in the media, on public housing estates, in public spaces, on public transport and by transit officers, in shopping centres, retail shops and supermarkets (including by security guards and the refusal of service), on the street or whilst travelling in a car. Discrimination in employment and in the provision of medical, government or rental services (particularly in regional areas) were also identified as common experiences. Unprovoked incidences of violence and damage of property were also noted.
- While some positive intervention was performed by bystanders, it was noted that incidents where bystanders did not stand up against the behaviour was particularly hurtful, although people who had witnessed incidents often did not know how to respond, particularly when their safety also may have been at risk. Young people noted experiences at school mostly in terms of favouritism. Concern was therefore expressed over harassment and verbal and physical abuse that many young people have endured as a result.
- Anti-terrorism laws made women particularly fearful and there was a general lack of understanding of these laws and the rights of citizens protected under law.

Suggested strategies

- Awareness campaign to all Australians stating that the elimination of discrimination and abuse is everyone's responsibility. This could be done by creating awareness of the impacts on the victims of discrimination.
- Empower Muslim women, young people and all Australians to safely confront discrimination, vilification and abuse through knowledge, information, conflict resolution and practical ways of dealing with such issues.
- Facilitate greater access to social support and other services.
- Conduct specific workshops about anti-terrorism laws and civil rights for advocates as well community groups as part of other forums focusing on human rights and not as stand alone workshops. This addresses the issue of fear expressed by women who are afraid of attending workshops on anti-terrorism laws specifically as they fear that, as a consequence, they will be targeted by those laws and ASIO.

Note: Strategies outlined in relation to other issues may also address the issue of racial and religious discrimination and vilification.

5.3 Social and personal impacts of discrimination, vilification and abuse

Issues

- The most common feelings expressed as a result of experiencing discrimination included: 'alienated', 'isolated', 'humiliated', 'helpless', 'powerless', 'unsupported', 'violated', 'bullied', 'fearful', 'angry', 'not accepted as being Australian', 'distrustful', 'insular' and 'feeling like they don't belong and targeted'. Such impacts were likened to feelings of trauma by participants. Many people believed they were victims of circumstance and felt lost within the country, the community and the system. Concern was expressed about anti-terrorism legislation, such as fear of house being bugged or fire-bombed or fear of being deported.
- The social and personal impacts identified as being particularly important include:
 - the rise in mental health issues including chronic depression, leading to suicidal behaviour
 - limited mobility due to fear of being in public places such as shopping centres, relying on existing support networks to do daily tasks such as take children to school, shopping, etc. Some women have also been hesitant to go to the doctor or on family outings such as picnics and holidays. This can also impact on other family members' mobility, including children
 - limited access to economic and social development such as to education and to employment. Associated with this is a loss of social interaction and cohesion, limited participation and contribution in the broader community and with people of other cultures and backgrounds
 - loss of confidence, motivation and opportunity to plan, develop and access career, ambition, residence, etc.
 - loss of respect for and confidence in others and the system, leading to a distrust of service providers, friends, government, authority and self
 - rejection of culture and religion leading to feelings of not belonging to either 'Australia' or to the 'community'
 - anger, defensiveness and aggression can result in some women behaving discriminatorily as a defence mechanism
 - the creation of divisions and polarisation amongst the community instead of harmony
 - fear of speaking out at the risk of being labelled as someone who holds the 'victim mentality' or not taking responsibility
 - disintegration of social networks and support systems such as community organisations. These networks are therefore less able to influence policy, educate the community about human rights or to advocate for the community as a whole.

5.4 Generational gap and conflict

Issues

- A generational divide is being created as young people and their parents are experiencing similar feelings of alienation and isolation as a result of racial and/or religious discrimination, vilification, abuse and stereotyping. Both generations feel a loss of identity but rarely feel comfortable enough to talk about it. The younger generation often internalise feelings of anger at the treatment of their mothers, sisters, community, etc. and struggle to cope with such issues. Consequently, they may also find it difficult to help their mothers cope. Young people can become hateful of themselves and 'the perceived other'.
- Intergenerational tensions are created in response to fear and the need to protect children from similar mistreatment and discrimination. This can result in parents changing rules such as restricting their daughters' movement, demanding that their brothers be with them and choosing which friends they keep. This over-protectiveness can lead to increasing passivity in women who appear increasingly as victims. This then creates tensions between mothers and daughters.
- Other main issues faced by mothers and daughters include lack of communication, language barriers, differences in knowledge of political and social systems and a technology gap.

Suggested strategies

- Hold more events for parents and their children together. These events should be social and informative and interactive and should include workshops similar to that outlined in the *Living Spirit Forum*.

Action

Action Sheet 2 – 'How can parents and their children help empower each other, help each other cope with discrimination and help bridge the generation gap?' (Appendix 8)

5.5 Responses to incidents of racial and religious discrimination, vilification and abuse including knowledge of and access to complaints mechanisms

Issues

- Lack of awareness and difficulty in accessing various avenues of complaints and reporting mechanisms available to them, including police, HREOC, state anti-discrimination agencies, community organisations, etc. This is particularly felt by new arrivals, refugees and young people.

- Women would most likely inform family and friends if an incident of racial and/or religious discrimination and abuse occurred, rather than seek redress through legal avenues. Fear of victimisation, lack of trust in authority and complaints processes, lack of adequate and consistent religious discrimination and vilification laws, and fear of having citizenship revoked if they lodged a formal complaint were also identified as reasons for not seeking legal redress.
- Other reasons why women did not lodge complaints or report incidents of racial and/or religious discrimination, vilification or abuse to HREOC, EOCV, police, ombudsman, managers, or to other formal complaints bodies included:
 - lack of knowledge of where to go for assistance
 - lack of English language skills and access to translation and interpretation services that were available free of cost
 - feelings of suspicion and distrust of police, HREOC, etc. and a regard for them as being government. This made them reluctant to report incidents of abuse because of their experiences and background prior to coming to Australia
 - fear of confronting the perpetrator for fear of retribution
 - they did not think there would be a useful outcome
 - feeling uncomfortable with the process of making a complaint due to unfamiliarity with the process

Suggested strategies

- Educate women, young people and men in anti-discrimination laws, human rights and complaints processes.
- Training for women should include examples of incidents of vilification and discrimination and information about what constitutes a breach of anti-discrimination laws under both state and federal legislation and what constitutes a criminal offence. This information should also include a checklist of how women should collect evidence and other information to support their complaint.
- Develop specific strategies for improving the process of complaints to HREOC and state anti-discrimination agencies. Specific suggestions for doing this included:
 - conducting workshops and train-the-trainer sessions with women and community workers about anti-discrimination laws and complaints processes so they can facilitate future workshops within communities
 - provide information in a range of languages
 - build trust between communities and complaints bodies
 - educate youth through schools
 - stress HREOC's independence from government
 - stress that human rights and complaints mechanisms are for ALL people in Australia, including non-citizens and regardless of visa status
 - stress practical outcomes from complaints processes using examples.

Action

Action Sheet 3 – ‘Where to go for help if you have experienced discrimination, vilification or abuse’ (Appendix 9)

Action Sheet 4 – ‘Good reasons to report an incident of discrimination, vilification or abuse and/or lodge a complaint’ (Appendix 10)

5.6 Recognition of contribution and diversity of Muslim Australian women

Issues

- Need to recognise the diversity of Muslim Australians. Policies and programs which are targeted at Muslim communities should take account of this diversity as well as individual needs. Recognising the diversity and contributions of Muslim women was a particularly important step to building the self-esteem of young Muslim women, providing good role models and opportunities for progress and further contribution. Recognition of diversity on the basis of the following was noted:
 - ethnicity and culture
 - language
 - religious sect and practice
 - educational background
 - socio-economic background
 - area of residence
 - method of arrival to Australia, e.g. migrant, refugee, family program etc.
 - experiences and issues faced by Muslim women are also diverse and complex.

Suggested strategies

- Focus on Muslim women’s positive contribution to Australian society. This could include holding small exhibitions like the ‘*Why Women Matter*’ exhibition featured in *Living Spirit*. Post these profiles on websites. This helps address negative stereotypes perpetuated about Muslim communities and Muslim women in particular.

5.7 Lack of representation of Muslim women

Issues

- Muslim Australian women are not adequately represented on community and religious organisations’ management boards. This limits their participation in decision making related to broader Islamic and community issues, limiting the role of women to advising on Muslim women’s issues only.

- Lack of representation by Muslim women in broader Australian mediums, including in government and community advisory groups addressing broader non-Muslim specific issues, in the media, in private, public and political spheres, and in high profile professions and senior positions.
- Lack of representation and accurate reflection of the diversity of the Australian community on mainstream television programs, news and radio.

Suggested strategies

- Provide leadership and mentoring opportunities for Muslim women of all ages, especially women facing crises.
- Change policies in organisations to ensure that management boards, etc. reflect the diversity of the Australian community.
- Use the arts and community cultural development opportunities to ensure young people of diverse backgrounds are engaged in community arts projects.

5.8 Negative reporting, misinformation and stereotyping by media, community and political leadership

Issues

- Negative stereotypes of Muslim women are being perpetuated by some politicians, community members and religious leaders as well as the media and by some members of the Muslim community.
- Negative reporting and misinformation by the media are of particular concern including lack of adequate vilification laws that combat cyber-racism. Women feel powerless against media and politicians, thus creating further marginalisation.
- The repeated use of terms and labels such as ‘Middle Eastern Appearance’, ‘Muslim Extremists’, ‘Muslim Terrorists’ and ‘Australian Values’ in the public sphere by media, police, politicians and other people of influence, including community leaders, perpetuates negative stereotypes.
- There is an increasing gap between civil society and government, and Muslim communities need ways to participate in debates that affect them.

- Muslim and non-Muslim women recognise that they often stereotype each other, reflecting representations in the media and by society as a whole. Rather than question these stereotypes it is easy to fall into the pattern of also using them. For example, the most common stereotypes of Muslims include that Muslim women are oppressed, traditional and submissive and are the victims of violence. Stereotypes of non-Muslim women include that they are outspoken, have too much freedom, are sexually available and are feminists. There was a recognition that negative stereotyping of Muslims had increased considerably since September 11.

Women felt that stereotypes directly affected their human rights, and young women particularly felt that such stereotypes often leave young people feeling 'worthless', 'marginalised', 'depressed', 'discriminated against', 'not wanted', 'useless', 'feeling like losers', 'wanting to die', 'increasingly competitive', 'desperate to fit in' and 'wanting to change themselves and their religion'.

Suggested strategies

- Young women need to be engaged in workshops to learn ways of dealing with stereotypes.
- Young people need information on where to go for help if they are feeling suicidal or depressed and other resources to help them combat stereotypes and deal with the impacts of negative stereotypes – for example, using The Body Shop workshop examples and the IWWCV's SILC (Self-esteem, Identity, Leadership, and Community Participation Project) workshops as good models of practice.
- Provide opportunities for dialogue such as forums for Muslim women, young people in particular and media in a safe and neutral environment. Use personal stories to dispel myths about each other.
- Muslim women need fact-based information about their religious and cultural background and that of the Australian population in order to adequately respond to hard questions and misinformation.

Action

Action Sheet 5 – 'How can you empower yourself and others to combat stereotypes and discrimination – from a youth perspective?' (Appendix 11)

Action Sheet 6 – 'Strategies to combat stereotypes and discrimination' (Appendix 12)

Action Sheet 7 – 'How can you engage in the media debate?' (Appendix 13)

5.9 Need for school, community and public education about the value of diversity and to improve dialogue between Muslim and non-Muslim Australians

Issues

- The need to bridge the gap and improve dialogue between different cultural groups in the community and at schools. Education and dialogue are too focused on religion and there is not enough focus on other aspects of diversity, including cultural and ethnic diversity.
- The need for broad-based public education about religious and cultural diversity within Australia to help dispel myths and negative stereotypes in order to reduce prejudices. This could include the teaching of Islamic principles and practices. Such broad-based education is important within the context of multiculturalism and should avoid focusing only on Islam or singling out Muslims as this may reinforce the otherness of Muslim Australians and exacerbate prejudices. Similarly, while future projects may have a Muslim focus, they should endeavour to be inclusive of the broader community.

Suggested strategies

- Young people to conduct workshops for young people.
- Role models and sports heroes should be used in public education campaigns.
- Organise a project where Muslim and non-Muslim Australians swap lives for a day and document this for future discussion and resourcing.
- Develop a web-based forum as a means of providing a space for dialogue.

5.10 Cultural and religious competency and sensitivity in the workplace and by service providers

Issues

- Ongoing and interactive cross-cultural training required for all service providers including police and other law enforcement agencies, medical personnel, teachers, employers, community workers, childcare workers, interpreters, local, state and federal government service providers, and legal professionals.

- Service providers, employers, etc. have limited understanding and knowledge of anti-discrimination laws. This is often reflected in their policies and procedures.
- Service providers and staff in private and public sectors, including health professionals, may have knowledge of Islamic practices etc. but often do not recognise these practices in the workplace. Staff often fail to recognise and understand the impacts of discrimination and abuse. Whilst service providers and others may understand the issues faced by Muslim women, they often lack knowledge and skills in helping Muslim women and young people cope with negative stereotyping, discrimination, vilification and abuse. The use of translated material should not be the only tool to measure cultural competency in the workplace.
- There is an absence of appropriate and easily accessible social support services for Muslim women.

Suggested strategies

- Provide adequate and ongoing training to all staff at senior and junior levels in cultural competency using an interactive and participative method of learning. This could include on-the-job learning at community or religious organisations or migrant resource centres.
- Ensure that all policies and procedures in the workplace include a grievance handling mechanism for racism and bullying, and that all staff are made aware of their rights and responsibilities.

Action

Action Sheet 8 – ‘What are some of the measures you can take in the workplace to avoid or combat discrimination?’ (Appendix 14)

Action Sheet 9 – ‘What are the skills needed for support services to help Muslim women cope in crisis situations including racial and/or religious discrimination and abuse?’ (Appendix 15)

5.11 Capacity building and empowerment

Issues

- Need to empower Muslim women through skills development and improved knowledge. This includes access to plain language and multi-lingual education and information on Australian human rights, political structures, media, education and legal, government and departmental systems.

- Muslim women feel over-consulted and under-resourced, and expressed frustration at the lack of genuine support and follow up after consultations and forums are conducted. They wanted strategy-focused approaches and not problem-focused ones.

Suggested strategies

- More education, training and employment opportunities including a targeted leadership program and opportunities for Muslim women of all ages and backgrounds.
- Develop the skills of Muslim and non-Muslim Australian women to increase their ability to respond to racial and religious discrimination and abuse, e.g. developing an outreach program
- Ensure that women and young people of all socio-economic backgrounds are given the opportunity to participate in events and capacity building projects.

6. Budget

DIMA funded this project in conjunction with the *Unlocking Doors Project*. The report for the *Unlocking Doors Project* was released in 2007.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Muslim Women's Project 2006 A dialogue on human rights and responsibilities

What is the *Muslim Women's Project*?

The *Muslim Women's Project 2006* is being conducted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) to engage Muslim Australian women in a dialogue about human rights and responsibilities. The project is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA).

The project aims to increase understanding among Muslim women about human rights principles and the laws for protecting people against racial, religious and gender discrimination in Australia. The project will also identify further strategies to improve the capacity of individuals and communities to respond to discrimination and vilification, in particular racial and religious discrimination and vilification.

Background

In 2003, HREOC commenced a project called *Ismaξ : National consultations on eliminating prejudice against Arab and Muslim Australians*. During this project the Commission consulted with over 1400 Arab and Muslim Australians around Australia. Participants described their experiences of race and religious vilification since the September 11 and Bali bombings.

The *Ismaξ Report* found that the impact of racial and religious discrimination against Arab and Muslim Australians is most acutely felt by women, in particular Muslim women wearing the hijab or other forms of religious dress. The report also found that most incidents raised in the consultations were not reported to police or other government authorities due to fear of victimisation, lack of trust in authority, lack of knowledge about the law and complaints processes, the perceived difficulty in making a complaint and the perception that outcomes were unsatisfactory.

The biggest impacts reported by consultation participants were a substantial increase in fear, a growing sense of alienation from the wider community and an increase in distrust of authority.

Events since the *Ismaξ Report*, including the London bombings in July 2005, have only increased the need to address problems of discrimination and

vilification against Muslim women and to seek ways of promoting the common goals of harmony and understanding.

Consultation stage

In planning for the project, HREOC held meetings with over 30 key organisations and individuals in Victoria, and 29 in NSW, to determine how the project could best address the problems identified.

As a result of these consultations, two main activities were identified for HREOC action in the future. These were:

- A one-day forum in Victoria on Muslim women's human rights issues (see below).
- A series of workshops for Muslim women in Victoria to increase their understanding of existing legal protections against racial and religious discrimination and vilification.

Muslim Women and Human Rights Forum – *Living Spirit Forum*

The *Living Spirit Forum* was a one-day interactive event in Preston, Victoria on 21 September 2006, focusing on Muslim women's understanding of human rights and responsibilities.

Outcomes of the *Living Spirit Forum*

The forum:

- promoted harmony and understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims
- developed strategies to combat religious and racial discrimination and vilification against Muslim women (which may include the development of targeted resources)
- explored points in common between human rights principles and Islam, in order to increase mutual respect
- increased understanding of legal protections against discrimination and vilification in Australia.

Website for the project

For information on the project see the Commission's website at:
www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/livingspirit/

APPENDIX 2

List of key stakeholders consulted regarding *Muslim Women's Project* – February to May 2006

The following is a list of key stakeholders (Victoria and New South Wales respectively), individuals and organisations that were consulted on the basis of their expertise on Muslim women's issues, and others who have worked on particular issues around the promotion and education of human rights and anti-discrimination laws, particularly racial and religious discrimination and vilification.

Staff from HREOC met and consulted key stakeholders either by face-to-face meetings or by telephone. Not including future and intended meetings, there have been a total of 67 key stakeholders consulted in both Victoria (38 in total) and NSW (29 in total) between February and May, with a further 3 key stakeholders yet to be consulted.

Victoria

Organisation	Position	First Name	Last Name
Australian Arabic Council	Vice President	Taimor	Hazou
Australian Intercultural Society	Program Coordinator	Orhan	Cicek
Australian Intercultural Society	General Coordinator	Emre	Celik
Australian Multicultural Foundation	Executive Director	Hass	Dellal (OAM)
Australian Somali Council of Victoria	Women's Issues Worker	Khadija	Musse
Australian Somali Council of Victoria	Chairman	Abdalla	Ahmed
Australian Somali Council of Victoria		Fuad	Jama
Communities Together – Jesuit Social Services	Community Development Worker	Elias	Sabbagh
Cultural Perspectives and VICSEG	Arabic Cultural Consultant	Gabrielle	Fakhri
Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria	Community Consultant (CALD)	Kavitha	Chandra-Shekeran
Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria	Chief Conciliator/Chief Executive Officer	Helen	Szoke
Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria Inc.	Executive Officer	Prabir	Majumdar
Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils	Chairperson	Voula	Messimeri
Islamic Council of Victoria	President	Malcolm	Thomas
Islamic Council of Victoria	Executive Member	Sherene	Hassan
Islamic Council of Victoria	Executive Member	Waleed	Aly
Islamic Girls' and Women's Group Inc.	Administration Officer	Amy	Chalcik
Islamic Women's Welfare	Manager	Joumanah	El-Matrah

Council of Victoria			
Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria	Research and Education Worker	Nuzhat	Lotia
Moreland Turkish Association	President	Cemal	Akdeniz
Moreland Turkish Association	Secretary	Nurper	Goker
Northern Migrant Resource Centre	Chief Executive Officer	Stephanie	Lagos
Northern Migrant Resource Centre	Youth Settlement Worker	Abdinur	Weli
Northern Migrant Resource Centre, Whittlesea Office	Family and Community Settlement Worker	Khairy	Majeed
Victorian Multicultural Commission	Chairperson	George	Lekakis
Victorian Multicultural Commission	Commissioner	Yasser	Soliman
VITS Language Link	General Manager and President of Australian Council of Bosnian-Herzegovinian Organisations	Senada	Softic - Telalovic
Working Women's Health	Statewide FARREP Coordinator	Samia	Baho
Islamic Girls Women's Group Inc.	Treasurer	Maryum	Aziz
Commissioner for VMC and Goulburn Ovens TAFE Manager of Multicultural Unit		Vicki	Mitsos
Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition (VIRWC)	Community Resource and Training Officer	Nurcihan	Ozturk
Brimbank Community Legal Centre	Community Lawyer	Marika	Dias
Western Suburbs Community Legal Centre	Community Lawyer	Rebecca	Smith
Member of the Muslim Women's National Network of Australia and Teacher at RMIT		Nasyah	Bahfen

New South Wales

Organisation	Position	First Name	Last Name
Muslim Women's National Network of Australia and Muslim Community Reference Group and Chair of Women's Sub-Group	President	Aziza	Abdel-Halim AM
UTS Shopfront	Research Manager	Tanja	Dreher
United Muslim Women's Association Inc	Manager	Maha	Krayem Abdo
Mission Australia and African Communities Council	Team Leader/Volunteer Coordinator	Hashim	Elhassan

Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations	Director	Kuranda	Seyfi Seyit
President of NSW Anti-Discrimination Board and Community Relations Commission Chairperson		Stepan	Kerkyasharian AM
Arab Council Australia	Executive Director	Randa	Kattan
Mission of Hope	Director, Psychologist	Hanan	Dover
Affinity Intercultural Foundation	President, Director	Mehmet	Ozalp
Affinity Intercultural Foundation	Vice President, Director	Zuleyha	Keskin
The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils	Chief Executive Officer	Amjad	Ali Mehboob
Al Zahra Islamic Council	Chairperson	Fatima	Hamdan
Al Zahra Islamic Council	Project Manager	Iptissam	Hammoud
United Muslim Women's Association Inc	Coordinator, Bankstown Women's Support Centre	Wafa	Zaim
Immigrant Women's Speakout Association of NSW	Executive Officer	Jane	Brock
Information and Cultural Exchange	Director	Lena	Nahlous
Information and Cultural Exchange	Switch Coordinator	Fadia	Abboud
Auburn Community Development Network	Auburn Arts Officer	Alissar	Chidiac
Auburn Community Development Network	Centre Manager	Mark	Lack
Community Arts Development Worker		Paula	Abboud
African Communities Council (also ECLO Auburn Police)		Rosemary	Kariuki
Immigrant Women's Speakout Association of NSW	Families First Worker	Rahile	Cakir
Immigrant Women's Speakout Association of NSW	Domestic Violence Worker	Mariam	James
Immigrant Women's Speakout Association of NSW	Domestic Violence Policy Officer	Kyungia	Jung
Immigrant Women's Speakout Association of NSW	Information Officer	Yani	Mariyani-Squire
Immigrant Women's Speakout Association of NSW	Family Support Worker	Amela	Polovina
Immigrant Women's Speakout Association of NSW	Domestic Violence Worker	Rukhshana	Sarwar
Immigrant Women's Speakout Association of NSW	Domestic Violence Worker	Emina	Kovac



Human Rights and
Equal Opportunity
Commission

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and
Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria invite you to:



ISLAMIC WOMEN'S WELFARE COUNCIL of Victoria Inc.

Living Spirit

Muslim Women and Human Rights Forum

The Right to Participate in Social Change

PROGRAM

Thursday, 21 September 2006

Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre

Cnr. Bell St & St Georges Rd, Preston, Victoria

Proudly supported by:



Australian Government
Department of Immigration
and Multicultural Affairs



Goulburn Ovens
Institute of TAFE



VIRWC
Victorian Immigrant & Refugee
Women's Coalition

MC

Helen Szoke, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Conciliator of the Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria

9.00 – 9.30

Venue: Foyer

REGISTRATION

9.30 – 10.00

Venue: Courtyard

WELCOME

- ⌘ Indigenous Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony - Joy Murphy, Senior Woman Elder of the Wurundjeri People
- ⌘ Saara Sabbagh, Women's Network Coordinator, Islamic Council of Victoria
- ⌘ Introduction and overview of forum - Margaret Donaldson, Director, Race Discrimination Unit, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC)

DVD Presentation

(Combined session)

10.00 – 10.10

Venue: Theatre

'The Chaser's War on Everything'

Hypothetical

(Combined session)

10.10 – 11.00

Venue: Theatre

'Righting the Wrongs': How would you respond?

Facilitator: Hana Assafiri

Panelists include:

- ⌘ Victoria Police
- ⌘ Ken Nguyen, Legal Affairs Reporter, The Age
- ⌘ Joanne Bonighton, Acting Human Resources Manager, Woolworths Supermarket
- ⌘ Bob Morgan, School Principal, Alia Private School
- ⌘ Sheikh Isse Musse, Imam of the Virgin Mary Mosque, Hoppers Crossing
- ⌘ Benjamin Rice, Senior Legal and Policy Officer, Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria
- ⌘ Julie Ouaida, Muslim woman
- ⌘ Nurjan Eser-Salman, Multicultural Services Officer, Centrelink
- ⌘ Maria Vamvakinou MP, Federal Member for Calwell

Questions to consider: Using scenarios based on true stories of racial and religious discrimination and abuse under the themes of human rights, negative stereotyping and misconceptions, the hypothetical will ask the panellists 'How would you respond'? This addresses the sets of standards policy and decision makers use to respond to incidents of discrimination and abuse.



11.00 – 11.30

Venue: Foyer

MORNING TEA with politicians hosted by Maria Vamvakinou MP
Federal Member for Calwell**Session 1****11.30 – 1.00*****"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere"***

(Martin Luther King)

Exploring Human Rights**Plenary**

(Combined session)

11.30 – 11.45

Venue: Theatre

Speakers

⌘ Islam and human rights - Tasneem Chopra, Chair, Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria (IWWCV)

⌘ Human rights issues facing Muslim women - Omeima Sukkarieh, Acting Senior Policy Research Officer, Race Discrimination Unit, HREOC

11.45 – 1.00**Concurrent Workshops**

(Please choose one of the following workshops)

Workshop 1

Venue: Courtyard / Foyer

'My rights are your rights'**Human rights and young women**

(For young women only)

Facilitator: Nadia Mohamed, Youth Worker, Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) and Dakhylina Madkhul, Board of Management, IWWCV, Probationary Psychologist and Student Welfare Coordinator and Counsellor**Questions to consider:** What is the role of Islam in your life? What are your human rights issues? How can you practically apply human rights to your life?**Workshop 2**

Venue: Jacaranda Room

'Out of the shadows'**Human rights issues facing Muslim women****Facilitators:** Sultan Cinar, Citizenship and Anti-Violence Project Worker, IWWCV**Questions to consider:** What are your human rights issues and how can you address them? What do you know about human rights? What is the role of Islam and human rights in your life?**Workshop 3**

Venue: Acacia Room

'A new world'**What the new anti-terrorism laws mean to you?****Facilitators:** Marika Dias, Community Lawyer and Legal Education Worker, Western Suburbs Legal Service**Questions to consider:** What are the new anti-terrorism laws? How do they impact on your life? How are your rights protected?

Workshop 4

Venue: Theatre

'How I can, NOT why I can't'?

Why should I make a complaint and how to cope with crisis

Facilitators: Susan Newell, Senior Policy Research Officer, Race Discrimination Unit, HREOC and Najwa Yassin, Community Development / Parenting Worker, IWWCV

Questions to consider: What are the complaints procedures/mechanisms available? Where can you go for help? How can the complaints process be improved? Why is it important to report incidents? What can I do if I do not wish to make a formal complaint? What are some conflict resolution skills I need?

Workshop 5

Venue: Grevillia Room

'Lost in translation, found in respect'

Helping Muslim women cope with racial and religious discrimination and abuse

Facilitators: Hutch Hussein, Business Development Manager, Northern Migrant Resource Centre and Laila El-Assaad, Education Officer, Muslim Women's Association of South Australia

Speaker: Rebecca Smith, Community Development Worker, Western Suburbs Legal Service will provide a brief overview of the impacts of discrimination on Muslim women identified in the Racial & Religious Discrimination, Vilification and Harassment Project

Questions to consider: What are the personal and social impacts of discrimination on Muslim women? What are some of the preventative measures you can take in the workplace? How can Muslim women be supported? What are the skills needed for social support services to help Muslim women cope in crisis situations including racial and/or religious abuse? What cultural and religious competency is necessary in the workplace and how can policies and procedures be improved to reflect the needs of Muslim women? Is translation enough?

1.00 – 2.00

Venue: Foyer / Courtyard

LUNCH - includes drumming workshop facilitated by Tania Bosak, Pulse Drumming

MC

Voula Messimeri, Chairperson, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia

Session 2

2.00 – 3.30

'I'm not racist but...'

Confronting negative stereotypes and misconceptions

Plenary

(Combined session)

2.00 – 2.15

Venue: Theatre

'Learning from history - an Indigenous perspective'

Speaker: Joy Murphy, Senior Woman Elder of the Wurundjeri People

2.15 – 3.30

Workshop 6

Venue: Theatre

Concurrent Workshops

(Please choose one of the following workshops)

'Critical Connections'

Freedom of speech vs racial vilification

Facilitators: Peter Manning, Adjunct Prof. of Journalism at University of Technology (UTS) and Author of "Us and Them: a journalist's investigation of Media, Muslims and the Middle East" (Random House, Sept. 2006) and Farah Farouque, Social Affairs Editor, The Age

Questions to consider: A question and answer session focusing on the following, Muslim women and the media and how can Muslim women engage in them? When does freedom of speech violate human rights? What is the role of media? How can you engage in the media debate? What do media need to know?

Workshop 7

Venue: Acacia Room

'Image vs Reality – how to answer the hard questions'

Our responsibility to combat negative stereotypes

Facilitators: Doug Weller, Director and Team Leader, Corporate Media Services, and Joumana El Matrah, Manager, IWWCV

Questions to consider: How can you combat negative stereotyping? What are the FAQ's that you need to know the answer to? How do you respond to basic questions, e.g. 'why do you wear the hijab?' 'Why are Muslim women oppressed?' 'Why are all terrorists Muslim?' 'What does Islam say about terrorism?' 'What does Jihad mean? Why do Muslim women get married so young?' etc.

Workshop 8

Venue: Courtyard / Foyer

"Race is just lines drawn on a map" (Voices of Australia contributor, Marat, SA)

Understanding Stereotypes for Young Women

(For young women only)

Facilitators: Faten Mohamad, Citizenship and Anti-Violence Project Case Worker, IWWCV and Moona Hammoud, Youth Women's Project Worker, IWWCV

Questions to consider: What are stereotypes? Confronting your own prejudices and how can you combat negative stereotypes? How does cultural, religious and national identity relate to your self-esteem and affect stereotypes? Why is self esteem important? How do you empower yourself and others?



Workshop 9

Venue: Jacaranda Room

'Educate a woman, educate a nation'

The importance of combating negative stereotypes

Facilitator: Gabrielle Fakhri, Cultural Consultant

Questions to consider: using a role play and examples of existing stereotypes of Muslims and non-Muslims, how accurate are these stereotypes? Have you ever used these stereotypes? Correcting the stereotypes? How do these make you feel? Confronting your own prejudices and how can you combat negative stereotypes? How does cultural, religious and national identity relate to your self-esteem and affect stereotypes? Why is self esteem important? How do you empower yourself and others?

Workshop 10

Venue: Grevillia Room

'Creating possibilities' – a conversation between generations about experiences of discrimination

How to make a difference together in your family, community and life

Facilitators: Fatima Kourouche, State Advisor, Active After school Communities, Australian Sports Commission, South Western Sydney Area Health Service, Bilingual Community Educator, Women's Health, and former Coordinator of Parenting Education Network, and Mariam Kourouche (Fatima's daughter), 16 year old student at Malek Fahd Islamic School

Session will also include **Leadership Training** conducted by Nurcihan Ozturk, Executive Officer and Dalal Samaan, Vice President from the Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition

Questions to consider: Using a mother and daughter style role play, how do different generations of women experience and cope with discrimination and abuse? How can they make a difference to the way they respond to discrimination and abuse? What are the issues mothers and daughters face? How can they better understand each other? How can they better engage themselves in each other's lives? How can they help empower each other and themselves to change their lives and the people around them?

3.30 – 4.00

Venue: Foyer

AFTERNOON BREAK includes the screening of ***'Veiled Ambition'*** for optional viewing

('Veiled Ambition' is an inspiring documentary about "a little Aussie battler in a scarf" and her dream to create a fashion empire')



Plenary

(Combined session)

4.00 – 4.10

Venue: Combined Jacaranda and Grevillia Rooms

What's available and how to get involved in projects that affect you?

A presentation on existing state government and community projects presented by Robyn Morgan, Acting Director, National Action Plan and Jane Teafey, Project Officer, Community Support Section, Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA)

Closing

(Combined session)

4.10 – 4.30

Venue: Combined Jacaranda and Grevillia Rooms

'Participating in change' - capacity building and empowerment**Strategies for the future**

- ⌘ Vision for a better future – overview of suggested strategies of forum, question and answer – Joumana El Matrah, Manager, IWWCV
- ⌘ Where to from here – closing and what next, including future strategies Margaret Donaldson, Director, Race Discrimination Unit, HREOC

5.30 – 7.30

**CLOSING DINNER TO MARK THE BEGINNING OF RAMADAN
CAFE UMUT (TURKISH RESTAURANT) –
369 HIGH STREET, PRESTON**

(THIS WILL BE FREE AND ALL FOOD IS HALAL. CHILDREN WELCOME. (PLEASE RSVP FOR THIS ALSO))

Other Details:

Waratah Room - **Childcare** available in Waratah Room with qualified child care workers

Exhibition Hall - **'Why Women Matter' – personal achievements, amazing contributions Exhibition** profiling achievements of everyday Muslim women.

Exhibition Hall – all day prayer space available

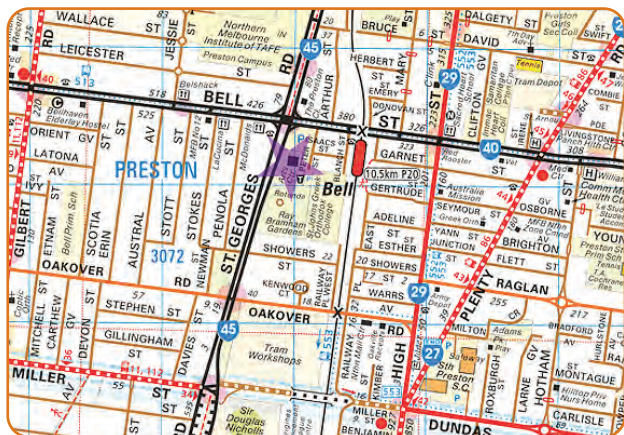
Foyer – **'Living Spirit' Mural** – available for women throughout the day to draw, write, paint, etc expressing their hopes, needs, future aspirations in the context of human rights and Muslim women. We hope that this mural will express what participants want the broader community to learn from what they have throughout the day.

For further information please visit:

http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/livingspirit/



Location & Map



Address

Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre
Cnr Bell St & St Georges Rd
Preston
VIC 3072

Parking

Car Parks: The Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre Car Park provides 180 unrestricted car spaces. Enter the car park via Peter Street, or St Georges Rd.

Street Parking:

Unrestricted parking is also available on St Georges Rd (East end).

Disabled Parking: 4 disabled car spaces are available in the car park.

Public Transport

The Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre is easily accessible by train, tram and bus. The nearest public transport is Bell train station a short 2-3 minute walk along Bell St, Preston.

Train

Catch the Epping line train to Bell Station.

The Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre is a further 2-3 minute walk along Bell St.

Tram

Catch the Route 86 Tram - Docklands to Bundoora RMIT (Plenty Rd/McKimmies Rd).

Stop 44 at the corner of Bell St and Plenty Rd, a further 7-10 minute walk to the Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre.

Catch the Route 112 Tram - South Melbourne / St Kilda Beach - West Preston.

Stop 40 at the corner of Bell St and Gilbert Rd, a further 10 minute walk to the Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre.

Bus

Catch Route 513 - Eltham - Glenroy (via Lower Plenty Rd & Greensborough), which runs along Bell Street.

Bus Stops are located 20-50 metres from the corner of High St and Bell St, Preston.

For more public transport information please call 131 638 or visit the Metlink Melbourne website:
www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au



Dalal Oubani

Dalal is originally from South Lebanon. She is 27 years old and recently married, has completed a university degree in Medical Science and a degree in Business. Dalal is currently a secondary school science teacher in Sydney.

"Over the years my contributions to both my local and general communities have been through assistance in writing reports on human rights and participating in projects, which aim to facilitate this crucial goal. I left the corporate sector to pursue teaching not just to achieve a balance in my life but to also use my skills to help the many disadvantaged Australian youth struggling to make sense of the world. I care about all Australian youth regardless of their background, but my heart especially goes out to the alienated Australian Muslim and Arab youth in our schools who are not given a 'fair go' and often with not enough support to fulfil their potential. I believe this minority group has unfairly become the underdog of Australian society for no reason other than believing that 'God is one'.

I believe that there can be no harmony and justice in society if inequality is accepted and endorsed by our politicians and the general public. Working towards better human rights is everyone's responsibility. There can be no winners when there is inequality because society is like a stream where a ripple in one end can affect the harmony and peace of the whole stream. My hope is to work in a school populated with Arab youth as I feel this is where I would be most effective. Later I would like to manage a tutoring business part-time and work overseas. I feel this would increase my understanding and skills and help me become a greater resource as a teacher."



Mariam Rind

Mariam is an Indigenous Australian Muslim who is in her 5th year of medicine at the University of Western Australia.



"I'm lucky to have come from such a diverse background. I was born in Port Hedland in Western Australia in 1980 and have lived in Australia for most of my life. My mother is an Indigenous Yamatji woman and her family originated from Mount Magnet. My father is from an area called Balouchistan which is near the border of Iran and Pakistan. My Indigenous legacy began when my great grandfather travelled to South Australia as a camel driver in the late 1800's. He then ended up marrying an Indigenous woman who reverted to Islam, and from there our family became!

My interest in becoming a doctor is driven by my cultural and historical background. I have seen so much growing up. I don't think you have to travel to a 3rd world country to appreciate humanity and the importance of the provision of basic resources. Living in Australia and seeing my Indigenous people experience conditions which should not even be present in such a country, has given me some insight into the great need for more Aboriginal doctors. As a Muslim I also appreciate the need and demand for more female Muslim doctors, and thus, hope to benefit both the Muslim and Indigenous communities by sharing a similar background and offering culturally appropriate care.

Studying medicine has not been easy. But giving up is not in my vocabulary. I have been awarded various scholarships to assist me in my studies. Both academic achievement and the desire for doing more community work in the future have helped me achieve much both academically and personally. I have been a mentor at camps targeting Indigenous youth and have been actively involved in encouraging tertiary education amongst Indigenous youth. It is important that our youth have good role models and that's what I hope to be.

I'll continue to study and one day I hope to be able to use my knowledge to help people, regardless of religion, background, or culture. I think that's why medicine was so appealing. It's a great avenue to helping others and easing the suffering of others is a basic human right which I'm proud to be part of. Ultimately, saving lives is in the hands of God, but God has also given us hands to help save lives too."

Chahida Bakkour

Chahida is a Victoria University student currently undertaking a Bachelor of Business (Computer Systems Management). She is also a Sessional IT teacher at Victoria University. In 2006 Chahida was awarded the Victoria University TAFE Student of the Year – Vocational Award and Victoria University Outstanding Student Award – School of Human Services, Science and Technology.

"I left Secondary School in 1992 without completing year 11. In 2003, after getting married and having two children I returned to study. I enrolled in and completed Certificate I in Information Technology during 2003. By the end of 2004 I completed Certificate IV in Information Technology. By 2006 having completed a Dual Diploma in Information Technology (Web Development and Internetworking) and Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training I was offered the opportunity to do some sessional teaching at Victoria University (VU). I also do web design which has become my new hobby.

I felt hesitant about returning to study and was not confident as to how I would fit within the study environment being a Muslim and mature age student. I was also apprehensive as to what was expected of me as an adult learner and was not aware of my capabilities.

Whilst studying I have faced many obstacles, but my greatest achievement was having the strength to keep going no matter what type of obstacles were in my way. I was able to show the people around me and more importantly prove to myself that I was capable of studying and at the same time successfully fulfilled my role as a wife and mother of two school age children. Learning has presented me with challenges both personally and academically. My achievements have come from perseverance and the support of family, friends, peers and the excellent teachers at Victoria University. I encourage everyone to go for their dreams."



Fatima Killeen

Fatima was born in Casablanca, Morocco and is an accomplished Australian and international artist based in Canberra.

I studied at the school "*Les Beaux Arts*" of Fine Art in Casablanca. During this time I was selected for an engraving workshop at the Asilah Arts Festival and on my graduation I was presented with the Award of Excellence.

In 1988 I was accepted into the Corcoran School of Art in Washington DC where I studied painting and photography. While at the Corcoran, I was awarded the Dean's Merit Scholarship.

I came to Australia in 1994 and continued my Bachelor Degree in painting and printmaking at the Canberra School of Art (ANU). In 1997, I graduated with First Class Honours and three Graduation awards (VETA, Mallesons Acquisition Award & Megalo printmaking residency).

Since my graduation in 1997, I have taken part in group and solo exhibitions in Canberra and Sydney. The work "*Stored Memories*" was acquired by the Canberra Museum and Gallery in 1998. During 2001, I received the Wattan Art Prize at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.

I have received a number of art grants to assist in the production of new works. My artworks are held in the Australian War Memorial, the Australian National University, and in private collections in Sydney & Canberra, Morocco, Singapore, Zimbabwe, Germany, Switzerland, Los Angeles, Ohio & Washington DC.

My wish is that the great need for communication between different communities, countries and faiths will be fulfilled in order to achieve peace, tolerance and a positive dialogue. Art is one vehicle of expression for such communication. The resolve of the people to change is in their own hands and not in the hands of deceptive politicians who are only interested in electioneering and self promotion."



Rawan Abdul-Nabi

Rawan is a Palestinian Australian currently completing a Bachelor of Arts Degree with Honours at Sydney University combining the disciplines of Sociology and Arabic and Islamic Studies to sustain for what she believes is exciting and compelling research.

"In the past few years I have participated in and achieved a number of things which have laid the foundations for a fairly active life in the pursuit of social justice. After finishing high school successfully I set off to take on an academic pursuit in the social sciences and humanities.

As in during my later years in high school where I was elected to various roles in leadership, including school Vice-Captain and through on to university life, I am an active member of the community, striving to raise awareness, provide support bases and promote understanding and foster social and cultural awareness by continuing to campaign for human rights and social justice. My most passionate defence remains in the struggle for Palestinian human rights and justice and the fair representation of Palestinian, Arab and Muslim peoples. I was a founding member and President of the Sydney University Arab Students Association and an Executive Member of the Sydney University Muslims Students Association. I served on Union committees and was a Councillor of the Student Representative Council, a delegate to the Asia-pacific Model United Nations Conference with a passion for advocating for human rights. My public role remains and I participate and speak on many panels, at rallies and meetings giving voice to Palestine and Arab and Muslim women.

I think Australia must urgently improve its defence and waging of human rights. We cannot any longer demonise those seeking refuge here and it is abhorrent to detain those who arrive deemed 'illegally'. Certainly we also cannot be part of wars that intend to wage peace but bring nothing but death and destruction."



Zahra Shafaq

Zahra is 20 years old and a refugee who fled Afghanistan in 1998 and escaped to Pakistan. Zahra arrived in Australia in 2001. She is currently undertaking her Higher School Certificate (year 12) at Holroyd High School.

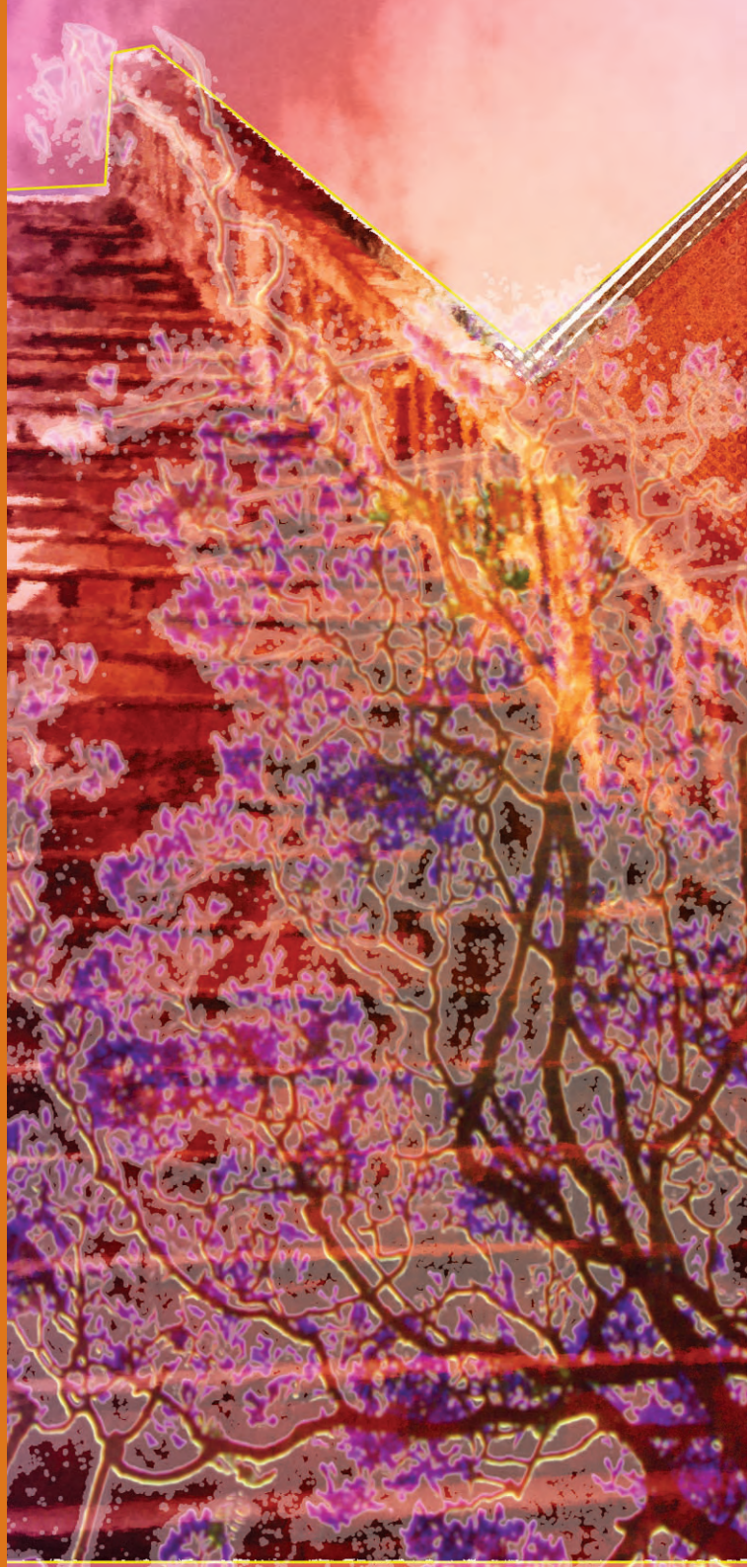
"I was in a refugee camp across the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan for a year. For two years after that I lived outside the camp as normal as possible hoping to come to Australia and have a better future in my education, life and with my family. When I first arrived in Australia in May 2001 I arrived in Sydney. I came to Holroyd High Intensive English Centre and was there for a year. With my determination I moved to mainstream classes at Holroyd High School in the last term of Year 9.

I am one of the young ChillOut (Children Out Of Detention) Ambassadors and was made one in 2004. Since then I have been going to private, public and primary schools to talk about and share my amazing experiences as a child refugee and the coping strategies of the hardships I come to face everyday as a refugee in Australia. This whole experience has been a great benefit. I realised that there are still good human beings out there because once upon a time I forgot they ever existed, especially after witnessing the war in my country of birth.

I started writing my own unpublished poetry and short stories regarding true life stories. I was also invited as a guest speaker at the Sydney Writers' Festival in 2004, speaking about my experiences.

As for the future of human rights, I believe and hope that everyone in the future will have equal rights whether it's in a business, in a home, or in a country, or even around the world. Everyone deserves the same rights because everyone is born with those rights just like everyone is born with a brain.

I hope also that the Human Rights Commission in Australia continues to give voice to the public."



Faten Jamalaldin Mohamed

Faten was born in Khartoum, Sudan and migrated with her family to Australia over 12 years ago. She has completed a Social Science Degree at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). Faten is currently working at the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria as the Citizenship and Anti-Violence Project Case Worker.

"My father is Sudanese and my mother is from Eritrea. I have always been involved in both the Eritrean and Sudanese communities in Melbourne from a young age, and enjoy being involved in community activities.

My biggest achievement has been my involvement in a group called 'Sudanese Youth for Reconciliation and Hope'. It is a group of eleven young people from North and South Sudan working together to reconcile a country and community divided by a devastating 50 year civil war. We aim to empower young people from Sudanese background living in Australia and around the world to take up a leadership role and to actively participate in sustaining peace in Sudan and to work together on building a nation free of religious and racial hatred."



Yasmine Ahmed

Yasmine is a lawyer who is currently working as an Associate to the Honourable Justice Sultan at the Supreme Court of South Australia. Yasmine has completed her Honours in Law at Adelaide University, a program in International Law at Uppsala University in Sweden and a Bachelor of Media at Macquarie University in Sydney. Yasmine has been awarded numerous scholarships for her achievements, worked in The Hague, was the Founder and President of the Australian Refugee Support Group and a member for the South Australian Muslim Reference Group.

"Who am I and what do I aspire to do? Good question! Well, I am many things. I am Australian, I am Muslim, I am a daughter, I am a lawyer, and I am a human rights activist. I hope to be the voice for those who do not have one. I hope to give others the confidence, encouragement and love to fulfil their dreams as I have been given. I currently work as an assistant to a Jewish Judge in the Supreme Court of South Australia and I hope to work in the field of human rights law and continue to do what I love.

I hope to one day see a typical 'Aussie' identified as someone who is not of a particular religion, race, colour or creed, but whose identity is accepted as one which is made up of many facets and which is so much the better for it."



Khadija Sukkarieh

Khadija is 60 years old and has 7 children and 11 grandchildren. She has been the primary carer of her physically and intellectually disabled son for over 30 years.

"I came to Australia in 1978 from Lebanon, after escaping the civil war. It took me 14 years to go back to Lebanon to see my family again. It has always been important for me to make sure my children and grandchildren remember their origins and heritage. They all speak Arabic and I love having my grandchildren sitting around me while I make Lebanese woodfired bread and yoghurt and cheese and things like that. I believe that if your children respect their heritage, they learn to respect the country and the environment of which they live. Respecting human rights is like making yoghurt. It's an easy recipe but takes a long time to make possible. It's also like taking care of someone who has a severe disability. It is in your blood. It takes a lot of nurture and patience. I live human rights every day especially as a carer. The human rights of people with a disability are often forgotten but as a mother I have had to fight for that all along in order to provide for my children and especially to make sure that my son has the best quality of life he can. That's what I live for.

I encourage every Muslim woman in Australia to do something good for herself. For her children and for her family. God created human beings to live not to live to be judged by anyone. Every person has basic human rights. They should live in freedom and without misery and threat. God created people to live in dignity and not to be treated in any other way."

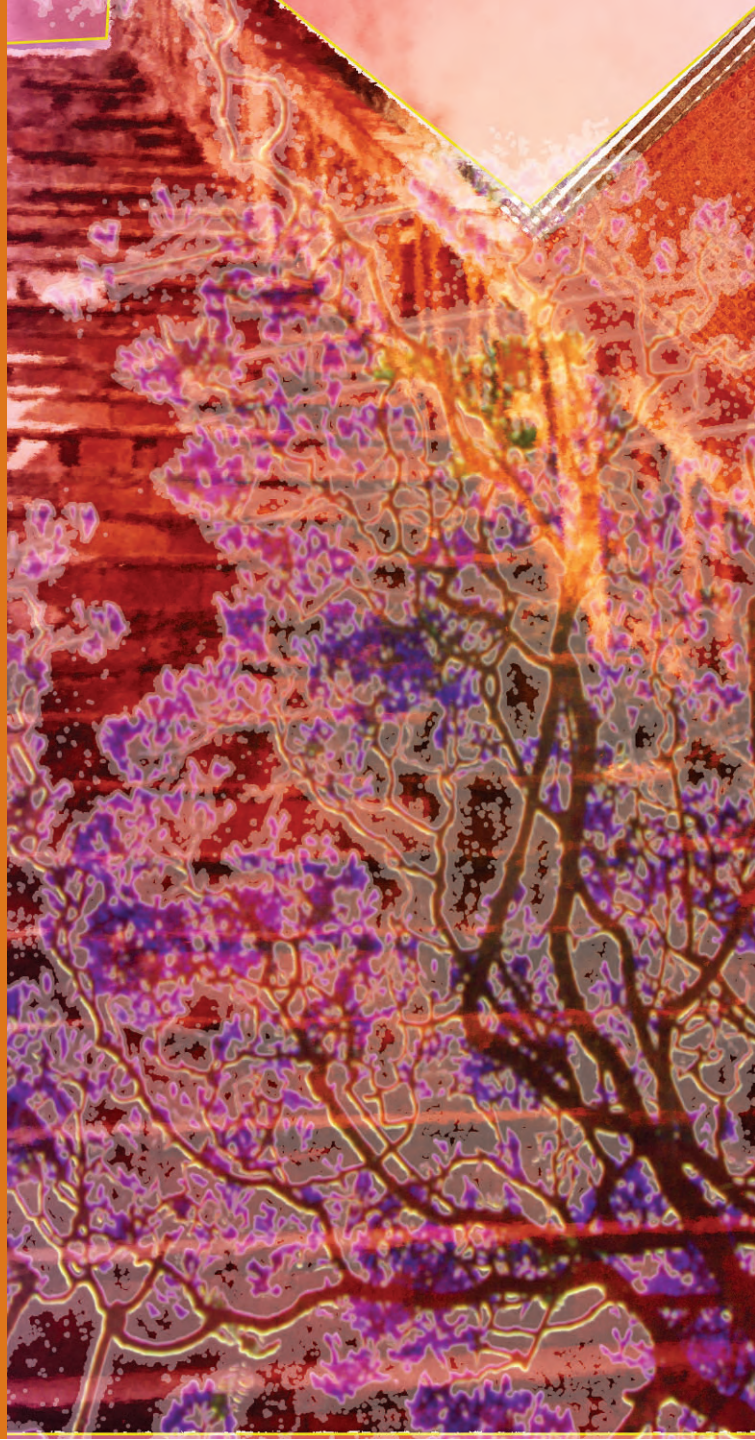


Frida Dakiz

Frida is 29 years old and married with a baby. She is a young Lebanese entrepreneur with a fashion boutique in the heart of Melbourne's Sydney Rd. With a background in catering, four years ago Frida made the leap from food to fashion when she opened her first clothing store '*Frida Boutique*' catering exclusively for Muslim women. Over the past twelve months she has diversified and expanded her business into the competitive world of after-five and on-line fashion retailing with her flagship store '*Sassy Boutique*'. Her dreams for the future are to be successful in her chosen field and have a number of stores across Australia.

Frida was recently the subject of '*Veiled Ambition*', a half hour documentary for SBS TV and winner of the '*Best short film promoting Human Rights*' at the 2006 Melbourne International Film Festival.

"My future aspirations for Muslim women are that more venture out into the business world and not be deterred by the general community's reaction to how they look and what they believe in. Understanding on both sides is important."



APPENDIX 5

‘Living Spirit’: Muslim Women and Human Rights Forum

The Right to Participate in Social Change

Biographies of Speakers and Facilitators

Tasneem Chopra is the current Chair of the Islamic Women’s Welfare Council of Victoria. She has been involved with this organisation since its inception over 13 years ago, and has a background in psychology, with over a decade of experience in community development. Tasneem currently works independently as a Cross Cultural Trainer and Consultant specialising in information sessions on ‘Understanding Islam and Muslims in Australia’ with a particular interest in promoting issues of social justice impacting on Muslim women. In addition to this she has been a contributor to the national journal, *Australian Islamic Review*.

Farah Farouque is the Social Affairs Editor at *The Age*, where she has a wide-ranging brief to cover social issues ranging from poverty and homelessness to ethnic affairs, demographic change and social trends. She has reported on the Bali bombings of 2002 and the tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka in 2004–05. She has also reported on Victorian and federal politics including three years in the Press Gallery in Canberra. In 2001, she was awarded an Asialink/Melbourne University fellowship which involved a three-month work exchange at *Tempo* news magazine in Jakarta. Farah is also a previous winner of the Australian-Arabic Council's national media award.

On a personal note, she is a rare species in the mainstream media – a Muslim. Her family migrated to Adelaide – where she went to school and university – in the mid 70s from Sri Lanka.

Laila El-Assaad is an Education Officer for the Muslim Women’s Association of SA. She coordinates and delivers a cross-cultural consultancy service for schools community groups and service providers on Islam and Muslims. She is also a high school teacher and has fifteen years experience of working with South Australia’s Arabic and Muslim communities. She participates on various committees including the Multicultural Education Committee (which advises the South Australian Minister of Education on multicultural education) along with the Multicultural SA’s Women’s Advisory Committee.

Dakhylina Madkhul is a Project Coordinator for the Goodness & Kindness Partnership – an interfaith harmony workshop program for primary schools. She is also a Student Welfare Coordinator and Counsellor at a Muslim school in Springvale and is currently completing her Psychology qualifications. She has been involved with community work for at least ten years and has a passion for working with young people. Dakhylina is a panel member of Channel 31’s *Salam Cafe TV* show and volunteers for a weekly Malay program on community radio and the *National Security Files* about Muslim current affairs on 3CR community radio. Other interests include soccer, traditional martial arts and organising huge Ladies’ Dances.

Hatice 'Hutch' Hussein defines herself as a 'cultural Muslim', who combines her Turkish-Cypriot heritage with Muslim traditions. She is currently the Business Development Manager at the Northern Migrant Resource Centre in Melbourne's northern suburbs which, via its settlement, aged care, family relationship, youth and employment services programs, aims to assist generations of migrants and refugees reach their full potential. Hutch has also worked as a Ministerial Adviser in the Education and Women's Affairs portfolios. In her 'spare time', Hutch volunteers her time to a range of organisations which aim to empower women to make a difference in public life.

Voula Messimeri has been involved in the community services field for over 20 years and has a particular interest in multicultural affairs and women's issues. She was appointed the position of Executive Director of the Australian Greek Welfare Society in 1989 and elected Chair of the Federation of Ethnic Community Councils of Australia in 2006. She is the first woman to hold the position.

Helen Szoke is the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Conciliator of the Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria. Previously, Helen was the Chief Executive Officer of the Infertility Treatment Authority in Melbourne, Victoria,.Helen is currently a member of the National Health and Medical Research Licensing Committee and the Board of Adult Migrant Education Services, and is past Chairperson of Women's Health Victoria. She has served as a committee member and Chairperson of the Ethics Committee of the Royal Women's Hospital, a member of the Victorian Family Therapy Association Ethics Committee, a member of the School Council of Melbourne High School, an executive member of the Victorian Council of Social Services and an inaugural executive member of the Consumers Health Forum of Australia. She also served one term as a city councillor in the Preston City Council.

Joumana El-Matrah is truly of Middle Eastern descent with an ancestry that includes Turkish, Egyptian and Syrian. She was born in Lebanon and migrated with her family to Australia in 1976 because of the civil war in Lebanon. Joumana became a staff member of the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria in 2000, and since that period the Council's work has grown significantly. In 2002, she was invited by Rutgers University Centre for Women's Leadership in New York to attend an annual international training conference on 'Women's Rights; Understanding the Intersections of Racism, Sexism and other Oppressions'. She has also been awarded a Churchill Grant to investigate international models of working with Muslim women.

Joy Murphy is an Aboriginal Elder of the Wurundjeri people. Joy has been involved with Aboriginal issues for 30 years and is Chairperson of the Australian Indigenous Consultative Assembly. She has held executive positions across many sectors of Government. Joy is an honorary Professor of Swinburne University, a Trustee of the National Gallery of Victoria, a member of the Victoria Police Ethical Standards Consultative Committee and a member of the Equal Opportunity Commission. She also operates her own business, *Jarlo Visions*.

Doug Weller has been a consulting media trainer since 1996 and is Director of Corporate Media Services Pty Ltd which he established in 2004. Doug has 30 years experience in journalism, including 13 years with the ABC in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra and Washington D.C. Doug has also lectured in Journalism at RMIT University, worked as a political adviser, developed media strategies and

executed issues and crisis management programs for a range of companies and organisations.

Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP is the Federal Member for Calwell (Vic.). She was elected to the House of Representatives in 2001 and 2004. Maria was born in Lefkada, Greece in 1959. Before entering politics she was a high school teacher from 1982–87. During her parliamentary career she has been a member of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations and the Joint Statutory Committee on Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings. She is currently a member of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Native Title and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Fund and the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. Maria has been a member of various parliamentary delegations including the Parliamentary Delegation to Canada and Chile from March–April 2003. She holds various policy and branch positions within the ALP.

Moona Hammoud was born in Australia. Moona started working at the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria in March 2003 while working towards her Bachelor of Social Science (Youth Work) Degree. At the Council, Moona works as part of the Diversity, Choices & Communications Program project, which aims to empower young Muslim women with the information, support and communication skills they need for their successful settlement in Australia. She has also worked as part of the Recreation Project at the Council and has successfully organised two Soccer Skills workshops for young Muslim women in metropolitan Melbourne and rural Victoria.

Sultan Cinar migrated from Turkey to Australia 26 years ago. She has studied Social Science at RMIT and Health Science at La Trobe University. Sultan has been working in the public welfare sector for the last 20 years. She has worked with Community Health Centres, Neighbourhood Houses, Skill Share, Anti-Cancer Council, local councils and hospitals. Her main work components are community development, community education programs, case work and consultation. Sultan joined the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria in 2003 as a Team Leader and Citizenship/Anti Violence worker.

Nurcihan Ozturk immigrated from Turkey in 1969 with her family and was one of the original founding members of the Victorian Immigrant & Refugee Women's Coalition in 1997. She was the Assistant Secretary of the Victorian Branch of the Textile, Clothing & Footwear Union of Australia and Junior Vice President of that union nationally. She was also the first Chairwoman of the Textile Workers Asian & Pacific Regional Organisation Women's Committee. Nurcihan was selected for the First Women's Honour Roll by the Victorian Government in celebration of Australia's Centenary of Federation in 2001. She is a member of the Thomastown Turkish Women's Recreational Group and is the current Executive Officer of the VIRWC. Nurcihan works tirelessly and with passion on issues affecting the CALD communities and in particular issues affecting women.

Margaret Donaldson is the Director of the Race Discrimination Unit of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. Prior to that she was the Director of the Native Title Unit, where she was responsible for the annual publication of the Commission's Native Title Report. Prior to joining the Human Rights and Equal

Opportunity Commission, Margaret practiced as a solicitor, specialising in government law, administrative law and commercial litigation.

Dalal Samaan is of Assyrian-Lebanese background. She immigrated to Australia in 2000 from Lebanon. She has qualifications in Computer Mathematics, and Quality Management and Assurance. She has extensive experience in corporate and service organisations including World Vision International. She has also had extensive community involvement. Currently Ms Samaan is the Deputy Chair of the Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition, the Deputy Chairperson of the Beth-Nahrin Assyrian Cultural Club as well as the Convener of the Assyrian-Chaldean Women's Network. She is a committee member of Northern Enterprising Women, an organisation which supports women from CALD backgrounds to establish their own small businesses. Currently Ms Samaan works with the Whittlesea Community Legal Service as a Coordinator of Service Administration and Volunteers. Ms Samaan is very passionate about the issues affecting the newly emerging communities and issues affecting immigrant women in particular.

Nadia Mohamed is a qualified and experienced Youth worker, and has interests in community development, especially from a youth perspective. Currently she works for the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, Australian Multicultural Foundation and PRACE.

APPENDIX 6 Photos from the forum







APPENDIX 7

Living Spirit': Muslim Women and Human Rights Forum

The Right to Participate in Social Change

Action Sheet 1

How can you practically apply and promote human rights in your life?

- 😊 Join in activities that promote human rights and community relations
- ⌘ Hold a fundraiser to give money to people who need basic necessities
- 😊 Host a community forum – educate people about others and celebrate differences
- ⌘ Bring young people from various backgrounds together to talk
- 😊 Make sure you publicise your event to attract lots of interested people
- ⌘ If you experience discrimination tell someone about it. Don't keep quiet
- 😊 Use the media:
 - to educate
 - to build up harmony
 - to support the initiatives of others
- ⌘ Use schools:
 - to educate
 - for political empowerment
- 😊 Use art:
 - music
 - festivals
 - exhibitions
 - conferences
- ⌘ Share legal education about citizenship rights and responsibilities

- ☺ Find out about available services, such as Migrant Resource Centres and Legal Aid
- ⌘ Increase knowledge about Islam and other communities
- ☺ Find out about how diverse your local community is; meet your neighbour and hear their stories
- ⌘ Create good communication between key political figures and grass-roots level organisations
- ☺ Generate more opportunities for young (women) Muslims in events
- ⌘ Invite religious/spiritual leaders to participate in community events
- ☺ For more ideas check out:
www.humanrights.gov.au/info_for_students/getinvolved/index.html

APPENDIX 8

'Living Spirit': Muslim Women and Human Rights Forum

The Right to Participate in Social Change

Action Sheet 2

How can parents and their children help empower each other, help each other cope with discrimination and help bridge the generation gap?

- 😊 Learn about each other
- ⌘ Lead by example
- 😊 Bridge the gaps, such as the use of technology
- ⌘ Share activities and common experiences
- 😊 Develop skills together
- ⌘ Effectively communicate with each other
- 😊 Meet in groups
- ⌘ Give and receive love

APPENDIX 9

'Living Spirit': Muslim Women and Human Rights Forum

The Right to Participate in Social Change

Action Sheet 3

Where to go for help if you have experienced discrimination, vilification or abuse.

- ☺ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
- ⌘ Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria
- ☺ Other complaints bodies such as healthcare complaints bodies and patient representatives
- ⌘ Community legal centres
- ☺ Community groups
- ⌘ Women's centres
- ☺ Member of Parliament
- ⌘ Church groups
- ☺ Unions
- ⌘ Police
- ☺ Ombudsman

APPENDIX 10

'Living Spirit': Muslim Women and Human Rights Forum

The Right to Participate in Social Change

Action Sheet 4

Good reasons to report an incident of discrimination, vilification or abuse and/or lodge a complaint.

- ☺ To get personal satisfaction
- ⌘ To get a meaningful outcome such as an apology
- ☺ To get monetary compensation for loss, for example if you lost your job as a result
- ⌘ To change policies and practices in the workplace/business/service, so that the discrimination does not happen again
- ☺ To change things for the better for other people, who may also be the victims of discrimination and abuse if no action is taken
- ⌘ To get the perpetrator to front up to the problem
- ☺ To get justice
- ⌘ To inform organisations such as HREOC, EOCV, police and others to understand a pattern of behaviour and inform programs and services to eliminate discrimination and abuse

APPENDIX 11

'Living Spirit': Muslim Women and Human Rights Forum

The Right to Participate in Social Change

Action Sheet 5

How can you empower yourself and others to combat stereotypes and discrimination – from a youth perspective?

- ☺ Defend yourself
- ⌘ Stand up for the victim
- ☺ Tell someone about it – police, teacher or parent
- ⌘ Ask perpetrator how they would feel
- ☺ Explain that bullying shows weaknesses, not strengths and that it is not cool
- ⌘ Use a joke
- ☺ Tell the perpetrator that it's wrong
- ⌘ Tell the perpetrator that they don't really understand you or your culture
- ☺ Stand up for your religion
- ⌘ Learn what your rights are
- ☺ Complain to the police/authorities
- ⌘ Challenge unacceptable behaviour in public
- ☺ For more ideas check out:
www.thebodyshop.com.au

APPENDIX 12

'Living Spirit': Muslim Women and Human Rights Forum

The Right to Participate in Social Change

Action Sheet 6

Strategies to combat stereotypes and discrimination

- ☺ Encourage Muslims to be active and visible in supporting people/causes/issues not related to Islam:
 - working bee at school
 - lollypop lady
 - discuss recipes on talkback radio

- ⌘ Media has to change how they portray Muslims

- ☺ Bring in people of different cultural backgrounds (e.g. woman in hijab) to say the news/weather on mainstream television or be a *Playschool* presenter

- ⌘ Need to make an impact at a policy level including:
 - education for both Muslims and non-Muslims
 - education for both men and women
 - education for the broader community

- ☺ Governmental responsibility and accountability

- ⌘ Workshop ideas to be discussed in schools and broader communities

- ☺ Teaching about different religions:
 - in schools
 - to childcare workers
 - to pre-school workers.

- ⌘ Non-Muslim community leaders defending basic social justice issues and championing inclusiveness and diversity

- ☺ Linking discrimination against Muslims to wider discrimination against all people

- ⌘ Interfaith dialogue between religious leaders

😊 Government to use a more inclusive model for 'Australian values'

🌀 Create connections with women who have been successful in the workplace or community

😊 For more ideas check out the *Ismaξ Project*:

www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/isma

APPENDIX 13

'Living Spirit': Muslim Women and Human Rights Forum

The Right to Participate in Social Change

Action Sheet 7

How can you engage in the media debate?

- ☺ Establish the points you want to raise BEFORE the interview (at least three main points)
- ⌘ Have a plan or 'follow a map' when dealing with media/journalists
- ☺ Don't let journalists 'lead' the interview
- ⌘ Be confident in the topic you are to interviewed about
- ☺ Present yourself calmly and try not to get emotional or upset
- ⌘ Don't get sidetracked
- ☺ Admit if you don't know or are unsure of the answer. Don't feel compelled to 'create' a response
- ⌘ De-mystify stereotypes and the 'fear' behind those stereotypes
- ☺ Ensure media is made accountable and take legal action if appropriate

APPENDIX 14

'Living Spirit': Muslim Women and Human Rights Forum

The Right to Participate in Social Change

Action Sheet 8

What are some of the measures you can take in the workplace to avoid or combat discrimination?

- ☺ Provide strong leadership

- ⌘ Training for senior management

- ☺ Cross-cultural training:
 - cross-culture/religious/linguistic
 - awareness of employees in relation to each other
 - ongoing evaluation of impact and changes as a result of training
 - training management to be empathetic not sympathetic

- ⌘ Talk about difference

- ☺ Make diversity an ongoing agenda item in meetings:
 - diversity in employment
 - set up committees drawing on people interested in specific issues e.g. well-being
 - create committees of joint staff and management
 - generate consultation about workplace practices

- ⌘ Flexibility around employment arrangements;
 - childcare
 - special needs of women
 - obligatory needs

- ☺ Awareness of legal rights and responsibilities

- ⌘ Even-handedness – ensure everyone is treated fairly and equally

- ☺ Provide allowances for religious observances:
 - prayer – to be respected by other employees
 - workplace to be aware of different calendars/ celebrations

- acknowledge and celebrate different cultural/religious celebrations

⌘ Peer support and supervision:

- opportunity to reflect/raise issues

😊 Policy development:

- anti-bullying; anti-racial and -religious vilifications
- accessible complaints process
- establish a grievance handling mechanism that is culturally sensitive

⌘ Regular review of policy procedures

😊 Understand the rights of Muslim women:

- include in work policies
- legal and industrial rights
- available to all
- act on policy

⌘ For more ideas check out information about HREOC's Good Practice, Good Business Resources at:

www.humanrights.gov.au/info_for_employers/index.html

APPENDIX 15

'Living Spirit': Muslim Women and Human Rights Forum

The Right to Participate in Social Change

Action Sheet 9

What are the skills needed for support services to help Muslim women cope in crisis situations including racial and/or religious discrimination and abuse?

- ☺ Bi-lingual workers or readily available translators
- ⌘ Convey information in relevant languages
- ☺ Culturally sensitive and religious knowledge and understanding
- ⌘ Buddy/mentor system to support person facing crisis and make connections with other women who have experienced discrimination
- ☺ Employ more Muslim women representatives on committees, especially in mainstream organisations
- ⌘ Willingness to support women through complaints process and explain the systems in a time that suits the women
- ☺ Forming partnerships between culturally aware organisations and mainstream organisations
- ⌘ Support for women and their children
- ☺ Point of entry of complainant will vary – agencies needs to be responsive
- ⌘ Use technology to support/break down geographic boundaries, such as using international networks
- ☺ Simplify process – not too much paperwork
- ⌘ Support services to be:
 - articulate
 - politically savvy

- confident in speaking out
- objective
- well resourced

😊 Understand and respect of Islam and its practical applications

⌘ A willingness to be myth breakers

😊 Appreciate differences as positives

⌘ Encourage women to speak up

😊 Ensure that perpetrators receive restorative justice such as community work in a Muslim community