

The Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations

FAIR

Annual Report

2005

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The FAIR ANNUAL REPORT 2003-2004

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Presidents Report

It has been a slow and steady start for FAIR. In the past 18 months FAIR has made great progress in many areas and still has room for improvement in others.

As you are quite aware the Islamic community is hardly a community but a cluster of smaller groups all calling themselves a name and with disparate agendas. So with this in mind FAIR has an impossible task to project a positive image of Islam in the media. Yet in this context it has achieved some remarkable success.

Therefore, FAIR can only purport to represent itself and do what it perceives is in accordance with Islam and what is fair and reasonable in the interests of the wider Islamic community living in Australia.

Of course we pray that Allah will give us strength and patience to climb out of the stench of ignorance and overcome the temptation to spread mischief. If our intentions are sincere and honourable then we will inshallah succeed. Success is not measured in quantifiable terms but in observable terms that show changes in attitude and perceptions, not only in the broader Australian society but more specifically within the media, the government, in the educational field, the police force and the judicial system.

FAIR has a long way to go to achieve its targeted aims but with small steps we will in the future take long strides with confidence and determination. As yet, the in-roads we are making in the media are good but need to be more widespread across different mediums especially radio and print media. Our training and outreach programs are a vital community resource but we need more assistance in making the public aware of it and to take advantage of it. The most recent success of attaining the very difficult task of receiving a funding grant was beyond all expectations. FAIR with little to its name and barely a year in existence was given \$45 650 for its ***Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP)- Interfaith initiative*** from the Living In Harmony section of DIMIA. We have already employed a part time worker and AVP interfaith is running hot across the country. Two workshops have been successfully completed in Sydney and more are scheduled in Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane and Alice Springs.

But looking back at the past year we have enjoyed the various events and activities that FAIR has initiated or has been a part. Since September 11 2001 the Islamic communities have fervently become involved in community affairs and there has been unprecedented number of initiatives from all sections of the community.

The ***Goodness & Kindness Project*** was FAIR's feather in its takke (cap). Awarded the 2004 National Multicultural Marketing Awards, FAIR was recognized by the State government for its role in creating, planning and marketing the project throughout NSW and in doing so attending over 100 schools and speaking to over 15000 students. The basic message that we conveyed to so many people was that we can all work together, respect each other and accept people of different faiths. One of the biggest advantages for Islam in this *War on Terror* climate was that many young people understood that there was nothing to fear from Islam. The project was reported in various media including the Sydney Morning Herald, 4BC radio, Cheez TV and ABC television's Compass program, once again with great response.

But of course last year's workshop based ***Race Religion and Rhetoric Conference*** with over 17 high profile speakers and chairpersons from the media, politics and religion, made some very profound statements on which to build and move forward in making a more balanced and fairer society. The media are so important in ensuring that our society is just and that our civil liberties are protected. The "Islamic

community” are justly concerned that their privileges and rights are not withered away by selfish governments and need to know how to engage the media effectively. We hope to repeat the event again this year with some significant improvements.

Finally, the overall thumbs up for FAIR comes from the various liaisons we have had with the media and the government. FAIR is recognized by many important organizations, by refugee advocacy groups, by Human Rights groups and community organizations. FAIR was a key player in the Community Relations Commission’s Crisis management committee during the Iraq war and shortly after Bali. FAIR was consulted by HREOC during its “isma” community consultations and by various others such as the ADB and the APC. FAIR won a moral victory against poor reporting of Islam when it went all the way to the tribunal with a complaint against the Australian Newspaper.

There are good things happening in the land of FAIR but there is more work to do and this can only succeed with more help from the grass roots. In this year we aim to broaden the volunteer program and to get more community involvement, we aim to consolidate on our relations with the media and to offer the media outreach program to hundreds of journalists across the country. And through the AVP interfaith once more we hope to break records and impress across the community.

One very important area of interest is in research and analysis and FAIR hopes to develop key research on perceptions about Islam, discrimination and to assess the needs of the community, through our new researcher. We want also to work with various institutions and academics in Australia.

Yours in Islam

Kuranda Seyfettin Seyit
President

MEDIA MONITORING AND COMPLAINTS

One of FAIR's primary roles is to maintain an effective monitoring service to enable us to reduce inaccurate and unethical reporting of Islam. To do this FAIR will need the assistance of members from the community, people who are concerned about such negative media reporting which affects us all, emotionally and sometimes physically.

Media monitoring is limited but can be effective with the co-ordinated assistance of several people for a few hours a day.

In 2003 the Australian Newspaper ran with the headline "Islamic terror kills peace in Jerusalem and Baghdad". FAIR complained to the paper with little headway and eventually took the matter up with the Australian Press Council (APC). After months of negotiation the matter ended up in front of a tribunal of a dozen industry professionals. The matter was heard jointly with another complaint made by Martin Oliver over the headline "Muslims kill 27 to 'stop oppression". After a long submission by a FAIR representative the panel was moved although the complaint was not upheld. However, the other complaint was upheld and both were printed in the Australian newspaper. This was a moral victory mainly because of the publicity that we gained and the admission that the Australian Newspaper had been neglectful and unfair in their choice of words for the headlines. (See Appendix A for Media Release of findings from APC)

FAIR has complained to several television and radio networks over erroneous reporting, in particular, against the incorrect use of the word "jihad" as meaning holy war. This was vehemently argued by both sides without result. However, FAIR must continue a vigilant monitoring of these media outlets to ensure that the media think twice about their approach which is usually disrespectful of the Muslim community. It is also our responsibility educate the media about the subtle meanings of Islam and related topics. And with the hope to change the hearts and minds of the media, at present there have been some positive changes in several journalists that have been dealing with FAIR over the past two years.

Media monitoring is a simple case of watching, reading and listening to the news. It only needs some basic co-ordination to make sure that reports are listened to and responses are made through the appropriate channels.

The Goodness and Kindness Awards

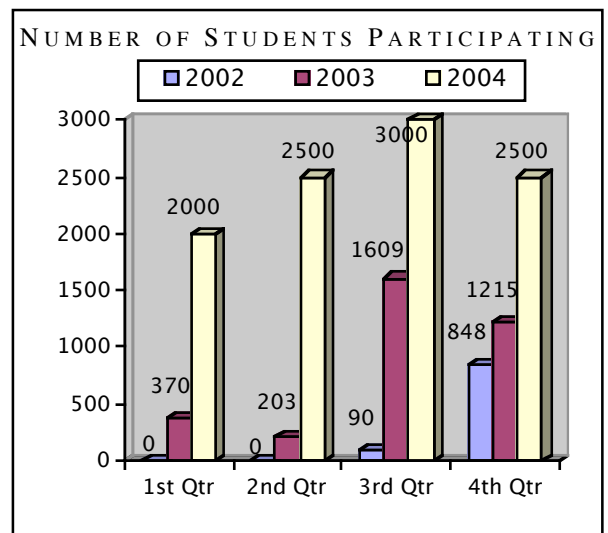
The G&K school visits project began almost 3 years ago above the mosque in Zetland, when Zalman Kastel an Orthodox Jewish rabbi and Joe Sheridan a lay Catholic visited Seyfi Seyit. The three discussed a project to visit schools and demonstrate to children that Muslims, Jews and Christians can get along.

Five Months of Rapid Growth

The Goodness and Kindness Project has gone from an idea and 90 participants in the 3rd term (quarter) of 2002 to a peak of 1609 students in the 3rd term of 2003 and an equally strong last term with an increase of almost 50% over the same period the previous year.

In 2004 the project grew exponentially surpassing our goals of 10000 students by almost a half.

As a part of the program students were encouraged to write a simple message on a piece of cloth which was sewn together to



form a giant quilt approximately 29 metres long and spelling the worlds “Goodness & Kindness”.

A few examples of what we wrote on our parts of the Goodness and Kindness quilt:

“If I ruled the world, I would put an end to all wars and if someone falls down in the playground I will help them up again. Peace”- Natasha

“I will help animals and take care of flowers, I will be honest, share my things, and stop drugs. I love this idea.” Signed, Lojain.

“I will not swing on my chair, to not upset the teachers.” Mohammed

“I will help everyone and try my best in every aspect of school”- Rowan

“I will not laugh at other people’s work”- Corine

“I will respect my parents and have good manners. If someone wants my sharpener I will let them use it”

The Goodness and Kindness team featured on a full hour program on ABC’s **Compass** hosted by Geraldine Doogue. The program was entitled “Three Faces of Hope”. One letter of response from a viewer read:

At last I see some hope for man, thanks to your efforts. If it is at all possible I would like to make contact with the trio who featured on the Compass programme. For over twenty years I've read philosophy, theology and ancient history; almost all works from "The Epic of Gilgamesh" to "Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius. The Koran, the Upanishad, Josephus, New and Old Testaments; plus many classic commentaries. Each and every word confirming my faith. I have many questions to ask.

And, if it doesn't sound presumptuous, I may be able to add a new string to their bow.

At the very least I would like to offer free accommodation if ever they're passing down the south coast of New South Wales. This movement is something I have prayed for, the three houses of man working for together for peace. The children of Abraham should not war. Muslims accept Jesus as Messiah, they just reject the Trinity, that makes them Unitarians. Why is everybody arguing semantics and not uniting to fulfil the mission God entrusted us with? To paraphrase Heraclitus... Mans arguments are like babytalk in God's ear. Whose right? Who cares! Let's roll-up our sleeves and get to work.

Again, thankyou for the hope you have brought me, it's one thing to have faith in The Word of God, it's another to keep dreaming of when man will listen.

Anything that I can do, just ask.

Guy Gustard.

The Goodness and Kindness Project received jointly with the Jews and Christians the 2004 National Multicultural Marketing Award. This was the top prize for the country and we also received the community category for a not-for-profit organization. It was awarded to FAIR by the Premier of NSW and the Chairman of the CRC.

See Appendix B for table of schools visited

Community Relations Commission Crisis management committee

In 2003 a crisis management committee was formed under the chairmanship of Stepan Kerkyasharian of the Community relations commission as a response to the Bali Bombings of 2002 and the looming war in Iraq. FAIR was an active member of the committee and contributed strongly.

FAIR also conducted a number of media training programs and seminars for various groups and organizations. The media training covered such areas as understanding journalism, how a newspaper works, viewing a film about talkback radio, writing press releases, letters to the editor, calling talkback radio and intensive television interviews and commentary. These workshops were run in Sydney,

Brisbane and Canberra. Workshops were also run in four major cities in New Zealand at the request of the Auckland Islamic community and FIANZ.

The CRC invited FAIR to run a workshop at their symposium in 2003 with good responses from the participants.

The media training called Media 4 Muslims will continue in 2005 and plans are being made to run workshops in June in Sydney and Adelaide and upon further requests for later in the year.

HREOC consultations

HREOC ran a long program of community consultations based on the thesis of discrimination against Arabs and Muslims.

FAIR was consulted and contributed some valuable media reports and extracts from talkback radio during the Sydney rape trials and a series of vilifying attacks against Islam and Muslims.

The results of this can be seen at

http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial_discrimination/isma/consultations/meetings/10sept03.htm

See Appendix C for full consultation between HREOC and FAIR.

Inside Islam Seminars

As a result of working with the diverse Islamic community FAIR has acquired an extensive network of individuals and organizations around Australia. In particular it has strong ties with Sydney representatives from an array of groups.

We have prepared a comprehensive overview of Islam in NSW. It covers the various schools of thought, Shi'ism, ethnic composition of Muslims in Sydney and statistics from the ABS, and the structure of the Islamic community in Sydney. It is delivered with a power point presentation and handouts. It has been thus far successful for individual journalists and council workers.

Race Religion & Rhetoric Conference 2004

The inaugural conference was held in Homebush bay on 8th October 2004. After establishing a relationship with Soka Gakkai International Australia (a Buddhist group) FAIR with the support of Islamic Realm ran the workshop based conference with some very knowledgeable keynote speakers. The speaker profiles and speeches are below:

Speaker Profiles

Opening Address by Justice Marcus Einfeld QC

Panel Discussion 1 **Religion**

Speaker 1 Hans Van der Bent

Mr Hans Van der Bent runs his own company that provides engineering support for the television industry. He has been the General Director of Soka Gakkai International Australia for 11 years and provides support for 2750 members.

He studies Buddhism under the tutelage of SGI president Ikeda through reading and absorbing his many speeches and peace proposals. He will be speaking about Humanism in Buddhism.

Speaker 2 Elenie Poulos

Reverend Elenie Poulos is a Minister of the Uniting Church in Australia.

She is the National Director of Uniting Justice Australia which is responsible for representing the Church in the public forum and developing church policy and positions on many justice issues including the environment, refugees and asylum seekers, peace and war and issues of globalisation among others.

She has just finished putting together the Uniting Church's federal election resources aimed at helping Church members to identify key issues and make an informed vote.

Prior to her current position with the National Assembly, she was School Chaplain at MLC School Burwood for six years and has a professional background in book publishing and an academic background in linguistics and theology.

Speaker 3 Silma Ihram

Silma converted to Islam more than 25 years ago after 8 years as a 'born-again' Christian. She grew up in a middle class agnostic family with private school education. After travelling to Indonesia she embraced Islam followed by her Catholic husband and embarked on a series of projects in the Muslim community while rearing her 6 children. After active involvement in the Muslim Student's Associations and the national body AFMSA (for which she was given a Centenary Medal in 2002) she established the first Muslim Women's Shop and Centre in 1979, and then was one of the pioneers of Islamic schooling, beginning with Al Noori in 1983. Currently she is the Principal and founder (with her husband Baheej Adada) of the Noor Al Houda Islamic College. In 2002 she was elected to the Federal Executive of the Unity Party and appeared on the State Ballot for the Upper House. She holds a Bachelor of Arts, Diploma of Education, Master of Educational Administration and is Vice President of the Australian Council for Islamic Education in Schools. She is the author of two books 'Bridges of Light', 'Islamic Parenting' and the producer of an educational video in Arabic 'Their First Years'.

Panel Discussion 2 RACE

Speaker 1 Randa Kattan

Ms Randa Kattan is the Executive Director of the Australian Arabic Communities Council. She has been an active community leader for over 15 years and has been vocal on promoting the status of women and social justice principles. She has worked in areas of settlement, employment, youth, women and has initiated a range of anti racist strategies, cultural and community development initiatives. She is currently a member of the Implementation Committee of the Youth Partnership with the Arabic speaking community - a NSW government and community partnership initiative aimed at improving the status of young people. She has also been one of initiators of the Arabic Community Forum which was set up in response to the racial attacks against the community.

Speaker 2 David Bitel

David Bitel is a partner of the long-established Sydney law firm Parish Patience Immigration, specialising in immigration law and administrative law. He is an accredited immigration law specialist by the NSW Law Society and a registered migration agent.

Since 1989 he has been a Judicial Member of the Equal Opportunity Tribunal of NSW, now the NSW Administrative Decisions Tribunal, Equal Opportunity Division. He has been Secretary-General of the Australian Section of the International Commission of Jurists since 1983.

He has particular interest in the problems of refugees and has been President of the Refugee Council of Australia since 1995 and chairman of the Australian Refugee Foundation since 1998. He was founding chairman of the Refugee Advice and Casework Service. David received Austcare's Paul Cullen Humanitarian Award in 2002. He is a member of the Law Council of Australia and the International Bar Association.

Speaker 3 **Pr Peter Manning**

In 1970's: was a reporter on television (ABC), in print (Sydney Morning Herald, The Bulletin) and on radio (ABC and Radio National).

In 1980's: Producer and then Executive Producer of "Four Corners".

1990's: Head of TV News and Current Affairs at both ABC TV and the Seven Network.

2000-2004: Adjunct Professor of Journalism at UTS and Author, "Dog Whistle Politics and Journalism: reporting Arabic and Muslim people in Sydney newspapers" (Australian Centre for Independent Journalism, UTS, 2004).

Panel Discussion 3 RHETORIC

Speaker 1 **Dr Anabelle Lukin**

Dr Annabelle Lukin is a researcher with the Centre for Language in Social Life at Macquarie University, and a lecturer in the Dept of English at the University of Sydney. Her research interests include discourses of war, political speeches, media discourse, child language development, language and literature, and the study of semantics. She is particularly keen to find ways of bringing ideas from the study of language into the public domain.

Speaker 2 **Dr Scott Poynting**

Scott Poynting is Associate Professor in Humanities at the University of Western Sydney. He is co-author of *Bin Laden in the Suburbs: Criminalising the Arab Other* (Institute of Criminology, 2004) and *Kebabs, Kids, Cops and Crime* (Pluto, 2000). He has recently (with Greg Noble) completed the report *Living with Racism* for the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2004).

Speaker 3 **Professor Emeritus Stuart Rees**

Professor Emeritus Stuart Rees, is Director of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies and Director of the Sydney Peace Foundation at the University of Sydney. He is Professor of Social Work and Social Policy.

Professor Rees has been a social worker in Britain, in Canada, in the War on Poverty programs in the USA and with Save the Children in India and Sri Lanka. He has taught at leading universities in the UK (Aberdeen & Southampton), in Canada (Toronto and Wilfrid Laurier) and in the USA (University of California at Berkeley, University of Texas). He is a well-known media commentator and has a regular spot with James Valentine on ABC Radio 702 in Sydney, 'Peace with Rees'.

Remarks by special guest **Donna Mulhearn**

Closing by The Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans MLC M.B.,B.S., F.R.C.S.(Eng.), M.Appl.Sci.(OHS), M.L.C.

Arthur joined the Australian Democrats in 1986 as the only political party that had a long-term vision and was not captive of either big business or unions. Arthur entered NSW State Parliament as an Australian Democrat MLC on the retirement of Elisabeth Kirkby in 1998. He was re-elected in his own right in March 1999.

Since his re-election to the NSW Legislative Council in 1999, Arthur has been a strong and tireless campaigner for social justice, environmentally sustainable economic development, sensible law & order policies and the rights of people with physical and mental disabilities.

Arthur is a member of the Standing Committee on Social Issues and in 2002 initiated the Parliamentary Inquiry into Child Protection Services.

In December 2001 Arthur also established the Select Committee on Mental Health, the first such inquiry since 1977. In 2003 Arthur initiated inquiries into Camden and Campbelltown Hospitals and the Redfern Riots. Arthur is due for re-election in 2007.

Media Outreach

The media outreach program is designed to assist journalists who need to understand more about Islam in general or a specific issue pertaining to an Islamic based story. The media can contact FAIR and organize for an interview and source material. If the media outlet so desires FAIR can send a representative to conduct a short seminar at the outlet's office premises. The information is also available on powerpoint.

Indonesian Exchange Program

Since late 2004 FAIR has been hosting visitors from Indonesia as a part of the Indonesian-Australian Muslim Leadership Exchange Program jointly being organized by ANU and Melbourne University. FAIR has been responsible for scheduling the itinerary to places of interest and relevance to the needs of the visitors. For example to meet with politicians, interfaith leaders, police, community leaders, youth networks and women's organizations.

As a result of the close relationship with these Indonesian visitors FAIR is planning an Australia-Indonesia Youth Peace Dialogue in Bali for 2006. This will involve 15-20 delegates from each nation to come together in a symbolic gesture of peace and understanding in Bali. The objectives of the dialogue is to promote better relations and prospects for the future as well to breakdown the hidden animosity that exists between the two peoples.

Alternatives to Violence Project – Interfaith - *Building Community*

This is FAIR's latest project that has received \$46 650 from the Living In Harmony funding grant.

The Alternatives To Violence Program or AVP project has been operating in Australia for more than a decade and today has an extensive network of facilitators who are thoroughly trained and experienced.

The Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations (FAIR) aims at increasing the peace in the world by improving community relations between Muslims and the broader society. FAIR hopes that through its work and the similar work being done by networks like AVP Australia that there will be greater social cohesion and harmony in Australia. One of the most important issues facing Australians today is the growing incidence of violent and aggressive behaviour towards others. There is an urgent need for people to understand how to deal with conflict and to solve them in a non-violent way. But before people can even tackle the problem we need to understand and communicate with one another.

Therefore FAIR, in conjunction with AVP Australia, has initiated a new approach to interfaith dialogue through AVP workshops. AVP-interfaith involves a two day (20 hours) intensive workshop that aids the individual to better understand positive approaches to transforming conflict.

The AVP- Interfaith project involves participants from different faith groups. Although the project has been working closely with Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Jewish and Indigenous participants, AVP- Interfaith also encourages people of other faiths including Buddhist, Hindu, Bahai, Non-religious and so on. This is an Australia-wide project and workshops will be held in Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Alice Springs, Perth and Newcastle. Furthermore there will be workshops held in prisons and schools.

This is a project for all types of people and not people with anger management or violence problems, it is an unique opportunity to gain some valuable skills in conflict management and at the same time learn more about other cultures and make new friends.

As a part of the grant we have employed a new part-time co-ordinator who will be working from the Rozelle Office once a week.

We aim to document the whole process and produce a video of the initiative.

For more information visit our **Website** www.fair.org.au/interfaith

Australia Fair News-zine

Australia Fair newspaper is in its second year and growing in popularity. This has become FAIR's trade mark and platform for expression in all manner of subjects. It has been extremely difficult to keep the paper going, only by popular demand and encouragement has the paper continued. Normally operating on a shoe string the paper needs urgent assistance with planning and marketing. The advertisements currently are just enough to pay for printing costs (approx. \$800 per issue).

To substantiate upon the success of the newspaper and to make it grow Australia Fair needs a professional marketing campaign to increase revenues which will be pumped back into the paper by increasing distribution and circulation, size and quality.

To see the latest newspapers on-line visit <http://fair.org.au/modules.php?name=Downloads>

WEBSITE

Website www.fair.org.au

The website has stalled in recent times due to our website manager being overseas and generally snowed under at work. Therefore we have a new website builder and designer who will be changing the over all look of the site and improve its graphics and appearance. It will also be easier to manoeuvre around.

Membership and subscriptions

Membership fees have dropped off since 2004. Many members have failed to re-new their \$12 fees. Presently there are 35 members in Australia. There are over 100 subscribers and/or members who have not renewed as yet. With the assistance of promotions we can follow these members up and hopefully renew their fees.

Visiting scholars

FAIR has managed a number of visiting scholars in the past two years:

International Visitors include Sheikh Khalid Yasin, Yvonne Ridley, Sheikh Abdul Hakim Murad, Pr. Tariq Ramadan, Sheikh Naeem Abul Wali, Sadun Engin from Harun Yahya Corporation
Videos completed - Interviews with Abdul Hakim Murad, Yvonne Ridley, MAA, Auburn Mosque, First Years, ABC 3 faces of hope, 60 minutes, insight. We will also be managing Anwar Ibrahim's upcoming visit in March.

Future Projects

Australian Foundation for the Children of Aceh (AFCA)- Orphanage Project

FAIR in conjunction with various members of the Islamic Community has initiated a new and worthwhile project to assist the Tsunami struck region of Aceh in Indonesia. Calling ourselves the Australian Foundation for the Children of Aceh. There are approx. 40000 unattached children in Aceh. This is an incredible number of orphans. Initial reports of the death toll were around 150000 but there could be as much another 400000 unaccounted or missing persons.

This is a catastrophe beyond comprehension. It is incumbent upon all Muslims to help, just as it is our obligation to help orphans and widows in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Sudan as well as other places. The immediate crisis is in Aceh and so with the help of our friends in Jakarta we aim to open a new school and orphanage in Aceh. AFCA is in the process of employing an Acehnese Project Co-ordinator and as Project Manager Seyfi Seyit will be visiting Aceh in April 2005.

A full report will be available after his return in May inshallah.

2005 Media Awards

FAIR hopes that towards the end of the year that we hold a fund raising dinner and awards night. This will include special film screenings and the 2005 Media Awards. For this we will need a sub-committee

to plan the event. We will need various categories such as the Googly Award (most hateful article about Islam), The Ibn Battutah Award (for accurate and fair reporting), The Cameleers Award (misconception of the year), The Lightning Bolt Award (Islamaphobe of the year), The Story of the Year award, The Fatima and Ali Award for best female and male youth and so on. And the top award could be called the FAIR Media Award of Excellence.

IIWPF Forums

FAIR will be conducting a series of forums with panel discussions throughout 2005. The topics will be broadly around the following with special key speakers: Islam and its ownership, the Journalist's Jihad, Human Rights in Islam, Creative Conflicts and Social Change. Etc

Islamic Documentary & Film Festival

The first film festival of its kind ever in Australia will be held with Allah's permission towards the end of the year. This is contingent on resources and will power. The good news is that we have negotiated a good deal with a well-known film-maker from Europe and hope to screen his film here as a feature. This is exciting news as the film is unique and will be sure to interest the public.

Financial Report Jun 2003- July 2004

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Australian Newspaper published April 2004

General Press Release No 261

Religious terms in headlines_

Issued: 6 April 2004
For immediate release

The Press Council has urged newspapers and magazines to be careful about using in their headlines terms for religious or ethnic groups that could imply that the group as a whole was responsible for the actions of a minority among that group.

Currently, the use of the words "Islam", "Islamic" and "Muslim" in headlines on reports of terrorist attacks is causing problems both for the Muslim community in Australia and the Australian media. It is important for newspapers to identify as clearly as possible the sources of terror; casting the net of suspicion and accusation too widely can be harmful.

The Council is also aware of instances beyond the Australian Muslim community, and the current concern with terrorism, where the use of overly general terms has caused concern for the Indigenous people and the Australian Jewish community, among many others.

The Press Council acknowledges that, in some cases, the linking of words with religious connotations to terrorist groups may be, in the strictest sense, accurate - but it is often unfair. Terrorists may be Muslims, but Muslims are not necessarily terrorists, as some headlines have implied.

The Press Council urges publications to be aware of the sensitivities of groups about whom they are reporting. Headlines are a particular problem, given the need to capture the essence of a story within a limited compass, and require particular care.

In a September 2001 press release, the Council expressed its concern "about references to race, colour, ethnicity or nationality which promote negative stereotypes in the community". Similarly, the Council considers that the use of wide, too-general terms for religious or ethnic groups in headlines could contribute to the promotion of a negative stereotype of that group.

Even, the use of headlines of the style "Muslim terror" and "Islamic bomb attack" would be best avoided as they can be seen to link religious belief and its adherents to deliberate acts of terror. The Muslim community has told the Press Council that it has already experienced the cumulative effect of the frequent use of the religious terms, which has led to increased divisions in Australian society and ostracising of citizens simply because they belong to a recognisable minority.

The Council appreciates that the problem extends to other religions, and to other groups whose standing may be tarnished by actions emanating from a minority of members, and therefore urges publications to be as narrow and focused as possible in their description of those responsible.

The Council also notes that full reports do not constitute as great a problem as headlines, since more accuracy can be achieved outside the limitations of headline space. However, both aspects of presentation need care.

END

Appendix B

Goodness and Kindness Schools Visited

List of Schools

			Schools 2002		
			Number of students		
1.	St Ives North Primary School	90	12	June	
2.	Lewisham Primary School	60	15	October	
3.	Yagoona Primary School	110		October	
4.	Masada College - Primary (Jewish)	232	24	October	
5.	Ashbury Primary School	215	18	November	
6.	Rozelle Primary School	113	21	November	
7.	Arkana College (Islamic)	60	25	November	
8.	St Ives Park Primary School	58	28	November	
			First half 2003		
			March 2003		
9.	Emanuel School (Jewish)	120	20	March	
10.	West Ryde Primary School	180	27	March	
11.	Gordon West Primary School	70			
			May 2003		
12.	Mascot Primary School	80	1	May	
			June 2003		
13.	Gladesville Primary School	90	4	June	
14.	Wyong Primary School	25	19	June	
15.	Yarramalong Primary School	8	19	June	
			Second half 2003		
			July 2003		
16.	Artarmon Primary School	220	24	July	
			August 2003		
17.	Dee Why Primary School	210	5	August	
18.	King Abdul Aziz – High (Islamic)	70	5	August	
19.	Epping Primary School	80	7	August	
20.	North Rocks Primary School	220	26	August	
			September 2003		
21.	Hunters Hill Primary School	71	2	September	
22.	Middle Dural Primary School	21	11	September	
23.	Hunter Valley Grammar Primary & High	410	16	September	
24.	Noor Al Houda (Islamic)	28	22	September	
25.	Greenwich Primary School	60	23	September	
26.	Masada College – High (Jewish)	64	23	September	
27.	Balmain Primary School	120	25	September	
28.	St. Bernards (Christian)	35	25	September	
			October 2003		

29. Arcadia Primary School	52	14 October
30. Samuel Gilbert Primary School.....	110	14 October
31. Epping West Primary School	160	16 October
32. Cherrybrook Primary School.....	95	21 October
33. North Ryde Primary School	90	30 October

November 2003

34. Fairfield Museum.....	70	2 November
35. Roseville Primary School.....	150	11 November
36. Oakhill Drive (Castle Hill).....	90	11 November
37. Lane Cove West Primary School	55	13 November
38. Moriah College (Jewish)	30	18 November
39. Lansvale Primary School.....	180	18 November
40. Glenorie Primary School	73	27 November

December 2003

41. St Ives Primary School	50	4 December
42. Year 2004 total	10,872	

Total number of students 2002/03	4299
Total in 2004	10 772
TOTAL TO DATE	15 073

APPENDIX C

**Consultation with the Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations (FAIR),
Lakemba, 10 September 2003**

The meeting was attended by three members of FAIR and facilitated by Meredith Wilkie and Susanna Iuliano from HREOC. Omeima Sukkarieh (notes) also attended from HREOC.

The Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations

The Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations (FAIR) is an independent, grass-roots public relations group aimed specifically at promoting a positive and harmonious relationship between Muslims and the wider community in Australia. FAIR publishes its own newspaper called 'Australia Fair' and operates its own media and research centre where basic functions are carried out such as monitoring the media and issuing press releases. FAIR's main objective is to enhance the position of Muslims in Australia and to promote a positive image of the Islamic community through public relations and by successfully engaging the media.

FAIR is modelled on the Council of Islamic American Relations in the USA. FAIR has officially been registered with the Department of Fair Trading since about April 2003 however has been 'a loose body' for about two years. It is not ethnic specific and looks at addressing the issue of all Muslims in Australia. Currently, FAIR has been endorsed and supported by 12 organisations including the Muslim Women's

National Network of Australia and the Islamic Council of NSW. FAIR is also completely self funded and all people working at FAIR do so on a voluntary basis.

"Our vision is to live in an Australia that does not label you according to your faith or your beliefs, simply to be Australian with no epithets attached."

"The situation regarding discrimination against Muslims in Australia particularly after September 11 has necessitated the role of such an organisation as FAIR. What people need to understand is that Muslims are a diverse group of people with young people and older people. Therefore you can't label Islam as one homogenous group."

Experiences and effects of discrimination

One participant described the impacts of discrimination noted by his wife who works on a voluntary basis at the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) as a counsellor. AFIC's counselling service is called Mission of Hope - Community Counselling Service.

"The problem that arises from vilification against Muslims is serious. My wife does counselling for 'Mission of Hope' and is finding that [people are having] amazing difficulties with identity formation. Some are growing to suicidal levels. She talked to 13 girls in the last few months and six are suicidal due to their exposure to discrimination. A friend who became a drug addict due to affects of discrimination now hates Australians. They are trying to get out of the problem but at the same time are being embroiled in an identity crisis."

"The issue of vilification is now beyond getting it right but about the fabric of Australian society. The majority of cases known to us are just slim." "It's sometimes the little comments that go unnoticed that affect people too. After September 11, I have a friend who is a bus driver and wears the hijab, and she told me about a guy who gets on the bus and says 'are you happy now?'"

People report incidents and cases of discrimination to FAIR as the Forum has developed a reporting facility for recording acts of discrimination and are *"trying long term to get all national statistics together"*.

Participants believe that the most common method of keeping informed about the experiences of discrimination by community members is through informal networks and community work.

"There is a huge misconception between what's an Arab and what's a Muslim. In recent alcohol research conducted all Arabs were assumed to be Muslim. Unfortunately [Arabs] are suffering from the misconceptions of being Muslims because they are Arabs. This leads to Lebanese Christians saying 'it's not us, it's the Muslims'. None of us [ie participants] are Arabs and we're all Muslim. I'm of Italian background."

"It all comes back to education. September 11 is a catalyst but not the overriding factor in the resurgence of anti-Islamic feelings. The media jumped on the bandwagon and it was selling and unfortunately the community is paying the price dearly."

"The number of events snowballed and that led to what is happening now."

One of the participants who visits prison inmates regularly noted that *"...in jails, Muslim prisoners are discriminated against in many ways"*.

"Hate mail is also a huge problem. People don't pass it onto police."

One of FAIR's objectives is to be the centre of coordination of all media enquiries relating to the Muslim community in Australia, as there is a *"need for a link between the media and the Muslim community"*.

"The Islamic community in Australia is based on personalities leading the organisations. FAIR is appealing to grassroots as well as organisations."

"The unfortunate thing is that most of the time is that you see the emotions flying FAIR is trying to stop that from happening and has brought representation broadly for the community."

Comments about the lack of knowledge organisations have of media resources were made.

"SBS has a database of spokespeople; the most moderate and informed and diversely inclusive. But is it effective?"

The role of Islamic organisations and their shortfalls were also noted. Existing community representatives and leaders of some Islamic organisations are believed to be *"isolated sometimes from the rest of the community"*.

"FAIR has an organised, professional and proactive approach to looking at these issues facing the community but it does not want to be the voice of all Muslims."

It was suggested that there is a need for organisations and the media to *"talk to people who really are Australian and being brought up here"* to get a real sense of the issues faced by the majority of the community.

Importance of legislative change

"We are looking for change in legislation with the benefit in the change being that people will stop to think about their actions before they attack."

"People think twice about making anti -Semitic comments because it's illegal and it's illegal because the current law covers Jews and Sikhs. Once you have the legislation, you know that it's enforceable by law and once the government has endorsed it then you know. People will think twice about racist and derogatory remarks about Muslims."

Responding to the media

Participants believed that the media is one of the biggest instigators of the increasing level of discrimination against Muslims in Australia with one participant saying *"our main gripe is about the media"*. FAIR regularly responds to articles and various media coverage which they feel negatively portray or impact on the Muslim community in Australia. One of the mechanisms they use to do this is submitting formal complaints to the Australian Press Council and the Australian Broadcasting Authority. There are currently two complaints under investigation by the APC and one by the ABA. FAIR also has a matter regarding an offensive leaflet that was distributed last local elections before the tribunal under the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act.

"Changing legislation is important, but it's not about changing it to silence people about talking about Islam because we welcome discussion and debate. But it is about controlling how far we go in demeaning and offending a group of people based on ignorance and misunderstanding."

"It's a free and democratic society and because of that we want fair and accurate reporting."

"People like Alan Jones, it's their bread and butter... that's why monitoring radio as well as TV and press is important."

FAIR buys transcripts from 'Media Monitors' and 'Rehame' and is currently focusing on Alan Jones.

"We are finding that their words are reconditioning people, by using the same words. There is a clear inconsistency around the use of the words 'Muslim man'."

An example was given regarding the reporting a few years ago about Mt Druitt High School which was labelled by media as 'the dumbest school'. The school successfully lobbied for an injunction to stop that. Participants argue the same should apply and injunctions should be available to stop *"consistent messaging using terms such as 'Muslim, or Lebanese Muslim Gang Rapists', and Muslim Terrorists"*.

"FAIR recently made a complaint to the ABC about the use of the term jihad. According to the independent findings, the complaint was not upheld on the basis that the term jihad in the Oxford dictionary does mean 'holy war'. FAIR stridently refuted such a definition to no avail, although there was a strong guarantee that the ABC would use the utmost care and remain vigilantly responsible when the term was included in any report."

FAIR runs a Media Outreach program for journalists which is assisted by the University of Technology Sydney. This is designed to assist journalists to write better and informed articles and to accommodate any queries that they may have about Islam and Muslims in Australia.

Although letter writing to put a view forward or to make a complaint was common, participants believed that this activity in many cases proves futile as they receive no response.

"Stations such as 2UE and 2GB don't bother to write back."

Future objectives

"It's the binding nature of Islam which makes it a clearly identifiable group and we should be dealing with all religions. We need to look at the attacks on all religions, e.g. synagogues, mosques, temples ... our aim is to compile as much statistics as possible."

FAIR currently runs a youth program on radio called 'Fairplay' which tackles media and human rights issues as well as looks at the Islamic community in an introspective way.

FAIR will be participating in the NSW Community Relations Commission (CRC) symposium in October 2003 to discuss where to go from here in regards to future strategies to address the issue of discrimination against the Arabic and Islamic communities. This symposium was a follow up of the Community Harmony Reference Group which was established by the CRC to address this issue on which *"everyone wanted to have some kind of resolution"*.

FAIR aims to develop a media kit and conducts media workshops for various community representatives with the long term objective of establishing a *'think tank of intellectuals together to start talking about issues involving Muslims and setting agendas for future strategies and work'*.

FAIR also deals with interfaith groups in promoting understanding between religions. A highly successful project which was co-founded by FAIR is the Goodness & Kindness Campaign which has received funding through a Living in Harmony grant from DIMIA. The campaigners have spoken to more than 4,000 students in 2003 and aims to visit another 10,000 students in 2004. Broadly speaking it involves a Muslim, Christian and Jew presenting to primary school students their shared values demonstrating that people of different faiths can work together.

FAIR has an official website: see www.fair.org.au