



# Muslim Voices

Hopes & Aspirations of Muslim Australians

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**Centre for Muslim Minorities & Islam Policy Studies**

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### **About the Centre**

The Centre for Muslim Minorities and Islam Policy Studies (CMMIPS) is dedicated to the promotion of civic harmony, social cohesion and enhanced global understanding. The CMMIPS is committed to the study of the Muslim experience in Australia and the contributions that Muslim Australians make to the future prosperity of this multicultural land.

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# ***Executive Summary***

The nature of the settlement and integration of Muslims in Australia has been of interest to government, media and the general population for a number of years, and yet comparatively little evidence-based research has been conducted on the hopes, aspirations, concerns and worries of Muslim Australians themselves. This report is a first step in addressing this gap, with a nuanced account of the thoughts and opinions of Muslims living in the nation's largest city. It is the result of a qualitative research project based on analysis of data arising from three focus groups and two hundred and ninety questionnaires covering a variety of questions in the following areas: wellbeing and happiness; living in Australia; relationship with country of origin for immigrants; values and characteristics; relationships and leisure; religion and spirituality; work and employment; education; and economics.

The research found that religiously observant Muslims see themselves as good Muslims and good Australians and believe their religious practice positively influences their contributions to Australian society. Furthermore, they value their ethnic and Australian identities but their religious identity is most important. Life in Australia is considered better than in Muslim-majority countries, particularly for Muslim women although this was perceived to have degraded over the last five years.

Muslims perceive Australian values positively including notions of freedom, a fair go, doing your best and compassion—attributes they hold in high esteem. However there is a strong sense that Australian society is influenced by a trend towards Americanisation, and where experiences of racism and discrimination occur, these are seen as a failure by some to live up to the high ideals Australia promotes.

There was repeated mention of frustration with the negative stereotypes and rhetoric about Muslims coming from some sections of the government and media, particularly given overseas crisis events such as terrorist bombings involving Muslims, and Muslim Australians feel themselves to be under enormous scrutiny. Extremism, whether real or imagined, is rejected as un-

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Islamic and religious Muslims feel a burden to emphasise their understanding of Islam as a religion of peace and kindness to others.

Socialising and interacting with the wider society is not impeded by religious adherence. The perception that Islamic religiosity isolates Muslims was not supported by data arising in the present study.

Muslim Australians tend to maintain strong and cohesive family relationships; renting is the most common form of house-ownership status and unemployment levels are relatively high. Those who are employed are generally happy and feel their jobs are secure. Education is valued and the demand for Muslim schools certainly appears to outstrip supply. Parents are keen for their children to have good future prospects and the majority felt their children would find fulfilling careers with a better standard of living.

Recommendations arising from the current report include addressing prejudice and discrimination that occurs in some sectors of the Australian community and promoting Islam and Muslims as a permanent and indigenous part of the Australian landscape.

# ***Introduction***

Muslim contact with Australia has a history that pre-dates white settlement and colonisation. At the very earliest, parts of the northern coast of Australia can be seen in the maps of ninth and tenth century Muslim cartographers. Definitive contact with Australia and the Indigenous peoples in the north occurred with the annual voyages of Macassan Muslim fisherman to the northern Australian coast from at least the mid-eighteenth century onwards, and possibly earlier.<sup>1</sup> In the convict period, names of Muslim sailors, convicts and settlers can be found listed in various records, however evidence of their continuing settlement in Australia is absent, most likely due to the need to assimilate as a survival tactic, or their leaving the colonies after earning passage home.<sup>2</sup>

The next period of Muslim settlement in Australia was with the arrival of the Afghan cameleers who helped open up Australia's vast interior; Malays who worked in the pearling industry in the west; and small-scale migration of Muslims from other parts of the world. Festival 'id prayers were held in 1885 in Melbourne and mosques were established in Adelaide, Port Augusta and Hergott Springs in South Australia; Perth, Coolgardie, Mount Malcolm, Leonora, Bummers Creek, Mount Sir Samuel and Mount Magnet in Western Australia; Mount Gravatt in Queensland; and Broken Hill in New South Wales, with some of these places of worship still standing.<sup>3</sup> However, racist hostility towards Asian immigrants, economic repression and the introduction of discriminatory acts such as the *Imported Labour Registry Act* of 1897, the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901, the *Roads Act* of 1902 and the

<sup>1</sup> Bilal Cleland, *The Muslims in Australia: A Brief History* (Melbourne: Islamic Council of Victoria, 2002), 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 3–5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 36–38.

*Naturalization Act* of 1903 meant that this early Muslim settlement was severely impeded.<sup>4</sup>

The period after the Second World War saw much debate about Australia's racially exclusive immigration policies. Reforms in the late 1950s and 1960s saw increased immigration from a variety of hitherto excluded nationalities, although notions of the desirability of a 'White Australia' were still strong. Such an approach was doomed to failure, however, with its negative impact on Australian trade and position on the international stage.<sup>5</sup> Expectations of the assimilation of migrants shifted to integration, and then in 1973 an official policy of Australian multiculturalism was introduced by the Whitlam Government, reflecting the increasing cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the population even if its acceptance was not universal.<sup>6</sup>

The third period of Muslim settlement can be said to have occurred with these changes in immigration policies; waves of mainly Lebanese and Turkish immigrants settled in Australia from the late 1960s and early 1970s, as well as smaller numbers of Muslims from Indonesia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iran, Fiji, Albania, Sudan, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Indian subcontinent and more.<sup>7</sup> The most recent Census of Australian Population and Households taken in 2006 puts the national figure of people who voluntarily nominated their religion as Islam, at 340,394 with 47 percent of them living in greater metropolitan Sydney.<sup>8</sup>

### **Some Relevant Literature**

A significant feature of Muslim communities in Australia is their overwhelmingly migrant character. Around two thirds of Muslim Australians were born overseas, with Lebanon and Turkey the two most common birthplaces respectively. Muslim Australians come from a wide variety of national and ethnic backgrounds, and their places of birth are wide and far-flung: from Somalia to Sri Lanka; from Kuwait to Fiji; from Indonesia to Cyprus and many more places besides. As such, the current study is interested in how experiences of migration and transnational ties affect perceptions of belonging for Muslim Australians.

In June 2007, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship released the report *The Social Costs and Benefits of Migration Into Australia*, prepared by a research team from the Centre for Applied Research in Social Sciences, University of New England. In particular, the study was concerned with assessing the costs and benefits on human capital; social capital; productive

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 25–36; Nahid A. Kabir, *Muslims in Australia: Immigration, Race Relations and Cultural History*, Studies in Anthropology, Economy and Society (London: Kegan Paul, 2004), 42–58.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 146–47.

<sup>6</sup> James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 25, 41.

<sup>7</sup> Abdullah Saeed and Shahram Akbarzadeh, "Searching for Identity: Muslims in Australia" in *Muslim Communities in Australia* (see note 13), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Australia (0) Basic Community Profile, 2006," accessed 30 October 2007; available from <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2001.0>; Internet; idem, "Sydney (SD 105) Basic Community Profile, 2006," accessed 30 October 2007; available from <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2001.0>; Internet.

diversity and natural capital—the first three in particular feeding into core principles underlying the policy of Australian multiculturalism.<sup>9</sup> It found that migration to Australia has been very successful, with long-term benefits far outweighing some of the short-term costs associated with initial settlement. Most migrants come to Australia to work, entering on skilled visas and settling in metropolitan areas, some of which then re-settle in rural and regional areas, filling important labour and skills shortages. Migrants are generally healthier, and most embrace Australian political and cultural norms and participate in community life. It might be asked, however, whether there is a disparity between perceptions and experiences of migrants in general, and Muslim migrants in particular.

A small number of texts address the history and presence of Muslims in Australia. Bilal Cleland has written *The Muslims in Australia: A Brief History*.<sup>10</sup> The text covers pre-white settlement contact between Maccassan Muslims from southern Sulawesi and Indigenous communities in the north of Australia; Muslim sailors and convicts who arrived with white settlement; Asian Muslim cameleers who assisted in opening up the interior of the continent; the period of racial exclusion that disrupted the already limited Muslim settlement; the migration of mostly European Muslims after the Second World War during the period of the White Australia policy; the wave of Turkish and Lebanese migrants and the consequent establishment of Muslim representative organisations; the difficulties that Muslims have faced from local governments in building mosques and offering religious services to Muslim communities; and finally concludes with a comment on the effect of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States.

Of pertinence to the current study is Cleland's discussion of the difficulties faced by Muslim migrants in settling and establishing a permanent presence for themselves on the local Australian landscape, and the heightened levels of suspicion of Muslims, particularly in periods where Australia and her allies have been involved in conflict with Muslim-majority countries. Despite such difficulties, Cleland's account can also be read as one of success, where Muslim Australians have used peaceful and legal methods to fight discrimination and prejudice, as part of a general shift towards multiculturalism and acceptance of diversity in official and popular attitudes.

As a focus of concern for the present study is to identify the aspirations of Muslim Australians, Cleland's history is particularly useful in documenting the types of concerns that Muslims have shared over the period of their settlement in Australia, including the need to: establish permanent mosques in which to offer regular prayers; obtain halal food; teach Arabic and religious instruction to the younger generation; have marriage rites recognised; perform funerals and burials; set up representative organisations at the state and

<sup>9</sup> Kerry Carrington and others, eds, *The Social Costs and Benefits of Migration into Australia* [report online], Centre for Applied Research in Social Science, The University of New England (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2007, accessed 30 October 2007); available from <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/research/social-costs-benefits/index.htm>; Internet.

<sup>10</sup> Cleland, *The Muslims in Australia*. A summarised version of this history is also included as a chapter in Saeed, *Muslim Communities in Australia* (see note 13), 12–32.

national level; found primary and secondary schools; share in equal treatment before the law, in both rights and responsibilities; find meaningful and sustained employment; fulfil their prayer and dress obligations during the working day; combat prejudice, racism and discrimination; distance themselves from negative attention surrounding crisis events involving other Muslims overseas; and perhaps most importantly, the need to feel secure in their right to be recognised as fully Australian.

It should be pointed out that given the diversity of Muslim Australian in terms of race, denomination, political outlook, ancestry, place of birth, length of time in Australia, class, age etc. different Muslims will express a different hierarchy of needs depending on their particular circumstances.

Nahid Kabir's work *Muslims in Australia: Immigration, race relations and cultural history*, covers domain similar to Cleland's in recounting a history of Muslim settlement, but through the perspective of how the wider Australian community has coped with receiving settling Muslim migrants.<sup>11</sup> Unlike Cleland's text, Kabir examines the development of public consciousness of Muslims in Australia through the lens of major events such as terrorist bombings overseas, the gang-rapes crisis and the Children Overboard affair.

This relates to the present study in that for contemporary Muslim Australians who are largely migrants and children of migrants, their experience of settlement in Australia is still coloured by the various factors and themes that Kabir examines in her text. These can be understood as four main narratives about Muslims. First, fear of Muslims in the wider Australian consciousness has developed through various themes such as fear of race tied with economic threat, whether by 'taking away' or undercutting jobs for white Australians through cheap labour, or through dominance in a particular market. At the turn of the twentieth century the Afghans, along with the Chinese, were viewed as an economic threat and racist rhetoric found voice in newspapers and political speeches. A second factor impacting attitudes towards Muslims is the involvement of Australia as an ally (British or American) in conflicts with Muslim-majority countries overseas. With this factor, the primary issue is security, and race and religion are secondary identifiers in assessing the potential security risk to Australia and her interests. Aside from racism and internal security fears, a third factor has increased suspicion of Muslims in Australia: acts of violence against Westerners and Western interests overseas committed by a variety of different state and non-state based Muslim actors, including acts of terrorism as played out on the international stage. A fourth factor is the negative depiction of Muslims and the religion of Islam in public discourse. This manifests as a concern with the inability of Muslims to acculturate, and asserts Islam as wholly alien and fundamentally incompatible with an ill-defined, culturally-hegemonic, 'Australian way of life'. It ignores the long history of Islam and Muslims as part of the Australian religious and cultural landscape, and hearkens back to a regressive notion of White Australia.

<sup>11</sup> Kabir, *Muslims in Australia*.

Gary D. Bouma's seminal study, *Mosques and Muslim Settlement in Australia*, looked at the process of settlement and integration of Muslims in Australia, with a particular focus on Muslims who settled in Sydney and Melbourne during the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> This sociological study examined Muslim immigrants' stories of migration to Australia and their efforts to establish mosques, schools and social networks that aided in their largely successful stories of making Australia their home. Bouma found that religious practice aided, rather than hindered, the settlement process and helped Muslims develop coping skills for dealing with the inevitable stresses of the new migrant experience. He described "religious settlement" as the negotiation of a new religious identity based on the introduction and interpretation of the immigrant religion into the new context of the receiving society.

Nevertheless, experiences of prejudice and discrimination were reported by interviewees particularly stories of resistance to the building of mosques, seen by some in the wider community as foreign and alien to the Australian landscape. The experience of Muslims adopting Australia as their home, has aided in the development of the nation as a multicultural and religiously plural society.

Bouma's study was undertaken in the early 1990s and since that time there has been even more immigration and settlement of Muslims to Australia, from more diverse backgrounds and to rural and regional Australia as well as the capital cities. Furthermore, there is a growing percentage of Muslims who are Australian-born, whether children of migrants or converts. Another difference is the heightening of political and media attention on Muslim Australians as a consequence of global crisis events. Consequently, the current research builds on themes examined by Bouma in his original study.

*Muslim Communities in Australia*, edited by Abdullah Saeed and Shahram Akbarzadeh, contains a number of chapters relevant to the present research, including the elaboration of various issues faced by Muslims as members of a minority religion and who are mostly migrants.<sup>13</sup> Of particular relevance is Michael Humphrey's point that Islam is a "public" religion in Australia by virtue of the need for Muslims to constantly interpret and negotiate their religious practice in an environment largely unused and even at times hostile to the patterns of Muslim life, and that despite an official policy of multiculturalism promoted by governments, there is still a widespread expectation that Muslims should assimilate into the majority Anglo-centric culture.<sup>14</sup>

Also in *Muslim Communities*, Bouma, Daw and Munawar explored how Muslims in Melbourne manage living as a minority in a predominantly Christian society, with a focus on their concerns such as culture shock; the need to find homes and jobs; learning to adjust religious performances;

<sup>12</sup> Gary D. Bouma, *Mosques and Muslim Settlement in Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994).

<sup>13</sup> Abdullah Saeed and Shahram Akbarzadeh (eds.), *Muslim Communities in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> Michael Humphrey, "An Australian Islam? Religion in the Multicultural City," in Saeed, *Muslim Communities in Australia* (see note 13), 33–52.

managing internal diversity; and dealing with the lack of extensive and integrated support networks.<sup>15</sup> This chapter describes different coping strategies such as avoidance; engagement; negotiation and raising awareness of wants and needs.

Another pertinent chapter is HV Brasted's "Contested Representations in Historical Perspective: Images of Islam and the Australian Press 1950-2000."<sup>16</sup> In a similar vein to Kabir's look at how the Australian community has received Muslims, Brasted points out that most of what the wider community knows about Muslims is gleaned from media sources, much of which is biased and provides caricature stereotypes of Muslims as bearded and veiled fanatics. Brasted's chapter surveyed media coverage before the 11 September terrorist attacks and a comparative survey would illuminate whether the problem has worsened.

In 2004, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission released the report *Isma'—Listen: National Consultations on Eliminating Prejudice against Arab and Muslim Australians*.<sup>17</sup> The report looks at the rise in racial and religious vilification of Arabs and Muslims in Australia, particularly in light of global and local crisis events involving Muslims. Data were gathered from national consultations, self-completing questionnaires and in-depth interviews. A summary of federal, state and territory legislation regarding racial and religious discrimination is provided, along with rich accounts of experiences of prejudice and racism suffered by Muslim and Arab Australians. The impact of, and responses to, such experiences are discussed, along with recommendations for addressing prejudice, particularly strategies for improving legal protection for victims; enhancing anti-racism education in schools; tackling prejudicial media coverage; promoting good relations with police; and using community leaders and organisations to build social cohesion.

Of particular interest in light of the current study, is the link between public visibility and experiences of prejudice and discrimination. The *Isma'* report describes the increased vulnerability of those who are visibly identifiable as Arab or Muslim, for example women who wear religious head covers, or men who wear Arabic dress.<sup>18</sup> This raises the question that if common markers of Muslim religiosity can increase the likelihood of experiences of prejudice and discrimination, particularly after global and local crisis events involving Muslims, how are observant Muslim Australians 'travelling' in their sense of wellbeing and security in Australia in the twenty-first century?

Certainly one of the concerns highlighted in the *Isma'* report, is the cumulative effect that experiences of prejudice can have particularly on migrants, which

<sup>15</sup> Gary D. Bouma, Joan Daw and Riffat Munawar, "Muslims Managing Religious Diversity," in Saeed, *Muslim Communities in Australia* (see note 13), 53–72.

<sup>16</sup> HV Brasted, "Contested Representations in Historical Perspective: Images of Islam and the Australian Press 1950-2000," in Saeed, *Muslim Communities in Australia* (see note 13), 206–227.

<sup>17</sup> *Isma' - Listen: National Consultations on Eliminating Prejudice Against Arab and Muslim Australians* [report], (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2004).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

leads them to question their 'Australianness'.<sup>19</sup> Coupled with a distrust for authority institutions (such as the police) due in part to lack of knowledge and possibly bad experiences with similar institutions in their countries of origin, it may be asked whether generation has an effect in knitting a stronger bond of belonging in the face of exclusionary and prejudicial attitudes towards Muslim Australians?

Despite the negative coping strategies undertaken by some victims of discrimination and even violence, the *Isma'* report also describes areas where Muslims, government and community organisations have been proactive in tackling prejudice and racism.<sup>20</sup> Opening up mosques to the wider public for tours; participating in interfaith events; working with journalists and forms of media to present positive images of Muslims and Arabs; responding to global and local crisis events with press-releases; participating in Harmony Day and running projects under Living in Harmony grants; as well as working with government and non-Muslim community organisations, demonstrate the willingness and ability for many Muslims and Muslim organisations to move beyond passive reception of aid and assistance, to be active participants in building social cohesion and promoting acceptance of multiculturalism in Australian society.

### **Research Questions**

Many Australians assume that Muslim Australians are different from other religious and ethnic groups who have migrated to and settled in Australia. This assumption, coupled with a knee-jerk reaction to the tense security environment of post-September 11, has led to an upsurge of intolerance and prejudice. On the other hand, it is often argued by community representatives that the hopes and aspirations of Muslim Australians lie in tangible issues of social and moral welfare—not in heinous acts of destruction; there is an obvious gap in our knowledge of the hopes and aspirations of Muslim Australians. This research is an evidence-based description of the nature of the Muslim experience in Australia. It asks the following questions: What are the everyday hopes and aspirations, concerns and worries of Muslim Australians? What is the extent of transnational communication linking Muslim Australians to their homelands? How does generation in Australia shape the hopes and aspirations of Muslim Australians?

As such, the purpose of this report is to provide a nuanced account of Muslim Australian life and attitudes.

### **Explanation of Terms**

A number of the words and phrases used in this report are controversial or can be understood in different ways. This section will describe how certain terms are used in this report.

In this report the term 'Muslim Australian' refers to Australians by birth or citizenship who practice the religion of Islam. Although there are many people who describe themselves as Muslim but who do not observe the ritual

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 110–14.

precepts of the religion such as praying, fasting, or attending the mosque for prayer, these are not the focus of the current study. Instead, the views of participants who self-identify as religious have been sought, although there is variation in the degree to which individual respondents practice their faith. It should also be noted that the study includes a number of participants who are Muslims living in Australia as residents.

Unless noted otherwise, this paper will use the definition of Australian multiculturalism provided in *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity*.<sup>21</sup> The federal government's official policy describes four principles of Australian multiculturalism: first, the civic duty of all to respect the basic structures and principles ensuring and enabling freedom, equality and diversity in Australian society; second, reciprocal cultural respect for all Australians to express their varying cultures and beliefs, subject to the law; third, social equity, which entitles all to equality of treatment and opportunity including freedom from discrimination against race, culture, religion, language, location, gender or birthplace; and fourth, the notion that productive diversity in the population benefits Australia and her people.<sup>22</sup>

Assimilation as a term carries multiple meanings and emotive shades. According to the Oxford *Dictionary of Sociology*, assimilation refers to the expectation that a minority or subordinate group becomes indistinguishable from the dominant host or majority group, particularly in terms of values and culture.<sup>23</sup> Jupp notes:

To many [assimilation] meant the disappearance of any characteristics which marked off individuals from each other. On this definition colour or facial features, which were inherited, made non-Europeans and their children unassimilable. This view was officially maintained well into the late 1960s as the basis for admission to Australia. The term also implied the adoption of majority culture, which was assumed to be uniform and self-evident.<sup>24</sup>

Although use of the word assimilation fell out of favour with the introduction of Australian multiculturalism, the expectation that new migrants should quickly learn to think, speak and even look like those who already possess a uniformly self-evident Australian-ness can still be found in political and media rhetoric. White immigrants from English-speaking nations can easily assimilate, whereas others *should* assimilate but are hampered by difference in language, culture and even physical appearance. Despite official acknowledgement of the reality that Australians manifest many different cultural patterns, with many different ancestries, in the minds of many (both

<sup>21</sup> *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity, Updating the 1999 New Agenda for Multicultural Australia: Strategic Directions for 2003-2006* [report online], Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 2003, accessed 30 October 2007; available from [http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/settle/\\_pdf/united\\_diversity.pdf](http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/settle/_pdf/united_diversity.pdf); Internet.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, 3rd ed., eds. John Scott and Gordon Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), s.v. "Assimilation".

<sup>24</sup> Jupp, *From White Australia*, 22.

Australian-born and migrant) there exists an Australian identity that is inaccessible to the vast majority of those who do not possess North-West European ancestry. We might describe footballer Hazem El-Masri as Lebanese-Australian, or the late John Ilhan as Turkish-Australian, but we would never bother describing singer John Farnham as English-Australian even though the latter migrated to Australia at the age of ten.

Transnational communication refers to the connections that migrants and their children keep with their original countries of origin. It includes visits back home, and for those with friends and relatives who did not similarly migrate, this may include communication through traditional methods (letters and phone-calls) as well as newer technologies (email and video-conferencing).

Generation refers to the link in the family chain at which an individual stands in relation to a migrating ancestor: a first-generation Australian is an immigrant who has taken up citizenship; a second-generation Australian, the Australian-born child of immigrants and so on. This is complicated by the fact that the average Australian might easily possess ancestors who migrated to Australia at different generations. This report is interested in transnational connections among immigrants and second-generation Australians with at least one parent who migrated.

### **Research Methodology**

A questionnaire (see *Appendix A*) was developed that sought to cover the following areas: wellbeing and happiness; living in Australia; relationship with country of origin for immigrants; values and characteristics; relationships and leisure; religion and spirituality; work and employment; education; economics; and background demographic information. Some questions were taken from other studies of Australian populations, in order to compare and contrast the responses of Muslim Australian participants, whilst other questions were developed for this particular study.

Data collection took place during the period of March to August 2007. The questionnaire was tested on a sample of twenty-one participants and then refined. A number of meetings were held with community representatives including three focus groups. The focus groups allowed for presentation of the questionnaire to small groups of Muslim Australians to stimulate discussion of thoughts arising from the types of questions that were being asked of participants. This in turn further guided development of the questionnaire as well as assisted in developing a sense of the territory of Muslim Australians in greater metropolitan Sydney and helped in the recruiting of further participants.

The project was advertised on a number of online forums. As well, letters and emails were sent and phone-calls made, introducing the research project to Muslim organisations and key community representatives, and inviting their participation. Some organisations responded promptly to the various invitations to participate, some ignored requests, one declined to participate without payment to members, whilst a few organisations were unable to participate during the time-frame allotted for data collection.

Data collection centred around three methods. The first method involved asking a host organisation to hold a meeting at their premises (or an agreed

alternative location) in order to administer the questionnaire, with the host organisation responsible for advertising the meeting among their membership. The second way of obtaining data was to distribute the questionnaire among organisations that were unwilling or unable to host a meeting but that would agree to distribute and later collect questionnaires. The third way was to put the questionnaire online and advertise the survey URL among groups who were unwilling or unable to participate in the first or second methods of data collection. As well, a small number of questionnaires were given to various individuals at their request. The first and third methods proved successful, and a total of 290 questionnaires were gathered during the allotted time frame, just 10 shy of the proposal target of 300. The second method yielded no results, and is not recommended for future research projects.

The questionnaires were entered into database software by two research assistants and then double-checked by a third to enhance reliability. The database was queried for the return of basic frequencies that covered the quantitative aspects of the research. Longer blocks of text were mind-mapped and coded to allow for qualitative analysis. More complex queries were then developed to cross-tabulate the data to expand on themes that appeared upon analysis of the sets and the textual data. These themes were then developed and written up. From this, a report was drafted.

Where textual responses from participants are included in the report they are coded in the following manner: gender/age they turned in 2007/place of birth/year of migration to Australia (if applicable). So, a twenty-three year old male born in the United Kingdom who migrated to Australia in 2001 would be coded as: M/23y/UK/2001. Some individuals chose not to give demographic information, so sometimes the coding is incomplete and the letters n.s. (not stated) are substituted.

### **Delimitations**

The present study is concerned with the experiences of Muslim Australians over the age of sixteen, living in greater metropolitan Sydney. In particular, it is interested in Muslims who self-identify as religious (practising the religion of Islam) and excludes those people who may have a connection to a Muslim culture through ancestry, but who do not consider themselves as following the religion of Islam in any meaningful sense.

A broad demographic spread was sought, in terms of migrant status; ancestry; socio-economic status; employment status; housing-ownership status; level of education; age; and gender. This was achieved; however being qualitative research the study is not statistically representative neither by design nor result.

The questionnaire was written in English, although respondents were given the choice of using a language other than English for their replies. Although one session of administering the questionnaire did use the services of a qualified translator to explain the questions in Arabic to approximately thirty Arabic speakers with low-level English skills, few questionnaires were returned with detailed Arabic responses. Consequently, the present study does have a bias towards participants willing and able to write in English in the questions requiring longer textual answers.

Participants were informed that their responses would be anonymous, and that they could decline to answer any particular question if they wished. Consequently, whilst the population sample is static at 290, response rates to each question vary and this is reflected in how the results have been interpreted and written up.

### **Remainder of the Report**

The remainder of this report will present a demographic picture of Muslims living in greater metropolitan Sydney, and move on to provide a nuanced account of the life for Muslim Australians, with an emphasis on their hopes, aspirations, concerns and worries, as well as the extent of transnational communication linking Muslim immigrants to their countries of origins, as well as how generation is shaping the attitudes of Muslim Australians, particularly in regard to their views on life in Australia.

## Demographic Picture

In this section, a demographic picture of the Muslim Australian participants is painted to illustrate the spread of views and opinions that were gathered. As the report is largely based on qualitative research methods, statistical representation was not sought. That is, the participant cohort for the current study does not statistically represent the wider Muslim population in greater metropolitan Sydney. Instead, a broad spread of opinions and views were sought including those of Australian-born Muslims, migrants, those in their late teens, young adults, mature adults, Sunnis, Shi'is, Sufis, converts, as well as those with traditionalist and conservative approaches to Islam and progressive or liberal Muslims.

### Participating Organisations

As mentioned previously, 340,394 people voluntarily nominated Islam as their religion on the most recent national census. Of these, 168,785 live in New South Wales with the vast majority living in greater metropolitan Sydney.<sup>25</sup> There are many mosques, schools and organisations for Muslims living in and around Sydney, however there is no authoritative list that can be consulted. A variety of different Muslim organisations and individuals were invited to participate in the current study. Table 1 shows the types of organisations that were invited to participated through letters, emails and phone-calls, and the number of groups that participated either through hosting a meeting at which

Table 1. Types of organisations invited to participate in survey.

Organisation	Invited	Participated
Convert	1	1
Councils	2	1
Ethnic	3	0
Mosques	5	0
Shi'i	2	2
Student	6	0
Sufi	2	1
Sunni	11	6
Women's	3	1

<sup>25</sup> ABS, Australia (0); idem, Sydney (SD 105); idem, "New South Wales (STE 1), Basic Community Profile, 2006," accessed 30 October 2007; available from <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2001.0>; Internet.

questionnaires were administered or distributing the URL amongst their networks.

### **Gender**

In all, 290 people participated by answering the questionnaire. Of these, 180 were female, 100 were male and 10 declined to answer. Thus, the survey is weighted more heavily towards female responses compared to the general Muslim population living in greater metropolitan Sydney, which is currently 47.9 percent.<sup>26</sup>

*Table 2. Age range of participants.*

Age ranges	Survey population	
	Number	%
15-24	120	41.4
25-34	66	22.8
35-44	45	15.5
45-54	26	9.0
55+	11	3.8
Not entered / meaningful	22	7.6
Total	n=290	100

### **Age**

Participants were asked to nominate their year of birth, with 268 people giving meaningful results. Years were grouped into age ranges and counted (see Table 2).

The population sample trended towards the younger age ranges, which may be a reflection of the types of people more likely to respond to online recruitment.

The largest number of people fell into the category of fifteen to twenty-four years of age, with 120 participants or 41.4 percent of those who answered the question on age. The next largest group fell into the age range of twenty-five to thirty-four years of age, at 22.8 percent.

### **Birthplace and Ancestry**

The percentage of Muslim Australians who were born in Australia is increasing at each census count and is around 38 percent.<sup>27</sup> In the current study, 49 percent of participants who answered the question on birthplace (208 participants) were born in Australia. This was followed by 11.1 percent born in Lebanon, and 9.6 percent born in Bangladesh. Other countries represented by more than one participant were Pakistan at 3.8 percent, Turkey at 2.9 percent, India and Singapore at 2.4 percent, Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq and Saudi Arabia at 1.4 percent and Canada, England and Malaysia at 1 percent. Furthermore, Algeria, Bosnia, Burma, Croatia, Fiji, France, Germany, Ghana, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Liberia, New Zealand, Oman, the Palestinian Territories, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, the United States and Venezuela were all represented by one participant each.

Consequently, the survey sampling achieved a broad geographic demographic in terms of birthplace of participants, which is reflective of the broad diversity of Muslim Australians in general, although those from

<sup>26</sup> ABS, Sydney (SD 105).

<sup>27</sup> Dennis Trewin, 2007 Year Book Australia (Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007), 387.

Bangladesh were overrepresented as an anomaly in the method of data collection.

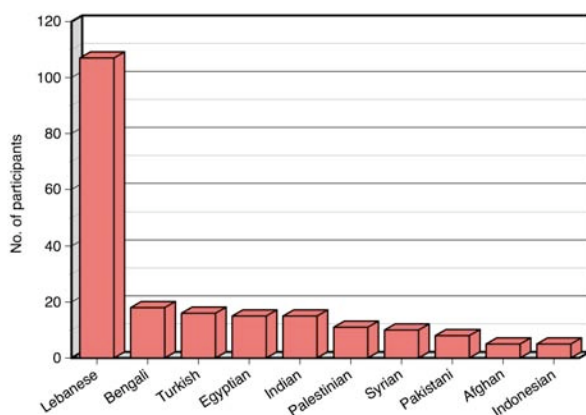
Even though, the number of Muslims born in Australia is large, when looking at the birthplace of parents, we find that the vast majority of Australian-born Muslims are second-generation Australian: children of migrants. This is for both the Muslim Australian population generally, and for the current survey (see Table 3). This indicates a community that is in transition from being largely migrant in character, shifting over generation to becoming indigenised.

Looking at the number of participants where one or both parents were born in Australia, along with self-reporting of ancestry indicates that whilst historical Muslim contact with Australia predates European settlement of the continent, widespread sustained Muslim settlement did not occur until comparatively recently. Very few of the participants reported that one or both of their parents were born in Australia. Furthermore, those that did, reported a variety of ancestries not just Australian, however this could reflect the complexity and even some

*Table 3. Top ten birthplaces of participants' parents.*

Maternal birthplace		Paternal birthplace	
Country	%	Country	%
Lebanon	47.8	Lebanon	46.6
Bangladesh	6.7	Bangladesh	7.1
Australia	6.3	Turkey	5.3
Egypt	4.9	India	4.5
Pakistan	4.5	Egypt	4.1
Turkey	4.1	Australia	3.8
India	3.7	Pakistan	3.8
Afghanistan	2.2	Afghanistan	2.3
Syria	2.2	Palestine	2.3
Indonesia	1.9	Syria	2.3
Responses	n=268	Responses	n=266

confusion over the definition of ancestry, and most non-Australian ancestries listed by this group were European. In all, nine participants (themselves all converts to Islam) reported their mothers and fathers both were born in Australia, whilst a further nine participants (of which five were converts, four raised Muslim) reported one Australian-born parent.



*Figure 1. Top ten responses to the question of ancestry.*

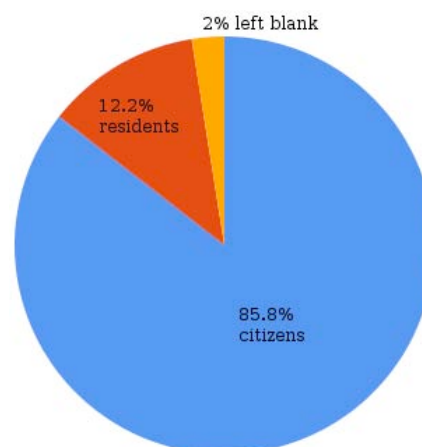
possible for people to nominate more than one ancestry, the number of ancestries listed is greater than the number of individuals who responded to the question. The biggest ancestry group was Lebanese with 41.6 percent of responses. Next was Bengali at 7 percent, then Turkish at 6.2 percent (see Figure 1).

On the question of ancestry, respondents gave a variety of answers. Because it was

### **Citizenship Status**

The *2007 Year Book Australia* notes that almost three-quarters of people born overseas take up citizenship. Length of time spent living in Australia

influences citizenship rates. Rates may also be influenced by unstable socio-economic and political conditions in the countries of origin.<sup>28</sup> Muslim immigrants to Australia are keen to take up citizenship, although it is possible that the effect of recent changes to the citizenship laws may impact on future citizenship application rates among Muslim immigrants. There were 148 participants who indicated their migrant status in the current survey. Of these 127 (85.8 percent) had become Australian citizens, 18 were not citizens and 3 left the question of citizenship blank.



*Figure 2. Citizenship status of migrants.*

### **Geographic Distribution**

The biggest groups of participants currently reside in Bankstown (12.1 percent) and Auburn (6.6 percent), which is reflective of the large concentrations of Muslims living in those suburbs. Nevertheless, there were 75 NSW postcodes represented among 265 participants (see *Appendix B*).

The next section of the paper will discuss themes arising from answers given to questions on the hopes and aspirations of Muslim Australians living in greater metropolitan Sydney in 2007.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 389.

# Muslim Australian Voices

Participants were asked to rank the strength of their agreement or disagreement with the statement: “I can be a good Muslim and a good Australian.” Overwhelmingly, the majority of Muslim Australian participants who answered the question strongly agreed (see Table 4 and Figure 3).

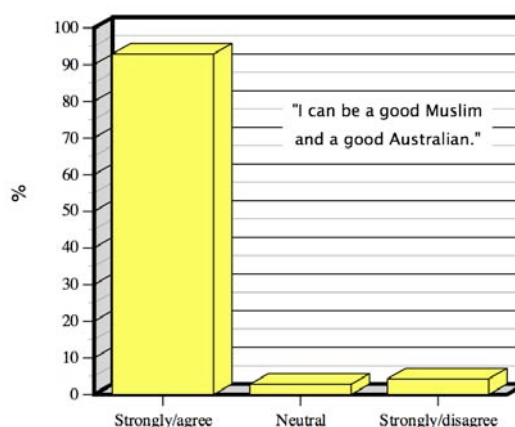
*Table 4. Being a good Muslim and a good Australian.*

Strength	%
Strongly agree	84.0
Agree	8.9
Neutral	2.8
Disagree	0.0
Strongly disagree	4.3
Responses	n=282

Of the very small number of participants who strongly disagreed, there appeared to be some ambiguity or confusion as to how they understood being “Australian”. For them, there was a conflict between Australianness and their ethnicity or their religious practice that was unresolvable. For example, a very small number of participants understood being Australian as necessarily being white and of Anglo-Saxon or Celtic ancestry (something impossible for them to change if they

did not already possess it) or engaging in activities in direct conflict with Muslim religious requirements, such as drinking beer and eating pork. On the other hand, the vast majority of participants had a much wider understanding of what being Australian means, and which includes ethnic and religious diversity.

A follow-up question asked respondents to reflect on being Muslim and Australian. The theme of harmony between being Muslim and Australian was one of the strongest to emerge from the data. The overwhelming majority of participants simply saw no conflict between nationality and faith.



*Figure 3. Being Muslim Australian.*

“I think being an Australian Muslim is great! I love living in Australia. There are times I feel discriminated against but overall I live happily and experience positive relationships with the people around me who come from all different religions and backgrounds.” (F/20y/Australia)

“I see no opposition between being a good loyal Australian citizen and a Muslim, since Islamic values teach me to love and work diligently towards the betterment of any community I live in.” (M/21y/Syria/1990)

“To me nationalism only exists on the sporting field and when one’s country is under direct attack. Being a Muslim in any part of the world means belief, good deeds, education and help thy neighbour.” (M/28y/Croatia/1993)

“‘Muslim’ and ‘Australian’ are not mutually exclusive. I can be and have happily been both since coming to Australia at the age of 9. I respect everyone, regardless of whether they’re Muslim or not, because we are human first, and Muslim, Christian, Jew etc. second. I believe the core fundamental values should focus on the commonality between people, rather than highlighting our differences. I feel blessed to be Muslim and I feel blessed to be Australian. Coming to Australia has given me so much and I will always be mindful of this.” (F/25y/Afghanistan/1992)

Yet, participants also chose to elaborate on themes of frustration with being depicted unfairly by the former Howard Government and media representatives; on experiencing discrimination and racism as well as at times being inhibited from practising their religion as much as they would like. These themes are developed further in the report.

*Table 5. Importance of maintaining Australian, ethnic and Muslim identities.*

Strength	Maintaining Australian identity (%)	Maintaining ethnic identity (%)	Maintaining Muslim identity (%)
Not at all important	4.6	5.7	0.0
Somewhat important	12.1	10.8	0.4
Important	20.4	21.1	3.9
Very important	31.4	22.2	9.5
Extremely important	31.4	40.1	86.2
Responses	n=280	n=279	n=283

Participants were asked to indicate their preference on the level of importance of maintaining variously their Australian, ethnic and Muslim identities. Of the three, that it was extremely important to maintain a Muslim identity received the strongest response (see Table 5). This is unsurprising, as the current research concentrated on recruiting participants who identified as religious and who can be expected to want to maintain a religious identity. Only 4.6 percent (just thirteen participants) felt it was not important to them to maintain an Australian identity, and a slightly higher 5.7 (sixteen participants) percent

felt it was not important to maintain an ethnic identity.<sup>29</sup> There was no one who was not interested in maintaining a Muslim identity.

When comparing responses from Australian-born Muslims as opposed to migrants (generation), there are some differences, but the overall trend is the same with heavy emphasis on the importance of Muslim identity and participants giving preferences of importance to the other two categories (see Table 6).

*Table 6. Maintaining Australian, ethnic and Muslim identities, by generation.*

		Not at all important (%)	Somewhat important (%)	Important (%)	Very important (%)	Extremely important (%)
Australian identity	Australian-born	7.8	12.7	15.7	27.5	36.3
	Migrants	1.6	13.1	20.5	36.9	27.9
Ethnic identity	Australian-born	8.9	8.9	21.8	14.9	45.5
	Migrants	1.6	10.6	22.8	29.3	35.8
Muslim identity	Australian-born	0	0	3.9	7.8	88.2
	Migrants	0	0.8	2.4	11.4	85.4

### **Australian and un-Australian values**

The debate over what constitutes Australian values has received some airplay over the last few years, particularly in the context of Muslim migration and settlement. In 2005, the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools was distributed. It identified nine core values: care and compassion; doing your best; a fair go; freedom; honesty and trustworthiness; integrity; respect; responsibility and understanding; tolerance and inclusion.<sup>30</sup> The values themselves, it should be noted, are universal in character and there is nothing uniquely Australian about them—they are shared by many different cultures and nations.

In October 2007, the former Howard Government introduced a citizenship test for immigrants applying to become Australians. The official preparatory material *Becoming an Australian Citizen* identified ten Australian values in a different list to the core values distributed to schools. This list of ten values is: respect for the equal worth, dignity and freedom of the individual; freedom of speech; freedom of religion and secular government; freedom of association; support for parliamentary democracy and the rule of law; equality under the law; equality of men and women; equality of opportunity; peacefulness; and tolerance, mutual respect and compassion for those in need.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Although it might be expected the 4.6 percent of participants who answered it was not important for them to maintain an Australian identity were the same participants who felt they could not be a good Muslim and a good Australian, however this was not the case when the individual responses were compared. Instead, the overlap was small, just two participants.

<sup>30</sup> Department of Education, Training and Science. National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools [online] (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2005, accessed 30 October 2007); available from <http://www.valueseducation.edu.au/values/default.asp?id=8757>; Internet.

<sup>31</sup> Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *Becoming an Australian Citizen* [online] (Barton, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia, 2007, accessed 30 October 2007), 5; available from <http://www.citizenship.gov.au/test/resource-booklet/citz-booklet-full-ver.pdf>; Internet.

Philip Smith and Tim Phillips researched what it means to be un-Australian in "Popular Understandings of 'UnAustralian': An Investigation of the Un-National."<sup>32</sup> Through analysis of data derived from focus groups, they developed a list of un-Australian characteristics that were either violations of standards of civility and natural justice or perceived to be a foreign influence on Australian culture.<sup>33</sup> It is un-Australian, according to this study, to display the following attributes: violence, intolerance, selfishness, waste, racism, divisiveness, separatism, immodesty, a trend towards Americanisation and assertion of ethnicity. The result of the Smith and Phillips research was to find that despite their choice of language appearing otherwise, the participants in their study still favour assimilation of migrants over multiculturalism, in the context of reflecting fears about the rapid pace of globalisation.<sup>34</sup>

Participants in the current study were given a list of attributes in alphabetical order composed of the nine values promoted in the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools (the former Howard Government's alternative list of ten core Australian values had not been published when the questionnaire for the current study was developed) and the ten un-Australian attributes from the Smith and Phillips research. The first testing cohort was asked to choose how often they experienced the various attributes living in Australia. As this proved unwieldy for participants, the question was rephrased to ask participants to rank the top five values and attributes they experienced in every-day life in Australia. The aim was to ascertain how Muslim Australians experience Australian values, rather than to label whether a particular attribute was Australian or un-Australian. This is because an idealised list of Australian values does not always reflect the reality of lived experiences. Racism may be un-Australian in popular perception, but experiences of racism still occur in Australia.

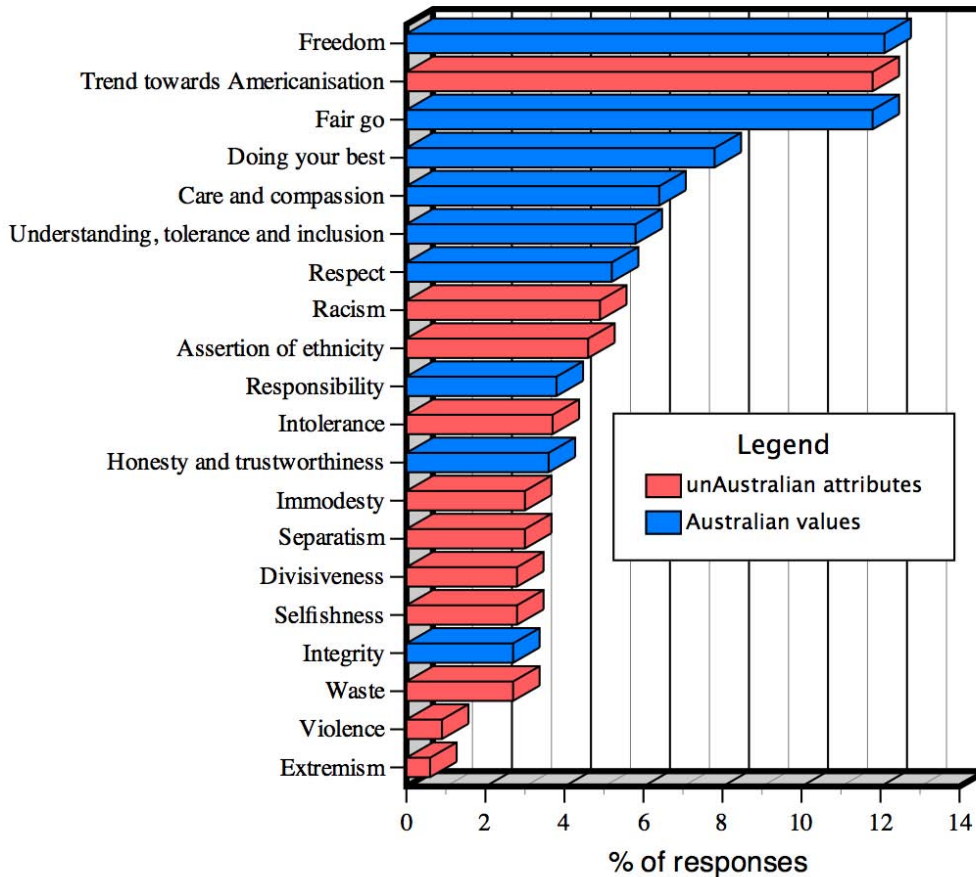
In analysing the data, it became clear that one group of non-English speaking participants did not appear to understand this particular question as it was translated for them, as they gave identical responses. This group of twenty-nine responses was removed before the data was analysed, to prevent skewing of the results. The most commonly selected five values and attributes chosen by Muslim Australian participants in the current survey were: freedom; trend towards Americanisation; fair go; doing your best; and care and compassion (see Figure 4 and *Appendix C*).

When looking at which five attributes received the most 'firsts', the list is the same but in a slightly different order: trend towards Americanisation came out on top followed by fair go; freedom; doing your best and then care and compassion. When looking at the entire list, participants mostly chose positive values over un-Australian attributes.

<sup>32</sup> Philip Smith and Tim Phillips, "Popular Understandings of 'UnAustralian': An Investigation of the Un-National," *Journal of Sociology* 37, (December 2001): 323-339.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.



*Figure 4. Ranking of values perceived by Muslims to exist in Australian society.*

This was confirmed in textual responses to various questions about life in Australia. Positive Australian characteristics were spoken about by participants as highly valued, but there also exists among some participants a sense of frustration with the disparity between the idealised Australian identity promoted as being tolerant, caring, giving everyone ‘a fair go’ etc. and the realities of individual Muslims’ experiences with racism, discrimination and marginalisation.

“In Australia, we are very fortunate in that we are able to practice our religion with greater freedom and access than in many other Muslim countries.” (M/19y/Bangladesh/1994)

“I constantly find myself having to justify both [being a good Muslim and a good Australian]. It shouldn’t be like that. All the Australian values of giving a fair go and all that don’t seem to be applied fully to the Muslim community in Australia.” (M/24y/Australia)

There exists a perception, expressed by some quarters of Australian society that Australian values are somehow different to Islamic values, and the former somehow need to be inculcated in Muslim immigrants and their children. A strong theme that arose among responses was the consonance between Australian and Islamic values.

“I believe that most Australian values and cultural characteristics such as showing care for all, hard work and love of sport and nature are also prescribed upon all Muslims and encouraged in Islam, so I personally do not have to compromise my Muslim values to become a good Australian.” (M/18y/Pakistan/2005)

“I do not feel that being Muslim conflicts with my being Australian. I was not raised as a Muslim, so I am first and foremost ‘Australian’. However, coming into Islam as an adult, I was surprised to discover how much of my upbringing and the morality that my parents instilled within me—typically ‘Aussie’ values—were actually universal and therefore Islamic also.” (F/25y/Australia)

“Australia is one of the greatest places to live in the world. By being Muslim, we are able to practice what we believe in. From this point of view we, in fact, are prescribing to two mutually inclusive sets of values—Muslim and Australian values. Given that the rules of religion and state are abided by and either party does not impose itself on another then it’s all good!” (M/22y/Singapore/1996)

The disparity between the perception of some in the wider community and Muslim participants in the current survey is the result of several factors. Although the federal government began promoting a list of nine values in schools, and ten values in citizenship literature, all of which might generally describe stable and democratic societies the world over, there is still no widespread agreement on what values and attributes are *uniquely* Australian. As well, it is quite possible that a great deal of ignorance exists amongst non-Muslim public commentators about what constitutes Islamic values. It is problematic to assume there is a list of values that characterise Australians but not migrant Muslims, a fallacy likely to be the result of the conflation of notions of culture, ethnicity, history and identity than actual ethics.

Another point to consider is that the current survey sought the views of observant, practising Muslims who (it is expected) would generally have a more comprehensive understanding of Islamic values than individuals whose Muslim identity is via cultural heritage alone. The idea that being a Muslim, following the religion of Islam, would make someone a *better* Australian was expressed through some of the comments on harmony between being Australian and being Muslim.

“I am so happy to be a Muslim and receive greater motivation to be a better person, a more productive and beneficial member of the Australian society.” (F/21y/Australia)

“As a practising Muslim I consciously become a better Australian. As an Australian I can contribute towards helping humanity.” (M/40/Egypt/1980)

“There is no contradiction [between being a good Muslim and a good Australian]. If anything, the values of Islam makes me a better Australian (neighbour, citizen, employee etc).” (F/21y/Bangladesh/1989)

### Transnational Ties

Another question that concerns the current study is: what is the extent of transnational communication linking Muslim Australians to their homelands? In all, there were 123 participants who indicated a country of origin other than Australia. Just on forty percent indicated their country of origin as Lebanon, whilst eighteen percent came from Bangladesh and eight percent from Pakistan. Other countries represented by more than one participant included Turkey, Singapore, Afghanistan, India, Iraq, Egypt, Fiji, Indonesia, Jordan, the Palestinian Territories and Syria.

*Table 7. Strength of relationship to country of origin.*

Strength	%
Very strong	13.1
Strong	34.4
Average	43.4
Weak	5.7
Very weak	3.3
Responses	n=122

Participants were asked to reflect on the strength of their relationship to their particular country of origin (see Table 7). By far, most migrant Muslims maintain an average or strong relationship to their countries of origin with under ten percent considering their relationship weak or very weak.

*Table 8. Communicating with family and friends in country of origin.*

Intervals of communication	%
Daily	4.9
Weekly	32.8
Monthly	45.1
Yearly	12.3
Never	1.6
No family or friends in country of origin	3.3
Responses	n=122

When asked how often they communicated with friends and family overseas in their countries of origin, 82.8 percent had at least monthly contact if not more often (see Table 8).

Overwhelmingly, the most common method of communication was phone and/or email for 92.3 percent of migrants who answered the question of how they mostly communicated with their friends and family overseas. Physically visiting them, flying back to their

countries of origin, understandably occurred at a much lower rate. Participants were asked to indicate whether they had travelled back in the last five years, and if so how often, and for how long. Of the 118 participants who answered, 33.1 percent visiting once and 29.7 percent not having visited in the past five years. When asked about their length of stay, over half (58.3 percent) stayed from one to three months, while 28.6 percent stayed between one week to one month.

### Households and Families

The family is an important institution in Muslim life, consisting of strong bonds between the basic unit of husband, wife and children and beyond to extended relatives.<sup>35</sup> It is important to note that formal registration with Australian regulatory bodies such as the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, is not required for a marriage to be considered Islamic. Depending on the school of religious law, generally speaking an Islamic marriage between two marriageable persons requires the offer and acceptance of a marriage contract, including agreement on a dowry payment from the husband to the

<sup>35</sup> Abdullah Saeed, *Islam in Australia* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen Unwin, 2003), 86-7.

wife, in front of witnesses.<sup>36</sup> Many Muslims will register their marriages with the state, but not all. For the purposes of the current study, participants were not asked about their registered marital status, and it was possible for participants to indicate either ‘married’ or ‘in de-facto relationship’ where they are in Islamic marriages whether or not these have been legally registered.

Overall, the largest group of participants in the present survey was single or never married, unsurprising given the large number of participants in their late teens and early twenties. For participants twenty-five years or older, being married was the most common current marital status with comparatively low rates of divorce, separation and de-facto relationships (see Table 9).

*Table 9. Current marital status of participants, by age groups.*

Current marital status	All (%)	15-24 (%)	25-34 (%)	35-44 (%)	45-54 (%)	55+ (%)
Single / never married	47.4	86.6	34.4	7.0	0	0
Married	43.3	9.8	53.1	83.7	88.5	54.5
In de-facto relationship	2.2	2.7	3.1	0	3.8	0
Separated	0.4	0	1.6	0	0	0
Divorced	5.2	0.9	7.8	9.3	3.8	18.2
Widowed	1.5	0	0	0	3.8	27.3
Responses	n=270	n=112	n=64	n=43	n=26	n=11

Rates of interfaith marriages between Muslims and non-Muslims were very low amongst the current sample, although a sizeable percentage of participants chose not to answer the question.<sup>37</sup> Of a possible 123 answers, 38 participants chose to leave the question blank. Of the remaining eighty-five participants, the overwhelming majority—eighty-one people or 95.3 percent—answered ‘yes’ to the question of whether their partner is Muslim. Of the four married to non-Muslims, two were Muslim women married to non-Muslim men and two were Muslim men married to non-Muslim women.

Some Muslim Australians are certainly taking the advice of former Treasurer Peter Costello for Australians to boost population numbers with “one for your husband and one for your wife and one for the country.” Although only 35 percent of the participants answered positively to the question of parental status, of those that did, over half have three or more children.

<sup>36</sup> Stipulations vary amongst the various Sunni and Shi’i schools of religious law as to what defines an Islamic marriage. Points of disagreement are too varied to be summarised here, but can include the number and type of witnesses, the need for a guardian to act on behalf of the woman, the nature of the marriage, what constitutes a valid dowry and more.

<sup>37</sup> It is possible that a negative stigma attached to being married to a non-Muslim could explain a low response rate, however it is more likely due to a design fault in the questionnaire. The question concerned was written: “if you are in a de-facto relationship or married, is your partner Muslim?” A hasty reading of the question may give the impression the question was about de-facto relationships, hence the relatively low response rate.

Regarding home-ownership, the largest category of people was renters, followed by owners paying mortgages (see Table 10). It should be noted there is some ambiguity with the statistics, as a number of young participants born

*Table 10. Housing situation of participants.*

Housing situation	%
Rent from private landlord	29.1
Own, paying mortgage	21.5
Rent from housing authority	19.2
Other (incl. living with parents)	17.4
Own outright	12.8
Responses	n=265

after 1983 chose the response 'own outright'. Given age and income level, it is more likely they are living with their parents who own houses outright. On the other hand, a number of participants chose 'other' and specified they were living with parents but did not state their parents' level of home-ownership.

### **Employment and Income**

A number of questions were asked of participants in the current survey regarding their level and type of employment. The first question was a basic yes/no question as to whether or not an individual was employed. Of the 271 participants who answered this question, 66.4 percent indicated they enjoyed some level of employment.

The next questions asked whether employed individuals were paid and whether their employment status was part-time, full-time, casual, permanent or whether they were self-employed. Of the 168 respondents who were employed and answered whether they were paid or not, the vast majority (162 people or 96.4 percent) were in paid employment with only 6 people (5 women and 1 man) undertaking some form of work for which they were not financially remunerated, for example this could include volunteer work or home duties.

*Table 11. Employment status of participants, by sex.*

Employment status	All (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)
Employed	66.4	57.1	83.3
Unemployed	33.6	42.9	16.7
Responses	n=271	n=170	n=96

Regarding levels of employment, 165 employed participants indicated their labour force status with 60.6 percent working full-time and 39.4 percent working part-time. Furthermore, permanent employment was the most common category at 53.8 percent of the 143 participants who answered the question on employment type, followed by casual employment at 34.3 percent and then self-employment at 11.9 percent.

*Table 12. Gross annual personal income of employed participants.*

Income brackets	%
\$10,000 or less	19.9
\$10,001 to \$25,000	11.4
\$25,001 to \$50,000	28.9
\$50,001 to \$75,000	28.3
\$75,001 to \$100,000	6.0
\$100,001 to \$125,000	2.4
\$125,001 to \$150,000	1.2
\$150,000 or more	1.8
Responses	n=166

Participants were asked to nominate their annual gross income within brackets. A total of 230 respondents provided information about their personal income, with the largest group of people (35.2 percent) earning \$10,000 or less, followed by 22.2 percent earning between \$50,001 and \$75,000.

Looking at employed participants, of which there were 180, 166 indicated their income bracket. Of these, the largest group at 28.9 percent were earning between \$25,001 and

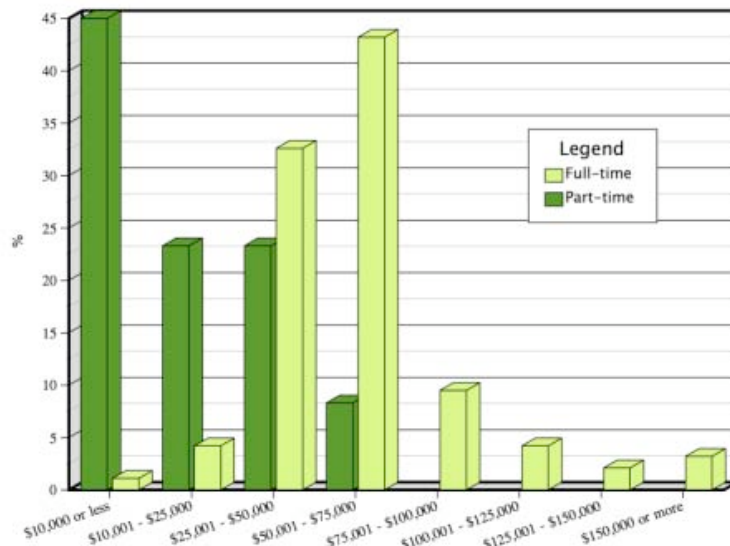


Figure 5. Gross annual income of employed participants by part/full-time status.

\$50,000 followed closely by those earning between \$50,001 and \$75,000 (see Table 12 and Figure 5).

Muslim Australian participants are generally happy in their jobs with slightly lower numbers of satisfied women than satisfied men. There were 177 working participants that gave responses to the question asking how

happy they are in their jobs. Of these, 80.2 percent were either happy or very happy in their jobs. As for job security, there were generally high levels, a feature not dramatically different between men and women (see Figure 6).

Those participants who were looking for employment were asked whether they had experienced difficulties in getting a job with 72 percent answering no. There was a slight increase in difficulty for men (30.4 percent) as opposed to women (26.8 percent). Those who indicated they experienced difficulties gaining employment were then asked

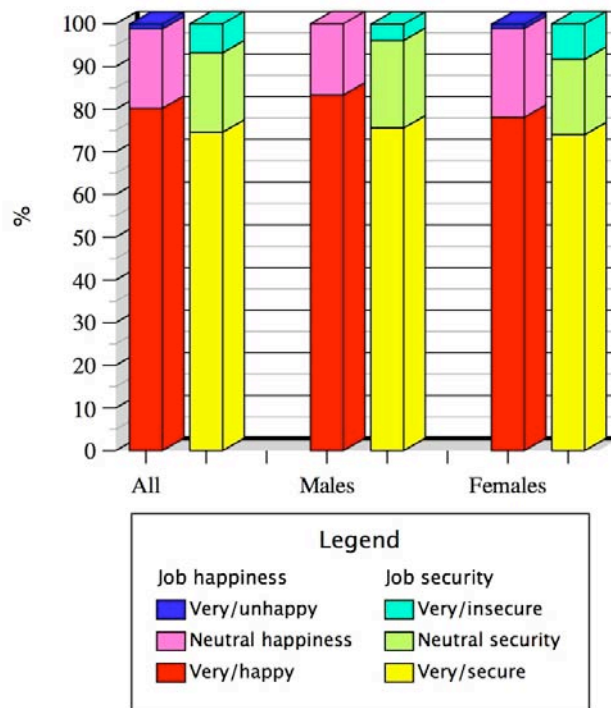


Figure 6. Levels of happiness and security among working participants.

to elaborate as to reasons why. The most common responses were lack of experience and qualifications in the chosen area, a competitive job market in chosen area, encountering racism and prejudice particularly for women wearing head covers.

### Education

Participants were asked about their highest level of education achieved, either here in Australia or elsewhere (see Table 13). No one indicated they had no level of education, and the largest group of people were those with bachelor

degrees followed by those who completed year 12 secondary school; this was for both men and women.

*Table 13. Education level of participants.*

Education level	Valid %		
	All (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)
Primary	1.9	1.8	2.1
Year 10 secondary	8.2	10.7	4.2
Year 12 secondary	28.3	27.8	29.2
Trade qualification or apprenticeship	1.1	0.6	2.1
Certificate or diploma	16.0	18.9	11.5
Bachelor degree	32.3	33.1	31.3
Masters degree	10.4	6.5	15.6
Doctorate	1.9	0.6	4.2
Responses	n=269	n=169	n=96

As well, a large number of participants were currently undertaking some form of study, with 58.3 percent of those who answered the question (n=266) studying either part- or full-time. This is partly explained by the proportion of younger participants in their late teens and early twenties. Although participants in the current study were not directly asked if religious beliefs had any bearing on the pursuit of education, the generally high value that is placed on acquiring knowledge in Islamic teachings may also help explain high levels of educational attainment.

When it comes to what types of schools Muslim parents send their children to, 95 participants answered the relevant question, which resulted in 109 responses as it was possible for an individual to nominate more than one type of school. The largest group were those who had at least one child enrolled in a Muslim private school (53.2 percent of responses), followed by those with at least one child in the public state school system (37.6 percent of responses). The 95 participants were then asked which type of school they would prefer to send their children if there were no constraints, such as cost or availability of places. This time, individuals could only choose their top preference, and of the 88 who responded, 69.3 percent indicated they would prefer to send their children to Muslim private schools, 20.5 percent preferred the public system, with the rest choosing other alternatives such as non-religious private schools.

### **Social Involvement**

Muslim Australians who participated in the current survey were involved in a wide variety of social activities at varying time intervals, contradicting the notion that Muslims—particularly religious Muslims—are removed from Australian society and avoid social engagements. In particular, they were asked to indicate how often (at least daily, weekly, monthly, yearly or never) they undertook the following activities: attending social meetings (eg. elderly citizens' groups); doing sports; eating out (eg. at cafés or restaurants); going to the movies; reading; shopping; spending time at the mosque; spending time outdoors (eg. on picnics); surfing the internet; visiting (eg. family or friends); and watching TV, videos or DVDs. Seven participants declined to answer any of the questions, so they were discounted in the analysis, leaving 283 response sets. In the main, participants were undertaking the variety of

activities at relatively frequent time intervals. For example, 57.3 percent ate out at least weekly; 48.8 percent went to the movies at least once a month; and 64 percent surfed the internet daily (see Table 14).

*Table 14. Activities undertaken by participants by cumulating time intervals.*

Activity	At least daily	At least weekly	At least monthly	At least yearly	Never
	cumulative %				%
Attending social meetings	1.4	31.8	47.7	68.6	31.4
Doing sports	10.6	43.5	70.3	87.3	12.7
Eating out	5.7	57.2	89.4	94.3	5.7
Going to movies	1.8	9.2	48.8	80.6	19.4
Reading	56.2	83.4	95.1	97.2	2.8
Shopping	12	64.7	92.6	95.8	4.2
Attending mosque	16.6	56.9	77.7	92.2	7.8

### **Prejudice, Discrimination and Extremism**

Across all the questions that sought written responses from participants, one of the strongest themes to emerge was a sense that Muslim Australians are having to cope with increased scrutiny, and at times increased levels of racism, prejudice and discrimination largely because of recent global crisis events overseas involving Muslims, and the media and former Howard Government focus on the War on Terror.

It is surprising that participants are showing relatively high levels of resilience to this scrutiny, which may in part be due to a distinction that Muslim Australians make between the perceived attitudes and policies of the government and media (very negative towards Muslims) and those of the general Australian population. That is, there exists a belief that where racism and prejudice exists among non-Muslims towards Muslims, this is because they know very little about the real teachings of Islam, or have little interaction with actual Muslims, and consequently are just as much the victims of ignorance and propaganda as are Muslims.

“Those people whom I have come in contact with, even though they may not show it, do have this prejudice which has been a result of misinformation whether through media, books or politicians whom pursue personal reasons rather than humans. Majority of these people, after talking and providing them info, very quickly get to change their views of Muslims.” (M/25y/Afghanistan/1999)

“If I was a non-Muslim Australian looking from the outside in, I would be the exact same. I don’t blame them yet hope that people will do their research and not be ignorant. The non-Muslim Australians that I hang out with are not racist or prejudiced at all, because they have had to interact with me...” (F/19y/n.s.)

Racism against Muslims occurs in the context of the majority of Muslims coming from non-Anglo ethnicities. It is difficult to tease out racism from purely prejudicial attitudes towards Muslims on the basis of their faith adherence because the vast majority of Muslims in Australia are migrants or children of

migrants from non-Anglo ethnicities and their reported experiences of racism and prejudice transverse categories of race and religion. An Anglo-Australian convert wearing a headscarf might just as easily be told to 'go home you Arab' as someone born in Lebanon or Egypt.

"People still are racist towards Muslims. In the 9/11 event I was approached by a random [woman] driving past me. I was on my way to school wearing my hijab and she screamed out 'take it off' and swore. I only had realised 'til afterwards what she was on about. I felt so depressed." (F/17y/UAE/n.s.)

Participants were asked to indicate whether they perceived a rise or decline in racism and prejudice amongst non-Muslim Australians, and 273 gave valid responses. Of these 76.9 perceived a rise over recent years (see Table 15).

*Table 15. Perceptions of rise/decline in racism and prejudice.*

Rise/decline	%
A big rise	31.9
A moderate rise	45.1
Stayed the same	16.1
A moderate decline	4.8
A big decline	2.2
Total Responses	n=273

The theme of racism and prejudice arose in response to a number of questions including a direct request for participants to reflect on their response to whether they perceived a rise or decline in the non-Muslim populace.

"Unfortunately due to recent terrorist acts there has been a rise in racism towards Muslims. Those who are ignorant seem to blame all Muslims. However they disregard the fact that those who do engage in these acts are not true Muslims." (F/19y/Iraq/1994)

One participant in particular narrated his story as an overseas fee-paying student who took up residency as a skilled migrant, with hopes of a better life.

"Till now I could not find I.T. job due to I have no local experience and I guess my name is Abdallah is not beauty name to recruit. Well that's fine but how can I get local experience while no one wants to give a chance, and [I] am not willing to change my name for that. A friend of mine who is from Syria and graduated with me, once he decided to change his name from Ali to Alex in his C.V. people and agencies started to respond to his application. He went for the interview he did not get any job so far [as] soon [as] they know and see his outlook, they reject his application in a polite way. [I] am not trying to prove here that all Australians are racist but this is a real daily experience. I have many Australian friends and families, where I care for them so much." (M/27y/Jordan/2000)

Aside from experiences of prejudice and racism, Junankar and Mahuteau's research looking at the employment levels among migrants generally, has found that lack of networks is a negative factor in job-seeking, particularly amongst those from newer migrating groups who have not had time to build extensive networks of support, and those who fall under the humanitarian

category of visa.<sup>38</sup> Further research would be required to ascertain whether race and religion are bigger barriers than simply lack of established networks.

For some, levels of racism and discrimination are part of a longer history of prejudice with which Australian society has had to struggle since European settlement.

“Australian society is and since 1788 always has been based on racism and prejudice. Be it against the Indigenous community (since the landing), Irish Catholics, Chinese migrants, homosexuals or any other minority group that you can care to name! ... Muslims are just becoming an increasing target of this because Muslim countries happen to be in an area rich in oil, an area that it suits the West to have control over. The way asylum seekers are being treated (and I am aware that not all asylum seekers are Muslim) is scarily similar to the policies of the Australian government towards Indigenous peoples around the 1920s. So no there is no decline or rise... it's just the same old stuff.” (M/21y/n.s.)

A broad survey of the text responses from participants indicates a strong perception that the framing of media coverage involving Muslims is a major contributing factor in explaining pejorative attitudes towards Muslims.

“I think there has been an increase in that people are more suspicious and are feeling scared and worried or no rational reason. It is only fear based on negative media images that fuel racism. People have stereotyped views of what Muslims are like and I don't look like what most people think are 'Muslims' so I often hear others (non-Muslims) say very very racist things about Muslims because they don't know I'm a Muslim. It really hurts.” (F/27y/n.s.)

Media coverage of acts of violence involving Muslims (whether overseas or locally) is seen as disproportionately heavy, whereas positive Muslim contributions are under-reported. Furthermore, it is considered hypocritical and unfair that the ethnicity and religion of those Muslim Australians involved in criminal acts is reported in media coverage with the un-stated implication they are contributing factors to criminality, whereas the ethnicity and religion of Anglo-Australians involved in criminal acts is not similarly reported. There also exists a perception that some within the media establishment (particularly radio shock-jocks) actively wish to portray Muslims negatively to fuel racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia, for ratings.

“Usually in the media, if there is an issue concerning any [person from] non-English background, any Muslim, almost automatically the religion is mentioned. However when a crime has been committed by a non-Muslim or an English speaking background, no one is told about their religion. This is injustice.” (F/18y/Australia)

<sup>38</sup> P.N. Raja Junankar and Stephane Mahuteau, “Do Migrants Get Good Jobs? New Migrant Settlement in Australia,” *Economic Record* 81, no. S1 (August 2005): S34-S46.

“I strongly believe that there are thousands of good true blue Muslim Aussies out there but they always get sidelined by the government and the media.” (M/37y/Lebanon/1995)

“Racism and prejudice against Muslims are on the rise thanks to politicians and news media. Specially the radio talk-show hosts.” (M/49y/Bangladesh/1998)

The link between media and political rhetoric is strong in the minds of many participants. In an almost chicken and egg scenario, the media and politicians are seen as feeding each other’s agenda to marginalise Muslim Australians. In other words, the political gain of some politicians and political parties in engendering fear of Muslims and terrorism in the Australian populace as a wedge tactic or response is being bought at the cost of social cohesion and quality of life for Muslim Australians.

“The Cronulla riots laid out big question marks, as well as the re-election of Howard Govt. after Tampa—a government based on lies, and willingly manipulative of the public to suit their own needs. The rise in racism today is a direct result of the election of Howard in government in my opinion, associated also with a rise in Islamophobia worldwide.” (M/22y/Australia)

The media are seen as complicit in this, by using Muslim issues to score ratings and sell newspapers. Of course the usual defence against this common perception, is that if there were nothing wrong, bad or controversial there would be no wedge issue for politicians to capitalise upon, or news to report. This leads to a related issue, which is: perceptions of the existence of extremism in the Muslim Australian community.

When asked to elaborate on the question of levels of extremism amongst Muslim Australians, a number of participants correctly pointed out that ‘extremism’ and ‘extremist’ are charged labels mostly used in a pejorative manner to describe the ideology and members of an ‘othered’ group. Furthermore, participants rejected the notion that visibility of Islamic religiosity in public meant a rise in levels of extremism.

“The term ‘extremism’ [is a] politicised term. No one actually knows what it means and even more so the context in which it applies. It is difficult then to say that extremism has been rising. Some would say that growing beards or wearing a hijab is evidence of extremism, others would say that if I speak against the government’s actions that is extreme. This is rather a ludicrous situation in my view. But one thing that I will say is that the increasing hostility against Muslims overseas and locally does make many Muslims (especially the youth) restless. And this means that some groups and leaders speak out on such issues that deeply disturb them. Although I do not [?] whether they are right or wrong in their actions, they ought to take extreme caution in doing such things. To non-Muslims and even some Muslims it is easy to dismiss such views as extreme—I think such attitudes are unhealthy to democracy. We need to hear everyone out no matter how minor they are because it is through

consultation and discussion that issues are resolved. It does not help in the cause of progressing Australian society to simply create labels and create prejudice against such views.” (M/19y/Bangladesh/1994)

What participants were clear about was that Islam does not preach or condone extremism:

“Extremism is bad and Muslims who are extremist have the wrong idea about Islam and should be educated by good Muslims who have the right understanding on how Muslims should approach society.” (M/19y/Oman/1997)

“When I learn about Islam I find that being Muslim is all about humanity, goodness and kindness; far, far from extremism.” (F/30y/Turkey/1978)

“Muslims should live in peace in the Australian community or any other community. Islam religion does not call to extremism.” (M/29y/Saudi Arabia/2006)

Given, then, that participants overwhelmingly reject the notion that Islam preaches extremism, what do they think about the existence of extremism amongst Muslims? Some flatly reject there is any credible level of extremism, or that if it does occur, it is a phenomenon that occurs on the fringes of all belief systems:

“This view maybe controversial but I believe there to be no Islamic extremism per se. I believe there may be extreme Muslims who partake in a twisted brand of Islam, and just as the non-practising Muslims, this is a stray away from the true principles of the religion. I also believe the media has portrayed a severe over-representation of Islamic extremism and its incidence.” (F/21y/Australia)

Yet others felt that while Muslims generally have been proactive in rejecting trends towards extremism in their communities, the existence and possible rise of extremism might possibly occur among a small number of frustrated individuals as a defensive response, reacting to the marginalisation of Muslims at home, and oppression of Muslims overseas and as a result of the foreign policies of Western countries:

*Table 16. Perceptions of a rise/decline in extremism.*

Rise/decline	%
A big rise	9.1
A moderate rise	24.7
Stayed the same	30.5
A moderate decline	14.4
A big decline	21.4
Responses	n=243

“Carrying the extra load whenever/where terrorism happens (e.g. having to be apologetic, explanatory etc.) I think has made many Muslims here genuinely want to do everything they can to nip extremism within our community in the bud. On the other hand, I think there may be a growing frustration at overseas politics/war

that fuels the ideology and confirms the thoughts and feelings of some who are drawn to extremist politics.” (F/21y/Bangladesh/1989)

So, the issue of extremism in the Muslim Australian community is a contested one, and this is reflected in the statistics with participants divided as to whether levels of extremism had risen, stayed the same, or fallen (see Table 16).

### **Life Satisfaction**

Life satisfaction is a difficult concept to measure, precisely because there are a considerable number of variables that can influence an individual's perception. In an attempt to understand and measure subjective wellbeing, the Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) has been developed by the International Wellbeing Group, a collaborative network of researchers around the world.<sup>39</sup> The scale assesses seven areas contributing to life satisfaction and wellbeing: standard of living, health, achieving in life, relationships, safety, community-connectedness, and future security.<sup>40</sup> Since 2001, the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index has surveyed samples of the Australian population using the PWI.<sup>41</sup>

The seventeenth such survey was run at approximately the same time as data was collected for the Muslim Voices survey, and has been used as a point of comparison for the present report. In order to analyse data from the Muslim Voices survey in comparison with the Australian Unity Wellbeing survey, results were standardised to give values between 0 (completely dissatisfied) and 100 (completely satisfied). Four response sets that gave consistently maximum scores across the questions were removed before analysis was undertaken. As well, gender was controlled to match the Australian Unity Wellbeing survey that controlled only for gender. Scores on each response set were averaged to provide a general personal wellbeing score (the PWI).

### **Personal Wellbeing**

The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index Report states that the average level of satisfaction for people in Western nations is about 75 percentage points within a normal homeostatic range of 70 to 80 percentage points.<sup>42</sup> In most areas of personal wellbeing, the Muslim Australian participants scored higher than Australians generally, except for the two areas of safety and future security (see Table 17 and Figure 7). This is in contradistinction to Australians

<sup>39</sup> Australian Centre on Quality of Life, Personal Wellbeing Index [online] (Melbourne: Deakin University, 2006, accessed 30 October 2007), 9-10; available from [http://acqol.deakin.edu.au/instruments/wellbeing\\_index.htm](http://acqol.deakin.edu.au/instruments/wellbeing_index.htm); Internet.

<sup>40</sup> The Personal Wellbeing Index began including question 'how satisfied are you with your spirituality or religion?' after the completion of the design of the Muslim Voices questionnaire. Unfortunately, this highly relevant question is not included in the current research.

<sup>41</sup> Robert A. Cummins, "The Wellbeing of Australians--Work, Wealth and Happiness" [report online], Australian Unity Wellbeing Index, survey 17, report 17.0, Australian Centre on Quality of Life, Deakin University, (Geelong: Deakin University, 2007, accessed 30 October 2007), xi; available from

[http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol/index\\_wellbeing/Survey\\_17\\_Part\\_A.pdf](http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol/index_wellbeing/Survey_17_Part_A.pdf); Internet.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

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generally; their satisfaction with safety and security is at highest recorded levels.<sup>43</sup>

Table 17. Personal wellbeing of Muslim Australian participants compared to Australians from AUWI survey 17.

Question	Australians, as measured in survey 17 of the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index <sup>a</sup>		Muslims, as measured in the current Muslim Voices survey, 2007	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<b>Personal Wellbeing Index</b>	<b>75.58</b>	<b>12.35</b>	<b>76.09</b>	<b>13.82</b>
Standard of living	78.25	17.04	81.88	18.93
Health	74.78	20.00	76.63	19.93
Achieving	73.23	18.99	75.25	19.19
Personal relationships	79.23	22.25	80.65	19.12
How safe you feel	80.12	17.45	77.42	21.16
Community connect	70.82	19.47	73.45	22.37

<sup>a</sup>. Source: Cummins, "Wellbeing of Australians," 4.

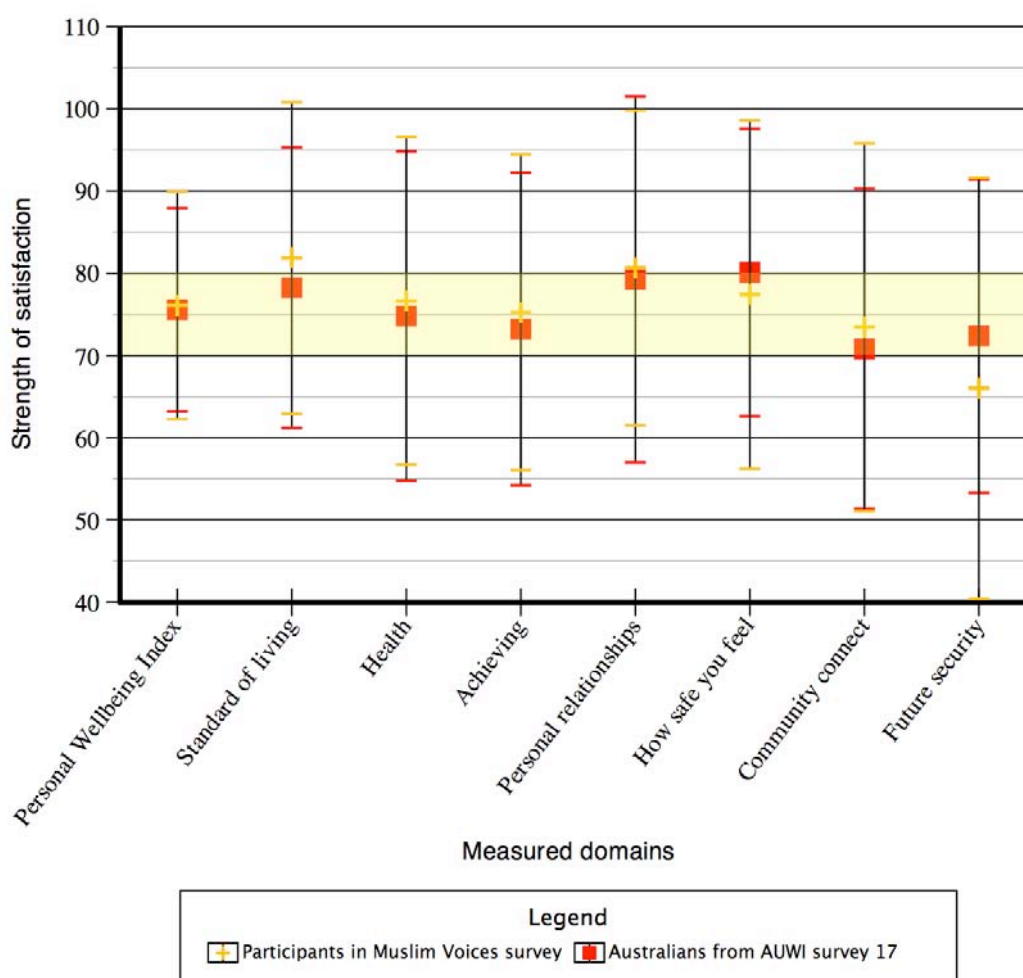


Figure 7. Personal wellbeing of Muslim Australian participants compared to Australians from AUWI survey 17.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 19.

Given themes that arose in analysis of textual responses to questions about life in Australia elsewhere in the Muslim Voices survey, lower scores on safety and security can be explained by the negative impact of terrorist events overseas involving Muslims, and the resultant spotlight on Muslims living in Australia particularly in media and political rhetoric.

Events involving Muslims as reported in Australian newspapers during the period of data collection included the running of a deliberative poll debating issues surrounding Muslims in Australia; then Prime Minister John Howard leading the call for Muslim leaders to sack Sheikh Taj al-Din al-Hilali after the latter made controversial statements about women and questions were raised over his distribution of charity; scrutiny over controversial statements made by Sheikh Feiz Mohamed; the referral to trial of nine Sydney men allegedly involved in a terror plot; support for Hizbollah expressed by Sheikh Kamal Mousselmani from the Australian branch of the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council of Lebanon; the release of convert Jack Roche from prison after serving time for conspiring to bomb the Israeli embassy in Canberra; publicity surrounding a claim that up to three thousand Muslim youth are at risk of being radicalised by hardline Muslim clerics; the release of a research paper by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute on Hizb ut-Tahrir as a potential threat to Australia; and the arrest of Mohammed Haneef.

The media was seen as presenting a skewed picture of Islam and Muslims and politicians were viewed as capitalising on anti-Muslim sentiment to garner votes.

“Media who interested in sales and bad governments who interested in being re-elected at any price are fueling racism, other wise left alone ordinary Australians are very tolerant people.”  
(M/42y/Lebanon/1984)

“Given the disgusting events that have occurred in the recent past (i.e. Cronulla riots) I would say there has been a big rise in racism and prejudice. Nonetheless, it doesn't bother me on an individual level as I don't agree with adopting a victim mentality.”  
(F/23/Australia)

“I love where I live and love the country I live in most of the times when the prime minister is not making stupid laws.” (M/28y/Australia)

Generation does have an impact on participants' sense of personal wellbeing and there are marked differences between how migrants—in particular female migrants—perceive the various aspects contributing to wellbeing, and how Australian-born Muslims perceive the same aspects. When comparing male and female migrant Muslims with male and female Australian-born Muslims it becomes clear that female migrants are pushing the averages upwards (see Table 18 and Figure 8).

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Table 18. Comparing the wellbeing of Australian-born and migrant Muslims, by sex.

Question		Australian-born Muslims		Migrant Muslims	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<b>Personal Wellbeing Index</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>72.09</b>	<b>17.67</b>	<b>74.98</b>	<b>14.32</b>
	<b>Females</b>	<b>73.15</b>	<b>12.55</b>	<b>81.22</b>	<b>12.30</b>
Standard of living	Males	79.31	22.19	80.40	23.64
	Females	80.00	17.06	81.34	14.66
Health	Males	73.79	23.21	77.84	19.83
	Females	72.14	20.77	79.61	18.07
Achieving	Males	69.31	23.13	75.49	18.90
	Females	72.43	18.29	82.19	15.27
Personal relationships	Males	74.14	23.98	82.40	20.16
	Females	78.09	18.39	85.52	14.38
How safe you feel	Males	76.55	24.97	73.67	22.61
	Females	74.20	19.81	83.28	18.45
Community connect	Males	68.57	23.53	72.20	21.79
	Females	70.00	21.81	79.55	23.38
Future security	Males	64.14	27.84	60.41	26.85
	Females	62.57	26.03	75.61	22.61

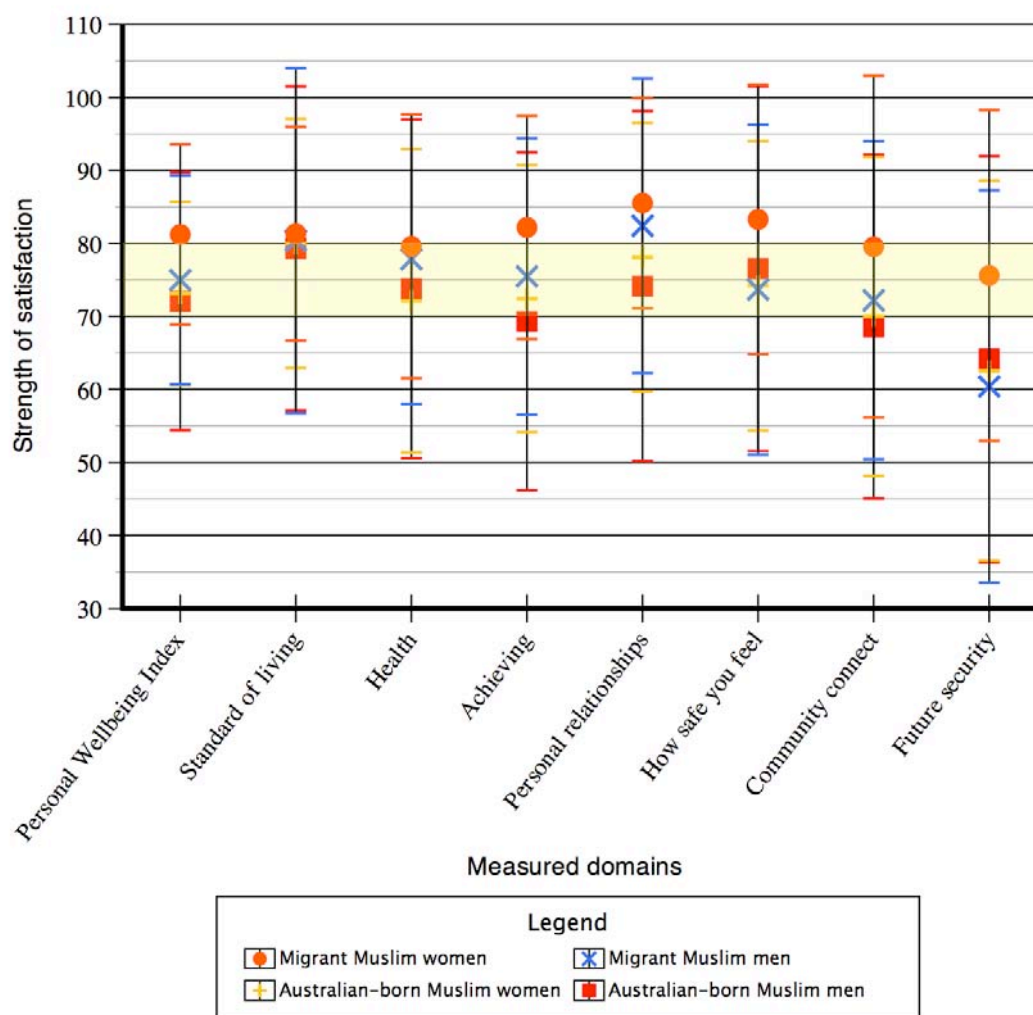


Figure 8. Comparing personal wellbeing among categories of Muslim Australians.

Migrant Muslim females are faring the best with higher scores as against the general Australian population in all domains including in the two areas of safety and future security. Migrant Muslim men whilst ranking higher in most categories than the Australian population generally, appear vulnerable in the domains of safety and future security, ranking lowest of all groups in this last domain. Somewhat surprisingly, in all categories except standard of living, Australian-born Muslims score lower than the Australian population generally. This is particularly marked for Australian-born Muslim men, especially in the areas of what they are achieving in life, their personal relationships and their perceptions of future security.

In terms of the overall personal wellbeing score, migrant Muslim females outscore all other groups including Australians generally. However migrant Muslim males, Australian-born Muslim females and Australian-born Muslim males all rank lower than the Australian population generally. This suggests that these three groups of Muslims are drawing on other reserves to maintain an overall sense of wellbeing. Where individual Muslim Australians are not able to draw on reserves to combat negative attention, there may be the possibility of homeostatic failure—the inability to maintain an overall sense of personal wellbeing—an area that needs further study.<sup>44</sup>

Turning to views of life in Australia compared to life in Muslim-majority countries, participants were asked four questions: 1) Has the quality of life for Muslim men in Australia changed over the last five years? 2) Is the quality of life for Muslim men in Australia better or worse than for men in Muslim majority countries? 3) Has the quality of life for Muslim women in Australia changed over the last five years? 4) Is the quality of life for Muslim women in Australia better or worse than for women in Muslim majority countries?

From their answers it is clear that the participants believe life in Australia, whilst it has degraded somewhat over the last five years, is still better than in Muslim-majority countries whether for men or women. The most marked result was the perception that life in Australia is “much better” for women than in Muslim majority countries, despite having gotten “a little worse” over the preceding half-decade.

*Table 19. Rating quality of life for Muslim men and women in Australia over five years, and compared to Muslim-majority countries.*

Rating	Life quality in Australia over last five years		Life quality in Australia versus Muslim-majority countries	
	For men (%)	For women (%)	For men (%)	For women (%)
Much worse	7.3	16.4	5.6	9.4
Little worse	38.1	34.2	16.7	15.7
About the same	34.9	25.8	20.4	19.3
Little better	13.3	15.6	31.5	26
Much better	6.4	8	25.9	29.6
Total responses	n=218	n=225	n=216	n=223

<sup>44</sup> See *ibid.*, 2 for a discussion on the concept of homeostasis in wellbeing.

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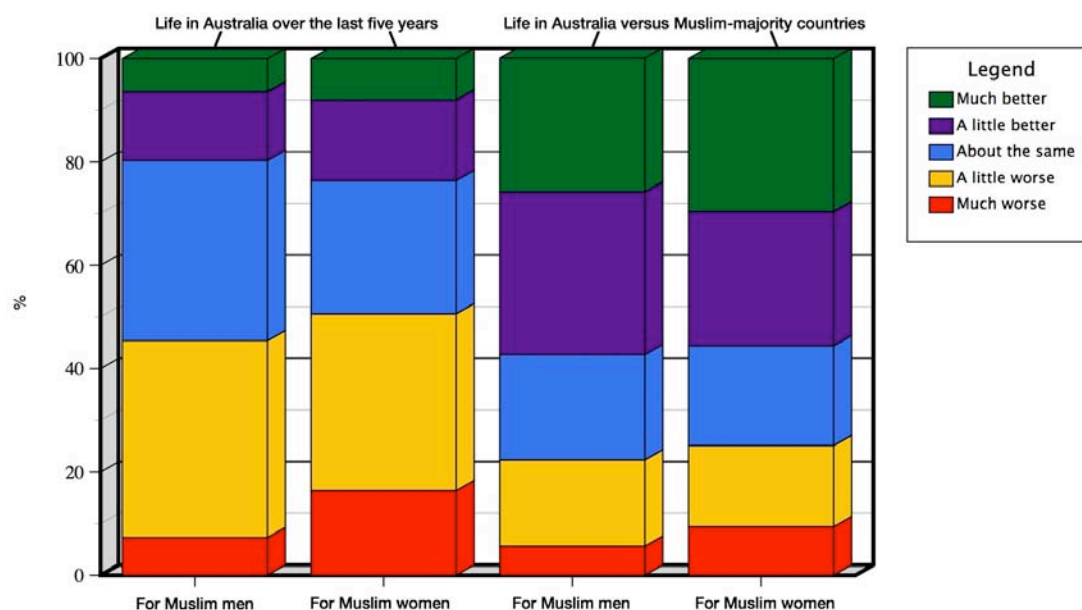


Figure 9. Quality of life for Muslim men and women in Australia over five years, and as compared to Muslim-majority countries.

### The Next Generation

The future prospects of their children were of great importance to participants with over 92 percent rating them as very/extremely important. Those with children (95 participants) were asked as to whether they thought their children would find fulfilling employment in the future. The majority (81.9 percent) answered yes, with a minority unsure (17 percent) and only 1 participant indicated they thought no.

In order to compare perceptions of standard of living across generations, participants were asked three questions on comparing their standard of living to their parents, their children and whether their level of income was comparable to Australians generally. Participants felt their quality of life had much improved over their parents when they were the same age, and optimistic about the future of their children. Just over half thought their level of income was comparable to Australians generally (see Table 20).

Table 20. Standard of living across generation, and income, compared to Australians generally.

	Far above average (%)	Above average (%)	Average (%)	Below average (%)	Far below average (%)	Responses
Standard of living compared to parents at same age	42.6	36.1	15.2	4.8	1.3	n=230
Standard of living for children in future at same age	21.6	39.9	21.1	14.6	2.8	n=213
Level of income compared to Australians generally today	4.1	27.7	51.4	13.2	3.6	n=220

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this report has been to provide a nuanced account of the life experiences for religious Muslim Australians living in greater metropolitan Sydney. In particular, the research has been interested in looking at the hopes, aspirations, concerns and worries of Muslim Australians, as well as the extent of transnational communication linking Muslim Australian migrants to their countries of origin and the influence that generation has on Muslim Australian attitudes.

Overwhelmingly, religiously observant Muslim Australians believe they can be both good Muslims and good Australians and that their adherence to Islam can even make them better citizens. Maintaining an Australian identity as well as an ethnic identity is important to Muslims, but religious identity appears to play the most important role amongst observant Muslims. The theme of harmony between Muslim and Australian identities was one of the strongest themes to emerge from the data. Nevertheless, a depth of frustration with how Muslims and the religion of Islam are viewed by the wider population—and in particular politicians and representatives of the media—is keenly felt.

Muslim Australians consider themselves to be under enormous scrutiny due to a variety of factors including focus on acts of violence committed by Muslims (for both ideological and ordinary criminal reasons) and as a result of foreign policy decisions by Western nations such as the United States and Australia that have involved conflict with Muslim-majority countries.

Along with opportunistic rhetoric from politicians in search of votes, the media is seen as being the biggest player in contributing to negative stereotypes about Muslims influencing the wider Australian population. Coverage of negative events involving Muslims is seen as disproportionate and the media establishment largely ignores the positive everyday contributions of Muslims to Australian society.

The existence of extremism among the Muslim Australian community is seen as over-inflated by many Muslims and if it does exist it is on the fringes of the community among marginalised and isolated youth, angry and frustrated at perceived and real injustices here and abroad.

For religiously observant Muslims, extremism is categorically rejected as un-Islamic. They see their faith as preaching peace and kindness to others. Many feel that the Muslim community has a responsibility to correct false images of Islam amongst non-Muslims and any who might be vulnerable to those with less than honourable intentions, with efforts being undertaken to do precisely that.

Muslim Australians encounter a variety of values and attributes in their social experiences of life in Australia. Most strongly, though are the values of freedom, a fair go, doing your best, care and compassion among others. Nevertheless, there is a strong 'un-Australian' experience of an Americanisation trend and racism is the second most negative attribute experienced. Where Muslims and non-Muslims engage at the grassroots level, there is bridge-building occurring yet racism is still a factor in the lives of Muslim Australians, particularly those who are visibly identifiable as followers of Islam.

Muslim Australians highly value the freedom they experience in society to practice their religion and go about living their lives. Reflective of the high ideals that Australia sets itself as embodying, there is also a sense that the lived experience does not always match the dream of a tolerant 'fair-go' society. However, many Muslims hold generally positive opinions of the society they share with their fellow Australians, with the exception of the political and media stigmatisation they experience at the hands of some.

For migrants, a sense of connection to their countries of origin is important and they generally maintain regular contact with family and friends overseas. Travelling to visit countries of origin occurs less often, perhaps reflective of the distance of Australia and cost.

Religiously observant Muslim Australians tend to maintain strong and cohesive family relationships. Over half of those between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four are married, with percentages increasing to 83.7 percent of those aged between thirty-five and forty-four, and 88.5 percent of those aged between forty-five and fifty-four. The percentage drops back down to 54.5 percent for those fifty-five and older, with an increase in divorce and experiencing the death of a spouse. Interfaith marriages are rare, with the vast majority of Muslims choosing to marry other Muslims. Over half of parents who participated in the survey had three or more children.

Renting is the most common form of house-ownership status amongst participants and unemployment levels are relatively high. Having said that, most are happy in their employment and feel their jobs are secure. Further research is needed to ascertain how the socio-economic status of Muslims impacts their lives in Australia.

In terms of education, there were relatively high levels of education amongst the population surveyed. Muslims are keen to send their children to Muslim schools if the opportunities exist, and demand certainly exceeds supply.

Religious observance is not a barrier to social involvement by any means, and Muslim Australians engage in a wide variety of social activities such as doing sports, eating out at restaurants and cafés, going to the movies, shopping as well as attending the mosque regularly. The notion that piety somehow

isolates Muslims from wider Australian society is not at all evident in the responses of the participants surveyed in the current research.

In comparison to the broader Australian population, Muslim Australians rate similarly on most of the factors that contribute to personal wellbeing, although future security and personal safety are areas of concern. Migrant Muslim women experience the most personal wellbeing, higher than Australians generally. Australian-born Muslim men fare the worst with lower than average levels of personal wellbeing.

Having said that, life in Australia is considered better than life in Muslim-majority countries, particularly for Muslim women, although it is perceived to have degraded over the last five years.

Muslim Australians are interested in the future prospects of their children, which bodes well for the establishment of the long-term sustained settlement of Muslims in Australia. The vast majority felt their children would find fulfilling employment in the future and that their standard of living would generally improve in comparison to their own lives.

Overall, the picture of life for Muslim Australians living in greater metropolitan Sydney is a positive one, although it is negatively impacted by elements of racism and prejudice propagated by some in the broader community, and the current focus on the War on Terror. Muslims have a long history of contact with Australia although sustained settlement is a relatively recent phenomenon. Nevertheless, the future of Muslim Australian experiences can be bright if an investment in social cohesion and harmony is made.

# ***Recommendations***

The following are a number of recommendations arising from themes discussed in the report.

- Promoting acceptance of the reality that Islam and Muslims are a permanent and valuable part of the cultural and religious fabric of Australian life, both among Muslims and among the wider Australian population may help counter the negative stereotypes that are propagated by some sections of the government, media and community. One way this might be achieved is in promoting education about the long history of Muslim contact and settlement in Australia: that Muslim contact with Australia pre-dates white settlement, and that Muslims have made important and valuable contributions to the history of Australia. This might be part of a wider program emphasising the multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of Australian society.
- Encouraging Muslim communities to hold open-days inviting the wider community into mosques and Islamic schools and promoting interfaith activities among Muslims.
- Promoting environmental awareness and environment-promoting activities among Muslim youth. Preferably encouraging them to join already established activities such as Clean Up Australia Day. This would introduce young Muslims to other Australians in a neutral non-religious, non-threatening context and by participating in activities designed to help the environment, young Muslims may be encouraged to feel they have something to contribute to Australia and to humanity in general.
- There is a need to address the higher unemployment rates among Muslim Australians, particularly those who have come to Australia on humanitarian visas, or from newer migrating groups without already established networks. Further research on this phenomenon is needed.
- Religious Muslims interviewed in the present study have emphasised their belief that religious practice promotes their sense of civic duty,

rather than inhibits it. That is, observant Muslims feel a keen sense of duty to promote their understanding of Islam as a religion of peace, kindness and good will to others, and that Islam makes them better Australians. Consequently, inhibiting or preventing the establishment of structures, organisations and buildings that facilitate the practice of Islam (such as mosques and Islamic schools) as has occurred in various local communities around Australia, would appear to be a step in the wrong direction. An education campaign to combat prejudice in local communities, particularly on this issue might help alleviate discrimination against Muslim Australians in their attempts to build networks and structures in which they find support and spiritual nourishment.

- There is certainly a demand for Islamic schools that is currently unmet. There may be opportunities for organisations to fill that gap in service provision.
- A program to promote careers in journalism and politics (whether local, state or federal) could be part of a long-term strategy to combat negative attitudes about Muslims and to assist in allowing Muslims to have a voice in the ongoing community dialogue and debate about the future direction of Australian society. As well, Muslims could be encouraged to engage in political and social processes: to join political parties, to campaign and lobby on issues that concern them, to write letters for publication in media etc.
- Psychological and counselling services to assist young Australian-born Muslim men might help inoculate them against lower levels of wellbeing in the areas of safety and future security. However, addressing the negative impact of rhetoric about Muslims from some sections of the media and government would provide a more long-term solution to the issue of lower rates of personal wellbeing among Australian-born Muslim men.
- Inviting Muslims to contribute to the dialogue of what it means to be Australian, and the nature of Australian values, is an important part of solidifying Islam and Muslims as part of the Australian landscape, particularly given that for most religious Muslims, there is no inherent conflict between Australian values and Islamic values.

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# **Appendix A**

The following list of questions were given to participants to answer. Some questions required textual responses, others offered a pre-determined selection of responses for participants to choose.<sup>45</sup>

A1. What is the postcode of the place where you currently live?

A2. Are you male or female? (Male; female.)

A3. What year were you born?

A4. What are the first ten words you would use to describe yourself?

B1. Thinking about your life, how satisfied are you with the following things? (11-point scale where 0=completely dissatisfied, 5=neutral and 10=completely satisfied.)

- a) Your standard of living
- b) Your health
- c) What you are achieving in life
- d) Your personal relationships
- e) How safe you feel
- f) Feeling part of your community
- g) Your future security

B2. Now thinking about life in Australia, how satisfied are you with the following things? (11-point scale where 0=completely dissatisfied, 5=neutral and 10=completely satisfied.)

- a) The economic situation in Australia
- b) The state of the natural environment in Australia

<sup>45</sup> Some of the numbering is non-sequential due to editing of the final version of the questionnaire in which some questions that had been asked of a test group were not asked of the main body of respondents.

c) The social conditions in Australia

d) Government in Australia

e) Business in Australia

f) National security in Australia

C1. What level of importance do you place on the following things? (Not at all important; somewhat important; important; very important; extremely important.)

a) Your children's future prospects in Australia

b) Your educational opportunities

c) Preserving your Australian identity

d) Preserving your ethnic identity

e) Preserving your Muslim identity

C2. "I can be a good Muslim and a good Australian." Do you agree or disagree? (Strongly agree; agree; neutral; disagree; strongly disagree.)

C3. Tell us your thoughts on being Muslim and Australian.

C4. Some people think there has been a rise in the importance of religion among Muslim Australians over recent years, others think there has been a decline in the importance of religion. What do you think? (A big rise; a moderate rise; stayed the same; a moderate decline; a big decline.)

C5. Do you have any thoughts on question C4?

C6. Some people think there has been a rise in extremism among Muslim Australians over recent years, others think extremism is declining, what do you think? (A big rise; a moderate rise; stayed the same; a moderate decline; a big decline.)

C7. Do you have any thoughts on question C6?

C8. Some people think there has been a rise in racism and prejudice among non-Muslim Australians over recent years, others think there has been a decline in racism and prejudice. What do you think? (A big rise; a moderate rise; stayed the same; a moderate decline; a big decline.)

C9. Do you have any thoughts on question C8?

C12. Some people are concerned about employment levels among Muslims in Australia, others are not concerned at all. What about you? (Very concerned; somewhat concerned; not too concerned; not at all concerned; don't know.)

C13. Do you have any thoughts on that?

D1. Migrants to Australia have different stories. If you would like, there is space below to tell us the story of how you migrated to Australia.

D2. What is the country you consider your country of origin?

D3. Thinking about your country of origin, how strong is your relationship to it? (Very strong, strong, average, weak, very weak.)

D4. If you have friends and relatives in your country of origin, how often do you communicate with them? (Daily; weekly monthly; yearly; never; I don't have family or friends in my country of origin.)

D5. How do you mostly communicate with them? (By post; by phone; by email; by webcam; other.)

D6. Have you visited your country of origin in the last five years? (No, once, twice, three times, four times, five or more times.)

D7. On average, how long did your visit/s take? (1 week or less; from 1 week to 1 month; from 1 to 3 months; from 3 to 6 months; from 6 to 12 months.)

E1. Some people think the following values and characteristics describe Australian society. Please number the top five characteristics you think most describe Australian society. Choose from:

- a) Assertion of ethnicity
- b) Care and compassion
- c) Divisiveness
- d) Doing your best
- e) Extremism
- f) Fair go
- g) Freedom
- h) Honesty and trustworthiness
- i) Immodesty
- j) Integrity
- k) Intolerance
- l) Racism
- m) Respect
- n) Responsibility
- o) Selfishness
- p) Separation
- q) Trend towards Americanization
- r) Understanding, tolerance and inclusion
- s) Violence
- t) Waste

F1. How close are you prepared to be with the following religious groups? (Welcome as family member; welcome as close friend; have as next door neighbour; welcome as work mate; allow as Australian citizen; have as a visitor to Australia; keep out of Australia altogether.)

- a) Born-Again Christian
- b) Buddhist

- c) Catholic
- d) Hindu
- e) Jehovah's Witness
- f) Jew
- g) Muslim
- h) Orthodox

F2. How much time do you spend on the following leisure activities? (At least daily; at least weekly; at least monthly; at least yearly.)

- a) Attending social meetings (eg. elderly citizens' groups)
- b) Doing sports
- c) Eating out (e.g. at cafés or restaurants)
- d) Going to the movies
- e) Reading
- f) Shopping
- g) Spending time at the mosque
- h) Spending time outdoors (e.g. on picnics)
- i) Surfing the internet
- j) Visiting (e.g. family or friends)
- k) Watching TV, videos or DVDs

G1. How important is your religion in your personal life? (Not at all important; somewhat important; important; very important; extremely important.)

G2. Do you feel you can practice your religion in Australian society? (To very little extent; to little extent; to some extent; to great extent; to very great extent.)

G3. Why is that?

G4. Not all Muslims regularly perform salat (prayers) but those who do, pray in different places. Where do you usually pray the following prayers: (I don't usually pray this salat; I usually pray this at home; I usually pray this at work; I usually pray this at school; I usually pray this at the mosque; I usually pray this somewhere else.)

- a) Zuhr (noon)
- b) 'Asr (afternoon)
- c) Maghrib (sunset)
- d) 'Isha' (night)
- e) Fajr/Subh (dawn)

G5. The obligatory salats have special times in which to perform them. Some people follow the timings strictly, others pray when they can. Approximately

how many prayers do you perform on time? (None; approx. 25%; approx. 50%; approx. 75%; 100%.)

G6. How often do you attend any or all of the following? (Never; daily; weekly; monthly; yearly.)

- a) Islamic talks or lectures
- b) Arabic language classes
- c) Convert support meetings
- d) Educational meetings (e.g. halaqas)
- e) Jumu'a (Friday prayers)
- f) Social gatherings with other Muslims
- g) Spiritual meetings (e.g. for dhikr)

G7. Some Muslims follow rules to do with some foods, others do not. Which of the following rules do you follow, if any?

- a) Abstaining from alcohol
- b) Abstaining from pork
- c) Abstaining from some forms of seafood (e.g. prawns)
- d) Only eating dhabiha (Islamically slaughtered) meat
- e) Only eating food prepared by Muslims

G8. Some Muslims follow rules to do with their clothing, others do not. Which of the following rules do you follow, if any?

- a) Avoiding clothing of the opposite sex
- b) Avoiding non-Muslim clothing
- c) Avoiding gold
- d) Avoiding silk
- e) Wearing loose, opaque clothing that covers the body and limbs
- f) Wearing a beard
- g) Wearing a face-veil in public
- h) Wearing a headcover in public
- i) Wearing an outer garment in public (e.g. abaya, jilbab)
- j) Wearing a headcover during prayer
- k) Other

G9. Muslims turn to a variety of sources for religious guidance. Who have you consulted in the past, and which would you prefer to consult?

- a) Local imam, shaykh or shaykha
- b) Muslim religious leaders at official institutions outside Australia (such as in Saudi Arabia, al-Azhar, or Qom)
- c) Muslim scholars or leaders on cable television

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- d) Muslim scholars or leaders on the internet
- e) National Muslim religious leaders in Australia
- f) Trusted family member or friend
- g) Other

G10. Some think there is a growing sense of Islamic identity among Muslims in Australia, others do not. What do you think? (Yes; no.)

G11. Why do you think that is?

G12. Now thinking about quality of life, please answer the following (It is much worse; it is a little worse; it is about the same; it is a little better):

- a) Has the quality of life for Muslim men in Australia changed over the last five years?
- b) Is the quality of life for Muslim men in Australia better or worse for men in Muslim-majority countries?
- c) Has the quality of life for Muslim women in Australia changed over the last five years?
- d) Is the quality of life for Muslim women in Australia better or worse than for women in Muslim-majority countries?

G13. Which statement most closely describes your approach to the role and nature of Islam in society?

- a) I think religion should be a private affair and have little or no role in the debate about the nature of our society.
- b) I think Muslims should rely on the chain of traditional interpretations of Islam in understanding the role of Islam in society.
- c) I think Muslims should return to the fundamentals of Islam as the source of authority for all political and social action.
- d) I think Muslims should interpret the role and nature of Islam in society in relation to the needs and contexts of the time.

H1. Please indicate your personal annual gross (before tax) income in the ranges provided:

- a) \$10,000 or less
- b) \$10,001 - \$25,000
- c) \$25,001 - \$50,000
- d) \$50,001 - \$75,000
- e) \$75,001 - \$100,000
- f) \$100,001 - \$125,000
- g) \$125,001 - \$150,000
- h) \$150,000 or more

H2. Do you currently have a part-time or full-time job (eg. paid employment or home-duties) or are you unemployed? (Yes; no; paid; unpaid; full-time; part-time; casual; permanent; self-employed.)

H3. What is the work that you do?

H4. Are you happy in your job? (Very happy; happy; neutral; unhappy; very unhappy.)

H5. Please briefly describe why.

H6. Do you feel secure in your employment? (Very insecure; insecure; neutral; secure; very secure.)

H7. Thinking about question H6, please briefly describe why.

H8. If you have been looking for work, have you experienced any problems in trying to find work? (Yes; no.)

H9. Please briefly comment on what problems you experienced and how you dealt with them (if you did).

I1. If you have any school-age children, what type of school/s do they attend?

- a) Catholic private school
- b) Christian (Protestant) private school
- c) Home-school
- d) Muslim private school
- e) Non-religious private school
- f) Public (state) school
- g) Other

I2. In a few words, please state the reason/s for choosing your particular school/s.

I6. Do you think your children will find fulfilling employment in the future? (Yes; no; unsure.)

I7. Why is that?

I8. If there were no geographical, financial or other constraints, what type of school would you most like your children to attend?

- a) Catholic private school
- b) Christian (Protestant) private school
- c) Home-school
- d) Muslim private school
- e) Non-religious private school
- f) Public (state) school
- g) Other

I9. Why is that?

I10. Have your children attended Islamic religious instruction classes (e.g. Sunday school at the mosque?) (Yes; no.)

J1. Please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements? (Completely agree; agree; neutral; disagree; completely disagree.)

a) I receive adequate income to care for myself and my family

b) I am adequately paid for the work I do

c) My job reflects the academic qualifications, training, skills, and experience I have acquired

d) My income reflects the academic qualifications, training, skills, and experience I have acquired

e) My income is that of other workers in my field

J2. Compared with Australian families in general, would you say your family income is above or below average? (Far below average; below average; average; above average; far above average.)

J3. Compared to your parents when they were the age you are now, do you think your own standard of living is better, worse or the same as theirs was? (Much better; somewhat better; about the same; somewhat worse; far worse.)

J4. When your children are the age you are now, do you think their standard of living will be better, worse or the same as yours now? (Much better; somewhat better; about the same; somewhat worse; far worse.)

K1. Where were you born?

K2. If you were not born in Australia, what year did you come here?

K3. Are you an Australian citizen? (Yes; no.)

K4. What year did you become an Australian citizen?

K5. If you are not a citizen, what type of visa do you have? (Eg. humanitarian, family etc.)

K6. Do you plan to stay permanently? (Yes; no; unsure.)

K7. Do you plan to apply for citizenship? (Yes; no; unsure.)

K8. Where was your mother born?

K9. Where was your father born?

K10. What is your ancestry? (Eg. Egyptian, Iraqi, North-West European)

K11. Do you speak a language other than English at home? If so, what?

K12. What is the highest level of education you completed?

a) None

b) Primary

c) Year 10 secondary

d) Year 12 secondary

e) Trade qualification or apprenticeship

f) Certificate or diploma (TAFE or business college)

g) Bachelor degree

h) Masters degree

i) Doctorate

K13. Are you currently studying? (No; yes, part-time; yes, full-time.)

K14. What is your current housing situation?

a) Own outright

b) Own, paying mortgage

c) Rent from private landlord

d) Rent from housing authority

e) Other

K15. What is your current marital status?

a) Never married

b) Single

c) In de-facto relationship

d) Married

e) Separated

f) Divorced

g) Widowed

K16. If you are in a de-facto relationship or married, is your partner Muslim? (Yes; no.)

K17. How many children do you have?

K18. Were you raised in a Muslim home? (Yes; no.)

K19. If you were not raised in a Muslim home, when did you become a Muslim?

K20. Please tell us your faith story.

## **Appendix B**

Participants were asked to choose and rank five values and/or attributes they experience in every-day life in Australia from a list. The following table shows the resulting list of most commonly chosen values and attributes based on the number of times a value or attribute was chosen in any of the five ranks.

Value or attribute	No. times picked 1st	No. times picked 2nd	No. times picked 3rd	No. times picked 4th	No. times picked 5th	Total times picked	Total %
Freedom	39	39	27	17	4	136	12.1
Trend towards Americanisation	51	23	18	14	27	133	11.8
Fair go	42	32	27	17	14	132	11.8
Doing your best	16	17	19	24	12	88	7.8
Care and compassion	14	13	18	15	12	72	6.4
Understanding, tolerance and inclusion	14	4	13	15	9	65	5.8
Respect	3	20	11	14	10	58	5.2
Racism	4	9	8	17	17	55	4.9
Assertion of ethnicity	5	8	8	15	16	52	4.6
Responsibility	2	11	10	10	10	43	3.8
Intolerance	5	4	15	5	13	42	3.7
Honesty and trustworthiness	9	7	8	9	7	40	3.6
Immodesty	6	7	8	6	7	34	3.0
Separatism	4	4	3	13	10	34	3.0
Divisiveness	8	5	3	7	8	31	2.8
Selfishness	5	5	9	5	7	31	2.8
Integrity	4	3	8	10	5	30	2.7
Waste	2	5	7	2	14	30	2.7
Violence	0	1	3	3	3	10	0.9
Extremism	2	3	0	1	1	7	0.6
Total Responses	235	230	223	219	216	1123	100