

The Civil and Social Participation of Muslim Women in Australian Community Life

Dr Helen Mc Cue

**Edsoc Consulting Pty Ltd
for the Asian Law Group
July 2008**

Preface

This research project, funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), sought to identify the drivers and barriers to Muslim Australian women's participation in Australian civil and social life.

The following report is divided into three main sections:

Section A provides a profile of research participants and compares some of this data with data from the 2006 ABS Census.

Section B is divided into 7 key areas of review, these being: education, workforce participation, business, social and family life, sport, government and Muslim and non-Muslim women's organisations.

Each of these sub-sections presents the research findings as drivers and barriers to that area of Australian society under review, and where material has been discussed previously it is cross referenced. Each sub-section also contains a brief summary and a series of proposed strategies to overcome identified barriers and concludes with research proposals. For each area of social life researched, a literature review was also carried out and a complete literature review is provided as Appendix 1. A bibliography can be seen in Appendix 2.

Section C of the report details data relating to the organisational structure and nature of activities of ten Muslim Women's Organisations (MWOs). Data was gathered from interviews and extensive use of specific MWO's web pages.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the support and generous contribution of Professor Abdullah Saeed to this project. I wish also to thank the research assistants for their valuable assistance, in particular Jamila Hussain, Anisa Buckley, Melati Lum, Susan Davis, and thanks to Helen Saville for proof reading. This project would not have been possible without the generous assistance of all the women who contributed as research participants and the managers and staff of the MWOs who gave their time so willingly and to them all I extend my sincere thanks and gratitude.

Contents	Page No
Executive Summary	4
Recommendations	10
Research Report	12
Research Outline	
Background	
Research Objectives	
Scope of the Project	
Research Methodology	
Research Findings	18
Section A Profile of Muslim Women Participants	18
Section B Drivers and Barriers to Muslim Women’s Participation in Australian Community Life	25
B.1 Education	26
B.2 Workforce	53
B.3 Business	69
B.4 Social and Family Life	75
B.5 Sport	97
B.6 Government	114
B.7 Muslim and Non-Muslim Women’s Organisations	126
Section C Mapping of Muslim Women’s Organisations	134
Appendix 1 Literature Review	
Appendix 2 Bibliography	

Executive Summary

This research project, undertaken on behalf of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), between April and December 2007, sought to explore Muslim Australian women's civil and social participation within the Muslim Australian and non-Muslim communities. The study involved a total of 110 Muslim women in the five states of Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and the ACT. The research has provided a window only into select areas of Muslim Australian women's lives within the Australian community and more detailed research is required.

Data collection for this project involved four stages, including an initial literature review, desktop web analysis and review of ABS 2006 Census data. The second stage of the research, presented as Section A, involved a short quantitative survey of twenty five Muslim women leaders and seventy five principally young Muslim women from all of the above Australian states and the ACT. This survey provides a profile of the research participants' ages, citizenship and educational levels as well as religious participation, ethnic background, marital status and English language skills.

In stage three of the research the same individuals participated in qualitative research that involved semi structured interviews with the women leaders, and focus group discussions with mostly young Muslim women. These interviews and discussions were around Muslim women's interaction with the broader Australian community in key sectors such as childcare and education, the workforce, business, social and family life, friendships, government and sport. Participation in Muslim women's and non-Muslim women's organisations (MWOs) was also discussed. This phase of the research, presented as Section B, has broadly identified the drivers and barriers to participation in those sectors of Australian life.

The fourth stage of the project involved the mapping of ten Muslim women's voluntary organisations and is detailed in Section C of the report. This mapping exercise included surveying the MWO's historical development, governance, funding, the services that they provide to meet the needs of the community, and the extent to which young women are involved in these organisations. This mapping exercise also involved a web analysis.

At its outcome, the project has identified the various drivers to Muslim women's participation and the barriers to that participation in broad areas of Australian society and has suggested various strategies to overcome those barriers, to enable Muslim women to be able to participate more fully in Australian social and civic life.

In summary Section A of the report details that 74% of the research participants were under forty years of age and 42% were born in Australia. Among those born overseas, 23% were from Middle Eastern countries and 22% from South East Asia. The majority were Australian citizens and 95% rated their English language skills as good with only 5% rating themselves as

having poor language skills. While three of the ten focus groups comprised principally university students, participants in the other groups came from a range of socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Nonetheless, overall the participants were very well educated; with 62.5% of participants having completed bachelors or higher level postgraduate studies, and 48% of the leaders had or were completing post graduate studies at Masters or PhD level.

The majority of participants were practising Muslims in that they undertook the religious obligations such as pray, fasting etc. Three quarters of participants wore the hijab¹. Every effort was made to find a representative sample of Muslim Australian women in terms of geographic location, ethnicity, workforce participation, educational level and religious observance. However, such a high incidence of religious observance, particularly in relation to dress may not be representative of the total Muslim Australian population.

In Section B of the report seven sub-sections were reviewed in terms of the drivers and barriers to Muslim Australian women's participation in Australian society. These sub-sections include education, the workforce, business, social and family life, government relations and sport. Participation in Muslim women's and non-Muslim women's organisations (MWOs) was also researched

In relation to the education sector the research covered preschool, primary and secondary school and tertiary education. The study found that Muslim women's participation in preschool activities for their children was supported by increasing religious and cultural awareness in the childcare industry and the growing availability of Muslim women who are childcare trained working either in non-Muslim child care centres or in Family Day Care. The barriers to that participation included preference for Muslim run childcare and a lack of sensitivity to religious rituals and practices in some childcare centres. Newly arrived Muslim women faced specific difficulties relating to cultural understanding of childcare. This was heightened by a lack of access to information regarding English language training and lack of child friendly and woman friendly language classes.

While there are some exceptions, in general the Muslim women involved in this study saw school, either in a Muslim or non-Muslim setting, as an overall positive experience. The majority, 43%, supported state based co-education, 22% opting for Islamic schools, with the rest preferring other sources of faith based education. There were many accounts of positive action taken by schools to integrate Muslim students and to work toward religious harmony and there were also accounts of both mothers and fathers being actively involved in a range of school activities. However, there was also reported discrimination on the basis of religious dress and some participants reported teacher and career adviser lack of interest and even discrimination toward Muslim women's higher education aspirations in some state schools. Parents'

¹ See p.12 or this report of a more detailed description of the hijab

participation in school activities is also impaired by perceptions of lack of social acceptance and discomfort in social settings.

The research indicates that Muslim women are actively participating in the Australian tertiary education system. The key drivers are a strong personal desire for higher education, strong family and community support and overall the multicultural university environment. Improved sensitivity to religious requirements at universities, including providing prayer rooms and halal food, are also drivers. While these are positive signs of Muslim women's participation in this sector of Australian life some barriers remain. This includes the active discouragement of further education for Muslim girls in some state school settings and family opposition in some ethnic groups.

In the area of workforce participation the key findings were that Muslim women involved in the study are actively participating in the workforce, either on a part or full-time basis. The drivers to that participation include a strong desire to participate actively in the non-Muslim community and to be able to express their Muslim Australian identity freely and without discrimination. Additional drivers were reported as being improved self-confidence, an overall improved workplace culture with regard to respect for and accommodation of religious dress, practices and rituals, and, in some instances, support from teachers in pre-work career encouragement. Nonetheless, significant barriers to workforce participation remain for some Muslim women, in particular new arrivals. These include, for some women, language, skill recognition, overt racial and religious discrimination, stereotyping and discrimination on the basis of dress. For other Muslim women, the social culture of the workplace, including the use of alcohol and lack of awareness and sensitivity to religious practices, remains a significant barrier.

This study reveals that 40% of Muslim women leaders either are or have been involved in a small business enterprise. The main driver to this involvement is the desire for independence and in some cases the availability of a niche market in professional services or specific commercial services such as hairdressing and beauty salons or goods such as women's clothing and food.

The research on friendships and social life included two specific areas. These were a review of the social and friendship bonds between Muslim women and the non-Muslim community and a review of the of social and friendship bonds that exist for Muslim women within the Muslim community.

In relation to friendships between Muslim women and the non-Muslim community, the key findings indicate that among the Muslim women leaders two thirds, 68%, have close women friends from other religions or no religious background while 32% identified Muslim women as their closest friends.

The drivers to these friendships include long term school and university friendships, mutually supportive and respectful relationships and shared religious, social and intellectual values. For many observant young Muslim women there is a shared youth culture and for some older women a shared social life sometimes around children. Muslim women also engage in a range

of social activities with their non-Muslim friends for example, going to dinner and the movies, talking on the phone, having coffee, shopping 'hanging out', and participating in children's events such as playgroups or sporting events. Some also participate in each other's festivals.

There were barriers also to these friendships and among those identified by the research participants was the widespread social use of alcohol. For young Muslim women, alcohol, other recreational drugs, attendance at clubs and the nature of male-female relationships that is the norm in Australian youth culture are also barriers to friendships. Other barriers include stereotyping and lack of sensitivity to Islamic religious dress and religious practices as well as, for new arrivals, poor English language skills and the lack of understanding of Australian culture.

In terms of social life for Muslim women within the Muslim community in the focus groups' discussion was dominated by lengthy and lively debates by the youth participants around the issue of friendships with Muslim males and the issue of marriage. The Muslim women leaders also addressed this issue.

The drivers to these friendships include the desire to meet and socialise with young Muslim males in a religiously acceptable way and the natural desire to partner and parent. Other drivers for some women included a willingness to break stereotypes and to challenge ethnic and cultural traditions. The barriers to these friendships and to marriage include religious differences, with the majority expressing the opinion that the young men were either 'too secular or not religious enough', while some expressed the view that some young males were too religiously conservative and patriarchal. For the majority of young women and Muslim women leaders, educational differences, lack of opportunity to socialise, lack of involvement by young men within the community, poor parenting of young males and the increasing tendency of young males to go overseas for brides were all major barriers for young Muslim Australian women in establishing friendships and partnering with young male Australian Muslims.

Sport is recognised as a key area of Australian social life. The key findings in this research relating to sport were that for Muslim women the major driver to undertake sporting activity is the personal desire to stay fit, trim and healthy. In terms of sport and recreational activities, the majority of young women and some older women engage regularly in sporting activities such as women only gyms, although others attend mixed gyms. Some also attend women only swimming pool sessions, where these exist. Others ride, run and walk or participate in Tai Kwan Do or kickboxing. Women's soccer is also popular with Muslim women's teams in Sydney and Melbourne. The increasing availability of women only facilities, especially in gyms and increasingly at swimming pools is also a driver for Muslim women's participation in these sports.

The major barrier to women's participation in sport is lack of accommodation by the various sports codes to Muslim women's dress codes, in particular in netball. The lack of women only sporting facilities is the other major barrier for Muslim women in some states. The racial and religious discrimination often

associated with verbal and physical harassment that takes place in some sports, such as women's soccer, is also a major problem. For new arrivals, cultural understanding, as well as religious conservatism relating to Muslim women's participation in sport inhibits some of these women's participation. Muslim women have also identified a lack of community leadership other than that which is given by Muslim Women's Organisations (MWOs) and committed individuals.

Another component of the research involved interviews and discussion around relationships with government. The key findings in relation to this component were that overall, all Muslim women leaders and young women involved in the focus groups reported having good relations with most government departments. They are participating actively in negotiating with those departments that provide funds for various services at an organisational or personal level. Most Muslim women leaders have also been involved at some time with cross-cultural training in various government departments and many report good relations with the nursing services, police and security services as a result of these contacts. Those leaders and youth that have been involved in youth services with government departments report good relations, as do those with small businesses.

In relation to barriers to participation with government, a key area of concern within the health sector was mostly at a personnel level with the system's 'gate keepers' such as secretaries and receptionists, as well as with some allied health personnel. In general these personnel in the health care system have not been involved in cross-cultural training. New arrivals especially are experiencing difficulties participating effectively within the health care system. Some research respondents identified Centrelink staff and DIAC staff as requiring intensive cross-cultural training to overcome what is seen as gender, religious and cultural misunderstanding.

The final areas to be reviewed in Section B of the report involve the drivers and barriers to Muslim women's participation in MWOs and non-Muslim women's organisations. The key findings indicate that Muslim Australian women are actively involved in providing voluntary service to their communities and young Muslim women are involved in youth leadership programs and other social events organised by the MWOs. Additionally MWOs provide social and religious camaraderie as well as the opportunity to reach out to the Muslim and non-Muslim communities through various community activities. For some young Muslim women these can include cross-cultural training with other non-Muslim youth and non-Muslim women's organisations (non-MWOs).

When questioned about working with other Muslim women's organisations, the key barrier was time and resources as well as the lack of effective national leadership. Competition for scarce funds was also a factor in lack of collaboration.

In regard to relationships with non-MWOs, Muslim women working in MWOs collaborated effectively on issues around women's services such as health,

domestic violence, housing etc.. Some MWOs also collaborated on interfaith issues, but there is growing dissatisfaction with these programs, because they tend to 'preach to the converted', that is, those who are already well disposed and tolerant. Barriers to participation with non-MWOs included the lack of religious understanding, cultural insensitivity, a perceived lack of acceptance and for some women, language skills.

The fourth phase of the research involved a mapping exercise of ten representative MWOs across Australia. These findings are presented in Section C of the report. This mapping exercise identified in brief that the majority of MWOs are incorporated bodies and have sound governance structures. Funding for their services is from various levels of government and some MWOs fundraise and receive donations, but a considerable proportion of the work is carried out on a voluntary basis.

Within all of the communities researched MWOs are the public face of Muslim women. They play an exceptionally pivotal role in the community, providing services and advocating for Muslim women. The research found that Muslim women have excellent organisations, the majority of which are working with and for their local communities, are deeply linked to those communities and know and understand the needs of these communities. As the public face of Muslim Australian women they undertake a substantial number of voluntary hours in cross-cultural education across all sectors of non-Muslim Australian society working for national religious and racial harmony. Such work is being carried out under extremely difficult human resource and funding conditions.

The research also concludes that there is an urgent need to increase funding for family support and parenting programs through Muslim women's organisations and other relevant Muslim community bodies. In particular, the report concludes that considerable additional support should be given to newly arrived Muslim women to overcome the significant barriers that exist to their active participation in Australian society, in particular the difficulties identified with regard to access to English language training programs.

In conclusion this research found that the majority of Muslim Australian women participants in this study are actively involved in broad areas of Australian social and civic life. Nonetheless significant barriers remain to that participation. Racial and religious discrimination against Muslim women wearing religious dress remains a factor in Australian public life. Lack of substantial national commitment and funding to undertake urgently needed cross-cultural training and other community activities to improve religious understanding and tolerance in the Australian community, contribute to that ongoing discrimination. Such lack of national action to inform and educate the non-Muslim community about Australia's religious and racial diversity, so as to ensure national harmony and full societal participation by all Australian citizens, remains the major barrier to Muslim women's active participation in Australian society.

Recommendations

- A key contributor to Australian racial and religious harmony is information and education about the nation's rich religious and racial diversity. To that end a substantial national funding package should be provided to a range of community organisations to undertake cross-cultural training.
- Considerable additional funding should be given to Muslim women's organisations and other suitable Muslim bodies, to employ staff to expand the already intensive and volunteer work they are doing in cross-cultural and religious and racial awareness training.
- Funds should be provided for a national family support program to be administered principally through existing Muslim community groups and MWOs with emphasis on early intervention, domestic violence and mental health. This program would include specifically targeted parenting programs for the Muslim community, to include new arrivals and young Muslim parents.
- A national media campaign should be undertaken to address stereotyping, prejudicial attitudes and discrimination against Muslim women and to promote positive images of the diversity of Muslim women and to normalise their participation in Australian community life.
- Existing school based anti-racist materials should be strengthened so as familiarise teachers, career advisers and students with the cultural and religious diversity of Australian society. Specific attention should be paid to career advisers to eliminate discriminatory practices against young Muslim women.
- At the Federal, state and local government levels, funds should be provided to strengthen sports programs for Muslim women, to support infrastructure development and to provide sports training programs for new arrivals and training for Muslim women coaches, so as to encourage and facilitate Muslim women's greater participation in sport.
- Ongoing reported discrimination in the workforce on the basis of religious dress should be addressed.
- To promote positive role models and to help overcome existing stereotyping and discrimination in the workforce, funding should be provided to undertake a national program of cultural diversity training within the Australian business community. Such a program should also facilitate Muslim business women's participation in local, state and national women's business councils and forums.
- At the national level, funds should be provided for a national consultative process to work towards a representative national body for Muslim women, to include all Muslim women's organisations and other Muslim women's representative groups within the community.

Research

- A national research program should be undertaken to identify the drivers and barriers for young Muslim Australian males to participate in the social and civic life of the Muslim and non-Muslim Australian community.
- A national review should be undertaken to identify access to various services by newly arrived Muslim women with a view to improving services and increasing resource allocation. This should include a review of English as a Second Language (ESL) training, including children friendly and women friendly programs in all states, and the identification of measures to be taken to facilitate women's more active participation in ESL programs.
- Scholarly research should be undertaken on the textual evidence of male roles and responsibilities in Islam and materials based on such research should be produced and disseminated.
- Research should be undertaken with state, independent and faith-based high school teachers, career advisers and students to identify the reported level of lack of interest and encouragement of Muslim women to enter into higher education and strategies should be identified to overcome this problem.

Research Report

Research Outline

This project has involved qualitative research exploring Muslim women's civil and social participation within the Muslim Australian community and the non-Muslim community. The research includes a profile of Muslim women that examines their religious participation, ethnic background and family relations. It has also explored ways in which Muslim Australian women are interacting with the broader Australian community in key sectors such as childcare, education, workforce, social and family life, friends and sport. The report has broadly identified the drivers and barriers to that participation in those sectors of Australian life. At its outcome, it has also identified various strategies to overcome such barriers to participation and provided a series of recommendations based on those strategies. The project has also mapped Muslim women's voluntary organisations, surveying their historical development, governance, funding, and the services that they provide to meet the needs of the community, and the extent to which young women are involved in these organisations.

Background to Project

This project was undertaken at a time in Australia when racial and religious discrimination and the associated rhetoric of 'Islamophobia' continue to challenge religious tolerance and community harmony. As the identifiable 'public face' of Islam, Muslim Australian women are often the targets of this discrimination and public abuse.

The 2004 report by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), titled '*Isma- Listen*', found that racial and religious discrimination against Muslim women existed widely in Australia.² The report also found that Muslim women, including young Muslim women, were often the specific focus of this discrimination, with prejudice taking a range of forms from offensive remarks to physical violence. This religious discrimination was particularly severe after the September 11, 2001 bombings. Muslim women's religious dress, a clear religious marker, makes such women visible targets of abuse and racial and religious hatred, particularly in times of heightened community tension.

However, Muslim women have a range of dress styles which express their religiosity. These dress styles can be seen on a continuum of the following: scarves that cover the head only with loose long sleeved tops that come to mid thigh over trousers or long skirts; corporate styled clothes with jacket and long trousers with a head scarf; loose long flowing dresses and a head scarf covering the upper body (generally referred to as the *abayah* or *jilbab*). All of these dress styles would be described by the generic term *hijab*. The end of the continuum would be the black full length, loose covering gown with gloves and with two thirds or all of the face covered, often referred to generically as

² Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2004, '*Isma- Listen Report*', HREOC.

the *niqab*. However, the word *niqab* refers only to the face covering. In times of heightened tension any one of these styles can cause attention and abuse. In this research we are referring to the generic term *hijab* unless otherwise stated.

In spite of the fear that this abuse engenders, the majority of Muslim Australian women have responded to this situation with courage and assertiveness, confident in their identity as 'Australian Muslims'. However, the more vulnerable women among them, including new arrivals and women with poor language skills, have at times found such situations overwhelming, with some resorting to withdrawing from public spaces for a time.

The Muslim community and MWOs in particular, with extremely limited resources and mostly on a volunteer basis, have reached out energetically to wide sections of the non-Muslim Australian community to help people understand about Islam and its place in Australian society. Extensive media campaigns including cross-cultural and Islamic sensitivity training programs with media managers and journalists have also been undertaken.

Over the past two years there have been some programs, principally on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) TV and radio that have sought to inform the Australian public about Islam and have sought, to 'normalise' Muslims within Australian society. While these have been important efforts, religious stereotyping by elements of the media and community prejudice against Muslims remains, as seen at the recent public outcry in Camden NSW over a proposed Islamic school. Significant stereotyping also still exists against Muslim women who regularly report being identified as newly arrived migrants with poor English language skills and as being poorly educated oppressed homemakers.

This research aims to explore how individual Muslim Australian women are responding to these issues in 2007/8. The research also seeks to explore the various ways in which Muslim women are participating in non-Muslim society, and the drivers as well as the present day barriers to that participation. The project also identifies ways in which individual Muslim Australian women and MWOs are addressing these issues, both within their community and within the broader Australian society.

Research Objectives

The specific research objectives are to:

- examine Muslim women's, including young Muslim women's, civil and social participation within Muslim community and religious networks
- explore the extent to which Muslim women across Australia are interacting with the broader Australian community

- examine Muslim women's civil and social participation within government at all levels
- profile Muslim women's religious participation, ethnic background and family relationships and interactions
- identify the specific obstacles that obstruct Muslim women's participation within community and religious networks and in the civil and governmental sphere
- identify the best practices in place to overcome these obstacles
- review Muslim women's voluntary organisations, surveying their historical development, the services that they provide to meet the needs of the community, and the extent to which young women are involved in these organisations.

Research Methodology

The principal methodology of this project is qualitative research, including a literature search and desktop web analysis, interviews with key stakeholders, focus groups, and a mapping exercise of key Muslim women's organisations across Australia. The methodology was informed by Flick's³ work on qualitative research and Bazeley's qualitative data analysis methods.⁴

Data Collection

Data collection has been undertaken in four stages. These involved an initial literature review and web based analysis. The second stage involved a quantitative survey of research participants. All the Muslim women leaders and focus group participants completed a short questionnaire covering age, ethnicity, birthplace, parents' birthplace, highest educational level, marital status, number of children, and several questions relating to religious practices. The third stage of data collection involved qualitative research that consisted of one to one interviews with twenty five Muslim women leaders. In this stage of data collection from ten focus groups involving seventy five women was also undertaken. In addition a fourth stage involved a mapping exercise of ten MWOs.

In total, one hundred and ten Muslim women from the five states of Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and the territory of the ACT participated in this research. The interviews and focus group participants included a broad range of ethnic groups, including over thirty different nationalities. The interview and focus group data collected was taped and transcribed. The data collected from both the leaders and focus

³ UWE Flick, 2006, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research 3rd Ed*, Sage Publications, London UK

⁴ Pat Bazeley, 2007, *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo*, Sage Publications, London .UK

groups focused on key issues of participation in Australian society. These included the workforce, business, education, social life and sport.

The research tools used were approved by DIAC in April 2007 as requested under the contract. In accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth), the Chief Investigator developed a plain English consent form that all participants signed prior to interview or participation in the focus groups. This consent form was also approved by DIAC.

Literature Search and Desktop Web Analysis

The project has involved a literature search to identify relevant research and data on Muslim Australian women. Data from the literature review has been incorporated into each relevant section of the report but has also been compiled and presented in Appendix 1. A bibliography is also attached as Appendix 2. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data from the 2006 Census has also been collected and has been used in the data analysis.

A desktop web analysis has also been undertaken of Australian MWOs and this information, combined with interview data from the managers of ten key MWOs has formed part of this final report on the mapping of MWOs across Australia.

Muslim Women Leader Interviews

A fifty four question, semi-structured questionnaire was used in the one to one face or phone interviews with Muslim women leaders in five Australian states and the ACT. In general these interviews were of one-hour's duration. All interviews were taped and transcribed.

The women involved in the research were known Muslim Australian women leaders who were approached directly. The key aim of these interviews was to explore with Muslim women leaders their understanding of Muslim women's participation and interaction with Australian civil and social life as well as their participation within Muslim community and religious networks. In addition, these interviews also sought to identify barriers to women's participation within the broader sphere of Australian life. Key areas of interest were the workforce, business, education, government, social life and sport. Data was also collected around participation in Muslim and non-MWOs.

Focus Groups

The principal target group for these ten focus groups were second and third generation young Muslim Australian women. Focus groups were held in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Canberra and Wollongong. On average there were eight to ten participants in each of the groups and they were invited to participate through existing networks and a snowball research approach. The focus groups included a broad range of ethnic groups with the majority of participants being in the eighteen to thirty five year age range.

Some of the groups were randomly selected and associated with university students and others with MWOs. The make up of these groups varied. Four were composed totally of young Muslim women who were generally well educated, but from lower-socio-economic areas of high Muslim concentration. One was held in the NSW regional city of Wollongong where all the women had attended high school, and, if working, were engaged in vocational related areas such as childcare, assistant nursing etc. Two were from outer western suburbs of Melbourne and Sydney, in areas of high Muslim concentration and generally lower socio-economic levels and were of mixed age ranges. Three were associated with Muslim women's organisations with youth groups or study groups. Overall English language skills were very good, but translators were needed for some women in two of the groups.

The focus groups discussed issues relating to specific drivers for young Muslim women's participation within Muslim communities, MWOs and broader non-Muslim Australian society. The key areas discussed were as in the Muslim leader interviews detailed above.

Mapping of MWOs

The project also conducted ten one hour long phone or face to face interviews with the managers of MWOs in most states of Australia including Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland, NSW, Victoria and the ACT. Data about these MWO's has also been collected from web pages where these exist. This mapping exercise of MWOs nationally has provided a useful profile of each organisation's structure, governance, funding, services provided and the outreach activities of these key organisations within the Australian community.

Data Analysis

Using data collected from the sources outlined above, data analysis involved reviewing the quantitative data relating to, age, marital status, educational level, citizenship, religious participation and ethnic background and comparing this with relevant data from the 2006 Census, provided by the ABS. Research findings from this phase of the data analysis is presented in Section A of the report.

The next phase of the data analysis involved transcribing Muslim leader interviews and focus group discussions and guided by qualitative research methods, identifying and tagging key concepts relating to the drivers and barriers to Muslim women's participation in identified sectors of Australian civil and social life. These included: the non-Muslim educational system at the preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary levels, the workforce, personally owned commercial enterprises, social and family life, sport, and local, state and federal government agencies and Muslim women's involvement with Muslim and non-Muslim women's organisation. Strategies to overcome the barriers to participation were also identified. These research findings are presented in the report in Section B.

The final phase of the research involved transcribing the ten interviews with the managers of the MWOs and compiling data relating to governance, finances, human resources, scope and nature of services provided, work with young women, and community and government relations. This phase also utilised data available from various MWOs' web sites and the research findings are presented in Section C of the report.

Research Findings

Section A: Profile of Participants

This component of the report provides an overview of the background of the key leaders and the focus group participants. Questions covered included age, ethnicity, citizenship, marital status, children, educational level and questions relating to religious practices.

Age group of Leaders and Focus Groups

As Table 1 indicates, the female leadership of the Muslim community in Australia involved in this research is in the middle age bracket with 48% in the twenty five to forty year range and 44% over forty years of age. The majority of focus group participants were under forty years of age with the majority, 43%, being in the eighteen to twenty four year old age range. This spread of age ranges in the research enabled us to identify a range of generational responses on key issues. In total, 65% of participants were under forty years of age.

Table 1: Age group of Leaders and Focus Groups

	Under 18	18-24	25-40	40 +
Leaders	0	8%	48%	44%
Focus Groups	0	43%	31%	26%
Total of all participants	0	25.5%	39.5%	35%

Country of Birth

The research also identifies a wide range of ethnicities among the leaders and focus group women. Some thirty two nationalities participated in this research, indicating the heterogeneity of the Muslim population in Australia.

Among the leaders, the country of birth included the following nine countries: Egypt, Lebanon, Sudan, Afghanistan, Taiwan, Malaysia, India, Kashmir and Australia. Of these, 56% were born in Australia.

Among the focus groups, the country of birth included twenty two countries from all regions of the globe. Among this group 28% were born in Australia, 11% in Lebanon, 9% in Iraq and 17% in Fiji. It should be noted that the high Fijian figure resulted from one focus group being held with Fijian women only.

Table 2: Region of Birth

Region	Leaders	Focus Groups
Australia	56%	28%
Middle East	12%	29%
Central Asia	4%	8%
South East Asia/Pacific	20%	24%
African	8%	6%
Europe	0%	5%

Viewed within regions, the total of the leaders and focus groups included 42% born in Australia. A total of 58% were born overseas, making them first generation Australians. Of those born overseas 23% were born in Middle Eastern countries, 22% in South East Asia and the Pacific and 13% in other regions such as Africa, Central Asia and Europe (See Table 2).

Parents Born Overseas

Among the leaders, 36% had parents born overseas with 64% having parents born in Australia. Among the focus groups 97% had parents born overseas and 3% had parents born in Australia. In total 66.5% of the research participants had parents born overseas while 33.5% had parents born in Australia.

Citizenship

92% of the leaders and 93% of the focus group participants were Australian citizens. On average the leaders had lived in Australia for twenty five years.

Marital Status

The majority of the research participants, 62.5%, (leaders 69% and focus groups 57%) were married. As would be expected of a younger group, 39% of the focus group members were not married, with a total of 27.5% of the research participants not married.

Table 3: Marital Status

Status	Leaders	Focus Group	Total
Married	68%	57%	62.5%
Divorced	8%	4%	6.0%
Widowed	8%	0	4.0%
Not married	16%	39%	27.5%

Age of Marriage

The average age of marriage for leaders was twenty four years and for focus group members was twenty one years.

Number of Children

On average the leaders had two point five children while the focus groups members had an average of three children.

Age of Youngest Child at Home

The average age of the leaders' youngest child at home was eleven years with an age range of one to twenty seven years of age. In the focus groups the members' youngest child at home was ten years with an age range of one to twenty eight years of age.

English Language Skills

In relation to English language skills, 100% of the leaders rated their English as excellent, while among the focus groups, 59% rated themselves as excellent and 36% as good with only 5% rating themselves as having poor English language skills. In total, 95 % of research participants rated themselves as good or excellent in English with only 5% rating themselves as having poor English language skills. This is similar to the 2006 ABS statistic of 86% of Muslim women in the eighteen to forty age range having good English language skills and 12% rating themselves as not having good language skills.⁵

Highest Educational Level

Among Muslim women there is a strong emphasis placed on higher education, and as this research demonstrates, Muslim women are committed to furthering their education, with a total of 62.5 % of the research participants undertaking or having completed undergraduate studies.

Among the leaders, 76% were either undertaking or had completed undergraduate and /or post graduate studies, with 48% having completed or undertaking postgraduate studies.

Among this group:

- 12% had completed or were undertaking PhD studies;
- 36% Masters degrees
- 28% Bachelors degrees
- 8% Diploma
- 16% had completed Year 12.

⁵ ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing Religious Affiliation and English Proficiency by Age and Sex

Among the focus groups, 50% were undertaking or had completed university studies. Specifically:

- 4% were undertaking or had completed postgraduate studies;
- 45 % were undertaking or had completed undergraduate studies
- 15% were at TAFE
- 19% had completed Year 12
- 17% had not completed Year 12.

Table 4 Educational Level of all Participants

Educational Level	Total
Ph.D	6.0%
Masters/postgraduate studies	20.0%
Bachelors degrees	36.5%
Diploma/TAFE	11.5%
Year 12	17.5%
Not completed Yr 12	8.5%

In the eighteen to forty age bracket the 2006 ABS Census shows that for 20% of the total Muslim Australian female population, the highest level of qualification is bachelors degree level and higher indicating that our sample was more highly educated than the average Muslim Australian female.⁶

Religious Practices

The research also questioned the participants as to their religious observance, specifically in relation to fasting, observing religious rituals and feasts as well as undertaking regular prayer, attending the mosque and wearing the *hijab*.

When questioned about wearing religious dress, 72% of leaders wore *hijab*, 16% never veiled and 12 % did sometimes when attending the mosque, meeting with religious leaders or attending religious events.⁷ Among the focus group members the figures were similar with 78% always wearing religious dress, 13% sometimes and 9 % never.

Among the leaders 100% identified themselves as being religiously observant, praying regularly, fasting and undertaking religious rituals with 96% of the focus groups identifying themselves similarly. Among the leaders, 52%, and among the focus group participants, 48%, attended a Muslim women's religious study group either weekly, fortnightly or monthly.

⁶ ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing Religious Affiliation and Highest Educational Attainment by Age and Sex

⁷ See Background to Project p.12 for a definition of *hijab*.

In relation to mosque attendance, 28% of leaders attended regularly, 12% sometimes and 60% never. Of the focus group members, 50% attended, 4% attended sometimes and 46% never attended the mosque. In total, only 39% of the research participants attended their local mosque.

It is not mandatory for Muslim women to attend the mosque and prayers are undertaken in the home, work or study place. When questioned about this, both Muslim women leaders and focus group members commented that in general they do not feel welcome or the facilities are uncomfortable or inadequate. In addition, many women commented that they do not have enough time to go to the mosque or that it is too far away. However, there are considerable state variations, with Western Australia and South Australia commenting positively on their local mosques.

In NSW and Victoria, comments included:

*No, I don't attend but mostly because I haven't felt welcome.*⁸

*No. It's not compulsory for women and I haven't found a mosque where I am comfortable religiously, that has English and is local. There are three issues for me: vicinity, language and dogma in some ways. But at Ramadan I'm always at the mosque in the evenings.*⁹

*No, since I moved to Sydney I've felt that the quasi buildings set up as a mosque, it's not very easily accessed by women. I feel quite intimidated by going.*¹⁰

In Western Australia, comments included:

*Our local mosque has a big space for women with a separate entrance and unlike other mosques it is not dark and the facilities are quite good.*¹¹

In South Australia, comments related to facilities and the nature of sermons and included:

*We have a new mosque with lovely bathrooms for Muslim women. It's very comfortable and it's really beautiful up there. You can relax and pray in peace without men upsetting you in any way. The same goes for the Adelaide mosque; there is an upstairs and a downstairs but it's not as big. Women are treated well and they've got their own bathroom but it's not as elaborate.*¹²

Another woman in South Australia commented:

⁸ Personal Communication MWL 24 3-7-07

⁹ Personal Communication MWL 5 10-4-07

¹⁰ Personal Communication MWL 6 15-4-07

¹¹ Personal Communication MWL 11 10-9-07

¹² Personal Communication MWL 18 19-4-07

*We don't go to our local mosque because the Imam there is not politically in line with our thinking so we go to the Adelaide mosque. I feel more comfortable at the other mosque because I like the sermons, and it is very spiritual rather than political. I feel there's a nice place for the women. There's no feeling of being pushed aside in any way.*¹³

A research project has been undertaken in NSW on women's attendance in mosques and in Victoria Muslim converts have also had their views canvassed on this issue. Neither piece of research has been published to date.

Involvement in Interfaith Activities

Interfaith activity is a significant component of Muslim women's volunteer work. Among the leaders, 68%, and among the focus groups members, 58% are active in interfaith activities. Such activities include participating in various interfaith networks, public speaking at interfaith events at schools and with teachers and representing the Muslim community at University interfaith events. One person edits an interfaith newsletter and another is a member of the Jewish, Christian, Muslim Association women's section. However, a number of leaders directly involved in MWOs indicated that they felt that such activity was 'talking to the converted' and they had made personal and organisational decisions to direct scarce resources to servicing Muslim women's needs and to undertaking cross-cultural training in the broader non-Muslim community.

*Things like interfaith dinners, which are like warming parties, they're preaching to the converted. They're already converted and they're only going to these because they are open to difference. Whereas, the people who are not open to difference are the ones that need that sort of education.*¹⁴

*The last thing we need is more religious people talking about interfaith solutions. All those resources could have been put to better use, rather than old white men and Muslim patriarchs spending time over lunch or whatever talking about their insights about the world, that have absolutely no relevance to anybody.*¹⁵

Now a lot of us want to concentrate on Muslims themselves. Just visiting them, helping them out, new arrivals, showing them where various things are. I'd rather do that than interfaith dialogue because I've done so much and I honestly don't think it's working that well. We've still got Muslim women being abused and looked down upon and not treated fairly. I blame the government because we have told

¹³ Personal Communication MWL 17 19-4-07

¹⁴ Personal Communication MWL 4 25-4-07

¹⁵ Personal Communication MWL 10 1-5-07

*the heads of government they must be more positive towards Muslims and give us a fair go.*¹⁶

Summary

This mostly quantitative section of the research has provided an overview of the Muslim women participating in the study, with some comparison with the total Muslim Australian women's population and non-Muslim population on key indicators such as English language proficiency and highest educational attainment.

Of the Muslim women leaders, 56% were under forty years of age and 56% were born in Australia. They were all Australian citizens, had good English language skills and were very well educated, with 76% undertaking or having undertaken undergraduate studies. 48% of Muslim women leaders had completed or were undertaking post graduate studies.

Of the focus groups, the majority, 43%, were in the eighteen to twenty four age range and in total 74% were under forty. These mostly young women were a mixture of first and second generation Australians with mixed marital status and some had young children. Members of the focus groups had good language skills and over half were attending or planning to attend tertiary level studies.

In total, 42% of the participants were born in Australia. Of those born overseas, 23% were born in Middle Eastern countries, 22% in South East Asia and the Pacific and 13% in other regions (Africa, Central Asia and Europe).

All participants were practising Muslims with the majority wearing *hijab*, depending on ethnicity. A majority were involved in interfaith activities of some kind but there were some concerns expressed about the direction of these activities.

¹⁶ Personal communication MWL 18 19-4-07

Section B

Drivers and Barriers to Muslim Australian Women's Participation in the Civil and Social Life of Australian Society.

This section of the report covers Muslim Australian women's participation, including the drivers and barriers to that participation in education, the workforce, business, social and family life, sport and government relations, as well as participation in Muslim and non-Muslim organisations. Each subsection has a brief summary and is followed by a series of strategy proposals as to how to overcome the barriers identified. The research provides a snapshot only into the attitudes and opinions of key Muslim Australian leaders and selected young Muslim women as to how they are participating and how they perceive other Muslim women are participating in these key sectors of Australian society. Additional in-depth research into all of these areas is required.

Section B.1 Education

Drivers and barriers to participation in the non Muslim educational system at the preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary levels

This section of the research has explored key issues relating to Muslim women's participation in the non-Muslim Australian educational system at the preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Childcare, including playgroups and child care centres, are often places where women establish friendships with women experiencing the same life stages and can be instrumental in assisting mothers to participate in the broader society. Primary and secondary school experiences also often facilitate life-long friendships and help develop skills, knowledge and identity. In relation to higher education, data from the 2006 ABS Census indicates that significant numbers of Muslim women are undertaking and participating in tertiary education successfully. Some 17.5% of Muslim women in the 18 plus age bracket have a bachelors degree or higher. This compares extremely favourably with the 18% of total Australian women in the same age range and with the same qualifications.¹⁷

In relation to English language skills, a key necessity for participation in the education system as well as the broader society, this research identified that 95 % of research participants rated themselves as good or excellent in English with only 5% rating themselves as having poor English language skills. However, it is noted that major problems continue to exist for newly arrived Muslim women in relation to access to information and appropriate child friendly and women only English as a Second Language (ESL) learning facilities. Newly arrived Muslim women in rural Australia face similar difficulties.

B. 1.1 Drivers and Barriers to Participation at the Preschool Level

Preschool is one of the critical areas of learning, including cultural and social learning for children. Within the Muslim community, great emphasis is placed on children, their care and their education. Where women use a childcare facility, this research shows that Muslim Australian women make every effort to be involved in their child's learning and in the community of the centre. This of course varies from family to family and from individual to individual as to how they are able to participate.

This research also indicates that childcare of different types and kindergarten services are widely used by Muslim Australian women. Muslim women's barriers to accessing these services include those which also affect the non-Muslim community such as cost, transport and location availability. In addition to these, there are some specific barriers to Muslim Australian women's choice of facility that relate to their religious practices.

¹⁷ ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing Religious Affiliation and Highest Educational Attainment by Age and Sex

According to research participants there is a growing number of Muslim owned and run childcare centres in areas of high Muslim population. In Adelaide and Perth there are kindergartens attached to the Islamic school in those cities, and in Sydney there are Muslim, mostly Arabic or Turkish run childcare centres in areas such as Auburn and Lakemba. In Melbourne, there are a number of Muslim owned and run childcare centres as well, but neither Canberra or Brisbane have such centres at this time. All such centres are open to non-Muslims.

B.1.1a Drivers to Participation in Childcare

The research indicated that there are a number of significant drivers to Muslim women availing themselves of childcare services. Among these is a growing understanding and acceptance within the childcare system of the needs of Muslim women and the positive impact of multicultural protocols and practices on the majority of these services. The work of the childcare industry and the kindergarten unions, as well as the cross-cultural work undertaken by Muslim women's organisations over many years, is also evident. Anecdotal evidence points to a growing participation in Family Day Care by all Muslim women while increasingly Muslim women are also using non-Muslim childcare.

Cultural Awareness Training

The MWOs have also been major contributors to cultural understanding in this industry sector, with extensive work being undertaken over several decades by the Muslim Women's Association in NSW, especially in Western Sydney, by the IWWC of Victoria and by MWOs in other states.

*We work with the coordinators of all the centres in our area [Western Sydney] to raise awareness of these issues and through this cross-cultural training we have established a kind of networking and understanding about Muslim women's needs and also about the various childcare centres' needs. At the moment we are working specifically in the Mt Druitt and Blacktown areas with the childcare coordinators there, because we received a couple of complaints from parents from that area. So we go and provide the coordinators with training and information because we believe that it is our responsibility to take the knowledge to them.*¹⁸

In Victoria extensive pro-active work in cross-cultural training has also been undertaken throughout childcare centres, especially over the past six years.¹⁹

Several focus group participants work in the industry and commented on the celebration of all religious feasts, including the Muslim *Eid* feasts:

Where I work most of the childcare centres celebrate each religious holiday. It's good. We're definitely moving forward I think in terms of

¹⁸ Personal Communication MWA 6-4-07

¹⁹ Personal communication FG 3 13-9-07

*childcare. We are being more accommodating to different cultures and backgrounds.*²⁰

*I work in ABC in what is a multicultural centre and we celebrate all the festivals like Christmas, Easter and Eid. Most of the parents are happy for the children to contribute to those celebrations. Usually with Eid they do a sheep drawing and pasting for the sheep and at my centre we do every single cultural celebration there. The parents are happy. We've got no parents there saying "I don't want my child contributing for Easter" or that kind of stuff. It's pretty good.*²¹

Availability of Trained Muslim Childcare Workers

As the above comments indicate, Muslim women are increasingly working in mainstream childcare facilities. A number of women also commented that they felt more comfortable once they knew that a specific centre employed a Muslim child care worker and that this was a significant factor in their choice of childcare facility.

Socio-economic Status

In relation to socio-economic status this research indicates that Muslim women from a higher socio-economic status are more accepting of childcare centres owned or run by non-Muslims. Women from a lower socio-economic status tend to use a Muslim run Family Day Care service or family members to meet their childcare needs.

*You'll often find that women in the lower socio-economic group often have more kids and they have extended family and therefore there are more aunties, uncles, cousins, older cousins to call on. Women in a higher socio-economic situation are forced to use childcare because they don't have that extended family or the extended family is all working. It's really an economic rather than a racial or religious issue*²²

B.1.1b Barriers to Participation in Child Care

While considerable work has been done in this important industry and Muslim women are happily using non-Muslim childcare facilities, a number of barriers still exist to Muslim women's participation in non-Muslim childcare and preschool settings. These include non-Muslim owners or workers in such facilities, religiously required food and toilet requirements, in some centres lack of celebration of Muslim festivals and rituals, and in some instances unacceptable behaviour of other children. Among those research participants with children, a significant number used family or home day care with the same ethnic or the same religious carers.

²⁰ Personal Communication FG 1 12-9-07

²¹ Personal Communication FG3 13-9-07

²² Personal Communication MWL 5 19-4-07

Preference for Muslim Run Childcare Services

A significant number of women interviewed felt that if they had a choice they would prefer to use a facility that was run by or had Muslim women working at such a facility.

Muslim women in the research also used Family Day Care with a preference to use such day care where there were Muslim workers. The main reasons cited for such a choice were comfort with other Muslim women of all ethnic backgrounds, knowledge that religious requirements would be adhered to, language and behaviour would be acceptable and rituals and feasts would be observed and honoured.

In all the cities where data was collected there is a growing trend for Muslim women, and especially new arrivals, to undertake training to work as Family Day Care workers as well as childcare workers for Muslim as well as non-Muslim centres. The main reason is that childcare work for women is culturally acceptable for a number of ethnic groups.

...there are quite a few Muslim women who do childcare from their homes. A lot of them tap into that because you do a short course and a senior first aid course and then you can start. I think there's quite a high demand for childcare workers and lot of Muslim women feel comfortable dropping their kids with other Muslim women or women from their same ethnic group because a lot of the time they are family friends. They are of course registered with the government as Family Day Care workers.²³

An additional reason for working in childcare is the difficulty some Muslim women, especially new arrivals, have in finding work in other areas, for a number of reasons, including lack of recognition of overseas qualifications as well as Muslim women's dress.

A reason why it is becoming common is because like a friend of my mother's she couldn't find work anywhere else. She's from Bangladesh and she has overseas qualifications but she decided to start her own childcare thing [family day care] because she was discriminated against because of the hijab. They are becoming more and more common.²⁴

A number of women also used family members, mostly for cost and convenience, to take care of their children, but this also has other advantages as one person interviewed commented:

... a lot rely on parents because it's cheaper, they probably get it for free. Along with a dinner when they get home.²⁵

²³ Personal Communication MWL 21-4-07

²⁴ Personal Communication FG 6 1-6-07

²⁵ Personal communication MWL 20-4-07

The women interviewed noted that Muslim women participating in Family Day Care have a good client base as such a service is convenient, they can stay at home and care for several other children and the clients are happy with the halal food and other religious and cultural arrangements. However, there were some concerns raised about children's language development skills in such a setting, especially where one ethnic group dominated and the language of that group was used.

Finally, however, the overall sentiment was that it was not necessarily a Muslim child care centre that Muslim women wanted but rather one that would cater to their needs especially with regard to food and rituals and festivals.

Lack of Sensitivity to Religious Concerns by non-Muslim Run Centres

Halal food

The most commonly cited issue for Muslim women, in relation to childcare settings, was that of access to *halal* food. However, it was also noted that, with the introduction of protocols in relation to food handling in childcare and preschools as a result of allergies, proper handling and access to *halal* food for Muslim children was becoming less of an issue. Nonetheless, Muslim women felt some anxiety about this issue and some felt that not all centres were fully aware of Muslim children's needs in relation to *halal* food.

Religiously Appropriate Toilet Training

For some Muslim women the issue of toilet training is of concern. Not all women follow the same Islamic school of law with different schools having different requirements.

There are certain things I expect my children to observe and having Muslim workers enhanced that. When I suggested to them could they use water instead of toilet paper and things like that they were OK with it, they understood what I was talking about.²⁶

Religious Festivals

Some of the research participants had had some negative experiences regarding a single focus on Christmas and on Easter and a failure to acknowledge other religions' festivals such as the Muslim *Eid* or Jewish or Hindu or Buddhist festivals in some non-Muslim childcare facilities. Those living in high multicultural environments did not experience such problems, but it was still cited as an issue by a significant number of the research participants.

I think there has to be a lot more work done in terms of celebrating the diversity of cultures, whether it's Hindu Divali celebrations or Jewish Passover or Muslim Ramadan or Christmas. In the childcare centres

²⁶ Personal communication MWL 25-4-07

*they don't always celebrate these other feasts. And I know that there is sometimes strong emphasis on Christian Easter Hat Parades and Santa Claus and this can be a problem for some Muslims.*²⁷

However, there were a number of women who felt differently as well:

*I didn't mind my kids celebrating Christmas and Easter. Not at all. Even though we don't believe in that, they're in Australia and that's something that Australia does.*²⁸

Inappropriate language and behaviour

A number of women were concerned about children being exposed to bad language and aggressive behaviour and some, the more religiously devout, find aspects of Australian culture in relation to children difficult. For practising Muslims appropriate language and respect for older persons are important aspects of their religion.

*Muslim women want childcare that is religiously sensitive in the sense that they don't want their child to go to childcare where they will pick up bad language or bad habits. Some people feel very strongly about it and it is an issue for most of the women and perhaps for the more devout families.*²⁹

Perceived Lack of Acceptance

When asked about the issue of acceptance by other mothers, the responses by both the Muslim women leaders as well as the focus group participants were mixed. A number of women had very positive experiences regarding being accepted by the other mothers in non-Muslim childcare settings but a significant number, even second generation and Anglo-Saxon converts, felt 'like a fish out of water'. Women wearing *hijab* felt the most excluded.

*It is quite difficult for those Muslims who are in a minority because women get together and talk about the things that are common to them and if you've got things that are different between you then you've got nothing much to talk about. If you live and work and go to childcare and schools where there are lots of other Muslims, they have a lot more in common and as a consequence you are likely to feel more comfortable.*³⁰

Another key issue in terms of acceptance was the way in which some Muslim women and non-Muslim women socialise:

A lot of socialising outside the centres with the other children and the other mothers seems to centre around birthday parties. For some of

²⁷ Personal Communication MWL 5 19-4-07

²⁸ Personal Communication MWL 4 25-4-07

²⁹ Personal Communication MWL 13 6-6-07

³⁰ Personal communication MWL 5 19-4-07

these [Muslim] women they have an issue with celebrating birthdays at all and for some of them it's a matter of the difficulties around food and just the different kind of environment, the non-Islamic environment that their child might be exposed to. So my sense is that people do a kind of balancing act so that their child will make friends and they themselves can be involved in the centre, the community around that place, and also not compromising their own personal standards or principles.³¹

Also as part of this socialising, Muslim women working in non-Muslim childcare centres are exposed to the after work socialising of childcare workers, which, as in other areas of Australian social life, generally involves alcohol, and or meetings in clubs and bars where alcohol is served.

Specific Barriers for Newly Arrived Muslim Women

MWOs in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth are all funded to support settlement programs that support newly arrived Muslim women. A number of women from these organisations were interviewed, and others were part of the focus groups. While this project did not specifically address the issue of the problems faced by newly arrived Muslim women, issues relating to childcare and English language training were raised.

Childcare

As with non-Muslim Australian women of lower socio-economic status the cost of childcare is an issue for a significant sector of the Muslim population and in particular, new arrivals. An interviewee working with Muslim women new arrivals commented:

Our women can't afford centres and they tend not to use childcare unless they are in a group or doing something very small and the kids are being looked after somewhere nearby.³²

Among new arrivals, as would be expected, where they used non-Muslim childcare, and this is reported to be rare, new arrivals also felt very excluded. Newly arrived African Muslim women in particular have very specific problems and they feel that they are also discriminated against on the basis of colour as well.

Sometimes they think they're discriminated against and with African women that is probably on the basis of colour. With other Muslim women I hear a lot that some women just don't talk to them. Some of them do say they don't feel welcomed.³³

While Iraqi and Afghani women were facing some difficulties, there were sufficient numbers of Arab speaking and Afghani community members to ease the settlement process for these women to some degree. Also, in the

³¹ Personal communication MWL 4 25-4-07

³² Personal Communication MWL 10 1-5-07

³³ Personal communication MWL 18 19-4-07

case of the Iraqi women in particular, the majority were literate in their own language and many were very well educated. In the case of newly arrived Muslim women from African countries, their situation differed. The vast majority of these women came from rural backgrounds and most had spent considerable time, often years, in impoverished refugee camps suffering unspeakable hardship. In addition, many were illiterate in their own language as a result of their background, as well as the time spent in refugee camps with poor, if any, educational facilities, and many of the children were also struggling with numeracy and literacy.

In such a context the concept of childcare, that of another person, even a fellow Muslim sister, minding your children, is very foreign. MWOs working with these women and service providers providing assistance with settlement have had to work with this difficulty.

*We work with the really most disadvantaged women within the Muslim Community and these women have never ever used childcare before. They are absolutely terrified to leave their children. Its taken five or six weeks to allow their kids, during the time we were working with them, to be looked after by a childcare worker in the next room much less actually leaving the kids anywhere. What then happens is the service providers won't work with them as we might have fifteen women in the room some with four or five kids each so there might be up to thirty or forty children. You can understand where service providers are coming from. Unless you start working on these issues there's no way on earth they are going to start accessing any sort of services.*³⁴

English Language Programs (ESL)

The cultural issues around childcare for some newly arrived Muslim women migrants and refugees also impacts on English language training programs. Unwillingness to leave children and lack of child friendly training spaces means that a number of women are not accessing their approved quota of free ESL classes. The need for child-friendly and women only literacy classes was also confirmed by the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium.³⁵

A. Rida and M. Milton's research on why migrant Muslim women fail to access English language classes in Perth identified lack of information about available classes and also the lack of accessible women-only classes. While women-only classes were not universally needed, some women were not attending for this reason.³⁶

³⁴ Personal communication MWL 10 1-5-07

³⁵ Helen Macrae and Jacinta Agostinelli, 2002, 'Women and Literacy in Australia' *Adult Literacy and Numeracy Research Consortium, Nathan, Queensland Centre.*
http://www.staff.vu.edu.au/alnarc/onlineforum/AL_pap_macrae.html

³⁶ Rida, A. and M. Milton, 2001, 'The Non-joiners: Why Migrant Muslim Women aren't Accessing English Language Classes', *Prospect*, vol 16, no.1, pp 35-48.

A similar situation exists in the in the case of the rural Victorian town of Cobram. A Monash University study of newly arrived Muslim migrants in the town indicated that around 57% of Muslims have low levels or no English language skills. The lack of ESL training in the town has also contributed to performance difficulties in school-aged children, affected employment prospects and impacted on unemployed Muslim women.³⁷

In a study conducted with women refugees in Western Australia the researchers found also that access to English language classes was problematic for Muslim women new arrivals and refugees. Common concerns were childcare arrangements, mixed gender classes, inadequacy of hours allocated per person and the level of the courses, either too high or too low. Some women refugees had specific difficulties resulting from trauma, affecting their ability to concentrate and cope.³⁸

For some Muslim women, lack of access to information as well as lack of access to child and women friendly ESL training is a barrier to language skill acquisition. In turn, this lack of English language proficiency is a barrier to both successful settlement and to participation within the broader Australian society.

Summary

In summary, the drivers to Muslim women's participation in preschool activities for their children include increasing religious and cultural awareness in the childcare industry and the growing availability of Muslim women who are childcare trained, working either in non-Muslim childcare centres or in Family Day Care.

Considerable efforts have been made by the industry in relation to religious and cultural understanding, but, none the less, some barriers still remain for Muslim women's participation in non-Muslim child care. These include lack of cultural and religious familiarity, preference for Muslim run childcare, lack of religious sensitivity in some childcare centres about religious rituals and practices and a perceived lack of acceptance by other mothers. After work socialisation by childcare workers involving social settings serving alcohol is also a problem. Newly arrived Muslim women faced specific difficulties relating to cultural understanding of childcare, lack of access to information regarding English language training and lack of child friendly and women friendly language classes.

³⁷ Centre for Muslim Minorities and Islam Policy Studies, 2006, *Social Integration of Muslim Settlers in Cobram*, Monash University, July p. 121-13

³⁸ Suzy Casimiro, Peter Hancock and Jeremy Northcote, 2007, Isolation and Insecurity: Resettlement issues among Muslim women refugees in Perth Western Australia, *Australian Journal of Social Issues* Vol. 42, No. 1 Autumn.

B.1.2 Drivers and Barriers to Participation in non-Muslim Primary and Secondary Schools

Outside of family life, school is the principal arena of preparation to participate in Australian intellectual, social and economic life. Muslim Australians are a very young population. Considerable research has been conducted on the special needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) children, though interestingly, there have been few academic studies of Muslim children in the Australian educational system.

There have been various studies of specific ethnic groups such as the work by Inglis³⁹ and by Sunbul on the Turkish community.⁴⁰ A more recent contribution to this type of research is that carried out by Fethi Mansouri. This study explores the links between issues of citizenship, identity perceptions of belonging, identity and attitudes to schooling among Arab-Australian students in Melbourne.⁴¹ Also recently, McLeod, and Yates have explored how students negotiate race and national identity in Australia.⁴²

However, the first academic work carried out specifically on Muslim children and their educational experiences and needs was that done by Irene Donohoue-Clyne in the late 1990's⁴³. The focus of her work was principally on the attitudes and expectations of Islamic schools on Muslim children and their parents.

In the HREOC *Isma* –Listen report, released in 2004, the experiences of racial and religious discrimination against Arab and Muslim children were detailed. The report concluded that Muslim children overall felt physically safe and culturally accepted in the school environment as this present research has also shown. However, there were reported incidences of abuse and bullying, but, as reported here also, there were incidences of teacher and staff ignoring racist behaviours and direct discrimination. In addition, as also reported here, there was some lack of teacher support and acceptance of religious and cultural backgrounds. In schools where this does not occur, senior school

³⁹ Christine Inglis, Joy Elley, and Lenore Manderson, 1992 *Making Something of Myself: Educational Attainment and Social and Economic Mobility of Turkish-Australian Young People*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs Volume 26, August 2006

⁴⁰ Sunbul, A, 2003, 'An analysis of relation among locus of control, burnout and job satisfaction in Turkish high school teachers', *Australian Journal of Education*, vol.47, No.1 pp. 58-72, April.

⁴¹ Fethi Mansouri and Anna Trembath, 2005, 'Multicultural education and racism: The case of Arab-Australian students in contemporary Australia', *International Education Journal*, vol.6, no. 4, pp. 516-529.

⁴² McLeod, J. and Yates, L., 2003, 'Who is 'us'? Students negotiating discourses of race and national identification in Australia' *Race Ethnicity and Education*, vol.6 no.1 pp. 21-49.

⁴³ Donohoue-Clyne, Irene. 1998, 'Cultural Diversity and the Curriculum: the Muslim experience in Australia'. *European Journal of Intercultural Studies* 9, 3, 279-289.

---- Donohoue-Clyne, I. 1997, 'Seeking Education for Muslim Children in Australia', *Muslim Education Quarterly*, vol.14, no.3, p.11.

leadership was contributing to a safe and religiously and culturally understanding school environment.⁴⁴

More recently in 2007, Dr Abe Ata from the Australian Catholic University carried out a survey exploring the attitudes to Muslims among over five hundred and fifty school students in years 10 and 11 in Victoria. His research revealed that more than half of the school children view Muslims as 'terrorists' and the same number believe that they 'behave strangely'.⁴⁵ His findings illustrate that these students lacked any true knowledge of Muslims and Islam and that the education system is not providing them with that knowledge or understanding.⁴⁶

However, the majority of the research participants in this study on Muslim women reported that overall they had had worthwhile experiences at school, with only some having experienced racism and religious intolerance. All reported that after September 11 2001, they or their friends or children had been subject to more racial and religious abuse, but that as time distanced the Australian community from those events, there was a general lessening of such abuse. Cross-cultural and Islamic sensitivity training by the Muslim community, as well as work done by Islamic schools and some sections of the non-Muslim community, including the faith based schools and communities, seem to have had some impact. An example of such work is that undertaken in 2004 by the Migrant Information Centre of Eastern Melbourne, through its Communities Together Project, that involved students and teachers from six local schools undertaking Islamic sensitivity training.⁴⁷

B.1.2a Drivers to Participation in non-Muslim Schools

This research shows that there are a number of significant drivers for Muslim women to participate in non-Muslim school based education. These drivers include a commitment to state-based education, a commitment to co-education as well as a strong commitment to social integration and academic excellence.

Commitment to State Based Education

Among the Muslim women leaders interviewed, 43% sought state based education for their children with 40% preferring some form of faith based education, either Islamic or Christian. Of this 40%, 22% preferred Islamic schools. In addition, some 17% preferred to send their children to a mixture of state and religious based education generally with Islamic primary and secular secondary schooling.

⁴⁴ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Report, 2004 *Isma-Listen*, HREOC, pp. 57-60

⁴⁵ Chee Chee Leung, 2006 *Children cast judgement on Muslims*, The Sydney Morning Herald Feb 6th

⁴⁶ Abe W. Ata, 2007, *Moslem Arab Portrayal in the Australian Press and in School Textbooks*, http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_9/Ata.htm

⁴⁷ Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne), 2004, *Communities Together: A Model for Promoting Harmony and Understanding of Australian Muslims Project*, Evaluation Report, Sept.

The research participants reported that they supported state based education for a number of reasons, among these being cost and a desire to participate in the broader society.

The commitment to state based education was overall about the opportunities to learn about other cultures and to inform their fellow students about Islam so as to normalise Muslims within the broader Australian society. There was also a very strong feeling of friendship with non-Muslims that was possible in such settings.

I think it's a great opportunity to be able to learn other cultures with another group as well as for them to have an awareness of Muslim beliefs and cultural views. I would have hated it if I had have missed out on making the friends that I did in high school and we still remain good friends. I know that if there is a misconception brought about Muslims or Islam they would be the first ones to defend it. They would say 'hey I know a Muslim that's not true about all Muslims or that's not what Islam teaches'. The school that I attended was quite open as well and accommodating. If parents are willing to support their children then it's a fantastic opportunity to be able to interact.⁴⁸

I didn't go to an Islamic school and I'm proud of that because I feel personally that some Islamic schools promote exclusion. I feel that Muslim women, particularly in the present climate, need to branch out, venture out and interact with other cultures and other people because it's at that level, particularly with youth, that tolerance and respect can be inculcated. And it can really grow and it can make a difference. It's that interaction that's really vital.⁴⁹

The majority of research participants were very supportive of state based education and there was some criticism of Islamic based education but not all shared these views. Some participants felt that Islamic schools helped develop their Muslim Australian identity and helped them develop their interfaith networks, which in turn has facilitated their non-Muslim community participation.

Other participants were not sure what type of education might be the right choice for their children with conflict existing between supporting good public education, the desire to help their children develop a strong Muslim Australian identity and concerns over Islamic schools' insularity.

I to and fro, because I strongly support the idea of public education and so therefore I'd want to support good public education. But on the other hand since the Islamic College has opened here in South Australia I've seen kids come through and they have a much richer sense of their Islamic identity than myself and I'd want that for my child. At the same

⁴⁸ Personal communication MWL 12 9-0-07

⁴⁹ Personal communication FG 4 6-4-07

time I'm also aware that while those kids who go through the Islamic faith based schools have a really strong sense of their Islamic identity they're also quite narrow minded in some respects. They only mix with this small little community and that's not something that I'd want for my child. I don't know that I'll ever know which is right.⁵⁰

Most women who supported state based co-education reported a generally high level of satisfaction, but some reported bullying and verbal harassment after September 11, which they report is continuing but the incidences are diminishing. However, the overwhelming majority of all participants in the research felt, however, that participation in non-Muslim state based education helped considerably with Muslim women's integration into and participation in Australian non-Muslim society.

Commitment to Co-education

Another driver for Muslim women to participate in non-Muslim school based education was their commitment to co-education. The majority of state-run schools across the country are co-educational although there are some single sex state schools. Islamic schools are also co-educational with some of these having class segregation.

Among the leaders, 48% of participants had a strong commitment to co-education for young Muslim women with 24% committed to single sex education and a further 24% committed to segregation at high school. In this situation, segregation could mean single sex schools, or in the case of some Islamic schools, segregated classes. 4% were committed to home schooling and this is believed to be a small, but growing, trend among Muslim families.

Overall this group was evenly divided on this issue but those committed to co-education held very strong views. Also among the focus group participants, there was a majority view that co-education for Muslim girls was important in helping to build esteem and identity and in helping to build confidence in dealing with different cultures, including young non-Muslim and Muslim male culture.

When I went to school, Islamic schools didn't even exist but I think going to a co-educational state school was such an enriching experience for me. It gave me so much confidence to be in this society and to say well there are people who are different and I needed and wanted to use my school days to get to know my non-Muslim friends. I wanted to know how to deal with issues when people ask me questions because at Muslim school no one will call you a terrorist.⁵¹

I went to a Muslim primary school which I believe was good for developing my confidence and a good friends network and I went to a public girls high school. I feel that a Muslim girl with confidence in her

⁵⁰ Personal Communication MWL 22 3-7-07

⁵¹ Personal Communication FG 8 21-4-07

*religious practice should have no problem mixing with boys and studying alongside boys.*⁵²

Commitment by Schools to Integration

In some cases this commitment to integration and participation was greatly assisted by the school, including the school's commitment to multiculturalism, religious tolerance and social integration. This included making a special effort during Muslim feasts, ensuring non-discrimination over Muslim dress codes and providing appropriate places for ablutions and prayers. Comments on this from focus group participants included:

In outer western Melbourne:

*Last year the school invited all the mothers and parents to come and have a feast to celebrate breaking the Muslim fast. I was not feeling like going but I took my food and when I arrived I was surprised to see that all the meal was halal food. This is a big step for the school to do something like that to celebrate with us and with other non-Muslims and share with the Iftar together. It was a major step for them.*⁵³

In outer western Sydney:

*When my daughter started wearing hijab, the head mistress called an assembly and told the students that my daughter had started wearing a scarf. The headmistress told the students to respect her and she said if anyone at the school teased her she has the right to go and complain and if she sees anyone saying something to her she will put them in detention. Which was very good from the start. Now we have got a lot of students wearing scarves at that public school. So we have to educate each other.*⁵⁴

In Queensland:

*The [state] school was very good in providing us with a room to pray and access to the bathrooms for our ablutions when we used to have our lunch. It was a positive thing in that way.*⁵⁵

These views are also supported by Geoff Strong, who reported on actions taken by teachers on the rural town of Shepparton in Victoria to help with the integration of young Muslims into the community. The local primary schools designed *hijabs* in the school colors, young Muslim women are encouraged and facilitated to play soccer, and the local TAFE offered 510 free hours of ESL training for new arrivals and sponsored a 'buddy' system to help with migrant settlement.⁵⁶

⁵² Personal Communication FG 1 12-9-07

⁵³ Personal Communication FG 3 13-0-07

⁵⁴ Personal Communication FG 5 20-5-07

⁵⁵ Personal Communication FG 6 1-6-07

⁵⁶ Geoff Strong, 2005, 'Dinky-di Aussie Muslims', *The Age*, August 4.

Commitment to Academic Excellence

Among all Muslim women leaders and the focus groups participants there was a strong commitment to providing their children with educational opportunities that offered academic excellence. Those that could afford it would send their children to either private, independent or a faith based school of academic excellence. The majority however, sent their children to state schools but even among these some would, if they could, ensure that their children attended a state school with a reputation for academic excellence. Concerns again were expressed about the standard of academic excellence in some Islamic schools.

When you go to high school I think it's important to get a good academic education as well as a religious one but I think at the moment the Islamic schools in Victoria are lacking on the academic side.⁵⁷

Some Islamic schools have received negative publicity in the recent past and while there has been considerable public debate, Mary Costello's article about the Australian International Academy of Education in Melbourne is a more positive contribution to that public debate. The article also notes the commitment of this school to interfaith and interschool activities, all measures aimed at facilitating students' participation in the non-Muslim Australian community life.⁵⁸

Cost and Location Availability of Muslim Based Educational Facilities

A number of participants indicated also that cost and the location availability of Muslim based education were factors in their participation in non-Muslim based education. Many said that they could not afford the cost of Islamic education and for some the location and subsequent amount of travel time were also factors.

Acceptance of Muslim Parent Involvement in Schools

A number of research participants indicated that they were actively involved in their local schools and many had very positive stories of success in this regard.

A majority of key leader participants, 56%, indicated that they were presently or had previously participated in their children's school activities, such as sports days, fundraising, other children's events, library, clothes stores etc. Several also helped with reading programs for children with special needs, several also gave talks to schools on Islam and two mentioned their husbands' close involvement with the schools' activities. Two women had also served on school parent committees.

⁵⁷ Personal communication FG 1 12-9-07

⁵⁸ Costello, M. 'Australian Students under the Minaret', 2005, *The Age, Education*, June 13, p. 4.

In regard to parent participation and integration into school life members of one group in a multi-ethnic, lower socio-economic area of Melbourne, commented:

*We share coffee and we talk about what we are cooking. We are all multicultural; some of us are from China, some Greek, some Italian, some Macedonian so we feel like we all come to this country. But we all get together, Muslim and non-Muslim, and we share the same experience so we have a good relationship with others, we don't feel isolated.*⁵⁹

Also from the same area one woman reported:

*I was at the school involved with maths because I love maths. They pushed me to do it. And I started to do volunteer work with them and reading sometimes, reading sessions to prepare the books and sometimes I take one group and help them with the maths and of course they ask me to do some aid teacher with them.*⁶⁰

Women would also act as advocates for other parents:

*I was only involved with some of the parents if there was a problem like they were not happy with the teacher so I would go to the school [to discuss the problem] on their behalf.*⁶¹

B.1.2b Barriers to Participation in non-Muslim Schools

In general the overall response from participants in this research was that they had had positive experiences at school but nonetheless barriers do exist for some Muslim women students. Among these barriers are discrimination on the basis of dress, teacher prejudice and the prevailing non-Muslim youth culture. Some of these can be attributed to leadership within the school, as the previous positive experiences indicate, but they could also be attributed to adherence to guidelines or protocols at the state educational level on issues of multiculturalism and religious tolerance.

Discrimination on the Basis of Religious Dress

Young Muslim women discussed the growing use of *hijab* at schools and identified the desire to express both their religiosity and their Muslim Australian identity as the principal reasons for its use. However, some women also indicated that wearing the *hijab* acts as a barrier or a shield to the strong peer pressure that exists in youth culture in and out of schools.

Anecdotal reports by research participants indicates that, over the past six years even though more Muslim girls are wearing *hijab* the numbers of Muslim girls experiencing discrimination at school is diminishing.

⁵⁹ Personal communication FG 3 13-0-07

⁶⁰ Personal communication FG 3 13-0-07

⁶¹ Personal communication FG 3 13-0-07

Nonetheless, such discrimination does occur and in the research undertaken by Fethi Mansouri and Annelies Kamp school students expressed concerns about negative attitudes toward girls who could be clearly identified with Islam, in particular those wearing the *hijab*.⁶² The following comments from research participants in our study concur with these findings.

*Where you have a concentration of Muslims, those schools are OK but if your area is pretty Anglo-Celtic and I think it is difficult.*⁶³

*Yeah I was the only person at that school at that time who wore hijab and going to a school like that where everyone is blonde and blue-eyed, it was a very confronting thing for them and difficult for me.*⁶⁴

Teacher Discrimination and Lack of Interest

Another barrier to successful school experiences for Muslim girls was the experience of teacher prejudice, discrimination and lack of interest.

The experiences reported in this study were also identified in Mansouri's study, with teachers' lack of interest and low expectations of school achievement being key factors in disengagement from school.⁶⁵ These findings mirror that of the 2004 HREOC report *Isma-Listen* where students reported lack of support from teachers over incidents of student racial and religious discrimination and a perceived lack of understanding of students' cultural and religious backgrounds.⁶⁶

These findings remain disturbing, particularly in the light of the various national and state government educational initiatives taken to address this issue. For instance: the national 1999 Adelaide Declaration addressed student knowledge of cultural and linguistic diversity, the national 2000 *Racism. No Way!* document aimed at helping teachers and students to recognise racism, and the additions to that document in 2002 on Islam and in 2003 on terrorism provided material specific to Islam and current geo-political events. These national educational initiatives are in addition to various state policies and procedures that exist to address these matters in schools.⁶⁷

Prevailing non-Muslim Youth Culture

Young women discussed in depth the prevailing youth culture at school, including the strong peer pressure to participate in youth cultural and social

⁶² Fethi Mansouri and Annelies Kamp, 2007, Structural Deficiency or Cultural Racism: The Educational; and Social Experiences of Arab-Australian Youth in Melbourne, in *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Vol 42, No. 1 pp.87-102.

⁶³ Personal Communication FG 7 2-6-07

⁶⁴ Personal communication FG 4 6-4-07

⁶⁵ Fethi Mansouri and Annelies Kamp, 2007 op. cit., p.95

⁶⁶ HREOC, 2004 *Isma-Listen* Report, HREOC, Sydney, p.59

⁶⁷ *ibid* p. 108-109

activities that they believe are contrary to their religion. Such activities can include the use of alcohol, other drugs and engaging in intimate relations.

My friend was at a school where she was pretty much the only Muslim and her family were the only Muslims in the area. And so her school was very much of that kind of Anglo environment. She really didn't subscribe to most of that [youth culture] stuff so she was kind of left out and she did feel that whole pressure to fit in. So it comes back to what area you are in and I'm sure schools in our area have their problems.⁶⁸

One focus group participant indicated that these issues were not confined to secular or non-Muslim faith based school education.

I went to an Islamic school from kindy to year 11 and there were those issues there but it was never an issue to me. It happened more with the guys than with the girls.⁶⁹

As stated above, wearing the *hijab* for a number of women shields them from this unacceptable youth culture.

Barriers to Parent Involvement in School Based Activities

There are a number of barriers to Muslim parent involvement in school based activities, including lack of acceptance by other parents, family commitments, and, for newly arrived and some other women, language difficulties.

For some women, barriers include the lack of acceptance by non-Muslim parents as well as the nature of socialising at parent nights or parent activities with the dominant social culture's use of alcohol. The sense of not sharing common ground socially was also quite strong for some women.

They socialise together, and they do things together and they talk about the things they do together and they have common interests. I don't have many common interests with other [non-Muslim] parents.⁷⁰

In addition, in a number of cultures, especially among lower socio-economic new arrivals, active participation in their children's education is not the cultural norm. Also in some cases poor language skills, shyness and concerns about being accepted are barriers.

... for a new arrival, I don't think they would want to go near a school committee. They'd be concerned about their language. Over in a lot of those countries usually parents don't participate. The kids are taken by bus and they're brought back and they get a report once a year, maybe a parent interview. Here we encourage parents to be involved.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Personal communication FG 4 6-4-07

⁶⁹ Personal communication FG 4 6-4-07

⁷⁰ Personal communication MWL 5 19-4-07

⁷¹ Personal communication MWL19 25-4-07

Family commitments can also be an issue and while this is a problem also for some members of the non-Muslim community, both religious expectations to care for one's parents, as well as cultural understandings, impact on some middle-aged Muslim women. Often because of marrying young, by middle age many will have grandchildren as well as parents to care for.

*These women are going into the next stage of their life, grandparenthood, and their responsibilities are becoming a lot bigger. They may still have children at school as well as caring for grandchildren at home so it makes it really hard for them to participate in school activities when they are looking after their grandchildren and sometimes parents as well.*⁷²

In Summary

In general, with some exceptions, the Muslim women involved in this study saw school, in a non-Muslim setting, as an overall positive experience. The majority, 43%, supported state based education with 40% preferring some form of faith based education, either Islamic or Christian. Of this 40%, 22% preferred Islamic schools with several citing the cost and location of Islamic based education as factors in their participation in non-Muslim education. The remainder, 17%, preferred a mixture of state and religious based education for their children. 48% of participants were committed to co-education.

There were many accounts of positive action taken by schools to integrate Muslim students and to work towards religious harmony. Many young women felt that non-Muslim co-educational school prepared them to participate more fully within the Australian society. There were also accounts of both mothers and fathers being actively involved in a range of school activities.

However, there were also barriers to that participation and, while diminishing, discrimination on the basis of religious dress code remains ongoing. Reported incidents of teacher prejudice are also of concern. While the prevailing youth culture was a barrier to full participation in youth social life, the majority of young Muslim women participants felt that they were able to deal with the prevailing youth culture with considerable maturity. Participation barriers exist for some parents in areas of social acceptance and, for some, discomfort in social settings where alcohol is served.

B.1.3 Drivers and Barriers to Participation in Tertiary Education

The majority of Muslim women involved in this study attended, or are wishing to attend, tertiary level TAFE or university courses. All those attending report a most positive experience overall. With some ethnic exceptions, in some areas, women are generally strongly supported by families to undertake further education where evidence is that they are high achievers. The 2006 ABS Census shows that 17.5% of the Muslim Australian female population in

⁷² Personal communication MWL 3 20-4-07

the 18 plus age range has a qualification of bachelor's degree or higher indicating this strong commitment.⁷³

For some women the wearing the *hijab* at university or TAFE also provides the 'barrier' described in the section above and it also allows Muslim women from conservative families the freedom to participate more fully in university life without parental pressure.

There have been few academic studies of Muslim women's university experience but published work by Christine Asmar has contributed to our understanding of the specific problems faced by Muslim Australian women on university campuses.⁷⁴ Nayeefa Chowdhury's more recent paper on the role of Australian-based Muslim student associations also provides insight into Muslim campus experiences, exploring both *da'wah* (spreading the work of Islam) and interfaith dialogue.⁷⁵

Hence, existing published academic studies and ABS data supports our research findings that among Muslim Australian women there is strong emphasis placed on higher education. This research also demonstrates that Muslim women are committed to furthering their education, with a total of 62.5% of all the research participants presently undertaking or having completed undergraduate studies.

This study also demonstrates that there are significant drivers to Muslim women's education including personal desire and support from families and communities as well as reported religiously supportive university campus environments. Barriers do however exist for some women and these include family opposition and religious conservatism as well as difficulties in dealing with the prevailing social culture on university campuses.

B.1.3a Drivers to Participation in Tertiary Level Education

There are a number of significant drivers for Muslim women to participate in tertiary level education.

Strong Personal Desire for Tertiary Level Education

As indicated, the majority of women in this research have attended, or are wishing to attend, tertiary level TAFE or university level education. Among the leaders, 76% were either undertaking or had completed undergraduate and or

⁷³ 2006 ABS Census of Population and Housing Religious Affiliation Highest Educational Attainment by age and Sex

⁷⁴ Christine Asmar, 2001, 'A Community on Campus: Muslim students in Australian Universities'. In eds Abdullah Saeed and Shahram Akbarzadeh, *Muslim Communities in Australia*. Sydney: UNSW Press, pp.138-160.

--- Asmar, C. Proude, E. and Inge, L. 2004, 'Unwelcome sisters?' An analysis of findings from a study of how Muslim women (and men) experience university', *Australian Journal of Education*, Vol 48, No 1, pp.47-63.

⁷⁵ Nayeefa Chowdhury, 2006, 'Presenting Islam: The role of Australia-Based Muslim Student Associations', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol 26, no 2, August.

postgraduate studies. Some 12% had completed or were undertaking PhD studies and 36% were engaged in Masters degrees, making a total of 48% having completed or undertaking postgraduate studies. Among the focus groups, 50% were undertaking or had completed university studies and 4% were undertaking or had completed postgraduate studies. (See table 4 Section A.)

These figures are considerably higher than those of the 2006 ABS Census, that indicate some 17.5% of Muslim Australian women in the 18 plus age range undertake university studies at bachelor and post graduate levels. This figure compares favourably with 18% of Australian women in the same age range undertaking university studies at the same level. The exceptionally high level of university educated Muslim women leaders is worth noting.

Support from Families and Communities

Muslim Australian women, with some ethnic exceptions, are generally strongly supported by families as well as by the broader Muslim community to undertake further education, where evidence is that they are high achievers, as the above statistics indicate.

My mum was a huge influence on the family. She stressed that it was so important to be independent and work for yourself and get your own money and as a woman to be able to, even when you get married with your own children you should still be working and earning your own money.⁷⁶

As a community overall I think we are very encouraged to study and to work and people are very proud of you in the community, they are like, wow, good on you.⁷⁷

University Multicultural Environment

The overall sentiment from all research participants attending higher education was that it was an enjoyable experience and these findings concur with those of Asmar in 2004.⁷⁸ They do not report feeling discriminated against on the basis of their religion or dress and there were no reports of discrimination by university lecturers or support staff, as also reported by Asmar. One of our participants commented:

Most of the time higher education faculties are very diverse and multicultural anyway. You have the heads who are academics and doctors and they are usually very educated people who know how to get along with people from all walks of life. So maybe higher education is

⁷⁶ Personal communication FG 1 12-9-07

⁷⁷ Personal communication FG 8 21-4-07

⁷⁸ Asmar, C. Proude, E. and Inge, L. 2004, 'Unwelcome sisters?' An analysis of findings from a study of how Muslim women (and men) experience university', *Australian Journal of Education*, Vol 48, No 1, pp.47-63.

*maybe more sheltered from the real world. University environment is fine.*⁷⁹

Wearing the *hijab* at university or TAFE was described by some participants as a religious and cultural shield.

Availability of Prayer Facilities and *Halal* Food

The availability of adequate prayer facilities in universities these days was also a factor in facilitating a good university experience for the majority of women, as was the provision of a good range of *halal* food in most universities.

*In terms of practising our religion no I don't find that there are any obstacles. We have prayer rooms in most universities and that's pretty much the basic thing that we need, just to pray at uni.*⁸⁰

B.1.3b Barriers to Participate in Tertiary Level Education

There is a strong driver for Muslim women to participate in tertiary education but there are none the less some significant barriers for some women. A number of women had not been helped by school teachers and in fact actively discouraged to go on to further education. Some women expressed concern over some aspects of the university campus culture and some women also faced family opposition. For a very small minority of women, religious conservatism on the part of some religious leaders was also a barrier. There are also some religiously conservative groups within the community that do not encourage women to undertake further education and for women associated with these groups this conservatism can also be a barrier.

Active Discouragement by Some High Schools

Some participants in this study identified active state school discouragement from both teachers and careers advisors as a factor influencing their higher educational choice.

*My careers adviser told us that only ten of us would make university. So if encouragement isn't coming there then what's the point?*⁸¹

*They're pretty shocking. They encourage vocational education with Muslim women because you're going to become a mother, so childcare's the way to go. They're like, oh we're just being sensitive towards your culture. And no, there's no encouragement there.*⁸²

University Social Life

⁷⁹ Personal communication FG 8 21-4-07

⁸⁰ Personal communication FG 4 6-4-07

⁸¹ Personal communication FG 4 6-4-07

⁸² Personal communication FG 4 6-4-08

For some people, being a visible minority as Muslim women on campus can be challenging. Muslim women try to establish good relations with fellow students, colleagues and staff but nonetheless there is the recognition that there are major differences in how they live their social lives on and off campus.

I wouldn't go out with my friends late at night because I know they would be drinking or going out to clubs. And for them that's really normal and that's how they spend their weekends and that's how they get to know people better. But for me doing that is highly abnormal and something that I would never do, so there's that striking difference.⁸³

For some women, especially those who have been to single sex schools or for religious or cultural reasons have generally not had the social opportunities afforded their friends from co-education schools, interacting with males in academic and social settings can be quite challenging.

Coming from a private girls' school it was a little bit like that, going to uni as well. It's just that environment where it is all girls and it's a whole other little world and we grew up in a family where it was just all girls and we didn't have any contact with boys until I hit uni and it was, oh my god. What the hell do you do?⁸⁴

Family Opposition

The overwhelming response from the research participants was that both their families and the communities were very proud that they were attending university. However, some families felt concerns about other issues of female attendance at university, including mixing with men and the social life on campus.

This is my experience in Western Australia. In the Iraqi community, I know a lot of girls who want to go for higher education but they are discouraged because of the mixed environment and I know many young girls, who, although they have the aspirations of going for higher education, there's always marriage planned for them.⁸⁵

There is also, for a minority of families, the issue that Muslim women should marry early and concentrate on having children and establishing a family life, but this is interpreted as a cultural, not a religious response. Some newly arrived Arab and Somali families were identified as holding these cultural views with regards to women's education.

For some Muslim women and I say some because it's increasingly less, there's still an expectation within their family and community circles that they don't need to or it's inappropriate for them to get higher

⁸³ Personal Communication MWL 22 3-7-07

⁸⁴ Personal communication FG 8 21-4-07

⁸⁵ Personal communication MWL 12 8-9-07

education but there are fewer and fewer of those instances as time goes by.⁸⁶

Religious Conservatism

Again while the majority of the community including the majority of religious leaders fully support higher education for Muslim women, there are some conservative elements within the community who encourage women to early marriage. Also some parents are concerned that a more highly educated girl will have problems finding a suitable husband. According to one participant:

I think that there is a growing tendency towards early marriage and there is a growing conservative agenda in the Muslim community towards women. It really wasn't like that about eighteen years ago. I've heard repeatedly that it's not appropriate for a Muslim woman to be highly educated because it severely restricts their marriage options. The men won't marry you if you are more educated than they are⁸⁷

Some religious leaders and certain religious trends also encourage early marriage and motherhood for women and counsel against higher education attendance on the basis of mixed gender classes.

The local Imam will stress to the girls in high school, family, parenthood and mothering and won't encourage a woman into higher education because he is part of the chauvinistic cultural interpretation of the religion and this is what he'll present.⁸⁸

I know of a group, [with Wahabbi religious tendencies] in Western Australia who have this thinking that it is prohibited for women to attend a university or TAFE class where there is mixed men and women. So they do not encourage their girls to go to higher education. Although I know of certain cases, the girls are finding ways around it by doing courses through correspondence.⁸⁹

This type of religious conservatism can also be seen on some university campuses where there is concern over mixed classes. A report on the ABC's Radio National Religion Report in September 2007 aired some of these views that included a call for the segregation of males and females and the necessity to adhere rigidly to prayer times even when sitting exams.⁹⁰ This type of conservatism was referred to in discussions in the focus groups with university students but it was considered to be an extreme minority view on gender relations.

Summary

⁸⁶ Personal communication MWL 22 3-7-07

⁸⁷ Personal communication MWL 10- 1-4-07

⁸⁸ Personal communication MWL 5 19-4-07

⁸⁹ Personal communication MWL 12 8-9-07

⁹⁰ Stephen Crittenden, 2007, *Barriers to inclusion*, ABC Radio National, Religion Report, Sept 12. <http://www.abd.net.au/rn/religionreport/stories/2007/2030244.htm#transcript>

The research and ABS statistics indicate that Muslim women are actively participating in the Australian tertiary education system. The key drivers are a strong personal desire for higher education, family and community support and overall the supportive multicultural university environment including prayer rooms and, increasingly, the availability of *halal* food.

These are positive signs of Muslim women's participation in this sector of Australian life however, some barriers remain. Of concern, identified in this research and supported by Mansouri's 2007 research, is, in some schools teachers' lack of interest in, and in some instances actual discouragement of further education for some Muslim girls.⁹¹ In addition, for some Muslim women the dominant university culture, which can involve alcohol use and intimate sexual relations, can be a challenge. For a minority of women from some ethnic groups, family opposition remains an issue, but overall this was not our finding. Conservatism from a few religious leaders and certain Islamic trends is also a barrier but for a very small minority of women only.

B.1.4 Strategies to Overcome These Problems of Participation in non-Muslim Based Education

A number of strategies are proposed to address some of these problems. These relate to strategies that can be undertaken by government, the Muslim community and the non-Muslim community in childcare and educational settings. Various research strategies to inform action are also provided.

Government

Childcare Settings

- ESL training, specifically child friendly and women friendly for newly arrived Muslim women should be reviewed in all states and measures taken to facilitate their more active participation in ESL programs.
- Under the Federal Government's Early Intervention Program specific support for newly arrived mothers should be provided.
- Cross-cultural and Islamic sensitivity training, addressing the specific needs of Muslim women in childcare settings, should be part of the Industry training requirements.
- As part of an overall nationally funded cross-cultural training package, considerable additional funding should be given to Muslim women's associations to employ staff to expand the already intensive and volunteer work they are doing in cross-cultural and specific Islamic sensitivity training in childcare centres, and with staff, supervisors and managers.

Educational Settings

⁹¹ Mansouri F. and Annelies Kamp 2007, op cit.

- Specific cross-cultural and Islamic sensitivity training work should be provided for teachers, careers advisors, school based anti-discrimination officers and students.
- Existing school based anti-racist materials should be strengthened with Islamic educational and sensitivity training materials.
- Specific attention should be paid to career advice to Muslim women to eliminate discriminatory practices.
- As part of an overall nationally funded cross-cultural training package, considerable additional funding should be given to Muslim women's associations to employ staff to expand the already intensive and volunteer work they are doing in cross-cultural and specific Islamic sensitivity training in state and faith-based schools.

Muslim Community

- Expanded funding to MWOs and other community groups should be provided to support youth leadership training, so as to develop young women's self esteem and identity and to encourage participation in the broader Australian society.
- Educational work by MWOs and other sectors of the community should be undertaken to educate conservative religious leaders about the benefits of higher education for Muslim women.
- Muslim women should be encouraged and facilitated at the community level through the parent teacher associations to reach out to the school and participate more fully in the school community. Special functions could be organised where parents meet and where there are activities for the parents to get to know each other.
- Muslim women should be further encouraged to invite non-Muslim friends to attend special feasts and other significant rituals.

Non-Muslim Community

- Cross cultural and Islamic sensitivity training should be undertaken for school support staff and parents with regard to Islamic rituals, feasts and food requirements, to help the non-Muslim community learn to accommodate the Muslim faith in Australian mainstream life.

Research

- A major study should be undertaken involving all sectors of the childcare industry, including owners, service providers and trainers to review Muslim children's childcare needs with particular emphasis on the needs of newly arrived migrants. Such a study should be undertaken with the involvement

of MWOs, all of whom are involved to varying degrees in family support services and cross-cultural training.

- An in-depth national study of newly arrived Muslim women's ESL needs and services should also be undertaken.
- Research should be undertaken with state, independent and faith-based high school teachers to identify the reported level of lack of interest and discouragement by some teachers of Muslim women's participation in higher education.

Section B.2

Drivers and Barriers for Muslim Women's Participation in the Workforce

Workforce participation is a key element of economic life for all Australian citizens and a major factor in societal participation. Access to that workforce by some Muslims has been identified as one of the major barriers to successful participation in Australian social and economic life.

Research in this area has until recently focused on specific ethnic communities, the majority of whom are Muslim. For instance, Michael Humphrey carried out extensive research work in the 1980's and 1990's on the Lebanese community in Sydney, examining this community's settlement and employment patterns.⁹² Kathryn Betts' and Healy's (2006) more recent publication on the social disadvantage of Lebanese Muslims in Australia also explores employment and other social issues.⁹³

Some recent studies have included Muslim women in their broader analysis, including the HREOC *Isma-Listen* Report of 2004 that highlighted racial and religious discrimination as key barriers to Muslim workforce participation and also identified Muslim women's dress as a significant barrier as well.⁹⁴ Kabir and Evans' paper explores the historical trends of Muslims in the Australian labour market from 1980 to 2001 and provides some reference to the specific situation of Muslim women.⁹⁵ Collins' chapter on Arab entrepreneurs in Australia also includes a brief review of women in Arab small enterprises.⁹⁶

In the course of this research, various research projects were reported as being undertaken by Monash University, Murdoch University and Queensland University of Technology on Muslim employment. However it was not possible to clarify this and data on these studies is not yet in the public domain. As far as can be ascertained, there has been no significant study on Muslim women's workforce participation to date. The data that is available from the ABS shows the national percentage of Muslim women participating in the labour market as 26.3% in 1991 up to 30% in 2001.⁹⁷ The figure for 2006 is 31% and 85% of that workforce are employees. In terms of income, overall the Muslim population in Australia is in the lower socio-economic bracket with over two thirds of the population earning less than \$600 per week and only 1.6% earning \$2,000 or more per week. Of the Muslim Australian female

⁹² Humphrey, M. 1984, 'Family, work and unemployment: A Study of Lebanese settlement in Sydney', *Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIEA)* Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

⁹³ Kathryn Betts and E. Healy, 2006, 'Lebanese Muslims in Australia and social disadvantage', *People and Place*, vol. 14 no.1.

⁹⁴ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2004 *Isma-Listen* Report, HREOC Sydney pp. 60-64.

⁹⁵ Nahid Kabir and Raymond Evans, 2003, 'Muslims and the Australian Labor Market, 1980-2001', *Immigrants and Minorities*, Vol.21, No. 3, pp 70-95, November.

⁹⁶ Collins, J. 2002, 'Arab Entrepreneurs in Australia', in ed. G. Hage, *Arab Australians Today*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, pp.92-127.

⁹⁷ ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing Labour Force Status.

population, 79% earn less than \$600 per week with only 0.6% earning \$2,000 or more per week. Of those that work, 85% do so as employees.⁹⁸

This research study has not attempted to undertake a detailed study of Muslim women's workforce participation but rather it provides an overview of the drivers and barriers to that participation experienced by Muslim Australian women.

As would be expected, Muslim women involved in this research are working across all sectors of the Australian workforce. They work in the private and public sectors as professionals and service providers. They work in all sections of the public service including in health, education and academia, social services, community development, policing and justice sectors. Many work in the commercial sector in the hospitality industry and in the retail sectors in major enterprises such as Coles and Woolworths. Others work as sales representatives, or in real estate, as well as in the IT industry. Muslim women involved in this research work in the media, and as authors, fashion designers, events managers, sports trainers, auditors and engineers. Many also work in family or self owned commercial enterprises such as food shops or hairdressing, while others have their own legal, accounting or medical practices. Overall Muslim women are participating in most areas of the workforce, determined by education, training and socio-economic status.

Among the leaders interviewed, 80% undertake paid work of which 25% is paid work within the Muslim community. 84% also undertake voluntary work and the majority of this voluntary work is undertaken within the Muslim community, although some reported working in a voluntary capacity with human rights organisations, conservation groups and other non-Muslim voluntary organisations.

Apart from those drivers shared by non-Muslim women, such as income and economic independence, there are a number of drivers to Muslim women's workforce participation. These include a desire to participate in the non-Muslim community, positive Muslim identity and self esteem, in some instances a more racially and religiously accommodating and respectful workplace, some accommodation of Muslim women's dress in the workplace, and respect and support from teachers for career and workforce choices.

Barriers for Muslim women's workforce participation include lack of self-esteem and confidence, school based discrimination in workforce preparation, dress (especially in some industries) and, for some Muslim women, the fact that the work place culture includes the widespread use of alcohol in work related social activities in some industries. Newly arrived Muslim women face additional problems including language skills, lack of qualification recognition and overt racism.

⁹⁸ ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing Labour Force Status.

B.2.a Drivers for Workforce Participation

When interviewed about their participation in the workforce and their choice of employment, the research participants identified a number of factors that influence their work choices. Among these are personal sense of achievement, improved self esteem and personal confidence, a desire to integrate into the broader Australian community as well as income and life style. A number also identified wanting to serve the Muslim community as well as meeting their own personal and religious values. Some did so by undertaking paid or voluntary work with MWOs.

A number of the research participants work in the public service and several commented on the non-discriminatory nature of the work environment. Among other drivers to workforce participation, identified in this research, were teacher encouragement and support, changing attitudes to Muslim women's religious dress and in some instances a changing workplace culture.

Personal Confidence

Both in the leader interviews as well as the focus groups, the issue of personal confidence emerged as a major factor in gaining employment. Several people noted that the leadership training programs undertaken with various Muslim women's organisations had helped them gain this confidence, especially those wearing the *hijab*. First and second generation Muslim women with schooling in Australia and good English language skills were extremely confident about workforce participation. Those with poorer language skills, and especially new arrivals, were naturally less confident.

*When I was younger I thought that [wearing the hijab] would be an issue and there was a general consensus that it would be. A lot of people would say to my mum and dad, "your daughters, if they wear hijab they're going to find so much trouble finding a job". But all of us, the first interviews we went for we've got the job. It hasn't been a problem for us at all. And we've all gone for the jobs that we want and got them*⁹⁹

*I think it just depends on how you present yourself and how you deal with the situation. If you come in very confidently and represent that it [the hijab] is not an obstruction, wearing the veil or being a Muslim is not an obstruction to working. But of course it's not going to be the case for everybody.*¹⁰⁰

Where there was a mixed age group within the focus groups there was considerable difference of opinion. Older women in the main, possibly based on earlier personal experiences, expressed fears similar to the parents of the younger members of the group. Younger women from all

⁹⁹ Personal communication FG 8 21-4-07

¹⁰⁰ Personal communication FG 4 6-4-07

socio-economic backgrounds in the focus groups expressed greater confidence than the older women.

I think that if you've got the qualifications and the experience and the personality you can get whatever you want. You can do whatever you want to do. It doesn't have to be based on what you wear or how you look. There are so many Muslim women you see in Brisbane city who are so well qualified with their long skirts and their jackets and their black hijabs. They're corporate and they're doing well for themselves so I don't agree that it is difficult for Muslim women wearing hijab to get a job.¹⁰¹

However, some participants acknowledged the difficulties that new arrivals face, even if they were of the same age group.

I think having an Australian accent helps employers feel comfortable employing you. It's a shame that is the case but somehow I think they might feel you know the culture and even though many others have the same skills as you, but they just might not have the accent.¹⁰²

Positive Identity and Self Esteem

Young Muslim Australian women who participated in this research all showed a strong sense of positive personal identity as well as a strong sense of having a clear and proud Muslim Australian identity. These qualities were all drivers in wanting to participate in the workforce.

I don't see any barriers because of my religious beliefs. I'm confident enough to be able to present all my skills and to be able to say this is what I am capable of and that I deserve this job just as much as the next person. I think that sense of identity and self-esteem comes across as a lot more attractive to an employer or anyone.¹⁰³

I've always been in the workforce and only wore the hijab about four years ago and since I wore the hijab it hasn't been an obstacle at all. I just think it's the qualifications that are the obstacle so if you're going for the job and you have the criteria and you are the best applicant I believe you should get the job. That's been my experience. Maybe some people have different views.¹⁰⁴

Desire to Participate in the non-Muslim Community

One of the key drivers to workforce participation was that of the desire to integrate into the broader non-Muslim community. Many respondents indicated that they had chosen not to work within the Muslim community or with an MWO in spite of their commitment to the community. They believed it

¹⁰¹ Personal communication FG 7 2-6-07

¹⁰² Personal communication FG 1 12-9-07

¹⁰³ Personal communication FG 1 12-9-07

¹⁰⁴ Personal communication MWL 3 20-4-07

was important for Muslim women to participate actively in the non-Muslim workforce and expressed frustration when this desire was not able to be realised:

*I ended up working in a Muslim shop and I didn't want to because I wanted to have work experience in every aspect possible and not just the Muslim community. Especially as I wanted to break the stereotype that Muslim women don't integrate with the community very well.*¹⁰⁵

In terms of accessing work one young focus group participant noted:

*I like public transport because of that opportunity to break down those communication barriers. Even if its just striking a conversation with ordinary people and talking about ordinary things it's a small way of going towards changing those kind of perceptions [about Muslim women]. In the end that's the only thing you can do to counter that. It's really just so much about how you represent yourself. It's being respected.*¹⁰⁶

For a number of young people, volunteering in preparation for work was also a significant way of expressing their desire to be part of the non-Muslim community.

*I do a bit of volunteer work as well for Muslim organisations like non-profit organizations, which gives me a lot of experience and in the area that I want to get into once I graduate from university. I'm getting a lot of work through my volunteer work. I was wearing hijab when I was looking for work and I didn't have a problem.*¹⁰⁷

*I think most of the time you get jobs through your networks and I know that one of the Muslim ladies who was with [youth group] got a job at the local parliamentarian's office through the volunteer work that she was doing with us.*¹⁰⁸

*Again the volunteer work that we do needs to go beyond the community even to the extent of volunteering for things like Neighbourhood Watch or Rotary clubs. It's extremely important. It does pay, it does help because it introduces you to a different culture, how things are being done, how decisions are being made, and portrays the level of skill and knowledge that you have. And then it helps you later on even if you need a referee, it helps that way.*¹⁰⁹

The positive benefits of such volunteering, and willingness of Muslim youth to be involved in volunteering has been identified in research undertaken by Volunteering Australia and the Australian Multicultural Foundation (AMF) in

¹⁰⁵ Personal communication FG 6 1-6-07

¹⁰⁶ Personal communication FG 4 6-4-07

¹⁰⁷ Personal communication FG 1 12-9-07

¹⁰⁸ Personal communication FG 6 1-6-07

¹⁰⁹ Personal communication MWL 13 6-6-07

2006.¹¹⁰ The research found and has been confirmed by this study that young Muslim women are more inclined to be involved in community and welfare based volunteering. The AMF research also found that 'the idea that volunteering formed a significant part of being a good community member emerged as a common cultural norm among Muslim youth'.¹¹¹

Improving Workplace Integration and Support for Religious Rituals and Feasts

While there has been reported discrimination against Muslim women in the workforce, especially for women on the basis of dress, this research has identified some positive experiences that contribute to significant drivers for some women's participation in the workforce in the public, private and retail sectors.

Public Sector

In the public sector, in both the state and federal government public services, non-discriminatory regulations are in force. A number of Muslim women in this research project worked in one or other of these public services and commented on the overall non-discriminatory nature of the workplace.

*At this point in time I think Canberra is a great place to be employed particularly in the public service. In the public service there is such a process with employment that you're really going to be judged on what you are going to bring to the job and your experience and your ability rather than what you look like and where you've come from.*¹¹²

*When I was doing prac teaching during my undergrad degree I worked in a variety of public schools across NSW, some in Muslim areas. I never had any difficulties wearing hijab and my requests for a prayer room were always happily granted.*¹¹³

There was also considerable comment on the support provided in the public service for religious rituals such as praying as well as for attendance at important religious festivals.

*One good thing about working for the government, you get your normal leave but there's a leave called family and community services leave. This comprises two days in a year and you can use that for things like moving house but it can also be used for a religious celebration and that's on top of all your other leave.*¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Volunteering Australia, 2006, *Muslim youth's experience of and attitudes towards volunteering*. www.volunteeringaustralia.org

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² Personal communication MWL 9 20-4-07

¹¹³ Personal communication FG 1 12-9-07

¹¹⁴ Personal communication MWL 9 29-4-07

Private Sector

In the private sector, in spite of reports to the contrary in the HREOC *Isma-Listen* report, several women in this study gave extremely positive private or corporate workforce participation stories.¹¹⁵

For example, in the corporate world, while working as an auditor in a large international audit firm, one woman's religious practices and dress codes were extremely well accommodated.

*I started work with it [the hijab] and it was no issue at all. People were pretty supportive, pretty understanding. The clients were great too, I didn't have any sign that I was discriminated against in any shape or form.*¹¹⁶

In the professional workplace, in this case a legal firm, a Muslim woman research participant reported similar experiences:

*It's really good because where I am now there are quite a few Catholics and they tend to be quite religious like myself. We've noticed that we've got quite a lot of common ground and want the same things in life and even those that aren't religious or have any particular religious beliefs definitely want to know more about Islam. They often ask me questions and just seem really genuine and interested in knowing the truth.*¹¹⁷

Changing Attitudes to Muslim Women's Religious Dress

There has been considerable debate about Muslim women's religious dress as a barrier to employment and workforce participation. Research conducted by HREOC confirmed this discrimination and this present research also indicates Muslim women's dress remains a significant barrier to employment for some women.¹¹⁸ However, a number of women in our research had positive experiences and had not been discriminated against in the workforce on the basis of their religious dress. In some instances it would appear that attitudes are changing. The following are representative of the reports of non-discrimination on the basis of dress code in this research.

*I have worked at a market research contractor and I was wearing a hijab in this market research and I don't think there was a problem.*¹¹⁹

*I have been working before with a set construction company and it's not really a problem for me wearing the hijab.*¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2004 *Isma-Listen* Report, HREOC Sydney pp.60-64

¹¹⁶ Personal communication FG 2 12-9-07

¹¹⁷ Personal communication MWL 2 25-4-07

¹¹⁸ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2004 *Isma-Listen* Report, HREOC Sydney pp. 61-63

¹¹⁹ Personal communication FG 1 12-9-07

I work for a large biscuit firm as a machine operator and I'm from a Christian background. I converted to Islam when I married my husband. When I started work I didn't wear the hijab so the first day I went to work with the hijab everybody at work couldn't believe it, they said what have you done to your hair. I told them I just want to observe the Islamic way and I want to keep my hijab and this is part of my religion. They were very interested and supportive.¹²¹

I worked in the city in a very large mental health rehab association and I had no problem, travelling, at work, at social gatherings, I found it pretty interesting. I was very well accepted by the clients of the organization, by the management, by everyone.¹²²

Of particular interest in this research was the number of young women who reported working or having young friends who work, in the retail sector:

At our local Safeway which is Woolworths we have three Somali girls and one Arabic girl with the hijab. You find heaps of them now. Only recently though, only in the last two years. Before that I never saw a girl in a supermarket with a hijab. Even in this area, so it's very new. And the bank now, you have a couple of girls working in the bank wearing the hijab. So it's very good.¹²³

Respectful and Accommodating Attitudes in the Work Place Culture

Many participants in this research indicated the difficulties they have at all levels of Australian society with regards to the widespread social use of alcohol, and in some instances, though less so now, the lack of available of *halal* food. However, this research shows that some progress is being made in the workplace with regard to people's knowledge and understanding of these religious practices and prohibitions. Participants reported the following:

I used to work for a private firm and they tend to have the drinks on Friday nights. They would pre-warn me and say we're going to have drinks, you don't have to attend. If you want to attend we'll have orange juice for you. Where I am now they don't ever drink within the office and if they do have drinks they go to a pub. They know not to invite me if they were going to a pub.¹²⁴

I don't wear hijab at work and I recently started work with a company that has a barbecue every month. When they approached me about it I told them I would manage with salad, but while I was talking to one of the girls, who knew I was Muslim, mentioned that I have to have halal food. They actually went and bought a separate barbeque for me and brought all the separate containers. I really appreciated that. I'm the

¹²⁰ Personal communication FG 1 12-9-07

¹²¹ Personal communication FG 2 20-5-07

¹²² Personal communication FG 7 2-6-07

¹²³ Personal communication FG 3 13-9-07

¹²⁴ Personal communication MWL 2 25-4-07

*only Muslim there and they did that for me. They said no we don't want you to eat salad every month. I was very appreciative.*¹²⁵

Support From Individual Teachers

The overwhelming impression from the focus groups was that most of the faith based schools, Catholic and Anglican, the Independent schools and some of the state schools were supportive of their career choices.

A number of the young women commented on the direct positive advice and encouragement given by individual teachers for their future careers. (See Section B.1.2a for more details)

B.2.b Barriers to Participation in the Workforce

Most of the research participants identified barriers in relation to workforce participation, however the majority were employed or studying and were confident that they would find employment. Many also were working part-time while studying. As noted earlier, the national percentage of Muslim women participating in the labour market was 30% in 2001 and the 2006 figure was 31%.¹²⁶ As would be expected, 80% of Muslim women leaders were active in the labour market, and as a consequence, the cohort of Muslim women involved in this study is not representative of the national average of Muslim women.

The Hijab

In research referred to previously Muslim women's dress as an obvious marker of religious identity in Australian secular society has been clearly identified as a barrier to participation in the workforce for some of those Muslim women who wear it. This is particularly so in some industry sectors. (See Section B.4 for a description of the *Hijab* and Appendix 1. Literature Review for a more detailed over view of the research on this topic).

In this research, Muslim women's dress was also identified as a barrier for Muslim women to enter the workforce. The majority of women interviewed for this research reported anecdotal evidence of perceived discrimination on the basis of dress, although many of them, as detailed in the previous section, have not faced that discrimination personally. The HREOC *Isma-Listen* Report of 2004 reported several specific incidences of such discrimination.¹²⁷

Participants in this research commented:

Yes I think the hijab is a big factor. I think that even though employers know that they're not supposed to discriminate against people on religious grounds, they do. I think it's just from laymen observation and what other people have told me and even I looked at a study in the UK

¹²⁵ Personal communication FG 5 20-5-07

¹²⁶ ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing Labour Force Status

¹²⁷ HREOC *Isma-Listen* Report of 2004, HREOC, Sydney pp 61-63

*and yes religious discrimination is a factor and unfortunately the hijab is such an identifying feature that it is a real concern.*¹²⁸

*I know a lot of women who have, and even if they're over qualified find it very hard to find employment based on hijab usually. It's a big problem. It reinforces that stereotype that Muslim women aren't getting out there and being involved in the wider community.*¹²⁹

The discrimination against women on the basis of dress is brought into sharp relief with reports of discrimination that some Muslim women converts have had, following their decision to wear the *hijab*.

*I have heard from convert ladies who previously had no problem [with employment] that since becoming a Muslim, and especially when they choose to start dressing according to the dress code, they have a lot of difficulties finding work.*¹³⁰

However, the extent of this discrimination has not been clearly identified and debate on this issue continues within the Muslim community.

*It's hard to say because some women are absolutely adamant. They say time and again, that they have been grossly mistreated [on the basis of dress] and not able to get work. And then you get other Muslim women who just think it's absolutely ridiculous, so we've had both come to us, so we don't quite know at the moment where it stands and that is one really important research work that we'd like to do to, actually get what's going on.*¹³¹

As has been noted the extent of this problem is not fully understood and research on this issue is needed.

Personal Lack of Confidence

In addition to dress, some Muslim women have to overcome personal barriers to participate fully in the Australian workforce. Some lack personal confidence in presenting themselves adequately in job interviews, which may be due to a number of factors. Research participants reported that some young women wearing *hijab* do feel that they will be rejected on the basis of their dress code and subsequently lose confidence to present themselves with assurance during employment interviews.

And also sometimes it's just a fear of rejection in getting a job for some Muslim women. I've heard lots of women say, especially university students, how are they going to go when they look for employment, are

¹²⁸ Personal communication MWL 22 3-7-07

¹²⁹ Personal communication MWL 15 21-4-07

¹³⁰ Personal communication MWL 11 10-9-07

¹³¹ Personal communication MWL 10 1-5-07

*they going to have to take off the hijab when they look for employment?*¹³²

School Based Discrimination in Workforce Preparation

One of the issues addressed in the education section of this report related to teachers' lack of interest and, at times, lack of support for Muslim girls career choices. When discussing workforce participation, several research participants raised this issue again. (See Section B.1.2b)

Industry Employment Stereotyping and Discrimination on the Basis of Dress

A number of industries have been identified in this research as having discriminatory practices against Muslim women wearing *hijab*, both in employment and workplace practices. The hospitality industry was one area as was hairdressing and the retail industry. Research participants reported restaurants refusing to employ Muslim women and hairdressing apprentices being unable to find employment. In the health sector some doctors and nurses have reported covert discrimination and despite some Woolworths supermarkets employing Muslim girls in *hijab* in non-Muslim areas, some others are discriminatory on the basis of dress.

Hospitality

*We have had a couple of young girls come in who had problems getting jobs, but that was mainly dealing with waitresses and that because employers were scared that customers would be scared off by seeing a Muslim woman serving them.*¹³³

*One of the young ladies from the youth group applied for a fish and chips casual position at the corner store and was told that it was going to be very difficult for the shop to employ her because of her hijab. She was told that 'if people walk into the shop and find you here they will walk out and we will just lose business. It's nothing against you it's just a perception'.*¹³⁴

Hairdressing

*One of my friends was an apprentice hairdresser and she was a really good hairdresser, she won a lot of competitions and people just wouldn't employ her because she wore hijab.*¹³⁵

Retail Industry

¹³² Personal communication FG 7 2-6-07

¹³³ Personal communication FG 4 6-4-07

¹³⁴ Personal communication MWL 13 6-6-07

¹³⁵ Personal communication MWL 15 21-4-07

For instance, we have a couple of year twelve girls who work part time at Woolworths on the cash register and it was made very clear to them that they couldn't work there if they wore the hijab.¹³⁶

Health

I know a female doctor recently took her scarf off only because the older generation did not want to be treated by her in a private hospital because she was wearing a scarf. So she had no option but to take it off because she needed a job there.¹³⁷

There was another Bosnian girl who wasn't born here but she came here quite young and she was doing something similar to dentistry and started wearing the hijab and her boss told her that she had to take it off or leave.¹³⁸

Legal Firms

I think we've only ever had two lawyers here in Adelaide who have worn the headscarf and one of them has just taken it off. She finds it too hard to cope with everything that gets dished out to her in court and in her firm. She consequently moved now.¹³⁹

In spite of this discrimination several participants felt that the Muslim community itself should be doing more to address this issue:

A lot of people once they get to know Muslim girls they get to love them and they're happy with them but I think it's just that needs to be bridged. In a way Muslims have to be out there more and talking about themselves and about the hijab, so there's more understanding which I think is really lacking.¹⁴⁰

Lack of Muslim Friendly Job Providers

Research participants made several comments about the need for Muslim friendly services within the Job Provider network. However, one such example was given in Queensland and there may well be others and, if not, this service could provide a positive model for others. The Queensland Government is reported to have set up Access, which is an employment agency to help Muslim people access employment. One Muslim youth reported her experience:

I'm employed in an employment office. It was this plan by the Muslim Reference group to have two Muslim youth workers with employment workers. We had a lot of meetings with them and they said it's actually

¹³⁶ Personal communication MWL 17 19-4-07

¹³⁷ Personal communication FG 7 2-6-07

¹³⁸ Personal communication MWL 15 21-4-07

¹³⁹ Personal communication MWL 19 25-4-07

¹⁴⁰ Personal communication MWL 15 21-4-07

*going really good. Our people are coming up to them and saying we don't have a job, like a lot of new migrants as well. And so they are finding a lot of jobs for them, just them being there; a contact point liaising between the employer and employee is a great help.*¹⁴¹

Workplace Lack of Understanding of Islamic Religious Practices

In addition to pre-employment and workplace discrimination for some Muslim women others have had to face a lack of religious understanding with regard to specific religious practices. In the following report, the issue of hand shaking was a barrier to respectful and understanding religious practice. However, not all Muslim women will identify hand shaking as a workplace barrier.

*Women don't really shake hands and we don't like to be put in a room with a man alone. He'd come in and I'd feel like OK you're just too close to me now. That's just what I think they do need to be educated about. That's probably why women are too scared. That's personally my fear of going out there because the men won't understand where my barriers are. We do have barriers up that they need to know. It's not anything against them. It's just that fact that that's been instilled in us since we were little kids.*¹⁴²

Workplace Culture and Use of Alcohol

As in other areas of social life, for some Muslim women, the use of alcohol on social occasions in the workplace, or on other social occasions with their fellow employees, is a barrier to full social participation in the workforce. But there are other more subtle work cultures that are barriers for some Muslim women too. These are not necessarily formal things but more informal understandings about image or about team 'bonding', such as wine and cheese nights, after work meetings and going on overnight or weekend team building exercises.

*In some industry sectors there's a very narrow definition of what's accepted as business dress for men and for women including tailored suits or tailored skirts for women as well as the hegemony of the business lunch or Friday night drinks. In some sectors or workplaces such dress and social participation is mandatory and so that makes life quite difficult for some Muslim women. It is also internally policed, quite instinctively. Compliance is seen as acceptable, not just acceptable but it comes with the territory.*¹⁴³

Specific Problems Faced by New Arrivals

Several research studies have been undertaken on Muslim women new arrivals and refugees, identifying the specific problems faced by these

¹⁴¹ Personal correspondence FG 6 1-6-07

¹⁴² Personal communication FG 7 2-6-07

¹⁴³ Personal communication MWL 22 3-7-07

women. Such problems include English language acquisition, difficulties in getting qualifications recognised and lack of opportunity to upgrade their skills in preparation for employment. These barriers to employment are experienced by the majority of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) migrants and refugees but Muslim women face additional barriers.¹⁴⁴ There was considerable recognition by research participants in this study also of the barriers faced by Muslim women new arrivals in relation to workforce participation.

*We know that Muslim women, especially newly arrived, some of them are very highly qualified, but they have to work in a cleaning business, in supermarkets, or the food business. It's a shame to see very qualified people coming from different countries who because of the language and not having enough money to pay for study and university, they decide to do this type of work.*¹⁴⁵

In spite of the difficulties faced by some Muslim women in the workforce the degree of humour by young, mostly second generation research participants that accompanies this overt discrimination is striking:

*...if there's an employer who might be prejudiced against Muslims, once any of us here open our mouths we completely blow their stereotypes. Straight away it shocks them and they think oh wow she's normal. In a way it's probably a strength really because people might approach you with one perception but when you exceed that even a little bit they get really happy. [Lots of laughter]. Its almost like merely by speaking you impress them. [Laughs]. In English and really clearly [all laughing]*¹⁴⁶

Summary

Workforce participation is a key area of social and economic participation in Australian life. This research shows that Muslim women are actively participating in that arena. The drivers to that participation include a strong desire to participate actively in the non-Muslim community and to be able to express their Muslim Australian identity freely and without discrimination. Additional drivers were reported as being improved personal self confidence, improved workplace culture with regard to being respectful and accommodating towards religious dress, practices and rituals, and, in some instances, support from teachers in pre-work career encouragement.

¹⁴⁴ Yasmeen, S.2001, 'Settlement Needs of Muslim Women in Perth: A Case Study'. in ed. A. Saeed and S. Akbarzadeh. *Muslim Communities in Australia*. Sydney, University of New South Wales Press. Kamalkhani, Z, 2001, 'Recently Arrived Muslim Refugee Women Coping with Settlement', ed. Saeed.A & Akbarzadeh, S. *Muslim Communities in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney. pp. 97-115. Suzy Casimiro, Peter Hancock and Jeremy Northcote, 2007, Isolation and Insecurity: Resettlement issues among Muslim women refugees in Perth Western Australia, *Australian journal of Social Issues* Vol. 42, No. 1 Autumn.

¹⁴⁵ Personal communication FG 5 20-5-07

¹⁴⁶ Personal communication FG 8 21-4-07

Nonetheless significant barriers to workforce participation remain for some Muslim women, in particular new arrivals. These include, for some women, language, skills recognition, overt racial and religious discrimination, stereotyping and discrimination on the basis of dress, and sometimes the social culture of the workplace, including the use of alcohol.

B.2.1 Strategies to Overcome Workforce Participation Barriers

A number of strategies are proposed to overcome some of these problems and these are addressed in relation to strategies that can be undertaken by government, the Muslim community and the non-Muslim community. Various research strategies to inform action are also provided.

Government

- A national media campaign to promote positive images of the diversity of Muslim women's participation in the workforce aimed at diminishing workforce stereotyping and discrimination should be undertaken.
- Support should be given to arts and cultural bodies including television and radio to promote positive and normalising images of Muslim women in Australian society.
- Support for cross-cultural and Islamic sensitivity training for Job Providers and for the employment of Muslims in such services in areas of high Muslim population should be given.
- The Federal Government should establish a national task force or committee of Muslim representatives and national and state business leaders to review existing research and to plan a strategy to overcome employment and workforce discrimination against Muslims, including Muslim women and new arrivals.

Non-Muslim Community

- Islamic sensitivity and cultural diversity workshops for employers, representative employer groups and associations as well as state and local business councils should be undertaken.
- Business leaders and employer associations as well as trade unions should promote positive and diverse Muslim employee role models for non-Muslim employers to help overcome the perception and stereotype of Muslims as a monolithic homogenous whole.
- In educational settings, cultural diversity and religious sensitivity training in relevant commercial and business training programs should be undertaken.

Muslim Community

- Programs to support and promote confidence building programs for all Muslim women, especially for youth and new arrivals should be undertaken. This could include pre-employment workshops to help women understand different workplace cultures as well as pre-workplace training including for job interviews.
- Volunteering should also be encouraged and facilitated through the relevant bodies.
- Work with religious leaders and Muslim community leaders to give good pre-employment advice to young Muslim women should be undertaken.

Research

- A national study on Muslim women's workforce participation, with an additional focus on new arrivals, should be undertaken to identify more specifically the barriers that Muslim women face. Within such a study strategies to overcome those barriers should be identified.

Section B.3

Drivers and Barriers for Muslim Women's Participation in Small Business Enterprises

This section of the report looks at the way in which Muslim women in Australia are involved in their own business enterprises and explores the various drivers and barriers for Muslim women's participation in this area of the economy. Muslim women reported that the main drivers for owning their own enterprise was to specifically target niche markets, such as professional services for Muslim women, Muslim women's clothes, including swimwear and sports clothes, as well as beauty and hairdressing salons. Others expressed a desire to support the community of Muslim women through the provision of services or goods. Barriers to business ownership varied, but included, in some states, the lack of a sufficient market, the business, commercial and social environment in the non-Muslim community, and, in one case, security threats.

There has been no research published on Muslim Australian women's participation in their own enterprises. However, according to anecdotal evidence, Dr Christina Ho of the University of Technology Sydney, is presently undertaking research on this issue.¹⁴⁷

Kabir and Evans' paper explores the historical trends of Muslims in the Australian labour market from 1980 to 2001 and there is some reference to the specific situation of Muslim women.¹⁴⁸ Collins' chapter on Arab entrepreneurs in Australia explores the role of the family, including women, in Arab small enterprises. The research identified, in a national survey of the ownership structure of small businesses in 1996 that 61.5 % of the survey sample were business women from a Middle Eastern background who owned their own businesses. This percentage of ownership can be compared with 63.6% of Australian women business owners from an English speaking background.¹⁴⁹ Clearly women of Middle Eastern background in this study were actively involved in their own enterprises.

According to the ABS 2006 Census, some 21.6% of Muslim females are involved in a business enterprise, which is lower than Collins' research on Middle Eastern women and also lower than the sample in our study. This research indicates that some 40% of the Muslim women leaders interviewed either owned their own business presently or had done so previously. Among those interviewed there were women with businesses in accounting, psychology, consulting, childcare centres, medical practice, legal practice, educational consultants, real estate, swim and sports wear retailing and a cross-cultural training consultancy.

¹⁴⁷ See <http://datasearch.uts.edu.au/hss/staff/socinq/details.cfm?StaffId=1614>

¹⁴⁸ Nahid Kabir and Raymond Evans, 2003, 'Muslims and the Australian Labor Market, 1980-2001', *Immigrants and Minorities*, Vol.21, No. 3, pp 70-95, November.

¹⁴⁹ J. Collins, 2002 'Arab Entrepreneurs in Australia', in *Arab Australians Today*, ed. G. Hage, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, p.102

Among the focus groups, many women also had been involved in small businesses, and among these were small food shops or supermarkets, home based childcare, bookshops, beauty salons, a photography business, immigration agencies and a chiropractic business. The nature of the focus group discussion did not allow a quantitative figure to be reached with these groups, but there was strong indication of Muslims women's involvement in their own businesses.

This research indicates that 50% of those with businesses established them with the help of the family, and the remainder had support from a bank. One woman, who had difficulty gaining a bank loan, used her credit card to access \$7,000 for infrastructure costs. Another was given a management grant from the Australian Government's AusIndustry scheme to help with the establishment of her business.

B.3.a Drivers for Participation in Small Business Enterprises

Muslim women felt confident that they could, if they so desired, establish their own business in their profession or work choice area and there were a number of factors that contributed to this confidence.

Social Acceptability

Research participants reported that it was socially acceptable for a Muslim woman to own and run her own business in the Muslim community. One participant referred to a growing middle class, including Muslim women, who are increasingly involved in their own enterprises. However, there were many reports also of Muslim women owning and running their own small shops, supplying clothes, groceries, *halal* food and meat to a specific community.

*You are getting a lot more women owning their own business. Now with people coming from overseas, they have brought their education so we do have a lot of professionals especially from the South African community who all basically have businesses. They're in everything, trading, professional, medical, property development here in Queensland.*¹⁵⁰

Niche Markets

Available niche markets included professional services, particularly medical services.

There are a lot of women who are doctors. They are usually the ones that the Muslim women go to because it is one of the problems to find a doctor. Some are highly specialised, gynaecologists. Most of them wear the hijab. Their patients are Muslims. I know a few Muslim women doctors who have worked together with their husbands, where they work together as a team in a medical centre. There's a woman who has

¹⁵⁰ Personal communication FG 6 1-6-07

*a health and wellbeing centre, homeopathy and alternative things and she's very traditionally dressed as well. Her clients are not just all Muslim. There are also a few lawyers.*¹⁵¹

Other niche markets included *halal* food, women's clothes, hairdressing and beauty salons and photographic businesses targeting women, and, as the Muslim community has grown in Australia, these specific markets have emerged so that Muslim women with entrepreneurial skills have been able to take advantage of these commercial opportunities:

*I know a few Muslim women who had their own little businesses like in trading with Muslim clothing, those sorts of things. Because you're not so dependent on the non-Muslim Australian community, that's easier. They are often trading within the community.*¹⁵²

*Halal food, take away chicken shops, run by Muslim women often with their families, but they're often instrumental in that. I know a Muslim woman who runs a halal butcher shop. It is often something that is for other Muslims.*¹⁵³

*I started this swim and sports wear business not for the money side of it. I did it because it was close to my heart because I felt it was going to benefit women. Seeing my niece suffer through sports I thought I was going to benefit her and I have.*¹⁵⁴

More recently arrived migrants, Somali and Sudanese Muslim women are also becoming involved in small enterprises such as food and other small businesses, including importing furniture and clothes from China and the Gulf States. As has been stated elsewhere these new arrivals face considerable discrimination in the workforce so that a commercial enterprise in a predominantly Muslim area with a niche market is a possible solution to provide economic security.

Mentoring and Support

Other women reported the mentoring and support provided by other women:

*If you are moving into shops and retail where there are lots of other Muslim women, then you've got heaps of support.*¹⁵⁵

Discrimination in Employment

Some women reported that discrimination in employment as well as the opportunity to work from home and the independence that such working

¹⁵¹ Personal communication MWL 17 19-4-07

¹⁵² Personal communication FG 5 20-5-07

¹⁵³ Personal communication FG 3 13-9-07

¹⁵⁴ Personal communication MWL 20 26-6-07

¹⁵⁵ Personal communication FG 3 13-9-07

arrangements allowed, were also drivers for Muslim women in establishing their own businesses.

*I know a few women who work from home as beauticians and hairdressers and they have more business than they can handle. Some Muslim women don't want to go to public salons so they come to a private home.*¹⁵⁶

*I have two sisters-in-law who are twenty-five and twenty-three who have just started their own beauty salon. One was a legal secretary and one worked at a bank and they decided to run their own business. I have another friend who is a chiropractor with her own business. They are Muslim girls.*¹⁵⁷

Qualification Discrimination against Newly Arrived Migrants

For some newly arrived migrants, discrimination against their qualifications is a driver for establishing their own business and there are many similar reports of other professionals who are unable to get their qualifications recognised undertaking successful commercial enterprises.

*My dad was forced to have a business because he came as a skilled migrant and they paint this really good picture for you. He has Masters in Electrical Engineering from Washington DC and he didn't find any job. He went into depression for two years and he was forced into finding a business and he did and it worked out.*¹⁵⁸

B.3.b Barriers to Participation in Small Business Enterprises

The Muslim women leaders and focus group participants identified several specific problems and barriers that they had encountered in establishing a business as a Muslim woman.

Lack of Mentoring

The small numbers of Muslim women in certain professional areas available to mentor was identified as a problem.

*If you're trying to set up as an accountant or solicitor or a more educated profession where there are very few Muslims involved, it's harder to have those social connections where you get the mentoring and support.*¹⁵⁹

Lack of Market

¹⁵⁶ Personal communication MWL 3 20-4-07

¹⁵⁷ Personal communication MWL 6 15-9-07

¹⁵⁸ Personal communication FG 6 1-6-07

¹⁵⁹ Personal communication MWL 21 15-9-07

In some states the lack of a market as well as the spread of that market was also identified as a problem, as, for example in Adelaide, where the Muslim community is relatively small and spread across the city and is not clustered in one particular area.

Security

One business owner also cited security as an issue and noted that:

When I first opened my shop here we had threats and they said if you don't take those filthy Muslim rags out of here.... and we've had other threats. We're at Punchbowl right in the middle of all the other Muslims and that still happens. Occasionally we get emails calling me a terrorist.¹⁶⁰

Unwelcoming business and commercial environment

For some women also, particularly those that are wearing *hijab* and interacting with the commercial world, the social environment of the business and commercial community is unwelcoming and also uncomfortable in some situations where alcohol is consumed.

I was invited to the AusIndustries luncheon, a very cocktail kind of function which I felt very uncomfortable in. I felt like nobody wanted to speak to me because I was the only veiled person in this really uncomfortable situation and I would choose not to do that again.

Summary

The study reveals that Muslim women are active in the business community, being principally engaged in operating their own business enterprises. The main driver for this involvement is the desire for independence and in some cases the availability of a niche market in professional services or specific commercial services such as hairdressing and beauty salons or goods such as women's clothes and food. Another driver for women is the availability of other women who will mentor. Some new arrivals, among them African Muslim women are also becoming involved in their own small businesses.

There were a number of barriers to establishing their own business identified by women and these included lack of mentoring and in some Australian states a lack of a Muslim market. Others identified security as a problem, and, in the commercial world, an unfriendly and unwelcoming social atmosphere.

B.3.1 Strategies to Overcome These Barriers

The following strategies are proposed to overcome some of these barriers:

Government and non-Muslim Community

¹⁶⁰ Personal communication MWL 20 26-6-07

- Fund and implement specific programs to facilitate Muslim women's participation in local, state and national women's business councils and forums;
- Facilitate cross-cultural understanding at the national, state and local business council level;

Muslim Community

- Establish a women's business mentoring program to support Muslim women in their specific business enterprises.

Research

- Where such research does not exist, undertake research to identify more clearly the participation of Muslim women in business enterprises across Australia.

Section B.4

Drivers and Barriers to Friendships and Social Life within the Muslim and non-Muslim Community

This section of the research report explores the various drivers and barriers to Muslim Australian women's friendships and social life both within the Muslim community and within the non-Muslim community. One of the key issues that was raised, and which created considerable debate, was young Muslim women's relations with their male counterparts, not only in relation to friendships but also to marriage.

In terms of these friendships and social life, Muslim women's personal and socially perceived identity is the key to their participation in Australian social life. The majority of young Muslim women in this research identified themselves strongly as 'Australian Muslims'. Further research is needed on that concept and no attempt is made here to delineate exactly what that term might mean.

This 'Australian Muslim' identity is shared by women who are covered, wearing the *hijab*, and those who are not covered. Three quarters of the women in this research were wearing the *hijab* and acknowledged that some Muslim women who did not do so may well have had different social life experiences. (See Research Report Background to Project).

In relation to friendships with non-Muslim women, this research indicates that among the Muslim women leaders two thirds (68%) have close friends among women of other or no religious background. 32% identified Muslim women as their closest friends.

Muslim women also engage in a range of social activities with their non-Muslim friends, going to dinner and the movies, talking on the phone, having coffee, shopping, 'hanging out' and, for older women, participating in children's activities such as playgroups or sporting events. They also participate in each other's festivals. Many Muslim women also belonged to a wide variety of non-Muslim professional, social or charitable organisations.¹⁶¹

Muslim women's friendships, as part of their social life, are not an area that has been researched in Australia. However, in the literary field, Hanifa Deen's book 'Caravanserai: journey among Australian Muslims, provides insight into

¹⁶¹ For example: Law Society, Centre for Human Rights and International Affairs Deakin University, Australian Psychological Society, Australian Institute of Management, Australian Project Management Association, Arabic Society in Oxford England, Modern Language Teachers Association, Teachers' Registration Board, English Teachers Association, History Teachers Association, National Council of Women, Girl Guides, Young Women's Action Group, Migrant Resource Centre, Non Muslim choir, Bankstown Youth Advisory Committee, NSW Youth Round Table, National Youth Round Table, Board of United Ethnic Community Agencies, Leukaemia Foundation, Red Cross, Unifem and Amnesty International.

the social life of some Muslim communities¹⁶² and Randa Abdel-Fattah's works provide a popular cultural insight into young Muslim women's lives.¹⁶³

Finding suitable marriage partners was, for a significant number of women involved in this research, identified as a problem, as second and even first generation refugee or migrant women are better educated, more mature, more focused and often more religious than their male Muslim and ethnic counterparts. Many women commented on the lack of focus and lack of religiosity of a number of young Muslim males. Some women observed that they were aware that the activities of these young males were more akin to Australian youth culture than to their own ethnic culture or religious practice and hence these men were viewed as unacceptable partners. As a consequence, it is not uncommon for males to seek wives from overseas, and at times some families do this for their daughters also, but there is anecdotal evidence that a significant number of such marriages have high failure rates. Increasingly, Muslim Australian women are also accessing the Internet to seek marriage partners from overseas.

The issue of marriage among second generation Muslim women in Australia has not been addressed in the literature as far as can be determined. Birrell and Healy's work on out-marriage and the survival of ethnic communities in Australia, which covers the years 1996 to 1998, shows that only a small minority of second generation Australians choose partners who originate from the same country. The exception to this is people from the Middle East.¹⁶⁴ Such research has not been carried out on the Muslim community to date.

While not specifically addressing the issue of Muslim women, Zevallos' article explores some of the key issues facing second generation migrant women in Australia.¹⁶⁵ Overseas, this issue has been explored in greater depth, with works by Vertovec and Rogers, et al, making a significant contribution to our understanding of second generation Muslim youth identity.¹⁶⁶

According to these researchers, there are nine contextual factors affecting Islamic identification for contemporary Muslim European youth that differ from first generation Muslims. These include the inculcating of Western values through participation in Western education systems, with a corresponding tendency separate out religion and ethnicity. Youth are also 'compartmentalising' and 'secularising' their practice of religion and there is a growth in Europe of a 'vernacular' Islam, in much the same way as an

¹⁶² Hanifa Deen, 2003, *Caravanserai: journey among Australian Muslims*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

¹⁶³ Randa. Abdel-Fattah, 2005, *Does my head look big in this?* Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney, and, 2006, *Ten Things I hate about me*, Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney.

¹⁶⁴ Birrell, B. Healy. E, 2000. 'Out-marriage and the survival of ethnic communities in Australia'. *People and Place* vol.8 no.3, pp.37-46.

http://elecpress.monash.edu.au/pnp/free/pnpv8n3/v8n3_5BirrHealy.pdf

¹⁶⁵ Zevallos Z. 2005 'It's like we're their culture: second Generation Migrant women discuss Australian culture', *People and Place*, vol.13, no.2, pp.41-49,

¹⁶⁶ Vertovec, Steven and Alistair Rogers, 1998, *Muslim European Youth- Reproducing ethnicity, religion and culture*, Ashgate, UK.

'Australian Muslim identity' is believed to be emerging. Young European Muslims are also immersed in American and European youth culture.¹⁶⁷

According to Mandaville's study¹⁶⁸, Muslim youth are also increasingly using TV, video and the Internet to access key sites of religious discourse. Magazines such as Q-News and The Muslim News, which cover a range of issues including marriage, sexuality and contraception, provide young Muslims with access to Islamic thought and debate on these key issues.

In Australia, Noble, Poynting and Tabar's work on Lebanese male youth in Western Sydney demonstrates that Muslims and other migrant and second generation male youth move with ease between multiple social and cultural identities.¹⁶⁹ In this study, while group membership is defined by their 'Lebanese-ness' (even though they were not all Lebanese), there was a clear religious identification by Muslim boys in relation to religious taboos, prayer, fasting and the Qur'an. Their identity was based on religion "I mostly say I am Muslim because that is the main thing".¹⁷⁰

Poynting and Noble's various studies on the Arabic, principally Lebanese, community, details the various male sub-cultures that exist within that community, but little of that research specifically addresses young Muslim women.¹⁷¹,¹⁷² However, identity is subject to re-interpretation, with Muslim youth having multiple group memberships and demonstrating considerable flexibility in moving within different social contexts.

The one area of Muslim women's identity that arouses much Australian public comment, but is poorly researched, is that of Muslim women's dress codes and the particular focus and emotion it arouses in Australian public debate. Joumanah El Matrah's comments in her article "Stolen Voices of Muslim Women" are an important critique of this issue.¹⁷³ And Alia Imtoul's various recent scholarly works are also the exception to this lack of research.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁷ Vertovec, Steven. and Alistair Rogers, 1998, *Muslim European Youth- Reproducing ethnicity, religion and culture*, Ashgate, UK. pp.10-14.

¹⁶⁸ Mandaville, P. 2002, 'Muslim youth in Europe', in *Islam, Europe's second religion*, eds. S.Hunter & C. Buchanan, Praeger, Westport USA. pp. 219-229.

¹⁶⁹ Greg Noble, Scott Poynting, Tabar, 1999 'Lebanese youth and social identity', in eds. R. White, *Australian youth subcultures: On the margins and in the mainstream*, Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, Hobart, pp.130-37,.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. p.133.

¹⁷¹ ibid. pp.130-37.

¹⁷² Scott Poynting, 2002, 'Bin Laden in the suburbs': attacks on Arab and Muslim Australians before and after 11 September', *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, vol.14 no.1, July.

¹⁷³ Joumanah El Matrah, 'Stolen Voices of Muslim Women', *The Age*, April 22,2005

¹⁷⁴ Alia Imtoul, 2006 'A little bit of a slave?': towards a theorisation of the 'hijab in state schools' debate in Australia, *Feminist Media Studies* 6(1).

-----Alia Imtoul, 2005 "Cover your Face for the Photograph Please": Gender Issues, the Media and Muslim Women in Australia", *Journal of Australasian Studies*.

-----Alia Imtoul, 2005 'Is being Australian about being white?', Australian Whiteness, National Identity and Muslim Women' in ed Riggs, D.W. *Taking up the challenge: Critical race and whiteness studies in a postcolonising nation*. Adelaide: Crawford House Publishers.

-----Alia Imtoul, 2005, 'Religious Racism and the Media: Representations of Muslim Women in the Australian Print Media', *Outskirts: feminisms along the edge* vol 13.

<http://www.chloe.uwa.edu.au/outskirts/current/volume13/imtoul>

Earlier works by Santi Rozario (1998)¹⁷⁵ and Alma (1994)¹⁷⁶ also address this discourse.

The issue of the *hijab* has also become part of youth popular culture in Australian literature, with the release of Randa Abdel-Fattah's book, 'Does my head look big in this?'¹⁷⁷. Abdel-Fattah's article in the SMH Good Weekend of February 2007, titled "Veils and Vegemite", also explores issues of Muslim women's identity.¹⁷⁸ Public comment in the mainstream media is also very common, with articles like Cooke's,¹⁷⁹ and Riley's as typical examples and comments by senior political leaders remain commonplace.¹⁸⁰

Public media comments by other Muslim women, such as Fatima Shah¹⁸¹ and Nadia Jamal,¹⁸² have contributed to what, at times, is a heated debate on this issue within Australian society. Muslim women have also contributed to the public debate on comments made by Sheikh Hilali.¹⁸³

The Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria has undertaken several pieces of social research on Muslim women in Victoria. One, published in 2003, illustrates that international global events have affected the lives of Muslim women, in particular those who are identifiably Muslim though their dress.¹⁸⁴ Their report identifies the physical attacks, attacks against women's property, against Muslim women at public gatherings, the verbal harassment of women in public spaces and attacks against Muslim women's institutions that took place after September 11, 2001. This report is supported by evidence given by Muslim women during meetings held by HREOC while data gathering for the *Isma* Report released in 2004.¹⁸⁵

This political climate affects how Muslim women use the public space, but little research has been done on this topic until recently, with Whitton and Thompson's, 2005, academic paper on this issue making a valuable

¹⁷⁵ Santi Rozario, 1998 'On Being Australian and Muslim: Muslim Women as Defenders of Islamic Heritage', *Women's Studies International Forum* 21 no. 6 pp 649-661.

¹⁷⁶ Alma, M. 1994 'Lifting the Veil: A Study of Muslim women in the Canterbury-Bankstown area', *Education Links*, no.48, Winter, pp.26-28.

¹⁷⁷ Abdel-Fattah, Randa, 2005, *Does my head look big in this?* Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney.

¹⁷⁸ Abdel-Fattah, Randa, 2007, 'Veils and Vegemite', *Sydney Morning Herald, Good Weekend* February 17th p.51-52.

¹⁷⁹ Dewi Cooke 2007 'Muslim women unveil why they marry faith with dress', *The Age*, March 30 www.theage.com.au/news/nationa/muslim-women-unveil

¹⁸⁰ Mark Riley and Kelly Burke, 2002, 'PM Veiled comments on how Muslim women dress' AAP November 22. www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/11/21/10376978806923.html

¹⁸¹ Fatima Shah, 2004, 'There's enough room under the burqa for personal choice', *The Age*, 8 January.

¹⁸² Nadia Jamal, 2006 'There is more to Muslim women than a head scarf', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 October.

¹⁸³ John Stapleton, 2006 'I'm not fresh meat: Muslim women hit back', *The Australian*, 30 October.

¹⁸⁴ Joumanah El Matrah, 2003 'Living in apprehension and fear: the experience of Muslim women', *Australian Mosaic* no.3, Winter pp.31-32.

¹⁸⁵ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2004 *Isma-Listen Report*, HREOC Sydney

contribution to addressing the specific needs of Muslim women in urban spaces.¹⁸⁶

The issue of fear of using public spaces was not raised substantially by participants in this research. While incidents of abuse and intimidation and overt racism were identified, what was more striking was the response by confident and assertive young Muslim women, who consider it a fundamental right to occupy that public space without intimidation or abuse. This is not, however, to minimise the justified fear that some women, in particular new arrivals, face. The HREOC report of 2004 has made a considerable contribution to this debate.¹⁸⁷ More recently the Issues Deliberates 'Australia Deliberates-Muslim and Non-Muslims in Australia' has identified a number of key issues of concern for Muslims and non-Muslims.¹⁸⁸

B.4.1 Drivers to Friendships and Social Life within the non-Muslim Community

There are multiple drivers to Muslim Australian women's friendships with non-Muslims and this report demonstrates that the majority of young Muslim and Muslim women leaders in this study reported having strong relations with non-Muslim friends. The key drivers for those friendships identified in this study are long term school and university friendships, mutually supportive and respectful relationships and shared religious, social and intellectual values. For young Muslim women, there is a shared youth culture and for older women a shared social life around children and for some, shared festivals.

Commitment to Long-term School and Post School Friendships

A key factor in Muslim relations with non-Muslims, identified in this study, was attendance of Muslims in non-Muslim primary and high schools. Many research participants commented on their established school based non-Muslim friendships. They noted the value that they placed on those friendships and their desire to maintain those friendships. Those that attended Islamic high schools reported friendships established during inter-school activities that had been sustained post school. Many had friends from a range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

The social life of Muslim women with both Muslim and non-Muslim friends, both young and older women, tended to centre around activities such as going for coffee, attending movies, visits to each other houses and going to festivals, etc..

Young women spoke often of the way in which they negotiated issues around key milestones, especially 18th birthday parties and similar celebrations.

¹⁸⁶ C. Whitton and S. Thompson, 2005 'When cultures collide: planning for the public spatial needs of Muslim women in Sydney', *State of Australian Cities Conference*.

¹⁸⁷ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Report, 2004 *Isma-Listen*, HREOC Sydney

¹⁸⁸ Issues Deliberates, 2007 *Australia Deliberates: Muslims and non-Muslims in Australia*, Canberra Australia. http://www.ida.org.au/content.php?p=overview_of_the_dp

I have a lot of non-Muslim friends because I went to a non-Muslim school. Even from primary school I still keep in touch with some of my friends and it doesn't have to be a superficial relationship. After sixteen years I don't think I am going to still be her friend if it was a superficial relationship. I obviously didn't go to her 18th birthday party because I knew there would be alcohol and there would be other things but we went out for lunch separately for her birthday because I know that would mean something to her.¹⁸⁹

Mutually Supportive and Respectful Friendships

There was strong evidence of a commitment to relationships that were mutually supportive and respectful, particularly around the issues of dress codes and use of alcohol and food.

My friends are very good, they refuse to drink in front of us, they don't even bring out the alcohol. That's generally the case with all my non-Muslim friends, if we go out to a restaurant they won't drink that night.¹⁹⁰

My friend will go out with me somewhere else on a different day [from other friends who want to drink]. We will go and have lunch or coffee. Afterwards we might go back to someone's house and there will be a bottle of wine but it won't be opened because I'm there. They'll respect the fact that I'm there and they won't open that bottle of wine.¹⁹¹

One friend went to a halal butcher and bought halal meat, even though I said just don't serve meat, serve seafood or vegetarian. She went to that extent and that often happens.¹⁹²

Among young Muslims, as key life milestones are met, such as 18 year old birthday celebrations, friendships were sustained through efforts by both parties.

I attended a close friend's 21st birthday party and she was quite adamant that I must come and I had to bring family as well. They served alcohol but they catered the halal food for us specifically and there was an alternative for drinks. Some Muslims would prefer not to be in the same room as alcohol being served, but for us they had made so much effort to include us that we wanted to participate. We didn't have to drink alcohol or be near it.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ Personal communication FG 4 6-4-07

¹⁹⁰ Personal communication MWL 2 25-4-07

¹⁹¹ Personal communication MWL 19 25-4-07

¹⁹² Personal communication MWL 19 25-4-07

¹⁹³ Personal communication MWL 12 8-9-07

Shared Social and Religious Values

A number of research participants identified shared religious and social values as a driver to engaging in friendships with non-Muslims. Some even attended their friends' religious services at significant times.

We have close Uniting Church friends and we go to church functions etc¹⁹⁴

Increasingly also second generation Muslim women are breaking away from their ethnic identity and co-religious groups to form new friendships. In this study, women, especially those that wear *hijab* and are religiously observant, are increasingly identifying as Muslim Australians and all have friendships with women from a wider range of ethnicities creating their own 'united nations'. Where those shared values did not exist, several people noted that it would be impossible to have a sustained friendship.

Within the friends that I've had we've also shared the same values. The same friends who also practise their own religion of Christianity and I've also got a close Buddhist friend. She also did not believe in having boyfriends until she finished school and then the physical contact was limited and did not drink alcohol either. So based on those commonalities we've become friends.¹⁹⁵

For Aboriginal Muslim women there are shared values and cultural bonds between the Muslim community and the non-Muslim Aboriginal community.

I spend all my time with them. My [Muslim] sisters are my friends and we hang out. I don't find it an issue but I guess most of the non-Muslim friends that I have are Aboriginal and we have a different bond. I feel as comfortable with them as I do with Muslims. I can't say I feel particularly comfortable with the people that I work with but when you go to meet your Muslim friends most of the time you feel automatically comfortable and I feel very comfortable with friends that are Aboriginal as well.¹⁹⁶

Shared Human Rights Values

In addition to religious and gender issues some women identified humanitarian commitments and intellectual pursuits as drivers for friendships with non-Muslims. A significant number, especially second generation women, feel that social participation was a two way process and that it was important for Muslim women to reach out whenever possible to the broader Australian community. To this end some were actively involved in human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and other types of

¹⁹⁴ Personal communication MWL 1 18-4-07

¹⁹⁵ Personal communication MWL 12 8-9-07

¹⁹⁶ Personal communication FG 8 21-4-07

Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), the Girl Guides or other similar organisations. Younger women were also strongly encouraged to volunteer in non-Muslim voluntary organisations.

*When I joined the United Nations Society and I just found this huge group of people who had similar thoughts to me and shared values and I got along with them really well and I've made really good friends through what is a common bond. They are people from really different backgrounds.*¹⁹⁷

*As Muslim women we prefer to participate in more spiritual activities. But we also get involved in intellectual activities such as lectures and forums that not necessarily Islamic, often non-Islamic. The kind of forums that most people don't go to. That most Muslims don't go to, so we tend to be the only Muslims there, which is fine.*¹⁹⁸

Shared Youth Culture

All young Muslim women are exposed to the prevailing youth culture, some of which they can participate in. However, if they are religiously observant, other aspects will not be attractive to them. None the less there are significant youth milestones that Muslim young women share with non-Muslim friends and that they are able to negotiate while adhering to their religious principles.

*At the moment everyone is turning 21 so I usually just go at the beginning [of the party] before everybody's totally trashed and I'll just go and say happy birthday and give them a present and then I'll leave before things start getting crazy. This time is a bit funny because everyone's starting to go out and party and I'm not at all included in that.*¹⁹⁹

In terms of going to pubs and using alcohol and other mind-altering substances, all participants did not drink, but some were accommodating to their friends drinking and socialising in pubs. Only one mentioned drug use by friends, but all acknowledged the problem even within various ethnic communities.

*It depends, if its like a quick stop [at the pub] over for something then its OK but when its really late like after a movie or something then and you know that their intention is to get a little drunk. It just depends on the situation, if it's just let's have a drink, that's fine.*²⁰⁰

*I do have a friend that used to do drugs but I did alienate her and she went away but I'm glad she doesn't do it anymore. I like to think I was a positive influence on her.*²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ Personal communication FG 8 21-4-07

¹⁹⁸ Personal communication FG 4 6-4-07

¹⁹⁹ Personal communication MWL 15 21-4-07

²⁰⁰ Personal communication FG 8 21-4-07

²⁰¹ Personal communication FG 8 21-4-07

As with other young people, Muslim women enjoy parties and festivals where they can mix with non-Muslims.

*We have parties at friends' places, non-Muslims from school, and we get together for parties and there's no problem there. When we have celebrations we invite them over to our place but not on a very regular basis.*²⁰²

Participation in non-Muslim Childcare or Playgroups

Another area when Muslims make friendships with non-Muslims is around their children. This has been addressed more fully in the section on education, but in relation to this section of the report, some Muslim women identified childcare as a place where they have established relations with non-Muslim friends, but only where they have been particularly pro-active. (See Section B.1)

*Since I've been involved with playgroup I have got to know a lot of mums. None of them are Muslims. I suppose it took a bit of time. I don't know if that's because I joined later. I try not to say people aren't talking to me because I'm a Muslim. I try to be pro-active and just go and start making conversation, but it did take time. I'm definitely extroverted but it's not often that you go out and people will come up and make chit chat. I'm sure for someone who is a little bit more reserved it might be difficult. I like to use the opportunity for people to see that just because I'm wearing the hijab, I can speak English. Sometimes people are cautious because of that too.*²⁰³

Interacting with Neighbours

A number of women reported very good relations with neighbours, and the mutual commitment to express friendship and to care for one's non-Muslim neighbour was mentioned several times by research participants..

*I have an old lady. She's my neighbour; she depends on me a lot. I go and look after her during the daytime, do her washing and cleaning and take her shopping. She's got her own kids but they come once a month.*²⁰⁴

B.4.1b Barriers to Friendships and Social life in the non-Muslim Community

Perhaps the most significant barrier to friendships with non-Muslims for Muslim young women is the widespread social use of alcohol, other recreational drugs, and attendance at clubs, by young people in the Australian

²⁰² Personal communication FG 6 1-6-07

²⁰³ Personal communication MWL 4-25-4-07

²⁰⁴ Personal communication FG 5 20-5-07

culture, as detailed in other sections of the report. (See Section B.1 on Education)

Other barriers to friendships with non-Muslims include stereotyping and lack of sensitivity to Islamic religious practices, as well as, for new arrivals, their language skills and lack of understanding of Australian culture. Some Muslim women also feel marginalised and under threat in some social environments.

However, most report that, while extremely negative statements from political leaders about Muslim women's language skills, citizenship and women's dress fuel racist and defamatory media attacks, overall there has been some improvement in the level of verbal and physical harassment Muslim women are experiencing. The exception to this is the anecdotal reporting of racism being experienced by some Muslim African women in some communities.

Perceptions Regarding Muslim Women's Dress

In relation to non-Muslim friendships, Muslim women wearing *hijab* feel an additional burden as they are so identifiable and visible. In a secular society their religious dress makes a public statement about their religiosity, which, for some people, can already be a significant barrier to friendship.

Wearing the hijab you have to do double work to make friends with somebody because you need to break down the first barrier before people will even think about it. It's pretty hard meeting new people all the time. It's like they think they already know who you are before you've even said hi to them.²⁰⁵

Social Perceptions/Stereotypes

Social perceptions about Muslim families, gender relations and patriarchy can be barriers to the development of friendships. And in the workplace, attempts at friendships can also be marred by stereotyping.

A lot of people would think my dad tells me everything that I have to do. That my dad bosses me around and I've been forced to wear the hijab and I'm probably not from an English-speaking background and I'm probably not Aussie. As soon as I open my mouth they are really shocked. Once you get that initial thing down people are really fine.²⁰⁶

Sometimes it's good but sometimes I get frustrated because I get put in a totally different box. I'm just like totally different, I can't have a good laugh, I can't go out for a coffee. It's like I'm a totally different ethnic group, not even defined. Like a nun. Lots of times I have to explain to them. It's OK, it's OK, I can come for coffee. The other day a work

²⁰⁵ Personal communication MWL 15 21-4-07

²⁰⁶ Personal communication MWL 15 21-4-07

*colleague had a really sore throat and I said, have honey with a bit of pepper, straight up and he was like, is this a Muslim thing? And I was like, excuse me? I was a bit offended because I am not trying to impose my Muslim things. Sure Islam is a big component in my life but it doesn't mean that everything that is coming out of my mouth is Islamic. You're trying to make them understand, breaking barriers and break their ignorance and they come around and say comments like that.*²⁰⁷

Non-Muslim Social Life

For practising Muslims, there are several other social constraints in the development of friendships with non-Muslims. As reported in all other sections of this report, a significant barrier to social interaction between some Muslims and non-Muslims as well as to the development of friendships is the widespread use of alcohol in Australian society and while some Muslims don't have a problem, many do.

*Unfortunately a lot of social events in the wider community are associated with alcohol. That can pose a problem, so yes. Now it doesn't bother me and most of my non-Muslim friends are aware that I don't drink so they organize that we meet at a café. It may be a problem if I was back teaching in a different school. A lot of after school meetings are held in the pub. That could be a bit of an issue.*²⁰⁸

*Yes it does, because I do not attend any gatherings where there is alcohol served so that rules me out of a lot of social activities. When I was doing my Dip Ed, every so often the people would organize a barbeque or just a drink after a big exam or something and I wouldn't attend so I guess that limits the opportunities for me to get to know people.*²⁰⁹

*Having the same interests. Being Muslim is a lifestyle. One of the major things is we don't drink; we don't go clubbing and partying. We don't have the same social scene as the mainstream, so that makes it hard for us to totally interact with non-Muslims. We don't want to force any sort of obstacles on them in interacting with us and we don't want to put ourselves in a position where we have to compromise either. So it's easier for us to network amongst ourselves and socialise amongst ourselves.*²¹⁰

In relation to socialising for young people, not attending pubs and clubs means an exclusion from a major part of secular youth culture for those religiously observing young Muslim women.

²⁰⁷ Personal communication FG 9 2-6-07

²⁰⁸ Personal communication MWL 19 25-4-07

²⁰⁹ Personal communication MWL 11 10-9-07

²¹⁰ Personal communication MWL 4 25-6-07

Symbolically it's huge because you're excluded from those sorts of close knit circles. That socialisation base. When my non-Muslim school friends are having a reunion at a pub and obviously I want to see everyone and I would like to go but I know I can't go. And that reinforces that stereotype – oh Muslims don't go out and do anything, they're oppressed at home. They stay in their homes locked up. We go out; we just don't go out and get drunk. My friends weren't mostly Anglo-Saxon friends; they were 'wogs' if you want to call them 'wogs'. Even my Muslim friends, some of them went to the pub 'cause they're not practising and that makes me even more excluded – she's Muslim, she's coming, why aren't you coming? It's something they don't get.²¹¹

Lack of Friends' Sensitivity to Religious Codes

Some participants report a lot of support from good friends who are accommodating towards religious food and beverage requirements but for others the lack of sensitivity to these issues can be a barrier to sustained friendships.

Most people will not serve alcohol knowing how we feel. We went to dinner with some very religious people who were so happy to be mixing with Muslims and making us welcome but when we went there they were all drinking alcohol and I thought for highly educated people you wonder how that could happen. We stayed because we were invited for dinner but we felt hurt because I wouldn't do that and I expect other Australians to be the same.²¹²

Lack of English Language Skills

For some women, and in particular new arrivals, lack of or poor English language skills can be a significant barrier to establishing friendships with non-Muslim women.

Lack of Cultural Awareness by Muslims

The lack of Australian cultural awareness by some Muslims, especially new arrivals, can be a barrier to developing friendships, especially if such friendships can be developed in schools or community organisations.

Lack of knowledge of the other cultures can be a barrier. If you're a member of another group and you are at a meeting and you don't know what the processes are, how to engage and fully participate and that makes people uncomfortable taking the step and joining such organisations or institutions.²¹³

²¹¹ Personal communication FG 4 6-4-07

²¹² Personal communication MWL 10 19-4-07

²¹³ Personal communication MWL 13 6-6-07

Parental Concern over Youth Values/ Lifestyles

The majority of young Muslim women participants in the research were actively engaged with a wide range of non-Muslim friendships as were the Muslim women leaders. However, one participant noted her concern about her children, in much the same way a non-Muslim mother would feel about 'bad' social influences. The response, however, to confining friendships within a shared religion, may well be an isolated response.

Part of the thing I really encourage Muslim kids, children, teenagers especially, is to hang around with Muslim friends because you tend to get influenced by non-Muslim friends who drink and things like that. That's why I encourage the family thing, the parents to encourage kids to go into the community, the Muslim community and get in here because that's where they belong. Yeah of course they can have friends but certain friends are a problem.²¹⁴

B.4.2a Drivers to Friendships and Social Relations within the Muslim Community

In terms of drivers for social life within the Muslim community, this debate was dominated in the focus youth groups by lengthy and enlivened debates around the issue of friendships with Muslim males and around the issue of marriage. This issue was also addressed by the Muslim women leaders.

The drivers to these friendships include the desire to meet and socialise with young Muslim males in a religiously acceptable way and the natural desire to partner and parent. Other drivers for some women included a willingness to break stereotypes and to challenge ethnic and cultural traditions.

Desire to Partner and Parent

In the focus groups major discussions were held around the issue of friendships and marriage. Young Muslim Australian women identified the need to meet and socialise with young Muslim males and the natural desire to partner and parent as key drivers. In order to do this, Muslim women are negotiating new ways of partnering.

Willingness to Break Cultural and Ethnic Ties, Traditions and Stereotypes

All the research participants indicated that they would marry Muslims but there is an increasing incidence and support of Australian born Anglo Saxon male converts marrying Muslim women. Also, as the identity of being an 'Australian Muslim' seems to be consolidating, and ties are being broken from the ethnicity of parents, some inter-ethnic marriage is beginning to take place as well.

²¹⁴ Personal communication FG 9 2-6-07

There is also an increase in inter-ethnic marriage taking place in Melbourne I think because everyone's starting to realise that your culture or your ethnicity should have nothing to do with your marriage or how you deal with someone else.²¹⁵

Yes that is happening here [Sydney] there are a lot of Fijians and Indians marrying Lebanese. Yes [chorus] but they have to convert.²¹⁶

I see it happening in terms of, if there is a convert we tend to call them revert; it happens with someone like that. An Indian Pakistani boy who becomes married to an Italian who has converted to Muslim, and vice versa, but it is not very common here in the Indian community. In the future there will be more inter-ethnic marriages. It's slowly starting to happen now.²¹⁷

Willingness to Break Age Stereotypes

Some women are also prepared to break these age barriers and while possibly unrepresentative, the following comments on age of marriage are interesting:

My Mum got married about 34 and for me she says do not get married young. Whatever you do, don't get married young, go and travel, or get a job, become independent. I haven't got any pressure. But I definitely want to get married.²¹⁸

I think that's the bottom line for us, yes we are going to get married, whether young or old, it's just always there. There is a big problem in terms of expectations that women marry older men and men marry younger women. My husband is four years younger than me and we tell all our friends they should break the stereotypes of appropriate ages and don't just look at older guys.²¹⁹

Willingness to Seek Partners from Overseas

The driver to marry is so strong and the barriers so difficult to overcome that increasingly Muslim women, especially those that are Australian tertiary educated, are using the Internet to find suitable husbands from North America, Europe or the UK.

I've got friends who have said they are looking for partners in the US, the UK, and Canada. The Muslim communities there are more established, more educated as a consequence. And more and more people are using the Internet to meet fellow Muslims.²²⁰

²¹⁵ Personal communication MWL 25 7-9-07

²¹⁶ Personal communication FG 5 20-5-07

²¹⁷ Personal communication MWL 23 8-9-07

²¹⁸ Personal communication FG 1 12-9-07

²¹⁹ Personal communication FG 1 12-9-07

²²⁰ Personal communication FG 8 21-4-07

B.4.2b Barriers to Friendships and Social Relations within the Muslim Community

As noted Muslim women in all states where this research was conducted are experiencing significant difficulty in partnering and marrying. Lively debates were held around this subject within the focus groups and the following is a brief summary of opinions on this matter. Muslim women leaders confirmed that this was an issue for the community.

It is possible that the same issues apply to non-Muslim women some of whom in our secular society solve the problem through serial intimate relationships, de facto relationships and single parenthood, none of which are options for religiously observant Muslim women. This section of the report is a glimpse only of the attitudes and opinions on this subject by the research participants. More research would illuminate the extent of the problems identified.

The barriers to these friendships and marriage include religious differences, and for some women, educational differences, lack of opportunity to socialise, lack of involvement by young men within the community, poor parenting of young males and the increasing tendency of young males to go overseas for brides.

Religiosity

In terms of the religious differences between some young Muslim women and Muslim men in Australia today two aspects have been identified. The first is that some young men are not religious enough in that they have adopted significant aspects of Australian youth culture. The other aspect is that some Muslim men are too religiously conservative, holding rigid views on gender roles, which are considered, especially by well educated Muslim women, to be inappropriate in Australian society today. However, the dominant view is that young male Muslim Australians are 'too secular'.

Views on those who are too religiously conservative:

It's not just religiously observant young men; it's the lack of young men who have a modern view of Islam that is in line with mine. There are plenty of religious men but their views are not the same as mine in terms of Islam.²²¹

Views on those who are too secular:

Possibly but I've come to the conclusion that whether you are very highly educated or not these days, it is very hard for Muslim girls to find good husbands, full stop. I think their commitment towards the religion is not on the same level as girls, and also in terms of taking

²²¹ Personal communication FG 1 12-9-07

*responsibility, maturity. I see a lot of very very good Muslim young women but I can't see a lot of young men matching them.*²²²

*The young girls feel that they want to marry a Muslim, rather than ethnically, but are having trouble finding young men who are religiously observant enough for them. If they were born here and raised here, they aren't that religious.*²²³

*But even if they are practising they might be more inclined to the secular community than the Muslim community. It's not so much whether or not they're practising. It's where they hang out or the kind of things they do or the kind of people that are around.*²²⁴

*Within the Afghan community and even other communities men do go overseas to find a wife. In the Afghan community, it is because a lot of the girls, their families raise them to be very Islamic, not to do anything bad, not have boyfriends, but the boys aren't raised like that. So no girl that's been raised like that is going to marry a boy that isn't like that. So that's why everybody's [the girls] going to universities. The girls overseas want to come here because they would easily accept the boys but no girl here would accept them because we all know what they've been doing.*²²⁵

*I think a lot of young women who are rejecting, in the past it would have been put to them, oh well, here's Jo Bloggs or Mohammed Bloggs, yeah he used to be a wild boy but now he's a good boy. He's settled down, he's trying, he's a good prospect. But a lot of girls are now saying, no, I've behaved myself my whole life, why should I have to – I've heard people say why should I have to settle for someone who has played around and has baggage. I don't, so they see that as not a good prospect.*²²⁶

Educational Differences

Another key issue is the educational difference between Muslim women and men and the determination of Muslim women to be well educated. There was a strong opinion that overall there was a big discrepancy between the level of education of young male and female Muslims and a difference in their desire for higher education. (See Section B.1)

*They're not really educated. They haven't gone on to university to get good education so their mentality is very different. You just think very differently from them.*²²⁷

²²² Personal communication MWL 12 8-9-07

²²³ Personal communication FG 5 20-5-07

²²⁴ Personal communication FG 1 12-9-07

²²⁵ Personal communication FG 8 21-4-07

²²⁶ Personal communication MWL 22 3-7-07

²²⁷ Personal communication MWL 22 15-9-07

We now have a huge slice of educated Muslim women who can't find husbands. It's a big problem. Because the men are not keeping up with the women. The men are stuffing up at school, dropping out, becoming apprentices. They don't want to marry educated women. So even five, six, seven years ago there was this huge problem of women at university who threatened to wear placards saying 'what's wrong with me?'. You know, don't import, I'm available.²²⁸

I believe that there is a greater awareness amongst the community now for girls to gain an education. But there are also definitely elements of the community that see it as less of a priority for a girl and who see marriage at a young age as more desirable. I found that there were so many girls of Muslim background in university. Many more girls than boys. Our boys are hopeless.²²⁹

But there are still strong cultural pressures from some sections of the Muslim community regarding education for women and these are also impacting on partnering for Muslim girls.

When it comes to marriage there are still some very clear cultural expectations around that men need to be more highly educated or qualified than their wife, or if not, then of an equal standard.²³⁰

Persistent Patriarchal Gender Relationships

Another theme that emerged in this discussion was that of persistent patriarchal gender relationships that the majority of well educated Muslim women are not prepared to tolerate.

Also I think that Muslim women are very clear and very strong, their expectations around their rights, not only with Islam but within Australia, and gender expectations around domestic labour and expectations of relationships, that they're finding a lot of Muslim men simply don't meet those basic standards. And Muslim men are showing an unwillingness to ever meet those standards really. They seem quite comfortable upholding patriarchal family relationships, or even though their rhetoric might be different, Muslim women are pretty cluey, so even though a bloke is saying one thing, if his actions are indicating something else, you know.²³¹

Lack of Opportunities for Socialising

Participants expressed concerns about the lack of education and persistent patriarchal attitudes and there was concern also about the lack of opportunities for mixed socialising within the community. The segregation of mosques as well as their generally unwelcoming attitudes to women, as

²²⁸ Personal communication MWL 5 19-4-07

²²⁹ Personal communication MWL 6 15-9-07

²³⁰ Personal communication MWL 10-1-5-07

²³¹ Personal communication MWL 22 15-9-07

reported earlier, means that one weekly opportunity to meet with young men is not available. (See Section A, Religious Observance). Also it would seem that religious classes are also segregated. Women also commented that there were few young men actively engaged or involved in the community in the way that many of them were.

We don't have the opportunities to interact in an appropriate manner here. If we are attending the mosque it's usually segregated, whereas historically in Islamic societies there's always been an opportunity. The barrier didn't exist within the mosque where you could interact and see people and members of the opposite sex but obviously there wasn't free intermingling and socializing and nightclub sort of things, but you still had the opportunity to meet people and mingle with people.²³²

We do get a chance to meet Muslim men but very few of them - I'm quite active in the Muslim community, so through that, through my volunteer work and through working with the Muslim community you meet a lot of people, but its five to one, the ratio. There are just not enough men around who are interested in the things I'm interested in. I just don't know where they are. Maybe it's that they don't mix with the Muslim community. And so we never cross paths.²³³

The families are not letting the girls and boys mix enough. Lebanese, Iraqi, Egyptians they're not mixing, not mixing at all.²³⁴

Ethnicity

As noted, cultural and ethnic factors still play a most significant role in the choice of a partner, and, much more commonly reported was the pressure to marry from within the community. This varied with ethnicity, but was particularly strong in South Asian, Turkish and some Middle Eastern communities:

Pressure from the community as well as the family but from my community more than my family.²³⁵

But there is not much inter-cultural marriage in the Turkish community. There is pressure from my parents, both of them and my grandma; she says it definitely has to be a Turk. Mum used to be also like that, but now she sees how different everyone is and how wrong girls can go nowadays, she is more open to [a mixed ethnic marriage] so it's more like a voluntary thing. But personally I only know two people that have got married to someone who isn't Turkish in my community, which is pretty bad.²³⁶

²³² Personal communication MWL 12 8-9-07

²³³ Personal communication FG 1 12-9-08

²³⁴ Personal communication FG 5 20-5-07

²³⁵ Personal communication FG 9 2-6-07

²³⁶ Personal communication FG 1 12-9-07

Inadequate and Gendered Parenting

There has been some debate around the issue of Muslim male parenting and a number of the Muslim women leaders made reference to this work. In addition, all of the MWOs undertake parenting training as do several other community organisations in various states. This has been identified as a significant issue in the Muslim community and in some ethnic communities. However, Muslim women still express concern about the gendered approach to parenting by some parents and the lack of appropriate role models.

There's not the same discourse about parenting, you know, like male parenting within the Muslim community, whereas there is this huge body of formal and informal knowledge about female parenting.²³⁷

I think the problem comes from a lack of role models. A lot of the fathers who migrated here I think struggled for ten to fifteen years to establish themselves to financially support the family. They have become disconnected with their sons. They miss out on a big chunk of their sons' growing up and so their sons grow up lost. This cycle carries on.²³⁸

Increasingly young men are told that at one level they're highly discriminated against and they're never going to get anywhere in life because of who they are. And on another level they are told they are special because they are young, because they are men, therefore they have entitlements and that somehow things will come to them because of that specialness. But when they go out into the world and they are treated like they're ordinary, they scream that it's discrimination because it's not how they've been brought up. I think these issues need to be looked at. And the government desperately needs to get away from the idea that you mentor young people around success models. You don't. You model young people around humanity.²³⁹

Overseas Marriages and Lack of Suitable Local Partners

Overseas marriage was raised as a major barrier to partnering and parenting by Muslim women. There is apparently quite a trend for Muslim men and increasingly Muslim women to go overseas to find marriage partners. Some women are taken by their parents while some more educated women are seeking partners overseas through marriage brokers and through the Internet.

The debate around men going overseas to get brides reflects the barriers already discussed, poor education, lack of skills and patriarchal marriage preferences. Several problems have, however, emerged with these types of marriages.

²³⁷ Personal communication M WL 22 3-7-07

²³⁸ Personal communication MWL 12 8-9-07

²³⁹ Personal communication MWL 10 1-5-07

They go overseas because they are not very skilled or marriageable here. They go overseas to get another girl who just wants to be married and has all the home skills, that just wants a husband.²⁴⁰

I've got friends who have had failed marriages and really horrible experiences, with either guys who have married them just to get the visa, or have genuinely tried but can't meet minds because of the different experience for the men who come here. And then there are others who have really successful relationships, but interestingly the girls are more qualified and more educated and earning more money than their husbands. A lot of these girls have gone overseas as a last resort because they have just given up on the quality of the guys here.²⁴¹

If they marry a boy from overseas and they've brought someone from overseas as partners, some of those marriages are not working out. Some come here and they get used to it and they like it. But it's also language, language barrier, if they can talk English. But some come here and because of their language, they can't get a job, they can't support their wife, so their wife is taking the place of the man and that is a problem.²⁴²

Lack of Islamic Literature on Men's Roles in Islam

The lack of Islamic literature on men's roles in Islam was also identified as a weakness in being able to address these issues at the community and religious level.

I think it's also a problem of that, for a long time everyone talks about women's roles in Islam. You go into any place that sells "Islamic Law" and you find three or four books about women in Islam but I'm yet to find a book about men in Islam. There is no equivalent focus on the roles and responsibilities of the men. There's never the same discussion about what kind of forms of masculinity are appropriate within Islam and also within various cultural expressions of that.²⁴³

Summary

In summary, this section of the report on drivers and barriers to friendships and social life between Muslim women in the Muslim and non-Muslim community has highlighted some of the diverse ranges of social and friendship bonds that exist in Australian life for Muslim women.

In terms of friendships with non-Muslims this research indicates that among the Muslim women leaders two thirds (68%) have close friends among women

²⁴⁰ Personal communication MWL 3 20-4-07

²⁴¹ Personal communication FG 4 6-4-07

²⁴² Personal communication FG 3 13-9-07

²⁴³ Personal communication MWL 22 3-7-07

of other or no religious background. Only 32% identified Muslim women as their closest friends.

The drivers to those friendships include long term school and university friendships mutually supportive and respectful relationships and shared religious, social and intellectual values. For young Muslim women there is a shared youth culture and for some older women a shared social life around children. Muslim women also engage in a range of social activities with their non-Muslim friends. Some also participate in each other's festivals.

There were barriers also to those friendships and among those identified by the research participants were the widespread social use of alcohol. For young women, alcohol, as well as the use of other recreational drugs and attendance at clubs by young people in the Australian culture, was also a barrier to friendships. Other barriers to friendships with non-Muslims include stereotyping and lack of sensitivity to Islamic religious codes, as well as, for new arrivals, poor English language skills and the lack of understanding of Australian culture.

A key issue that dominated debate on social life within the Muslim community, particularly in the youth focus groups, was the issue of friendships with Muslim males and the issue of the desire and opportunities to marry. This issue was also addressed by the Muslim women leaders.

The drivers to these friendships include the desire to meet and socialise with young Muslim males in a religiously acceptable way and the natural desire to partner and parent. Other drivers for some women included a willingness to break stereotypes and to challenge ethnic and cultural traditions.

The barriers to these friendships and to marriage include religious differences, with the majority expressing the opinion that the young men were 'too secular, not religious enough', while a minority expressed the view that some young males were too religiously conservative and patriarchal. For the majority of young women and Muslim women leaders, educational differences, lack of opportunity to socialise, lack of involvement by young men within the community, poor parenting of young males and the increasing tendency of young males to go overseas for brides were all major barriers to friendships and partnering with young male Muslims in Australia.

B.4.3 Solutions to these Barriers

Government

- Additional funding for existing parenting programs within the Muslim community across all states, including for parents, young people and new arrivals should be provided;
- There should be increased support for volunteering organisations to be pro-active with regards to attracting Muslim participants;

- A national media program to address stereotyping and prejudicial attitudes by the non-Muslim community with particular regard to Muslim women has been repeatedly requested by Muslim women and should be undertaken as a matter of priority.

Muslim Community

- Further strategies should be developed to facilitate socialising between young Muslims.
- Muslim community leaders should further facilitate and encourage volunteering both with the Muslim and non-Muslim communities.
- Funding should be sought by the Muslim community to expand existing parenting programs and preparation for marriage programs for young people.

Non-Muslim community

- The non-Muslim community should be pro-active in attracting Muslim youth in particular into volunteering as well as into other non-government community organisations;
- Work should be expanded with non-Muslim youth organisations to break down stereotypes and prejudice regarding Muslims including women's dress codes;
- Support should be give for programs within the non-Muslim community to provide additional assistance to help new arrivals and refugees socialise and settle into their new communities.

Research

- A national research program should be undertaken to identify the drivers and barriers for young Muslim Australian males to participate in the social and civic life of the Muslim and non-Muslim Australian community.

Section B. 5

Drivers and Barriers to Muslim women's Participation in Sport

This section of the report explores the drivers and barriers to Muslim Australian women's participation in sport and provides a series of strategies to overcome the identified barriers.

Sport is a major activity in Australian culture and is a significant arena of community participation. Concerns about the involvement in sport and recreational activities of women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds have resulted in a number of studies by researchers including Vescio,²⁴⁴ and Taylor.²⁴⁵ More recently Cortis and Muir have also researched this issue.²⁴⁶ National interest in women's involvement in sport has also resulted in a 2006 Senate Committee report on women in sport and recreation in Australia.²⁴⁷

While barriers exist for non-CALD Australian women, there are specific barriers that have been identified that CALD women face in relation to accessing and participating in sport and recreation in Australia. The Senate Committee report of 2006 confirmed research studies that CALD women had lower rates of sport participation than women born in Australia and that 'barriers to their participation included lack of information, language and communication problems, family and cultural traditions and racism'.²⁴⁸ The report also identified the difficulties of sporting bodies in addressing these needs, including 'resources, understanding, or willingness to accommodate the particular needs of women from different cultures'.²⁴⁹

A 2007 report Social Policy Research Centre commissioned by the former Federal Government's Office of Women also identified a number of significant barriers to CALD women's involvement in sport including those directly impacting on Muslim women as well. These barriers include sporting dress codes, cultural issues around family responsibilities and family expectations and the cultural environment of sporting organisations, around difficulties of 'fitting in' and being accepted.²⁵⁰

Whitten and Thompson's paper on the spatial needs of Muslim women in Sydney briefly addresses the issue of women's access to sporting facilities as

²⁴⁴ J. Vescio, 1999 'An exploration of sports participation by girls from non-English speaking backgrounds', *ACHPER healthy lifestyles journal* Vol 46, No. 1, pp. 14-19,.

²⁴⁵ Taylor T. 2001 'Cultural Diversity and Leisure: Experiences of Women in Australia'. *Loisir et Societe Culture et mode de vie* Vol. 24, No 2, Autumn.
www.erudit.org/revue/ls/2001/v24/n2/000194ar.html

²⁴⁶ Natasha Cortis and Kirsty Muir, 2007, 'Participation in Sport and Recreation by Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women', *Social Policy Research Centre Report*, February.

²⁴⁷ Australian Parliament Senate Committee, 2006, 'About Time! Women in sport and recreation in Australia Report', Sept 6: http://www.aph.gov.au/senate_environment

²⁴⁸ *ibid* p. 51

²⁴⁹ *op. cit.*, p. 51

²⁵⁰ Natasha Cortis and Kirsty Muir, 2007, 'Participation in Sport and Recreation by Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women', *Social Policy Research Centre Report*, February pp. 8-17.

well.²⁵¹ A recent paper on Muslim Australian women in sport by McCue has highlighted the barriers that exist for Muslim women's involvement in sport in Australia but overall there is a scarcity of research in this area.²⁵²

Internationally there has been some research on Muslim women in sport, including Radzi's work on Muslim sports women in Malaysia, which makes an important contribution to the subject.²⁵³ In Europe, Norwegian researcher Walseth has contributed significantly to understanding Muslim women's involvement in sport in Norway and in Egypt. Among other findings, such research in Europe points to sport as a significant factor in helping Muslim women integrate into the non-Muslim broader society and to access employment through sporting networks.²⁵⁴

In relation to sports activities in schools a study undertaken by Davidson and Tremayne on the conflicts involved in teaching Personal Development Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) to Arabic and non-Arabic year nine students in western Sydney high schools, highlighted some of the barriers to sport participation in schools. These included dress, mixed sex activities, public display during physical activity, religious observances and lack of parental and community encouragement.²⁵⁵ This research explores these issues and suggests some solutions for overcoming these barriers.

The overall research findings in this study are interesting, highlighting some differences with previous studies. For instance, some 48% of the Muslim women leaders reported undertaking a sporting activity but not always on a regular basis. The most common sports undertaken by this group included walking, swimming and the gym. When asked what sports the younger women in the focus groups participated in the responses included a wide range of sporting activities: soccer, gym, tennis, cycling, yoga, kickboxing, martial arts, belly dancing, riding, Tai Kwon Do, karate, netball, skating, bike riding, running, and sailing as well as walking and swimming. Overall the most popular activity of both groups was the gym.

Muslim women involved in the research rarely belong to sporting clubs, except those active in kickboxing or Tai Kwon Do. Some are involved in

²⁵¹ Carolyn Whitten and Susan Thompson, 2007, *When Cultures Collide: Planning for the Public Spatial Needs of Muslim women in Sydney*, Social City 07, http://www.apf.gov.au/library/INTGUIDE/sp/muslim_australians.htm

²⁵² Helen McCue, 2006 'Sport as an arena of social inclusion / exclusion for young Australian Muslim women', *Not another hijab row: New conversations on gender, race, religion and the making of communities Conference*, University of Technology Sydney, Dec 10

²⁵³ Wirdati Mohammad Radzi, 2006 *Muslim women and sports in the Malay world*, Silkworm Books, Thailand

²⁵⁴ Walseth, K. & Fasting, K., 2004 'Sport as a Means of Integrating Minority Women', *Sport in Society*, Vol.7, No.1, Spring, See also, Walseth, K. & Fasting, K. 2003, 'Islam's View on Physical Activity and Sport, Egyptian women interpreting Islam', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Vol.38 No.1, Walseth, K. 2006 'Young Muslim Women and Sport: the impact of Identity work', *Leisure Studies* Vol 25, no.1, 75-94. January...

²⁵⁵ Neil Davidson and Bob Tremayne, 1998, *Personal Development Health and Physical Education in a cultural context: Perspectives of Arabic and non-Arabic speaking Year Nine students in four Western Sydney high schools*, University of Western Sydney.

health clubs for swimming and some of the younger women belong to soccer clubs and had previously belonged to netball and hockey clubs. In general the drivers and barriers to Muslim Australian women's involvement in sport can be identified as personal, religious, cultural and institutional.

B.5a Drivers to Muslim Women's Participation in Sport

There are a number of significant drivers to Muslim Australian women's involvement in sport and in the area of the personal domain, the desire for personal fitness and love of sport rated highly.

Personal Desire for Fitness/ Love of Sport

Overall, in both the leader interviews as well as the focus groups the commitment to personal fitness and a love of sport was very evident. Young Muslim women, especially second generation women who undertook schooling in Australia, were very committed to sporting activities and many had played a wide range of sports and physical activities during their school years.

*I've been a tomboy most of my life. I've been a sports fanatic ever since I was a kid. We grew up with sports because that's what you did.*²⁵⁶

This personal desire for sport even overrode parental objections:

*I'm a sport fanatic but mum hates me playing soccer and I used to sneak out and play and things like that. She still doesn't know that I play. My mum says girls shouldn't be playing sport, no, no, no, no.*²⁵⁷

Desire for Team Sports

Another significant personal driver for Muslim women to be involved in sport is their desire to participate in team sports.

*I used to play netball from grade 2 to grade 4. I really loved netball. It was good fun to play competition. It builds up your confidence and your competitive side and self esteem.*²⁵⁸

Despite the difficulties of sports organisation imposed dress codes many MWOs and individuals are working at ways to overcome these barriers and are seeking to help Muslim women participate in team sports and through this to participate in the broader Australian society.

In Brisbane we are working with one of the settlement workers at the Multicultural Community Centre in the city and she is trying to get girls to mix through sport. She has organised social volleyball days and we

²⁵⁶ Personal communication FG 9 2-6-07

²⁵⁷ Personal communication FG 9 2-6-07

²⁵⁸ Personal Communication FG 7 2-6-07

*have organised some of the Afghan refugee girls from one of the local state high schools to participate. Most of them wear the hijab and she's got students from different backgrounds and Australians as well and they're just going to get together and play volleyball.*²⁵⁹

Supportive Families

While some families will support boys more than girls to undertake sport, this research showed that there is growing awareness among Muslim women, as well as mothers, of the need for sport and recreational activities for their female children.

*For my child sport is exactly like feeding her or going to study, it's also a very important role to my child building a future. Now all the parents are more educated, more aware about that type of activity needed for our children and they pay money but they know it's for a good result. And it's important.*²⁶⁰

Religious Commitment

In the domain of religious and cultural drivers for sport participation religious commitment has been identified as a motivation or driver for sports activity. However, while some research participants identified religion as a driver the majority of the persons interviewed that played sport did not feel that their practice of religion was an impediment to their sports participation.

Several of the women quoted as motivation the Islamic source, the second caliph, 'Umar Ibn Khattab', as stating:

*'Teach your children swimming and archery, and tell them to jump on the horse's back.'*²⁶¹

Another popular motivating '*hadith*' tells of the time the Prophet raced with his wife Aisha both to please her and to enjoy himself, and in so doing he set an example for his companions.

*Aisha said: 'I raced with the Prophet and beat him in the race. Later, when I had put on some weight, we raced again and he won. Then he said: 'this cancels that' [draw], referring to the previous occasion.*²⁶²
Muslim women refer to this hadith, as it illustrates Muhammad's request for them to do exercise and keep fit.

In the research undertaken by Walseth and Fasting on sport activity among Muslim women in Egypt, they report that all the informants believed that Islam encourages women to participate in sport. The research also shows that

²⁵⁹ Personal Communication FG 7 2-6-07

²⁶⁰ Personal communication FG 3 13-9-07

²⁶¹ Walseth, K. & Fasting, K. 2003, Islam's View on Physical Activity and Sport, Egyptian women interpreting Islam, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Vol.38 No.1. p.53.

²⁶² *ibid.* p.53.

women who are fully covered by the face veil (*niqab*) believed that they were instructed by God to do sport:

*'Islam tells us that we have got the body as a gift from God and that we should take care of it. God tells us to do a lot of things. How much we do of these things, is what decides our place in heaven.'*²⁶³

In our research women also indicated that for some strongly religiously observant women their faith was a driving factor in their desire to keep fit:

*There is that perception that Muslim women are not allowed to keep themselves fit but your body has rights over you so you have to maintain your body but a lot of us forget that. And that's why a lot of us get obese and have health problems. It comes down to the basic concept that your body has rights too, you have to feed it properly, keep it fit. God's given this to you so take care of it. Look after it.'*²⁶⁴

Availability of Women only Facilities

One of the key areas of innovation in women's sport has been the development of institutional structures to facilitate women's participation in sport. For Muslim women, in spite of difficulties encountered, there have been some successes in gaining access to women only facilities including in swimming pools and gyms and success also in facilitating Muslim women's participation in women only soccer. For example, most states have made progress in making available swimming facilities for Muslim women.

In Sydney, after intense lobbying by the Muslim Women's Association (MWA) and other women's groups, various councils now provide facilities for Muslim women to learn to swim. Initially there was some public opposition to the establishment of women only pool times but this was overcome. In Sydney the MWA and other Muslim women's groups have been instrumental in making changes in this area. The MWA started working with Campbelltown Council in 1998 to put visual barriers around the pool premises and to allocate three to four hours a week for women only, not just Muslim women. Supported by the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation and by the local Councils of Lidcombe, Kogarah, Auburn and Roselands, Muslim women and other women now have a variety of pools that they can access at different times. Some of the pools provide learn to swim classes and others provide leisure swimming as well as learn to swim activities.

In Adelaide one interviewee reported that she was able to get ten women together and have women only classes at the local pool, initially so that they and their babies could learn to swim. The pool management overcame complaints of discrimination by one man, saying that they were committed to helping all Australians learn to swim, including Muslim women, and as privacy was a religious requirement they were committed to provide that for them.

²⁶³ *ibid.* p.53.

²⁶⁴ Personal communication FG 9 2-6-07

In Melbourne the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) has worked with several organisations, including a group of Muslim women, to develop women's swimming programs. The Reservoir Women's Swimming Program numbers can reach up to 200 a week. Both Muslim and non-Muslim women participate, although it is predominantly Muslim-based.²⁶⁵

In Brisbane the Islamic Women's Association of Queensland (IWAQ) have at times hired the Hibiscus Centre so that Muslim women can go there to swim.²⁶⁶

In Perth the MWA holds an annual swimming program that is specifically for Muslim women and plans to work with relevant service providers to help Muslim women engage with culturally and religiously sensitive sporting activities.²⁶⁷

Women only gyms are also very popular with Muslim women and women in western Sydney are able to attend a facility run by Muslim women but they also attend other women only facilities such as the Fernwood Facilities and Curves Fitness First facilities. A special Turkish gym for women only, particularly for Muslim women, also exists in western Melbourne.²⁶⁸

However, while gender separation in sporting facilities is an issue for some Muslim women, it is not universally so.

*I've been part of a gym which has both men and women but it's just a matter of maintaining that modesty while you are exercising and sweating. It's never been an issue for me but that's just because that's the way I am. I don't have any qualms about being on a treadmill with other people around but obviously with the hijab you get a bit warmer but you just maintain your pace to suit that.*²⁶⁹

Availability of Muslim Women's Sports Clothes

A recent initiative in Muslim women's sport clothes and in swimwear has also helped facilitate some women's more active participation in swimming.

*Apart from the few odd looks I was fine. I really liked the fact that I can wear my Islamic swimsuit and feel that I was properly covered and tootle off to the pool whenever I liked. I really enjoyed that.*²⁷⁰

²⁶⁵ <http://www.ausport.gov.au/women/casestudies/participation/caldsportsprogram.asp>

²⁶⁶ Personal communication MWL 14 23-9-07

²⁶⁷ Personal communication MWL 25 4-9-07

²⁶⁸ Personal communication MWL 16 10-6-07

²⁶⁹ Personal communication MWL 23 8-9-07

²⁷⁰ Personal communication MWL 24 3-9-07

Muslim Women's Leadership

What is clear from the interviews was that where leadership was involved either at the school or community level, Muslim women found it easier to break through existing structural barriers to participate more actively in sports activities.

For example, the MWA has established many walking groups in different areas, in Campbelltown, Auburn and one in Bankstown. They encourage women to swim and have 'learn to swim' classes and they also encourage women to join gyms in facilities where they can exercise in a women only atmosphere.

An excellent example of Muslim women's leadership also is the establishment of the Australian National Sports Club (ANSC) that has an all Muslim girls' soccer team, established by the MWA based in Lakemba in South Western Sydney. The team, with ages varying from sixteen to twenty two years, plays in the local district club against five other teams in the Canterbury District. They have just finished their second season. The coach is a Muslim woman and a skilled soccer player. The manager, who does all the paper work and organises uniforms and balls etc., is non-Muslim with a Christian Philippino background.²⁷¹

The Darebin Women's Sport Club in Victoria also provides volunteer coaches for a Muslim women's soccer program. The Islamic Women's Group (now the Muslim Women's Council of Victoria) was funded to coach Muslim women in soccer and they were supported by a Muslim woman coach who played for Victoria. In Reservoir in Victoria also, the local Migrant Resource Centre runs a Muslim soccer team mostly for Somali Muslim women.

Other MWOs and individuals have also played leading roles in facilitating and encouraging the development of Muslim women's sporting programs.

Government Initiatives

Government policy and funding are also significant drivers for Muslim women's inclusion in sport in Australia.

At the state level in NSW, the Department of Sport and Recreation helped the MWA to train six young women as aerobic and gentle exercise trainers and these women then trained other women to run such classes for the organisation. The MWA has also received a grant from Bankstown Council to promote sport for Muslim women.

The Federal Government has also given a sizeable grant to the Australian Sports Commission to undertake sports activities in the western areas of Sydney and Muslim women are involved in these activities. Various state

²⁷¹ F.2006. Personal communication. Muslim women in sport research, September.

governments, including Queensland and Victoria, provide funds for Muslim women's sports, including soccer programs.

Womensport and Recreation NSW is working with clubs and women's sporting groups to review requirements for sports clothing, where they are not governed by safety issues and are encouraging sports organisations to be aware of the clothing requirements of specific ethnic and religious groups.

In the areas of swimming, Muslim women were funded to become accredited Aus-Swim teachers and after the Cronulla riots, the NSW government funded a significant lifesaver program in which Muslim women actively participated.

Accommodation of Muslim Women's Dress by some Sports Codes

In some sports codes there is some movement with regard to changes in dress regulations to accommodate Muslim women's dress, as noted above, but it remains a difficult area.

One interviewee reported that in Sydney there was a Muslim women's netball team that was permitted by the code to compete wearing appropriate Muslim women's dress. But it is still not possible for a Muslim woman to wear such clothes and to be part of a non-Muslim netball team.

*I was in a non-Muslim team and I had to wear the uniform and it was short sleeved and a skirt with no shorts underneath. Within a non-Muslim team they don't make accommodation for your religious dress code but with your own team you have your own rules.*²⁷²

In soccer also, most women's soccer teams have dress codes that are upheld, but there are incidences where this does not occur, thereby allowing young Muslim women to interact in a sporting activity and competition with a non-Muslim woman soccer team. As one focus group participant explained:

*I never kicked a ball before the MWA's women's soccer team. I would have played for nationals if there was a team but there wasn't a team. Then one day I drove past a soccer field, I saw some [non-Muslim] girls playing so I went down and spoke to them and they said yeah join our team. I came on the training session, everyone was fine, I played in a title game for them, I wore my tights, my shorts, my long shirt underneath my jersey and my scarf and they were all fine.*²⁷³

Another also reported:

In the soccer club where I am, the majority of girls are Muslim and a few wear the hijab. When we first started playing there were a few comments about these girls wearing the hijab, particularly relating to safety. But as I am secretary of the club and go to association

²⁷² Personal Communication FG 4 6-4-07

²⁷³ Personal Communication FG 4 6-4-07

*meetings, we were able to address this issue. Some clubs are not happy. They feel if you want to come to our club you have to be like us. But in this instance the club management was accepting.*²⁷⁴

Supportive School Sport

In state schools Muslim women are encouraged along with other students to participate in sports activities. The same applies in Islamic schools. Muslim girls play soccer and they have competition with other schools. They also undertake a range of activities including rock climbing, rowing, and all sorts of sports at school and outside.

*I don't play any sports now but back in high school for the first couple of years I played basketball. Things were a bit different back then. They [let] me wear the long pants and long sleeved shirt underneath the basketball singlet. I find with the basketball uniform they are a little bit more flexible as long as you are wearing something you can run around in.*²⁷⁵

Clubs Accommodating Religious Dress Codes

Overall sports clubs do not accommodate religious dress codes, however this research illustrates that there are a few clubs that do work to overcome these issues.

*It depends what club you belong to. The club has to be aware and considerate of your needs. Some clubs are and some are not. Our club, because we are situated in Lakemba which is majority Muslim, and the majority of our members are Muslim, even though we are not a Muslim club but we make sure that everything we do is appropriate to Islamic rules and culture.*²⁷⁶

Barriers to Muslim Women's Participation in Sport

It can be seen from the drivers to Muslim women's participation in sport in Australia that considerable effort has been undertaken to facilitate that participation. However, many significant barriers remain.

The 2007 research report on CALD women's participation in sport carried out by the Social Policy Research Centre at UNSW noted that key barriers for CALD women were individual sports clubs limited infrastructure to tailor sports activities to CALD women's' needs and the overall lack of willingness to address these special needs.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ Personal communication MWL 3 20-4-07

²⁷⁵ Personal communication FG 7 2-6-07

²⁷⁶ Personal Communication MWL 3 20-4-07

²⁷⁷ Natasha Cortis and Kirsty Muir, 2007 'Participation in Sport and Recreation by Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women', *Social policy Research Centre Report*, February pp. 8-17.

Apart from those women who just did not wish to participate in sport, there were a few personal barriers identified. Among these was, for married women, time and family commitments as well as cost. Cortis and Muir's study of CALD women's participation in sport demonstrates that these barriers are shared by many women and cannot be attributed to their religion.

Other barriers that can be shared by some Muslim women include sporting dress codes and cultural issues around family responsibilities and family expectations. However, among first generation Muslim Australian women, particularly the most recent arrivals in Australia, there are additional personal barriers to participation, including a difference in cultural understanding of sport and recreation. First and second generation families also hold particular cultural views and some religiously conservative trends in Australia would advise against women's participation in sport.

Barriers Around Dress Codes

Personally Imposed Dress Codes

However, for some women personally imposed dress codes based on religion are also barriers.

Swimming is almost out of the question even though we do have the infamous swimming suit which is almost like a body suit, which some women think reveals more than it hides. The Islamic dress should be non-revealing and the new swimming suits cover all the body like a body suit and it is very revealing, so very few women feel comfortable wearing that and going to the beach for example.²⁷⁸

I personally wouldn't feel comfortable wearing that [Islamic swimsuit] because they are still fairly figure hugging. For me its not necessarily just about covering your skin, it's also about the way you cover it. For me I wouldn't personally be comfortable with it but I realise that lots of women are.²⁷⁹

Sporting dress as well, for women to participate in competitive sport is almost impossible because of the dress code, having to wear shorts is against Islamic values of humility.²⁸⁰

Institutionally Imposed Dress Codes

Each of the focus groups and most of the Muslim women leaders interviewed had personal or friends' stories about the difficulties of participating in sport as a result of dress codes imposed by schools or sports codes. The most common problems were with netball but in other codes this was an issue as well.

²⁷⁸ Personal communication MWL 13 6-6-07

²⁷⁹ Personal communication MWL 22 3-7-07

²⁸⁰ Personal communication MWL 12 8-9-07

My daughter loved ice-skating. She got to the level where to go further she had to go into competitions and she had to stop, due to the dress codes. I think she's not willing to push it. But she loved skating. Even with the hijab she could do really nice things.²⁸¹

Schools Sports Dress Codes

As this study indicates, the issue that caused most conflict was the dress code in netball at school.

I had to quit netball because I refused to wear the netball skirt at high school. That was the only reason why I was forced to quit because they wouldn't let me play unless I wore that stupid skirt and I said I would even wear the skirt with leggings underneath or pants underneath but no and I was quite good. I really enjoyed netball.²⁸²

At high school if you want to play netball you've gotta wear a skirt. That little skirt. And you can't wear tights underneath it and the skirts are really tiny and it's not really practical. Even if you're a Muslim woman not wearing the hijab you can't wear it. And that's the only thing you can play in, that skirt.²⁸³

When my daughter was in the lower years, primary school, she was a Grade A netball player but when she went to high school and put on the hijab and she suffered a bit of discrimination. They put her in the lowest group because she was wearing hijab. And all her friends protested but the school wouldn't listen. Imagine you were the top player and you were pushed there. She just left and there were no more games after that.²⁸⁴

The research undertaken by Cortis and Muir identified Muslim women's dress codes as a barrier to netball participation and while efforts are being made by the code to overcome this, attitudes of religious discrimination regarding dress codes still exist.²⁸⁵

Even in soccer there were reported incidents of discrimination on the basis of religious dress.

I played football, I played soccer, and I played basketball and hockey. I played everything at school but after I put the hijab on I took a little bit of a step back. Not because the hijab didn't allow me to play sport but because of the uniforms given to us. I turned up to footy practice one day wearing pants with shorts on top and I wasn't allowed to play.²⁸⁶

²⁸¹ Personal communication MWL 16 20-4-07

²⁸² Personal communication MWL 15 21-4-07

²⁸³ Personal communication FG 4 6-4-07

²⁸⁴ Personal communication MWL 15 20-4-07

²⁸⁵ Natasha Cortis, Kristy Muir 2007, *Participation in sport and recreation by culturally and linguistically diverse women*, Social Policy Research Unit UNSW Feb pp.10-11

²⁸⁶ Personal communication FG6 1-6-07

Lack of Family Cultural Understanding of Sport

Several interviewees noted that some Muslims, including some parents of school children, are considerably culturally sensitive to sport. This not only includes their lack of cultural understanding but also in some families there is both cultural and religious resistance to women's involvement in sport. Participants reported that at school some children present as sick on compulsory sports days and some of the parents have not addressed the fact that their children need to have exercise.

A lot of Muslims come from third world countries in which there isn't the understanding we have of sport and recreation. The notion that it is good for your physical and emotional wellbeing. There isn't that sort of refined understanding.²⁸⁷

I think a lot of families just don't see the benefits of getting their kids involved in sport. You learn a lot of relationship skills, working with others, leadership skills. A lot of kids find a lot of confidence when they do play sport.²⁸⁸

One focus group participant from western Sydney noted:

I don't think there's so much encouragement for girls to participate in sport. A lot of parents I know take their boys out for soccer training, for footy training or whatever but I don't hear of girls going regularly apart from a few who do Tai Kwon Do and things like that, which are more inside games. The girls do not do other types of games where they have to adorn themselves in other types of costumes.²⁸⁹

Community Resistance

There are also some barriers to Muslim women's involvement at the Muslim community level.

I don't think the community accepts at this stage, women openly participating in sport, in the normal sense, wearing sports gear and participating in sport like that. It's frowned upon and I don't think also that most families would support their girls being actively involved in competitive sport. And for married women that would also be an issue, again on a case-by-case basis depending on how religious or strict the family is.²⁹⁰

While community leadership exists, especially within the MWOs, nonetheless, participants felt that there should be broader community leadership on the issue of women's sports participation.

²⁸⁷ Personal communication MWL 10 1-5-07

²⁸⁸ Personal communication FG 9 2-6-07

²⁸⁹ Personal communication FG 5 20-5-07

²⁹⁰ Personal communication MWL 13 6-6-07

*It is also a matter of getting key people in the community to be involved to help get these things started. It is happening but it is a gradual process but if there are no stakeholders involved in the community the sport will be under represented in the community.*²⁹¹

Institutionalised Race and Religious Discrimination in Sport

Considerable barriers for Muslim women exist at the sports institutional level. This occurs within the sports codes by way of institutionalised racism and religious discrimination as well as the lack of facilities and human resources to facilitate Muslim women's participation in sport. Cortis and Muir's report confirms this institutional racism:

*Racism [is a barrier] whether it's perceived or actual...it is not an uncommon thing. I believe it can also happen between players themselves...It may not be overt, [but] it may be exclusionary.*²⁹²

The issue of racism in mainstream sport and mainstream women's soccer is something that all Muslim women's organisations are working on but clearly more needs to be done at the level of sports institutions and government policy. There were several reported incidents of racism and religious discrimination in sport in this study.

One research participant reported on repeated incidents of discrimination and verbal and physical abuse involving a Muslim women's soccer team. This included verbal abuse such as 'tea towel heads' and the use of very unacceptable and abusive language.

*In our team building exercises we taught the girls how to deal with verbal abuse by brushing off offending words. In one particular game there was a lot of abuse and at the end of the game there was a bit of physical violence. It is not just a bit of a hit with an elbow. Two of the girls had to go and see a doctor as they had severe bruising. We put in a complaint to the Association, for the second time, and we explained in detail what had happened. After that I felt that there was a lot more that still needs to be done in the soccer associations to address the issue of racism.*²⁹³

*There was a state school netball team that wouldn't play against the girls from the Islamic College. The St Anne's College was very annoyed and expelled them. The children are taught to ignore it but there are some nasties out there.*²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ Personal communication MWL 5 19-4-07

²⁹² Natasha Cortis, Kristy Muir 2007, *Participation in sport and recreation by culturally and linguistically diverse women*, Social Policy Research Unit UNSW Feb p. 9

²⁹³ Personal communication FG 4 6-4-07

²⁹⁴ Personal communication MWL 18 19-4-07

Lack of Women only Facilities

While in some states considerable effort has been made by governments and local councils to facilitate women only swimming pools there is not consistency in this approach nationally. For example, in Adelaide:

*There are no women only swimming opportunities in Adelaide other than if you've got a friend that happens to have a pool, then they're very popular.*²⁹⁵

*When I converted I decided not to go to mixed swimming pools anymore. There's a beautiful aquatic centre in North Adelaide. Often I go past and I would love to go in there but I don't feel comfortable anymore. When I was in Sydney I used to go to the women's baths near Coogee and that was very easy and very comfortable. And in Sydney they have more facilities for women. But here there's virtually nothing, only a few hours on a Saturday morning which is a difficult time for most women.*²⁹⁶

In Brisbane also there are apparently no women only swimming facilities:

*...but for the school children the Islamic school has just started hiring a pool that is a closed in facility where they can take the girls. We have to pay extra because they have to hire out the whole pool.*²⁹⁷

Even in soccer where there has been considerable effort made to incorporate Muslim women the issue of the lack of human resources remains a barrier to participation.

*A couple of us want to continue even though the season is over and we were looking to see if we can do an indoor soccer comp. But it is very hard to find women referees and because we are Muslim and want to play indoors, so it is hard to find a place that will allow girls only at a certain time and things like insurance cost a lot.*²⁹⁸

For a number of women, cost is a barrier in relation to sport facilities, even in relation to women only participation.

*Sports clubs are very expensive to go to, even for women only, and that prevents them from going, the majority. They are very dear. The women only ones are very expensive.*²⁹⁹

²⁹⁵ Personal communication MWL 22 3-7-07

²⁹⁶ Personal communication MWL 17 19-4-07

²⁹⁷ Personal communication FG 7 2-6-07

²⁹⁸ Personal communication FG 4 6-4-07

²⁹⁹ Personal communication FG 3 13-9-07

Sport Management/Organisation/Rules

Evidence revealed that despite the large number of migrants residing in communities and the range of policies and strategies recommended by researchers and state sporting organisations, most sport and active recreation clubs were unaware of, reluctant, or unable to provide opportunities for people from culturally diverse backgrounds.³⁰⁰

Research participants felt that there should be some sort of accommodation from the sporting clubs to encourage Muslim women to participate more fully in Australian sport. Sport is seen as a great way for young Muslims and non-Muslims to get to know each other, to get involved in sport and to facilitate participation in the broader society.

*If clubs could overcome some issues, whether its wearing hijab or taking a bit of time out to pray or whatever, to get around those issues, then I think it would go a long way to helping Muslims to become involved in Australian society.*³⁰¹

The research by Walseth in Europe certainly confirms that when the clubs do make this effort, participation within the broader society is facilitated, especially through the significant social networks that sporting clubs provide.³⁰²

Gender Mixing in Sport

In some sports, such as kickboxing, it is necessary to train with men at the higher levels and this involves physical contact, which some Muslim women feel uncomfortable about.

*I quit my previous kickboxing club because I was getting at a pretty high level and once I got to that level you had to train with guys and I just thought it would be too hard especially with hijab. And it's a contact sport so it would have been a bit difficult. But I'm looking at joining another one that a Muslim woman owns with her husband where I can continue to train at a higher level with women.*³⁰³

Social Issues in Sports

As in other areas of Australian cultural life, alcohol is a major component of the social culture of most clubs and sporting codes. Muslim women reported that whenever there is a social event related to sport there is consumption of

³⁰⁰ Hanlon, C. and Coleman, D., 2005, Recruitment and retention of culturally diverse people by sport and active recreation clubs, Centre for Aging, Rehabilitation, Exercise and Sport, Victoria University.

³⁰¹ Personal communication MWL 24 3-7-07

³⁰² Walseth, K. & Fasting, K., 2004 'Sport as a Means of Integrating Minority Women', *Sport in Society*, Vol.7, No.1, Spring.

³⁰³ Personal communication MWL 15 21-4-07

alcohol and a significant number of Muslim women reported being uncomfortable in such a social environment.

Summary

The major driver for women to undertake sporting activity is the personal desire to stay fit, trim and healthy. In terms of sport and recreational activities, the majority of young women including some older women engage regularly in sporting activities such as women only gyms although, others attend mixed gyms. Some also attend women only swimming pool sessions where these exist. Others do Tai Kwon Do or kickboxing, or ride, run, or walk. Women's soccer is also popular, with Muslim women's teams in Sydney and Melbourne. The increasing availability of women only facilities, especially in gyms, is also a driver for Muslim women's participation in these sports.

Other drivers to Muslim women's participation in sport are the various initiatives taken by governments at all levels, including federal, state and local council to facilitate this participation, in particular, in swimming and soccer.

The major barrier to women's participation is lack of accommodation by the various sports codes to Muslim women's dress codes. Netball is a very popular sport with Muslim girls but some schools and the sports organisations outside school have strict dress codes that prohibit Muslim girls' participation. The lack of women only sporting facilities is the other major barrier for Muslim women in some states. Another major barrier is the racial and religious discrimination often associated with verbal and physical harassment that takes place in some sports, such as women's soccer.

In some instances, especially with new arrivals and first generation Muslims, cultural understanding as well as religious conservatism relating to Muslim women's participation in sport is also a barrier. Muslim women have identified as a barrier a lack of community leadership, other than that which is given by MWO's and committed individuals.

B.5.1 Strategies to Overcome Identified Barriers.

Government

- At the Federal, state and local government levels, funding to existing programs should be strengthened so as to encourage and facilitate Muslim women's participation in sport.
- Specific funding should be provided to MWOs to continue with their existing health programs and to inform Muslim women about the benefits of sport and the availability of sporting opportunities for themselves and their children.

Non- Muslim Community

- Dialogue and facilitating partnerships with the relevant sporting organisations and Muslim women, through existing Muslim women's sporting bodies and/or MWOs should be supported.
- Funding should be provided for infrastructure and institutional strengthening to relevant sporting bodies so as to facilitate Muslim women's more active participation in sports activities.
- Sporting codes should be encouraged and assisted to expand the training of Muslim women as coaches.
- Cross-cultural and Islamic sensitivity training should be undertaken on a national level, for sports administrators, to facilitate a greater willingness to embrace cultural and religious diversity in women's sport.

Section B.6

Drivers and Barriers to Interaction with Various Local, State and Federal Government Agencies

At the organisational level, key Muslim leaders, through the MWO's, have considerable contact with federal, state and local government bodies. Of the leaders interviewed, 54% had contact with such bodies and, when asked to describe these relationships, 29% of these women leaders indicated that the relationship was good. In addition, many of the women for whom they provide settlement services, English language classes, and domestic violence and refuge support also have considerable personal contact, particularly with key state departments such as Housing and Community Services. Young Muslim women working in the Muslim women's organisations or in youth activities associated with these organisations are active in various state and local council youth related bodies.

At the personal level, most research participants had some experience of the health care system and several also had contact with Centrelink and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC).

B.6.a Drivers to Interaction with Government

The major driver for MWOs interaction with government bodies is to seek funding for settlement services and the provision of various domestic violence, aged care and youth services as well as funds for a range of support services for Muslim women.

At the individual level, some Muslim women access Departments of Housing, Centrelink and the Health departments, with the driver being the need to access services or financial support. MWOs also access these departments and others to undertake cross-cultural training programs.

It is notable that police in all states have in general very good relations with all Muslim women's organisations but some participants reported that major problems remain with police relations with young Muslim men although all state police forces are working to overcome these problems.

Seeking Funds for Various Community Services

At the organisational level the key MWOs across Australia all receive funds from various government sources to provide community services.

In NSW the United Muslim Women's Association (MWA) receives funds from DIAC for settlement services for Muslim women, as does the Islamic Women's Council (IWC) in Victoria, the Islamic Women's Association in Queensland (IWAQ), the Islamic Women's Association of South Australia (IWASA) and the Muslim Women's Support Centre (MWSC) in Western Australia.

In addition, in Sydney, the Special Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) funds two women's domestic violence refuges run by the MWA, and in Queensland, funds from the federal government through Family and Community Services (FACS) are given to IWAQ to provide aged care services.

These organisations also receive funds from state and local government bodies to carry out various community projects including assistance with housing, specific youth services etc..

DIAC also provides funds for interfaith and harmony grants and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has funded the Muslim Women's National Network of Australia to host various overseas visitors. Most agencies also receive some support from Adult and Community Education (ACE) for English language training generally but not always associated with settlement services.

Providing Cross-cultural Training

Cross-cultural training is mostly carried out on a voluntary basis by the MWO staff and volunteers. However, small elements of some government funds are allocated for this purpose.

Seeking Health Services

A key area of Muslim women's interaction with various levels of government is the public health care system at the personal and organisational level.

One area that had been identified as a problem area for CALD persons in the literature of the 1970's and 1980's was the health system and as a result cross-cultural training was implemented in nurse and allied health worker training programs. The higher degrees undertaken by nurses over these past two decades is evident in the research now available on issues relating to culture and religion in a health setting.

The majority of Muslim women access the health care system during and after pregnancy. Various studies have looked at key issues faced by Muslim women during this significant time. Tsianakas & Liamputtong (2002) found that Muslim women surveyed in the Melbourne metropolitan area were, in general, satisfied with the antenatal care and prenatal testing services provided. However, the study revealed that there was a need for better communication and for health providers to recognise the need for Muslim women to be attended by female doctors and health workers.³⁰⁴ The study also found that health workers needed to take into account individual women's preferences and personal circumstances when providing services for women of an Islamic background. Tsianakas' and Liamputtong's other work also

³⁰⁴ Tsianakas, V & Liamputtong P, 2002 'What women from Islamic background in Australia say about care in prenatal testing and antenatal care', *Midwifery*, Vol,18 No,1,pp 25-34,

focuses on this issue.³⁰⁵ A study in Queensland by Vose confirms these specific needs and identified 'the need for privacy; problems with male staff; the importance of covering the body; problems with diet and communication; preference for female care givers and spiritual needs'.³⁰⁶

Indicative of the cross-cultural training that has taken place in the past decade is Cioffi's study of midwives in western Sydney health settings. This study contributes to the literature on this issue, with midwives revealing their knowledge and support for religious and cultural preferences of Muslim women. This included midwives being aware of the need for modesty, a place for prayer, gender preferences, and the imperative of visiting by others.³⁰⁷

Another example of this cross-cultural training is the work in Western Australia training Islamic community workers to provide religiously, culturally and gender sensitive programs for the management of depression, including postnatal depression.³⁰⁸ A study on the Lebanese Muslim community in Western Sydney on immunisation illustrates the need for nurses' awareness in addressing Muslim cultural and religious needs.³⁰⁹

In some sectors of the health system, health workers have been educated about the religious and cultural needs of Arabic, Central Asian and South East Asian immigrants; however more recent arrivals from northern Africa, including Somalia and Sudan, some of whom are Muslims, are now accessing the health care system. Manderson and Allotey's work tells of 'conflict with hospital services, medical mismanagement and negative outcomes of procedures and treatment', with misperceptions and misunderstandings of medical events including stories of "pork injections," and rejection of 'black babies'.³¹⁰

Jeanine Blackford and Annette Street's work illustrates that progress has been made on understanding religious and cultural needs of patients from CALD backgrounds, but the cultural and 'western liberal feminist' framework

³⁰⁵ Tsianakas, V. & Liamputong, P, 2001 'Pregnancy, Prenatal Testing and Abortion: A Perspective from Muslim Women in Australia', *Australian Journal of Primary Health*, vol.7.no.2. pp.15-23.

Tsianakas, V. 2002, 'The reproductive health of Muslim women'. *Healthsharing Women* vol.12 no.3 Feb pp.11-14.

³⁰⁶ Vose, C; Thurecht, K, 1999 'What is different when you have a baby in a new country?' in ed Rice, P.L, *Living in a new country: understanding migrants' health*. Ascot Vale, Vic: Ausmed Publications, pp.43-55.

³⁰⁷ Cioffi J., 2004 'Caring for women from culturally diverse backgrounds: midwives' experiences', *Journal of Midwifery Women's Health*, Vol,49, No. 5, Sep-Oct p. 437,

³⁰⁸ Tina Tse, 2002, 'Islamic Community Worker Training Program for the Management of Depression', *Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health (AeJAMH)*, Vol. 1, Issue 2.

³⁰⁹ Deborah Brooke, Akram Omeri, 1999, 'Beliefs about Childhood Immunisation among Lebanese Muslim Immigrants in Australia', *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, Vol.10, No 3, pp. 229-236.

³¹⁰ Lenore Manderson and Pascale Allotey, 2003 'Storytelling, Marginality, and Community in Australia: How Immigrants Position their Difference in Health Care Settings', *Medical Anthropology*, Vol, 22, No, 1, January-March.

of the majority of nurses points to the need for more cross-cultural work to be done.³¹¹

The participants involved in this research certainly verify that where a concerted effort is made, both educationally and institutionally, as well as by the Muslim community in cross-cultural training and awareness raising, Muslim women would benefit.

*I think the hospitals are improving especially in western Sydney mostly because of the high density of Muslim patients and workers.*³¹²

*They used to treat us differently previously but now that we agitated things have improved. And I think they provide Muslims with halal food and they are allowed to cover themselves while they are in hospital. Staff did not know about all this but they have been educated about our needs.*³¹³

*There are Muslim nurses and doctors at Liverpool hospital and also they have a prayer room and a prayer time comes and I go in and ask reception can you open the prayer room and the security officer goes and opens it for me. That was great, I didn't have any problem. In intensive care they allow Muslims to go and pray which is very good.*³¹⁴

*The hospitals in Adelaide have really improved and part of the issues is the Muslim Women's Association has done a hell of a lot of cross-cultural training with the medicos and what's also good is that a lot of the doctors are Muslims now. You go into Royal Adelaide and heaps of the training doctors are Muslims. I'd say the last six years they've really improved.*³¹⁵

Seeking Department of Housing Services

The MWOs that provide settlement services to new arrivals generally reported a good working relationship with various state government housing departments.

Seeking Security Services

The majority of the women leaders interviewed who are working either in a paid or volunteer capacity with the MWO's overall spoke well of their relationship with the state and federal police services. Most contact was over security matters relating to the organisation or to events that they were

³¹¹ Jeanine Blackford, Annette Street, 2002, 'Cultural conflict: the impact of western feminism(s) on nurses caring for women of non-English speaking background', *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, Vol, 11 No.5, pp. 664-671.

³¹² Personal communication MWL 4 25-4-07

³¹³ Personal communication MWL 4 25-4-07

³¹⁴ Personal communication FG 5 20-5-07

³¹⁵ Personal communication MWL 19 25-4-07

involved in. Other contact with security services involved receipt of hate mail and, at various times, threatened or actual physical attack. There are numerous references to this violence toward the Muslim community, including that of Poynting,³¹⁶ and reports in the HREOC Report.³¹⁷

Participants in this research noted that such incidents did occur particularly when international events took place, such as bombings in the USA or the UK. However, such security concerns were not identified as being significant at this time, although there was deep concern and fear that they would resurface should another international incident occur.

We have some Federal Police guys who come into the office quite regularly who are very funny and they usually give us a call after something has happened in the media. Because we get a lot of hate mail and violent messages and psycho stuff left on our answering machine. If we've got an event coming up we tell them about it. They're pretty helpful. And we have contacted ASIO quite a few times when we are having a big community event, so they know, so when people call to report these sus-looking Muslims, it is only us.³¹⁸

Leaders working in Islamic schools also commented positively on their contact with police.

The Police have been working really well with the school. We have needed the Police after those world incidents like the Bali bombing because we got bomb threats, death threats, and all sorts of things. We needed protection from the Police. And ASIO comes all the time and checks on things as well.³¹⁹

Of interest in relation to improving relations with police and Muslims is the initiative by the Queensland Government and the state police service, involving the Al Nisa Muslim Women's Youth Group. The project aims to build positive relations between the Queensland Muslim communities and the Queensland Police Service (QPS) in particular with senior police women, with research aimed at providing information, developing resources and strategies and identifying communication procedures to improve relations between these two groups.³²⁰

Service Providers

The majority of women leaders interviewed that had contact with service providers in such areas as domestic violence, family support, aged care,

³¹⁶ Scott Poynting and Greg Noble, 2004 *Bin Laden in the Suburbs*, Sydney Institute of Criminology Series, University of Sydney, Australia, pp.158-164

³¹⁷ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2004 *Isma-Listen: Report*, HREOC Sydney pp.43-57

³¹⁸ Personal communication MWL 15 21-4-07

³¹⁹ Personal communication MWL 17 19-4-07

³²⁰ See details in this report 'Mapping of Muslim Women's Organisations'

childcare, youth services, and migrant and refugee services all commented very positively on their relationship with these providers.

*I find people in the different organisations and service providers are very keen to find out how they can better service the Muslims and they're all very very open-minded about things and very sympathetic towards Muslims, especially Muslim women. I have given a lot of talks to lots of groups who wanted to know more about Islam and the Muslim community.*³²¹

*I think some of them are quite good actually. They really go out of their way to try to accommodate the Muslim families. I have no problem in my work over many years now. In fact child agency workers are very compassionate people.*³²²

Job Providers

As far as can be ascertained, there are no Muslim-run job providers. Some Muslims do work in paid positions with job providers. Many participants commented on the need for more Muslim friendly job provider services, with a number of people noting that if the government wanted to increase the potential for Muslims to enter the workforce, support for a job provider service that can identify with and understand their needs would be of great benefit.

*I do think that the government should look at other faith-based organisations in addition to the Salvos and Mission Australia, not necessarily always supporting the ones they've committed to, to increase the diversity.*³²³

Involvement with Youth Services

The Muslim women leaders as well as the participants in the focus groups reported considerable positive contact with various government services in relation to youth services. The local governments in particular are very active in this area as are the various Multicultural Youth Services, Council based Youth Councils and Youth Resource Centres and Youth Development Services. In Queensland the Police Department is working closely with youth, and has a Muslim youth liaison officer placed with the department in Brisbane.

Seeking Small Business Support

One participant reported a very positive experience in dealing with various state and federal government agencies in establishing and promoting her small business. Other women involved in various business enterprises made no negative comments about their relations with government.

³²¹ Personal communication MWL 12 8-9-07

³²² Personal communication MWL 16 20-4-07

³²³ Personal communication MWL 4 25-4-07

*Fantastic. Really good. I'm also on the AusTrade Scheme as well. I've got a fantastic relationship with all government bodies; I find them very helpful. I am probably the only Muslim woman exporting from Australia, very Australian and taking the Islamic market international. It's been really good. Foreign Affairs, Trade, AusIndustries, Small Business. We do get a lot of support from these government bodies.*³²⁴

B.6.b Barriers to Interaction with Government

There are a number of key barriers that Muslim women experience in their relationships with federal, state and local governments.

For some women the barrier to access is language and while the majority of the research participants had very good English language skills they did report the difficulties faced by other women especially new arrivals. The lack of cultural understanding by some individual staff working in the service provision area as well as lack of understanding of Australian culture by some women, especially for new arrivals, was also a barrier. These issues have been well researched and reported on by Yasmeen,³²⁵ Kamalkhani³²⁶ and Casimiro.³²⁷

For the majority, however, with good language skills, one of the major barriers is the 'gate keepers', the secretaries and receptionists both in the government and private sectors. The private and government health sector including allied health and general practitioner practices were identified as having some staff who make offensive assumptions about language skills and comprehension, based, it would seem, on Muslim women's dress.

Health Sector Discrimination Based on Stereotyping and on Dress

While major efforts have been made within nurse training, the same cross-cultural effort needs to be made in the other health professional training areas including specialist doctors, general practitioners and, in particular, with the health services support staff. There were numerous reports of stereotypical judgements.

*The receptionists and people at the emergency are often worse I think. They do look you up and down. And often in general it is ethnic people, Greeks and Italians, South Americans, people of German backgrounds.*³²⁸

³²⁴ Personal communication MWL 20 26-6-07

³²⁵ Yasmeen, S. 2001 'Settlement Needs of Muslim Women in Perth: A Case Study' in ed. A. Saeed and S. Akbarzadeh. *Muslim Communities in Australia*. Sydney, University of New South Wales Press.

³²⁶ Kamalkhani, Z., 2001 'Recently Arrived Muslim Refugee Women Coping with Settlement', ed. Saeed.A & Akbarzadeh, S. *Muslim Communities in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney. pp.97-115.

³²⁷ Suzy Casimiro, Peter Hancock and Jeremy Northcote, 2007, Isolation and Insecurity: Resettlement issues among Muslim women refugees in Perth Western Australia, *Australian Journal of Social Issues* Vol. 42, No. 1 Autumn.

³²⁸ Personal communication MWL19 25-4-07

*Sometimes the receptionists think you can't speak English. They talk to you like this [slowly, stilted]. And you're like 'I understand what you're saying'. You're fine over the phone, you speak to people and there are no problems but then they see you and they're... like what? Receptionists for doctors, any specialists, anywhere, that is how they behave when they see me in hijab.*³²⁹

This barrier can be overcome through cultural and Islamic sensitivity training of specific 'frontline' personnel such as secretaries and receptionists and other people with whom the public have first contact.

Allied Health Personnel Lack of Cultural and Religious Sensitivity

In other areas of the hospital sector, such as radiology, lack of cultural and religious sensitivity also remains a problem.

*One lady was going for some x-rays and she had to take off all her clothes and wear the appropriate clothing. She had to go from one room to another and in order to do so she had to cross this hallway where there was a crowded waiting area. She offered to change where the x-ray was being done. The person, who was a male, performing the x-ray, had given her the most ridiculous 'what are you talking about' look and told her that it was not possible. So she just put on her clothes and walked away.*³³⁰

The response by Muslim women leaders is that as a community group, Muslims need to advise and assist those organisations to meet the needs of Muslims. This is being done but much more needs to be done at the policy level within the health care system.

Specific Problems for new Arrivals in Relations with the Health Sector

While not researched in detail in this project, specific problems with the health care sector are apparently being experienced by new arrivals especially those from Africa. The discrimination is on the basis of both religion and colour as reported by researchers Manderson and Allotey and as reported by our research participants as well.³³¹

Recently you will notice that we have had this big flood of Africans, Somalians and Afghans, so I have heard from people working with refugees that they have had problems. People [health workers] not very willing to deal with them. Not many I think. Just one or two. In private practice. The hospitals are not bad. A lot of the social workers

³²⁹ Personal communication FG 6 1-6-07

³³⁰ Personal communication MWL 12 8-9-07

³³¹ Lenore Manderson and Pascale Allotey, 2003, 'Storytelling, Marginality, and Community in Australia: How Immigrants Position their Difference in Health Care Settings', *Medical Anthropology*, Vol, 22, No, 1, January-March.

are very good with accommodating their special problems, special situations.³³²

Centrelink Work Regulations and Religious and Cultural Misunderstandings

Muslim women are experiencing some difficulties with the new regulations introduced in 2007 by Centrelink. All Muslim women see that their primary responsibility is to look after their children and for some this means staying at home and not working.

They don't see the need to work. So when they're asked to go out and work they find it unusual, especially if they're migrants. Because they want to look after their kids, that's what they've been taught to do and so for a long time that's the way they see the world. So they find it quite unusual to be told to go and do full time study or work, especially with the language barrier.³³³

Centrelink Gender Misunderstandings

Some Muslim women and some Muslim men also have difficulty discussing personal matters with Centrelink staff of the opposite sex.

Sometimes Muslim men - its something that they need to overcome living in a country like this – don't feel comfortable speaking to women on the front-line when it comes to Centrelink and other government departments. They have a power struggle when it comes to that because they're the men and they need to speak to women to get services. Even with women they prefer always to deal with a woman rather than males. Sometimes you will find that Muslim women will not disclose as much if the worker is a male because of cultural or religious reasons. You might have the same with even a non-Muslim woman who is speaking to a male she might not want to disclose to.³³⁴

Lack of Muslim Friendly Services among Job Providers

There is an overall concern that while existing job providers are trying to assist Muslim clients, some are helpful and other less so. Research participants felt that there was a need to establish Muslim owned or at least Muslim friendly job providers in areas of high Muslim populations.

The feedback from clients, depending on which agency, some of them are very helpful and do the job that they're supposed to. Others bounce the client from one place to another, have a bit of a football match with them. At the end of it there are no results and they have Centrelink on

³³² Personal communication MWL 16 20-4-07

³³³ Personal communication MWL 4 25-4-07

³³⁴ *ibid*

³³⁵ *their back because they haven't chased jobs and basically the job by the agency is not being done.*³³⁶

Cultural Sensitivity and Islamic Understanding in DIAC

While research participants reported that overall they had, with a few exceptions, good working relations with most government departments, DIAC was identified as a department that according to respondents required considerably more cross-cultural and Islamic sensitivity training.

*DIAC is driving me crazy. We work quite closely with them and our project officers meet them with other social workers or community settlement support services workers. DIAC is our main link because they're the ones that fund us and approve our reports. They're like your boss so there's the whole thing of governments making things difficult. I don't think they make it harder for Muslim women. I think they make it hard for everyone.*³³⁷

*There was one out of ten of the DIAC staff who was lovely, but it really was one out of ten. I just felt that they employed a particular type of person.*³³⁸

*Lots and lots of difficulties from our perspective with DIAC. It's an enormous amount of work and people's cultural sensitivity is getting worse rather than better. There is no longer a language around access and equity and minority rights and looking after a minority, so its no longer part of the culture of the sector and people no longer feel obliged as a matter of professional conduct to attend to those issues in any significant way.*³³⁹

State Police Insufficiently Trained

While overall police relations were reported to be good between the MWOs and the state police in South Australia considerable frustration was expressed with the response by some police officers to cross-cultural training being provided by Muslim women.

We have not had very good experience with the State Police. We do a lot of cross-cultural training with them but I think they need a lot more. There's a very negative relationship between the State Police and Muslims. Even when I do cross-cultural training, some of the questions that State Policemen ask are really questionable and they are supposed to be public servants. One session that a friend of mine was doing was so bad she had to stop because they were being so rude to her. Their woman officer that we work with was very apologetic. We do

³³⁵ Personal Communication MWL 10 1-5-07

³³⁶ Personal communication MWL 11 10-9-07

³³⁷ *ibid*

³³⁸ Personal communication MWL 2 25-4-07

³³⁹ Personal communication MWL 10 1-5-07

*about ten to twelve a year. They need to do more. We only do about an hour and a half. They need a full day's training.*³⁴⁰

Another area of major concern and one that was reported in a number of the focus groups was the relationship between various state police forces and young Muslim men.

*They target Muslim youth, mostly males here. If you go into Rundle Mall in the city on Friday nights there are groups of Middle Eastern looking boys standing together and groups of Aussie guys and they have that thing going on but the Police always ask the Muslim guys to move on. And they always pull the Muslim guys over. My brother always gets pulled over all the time to the point where they won't even ask him where he's from, they just say what part of the Middle East are you from?. My brother's like me, I'm not from the Middle East. I think they give him a very hard time.*³⁴¹

Summary

Overall, all Muslim women leaders and young women involved in the focus groups reported having good relations with most government departments. They are participating actively in negotiating with these departments that provide funds for various services at an organisational and or personal level. Most Muslim women leaders have also been involved at some time with cross-cultural training in various government departments and many report good relations with the police and security services as a result of these contacts. Those leaders and youth that have been involved in youth services with government departments report good relations, as do those with small businesses.

In relation to barriers to participation with government, the key barrier articulated was in the health sector at a personnel level with the systems' 'gate keepers', secretaries and receptionists, as well as with some allied health personnel. New arrivals especially are experiencing difficulties participating effectively within the health care system.

Some research respondents identified Centrelink staff and in particular DIAC staff as requiring intensive cross-cultural training to overcome what is seen as gender, religious and cultural misunderstandings.

Strategies to Overcome Barriers

Government

- Additional cross-cultural and Islamic sensitivity training should be undertaken in Centrelink and DIAC;

³⁴⁰ Personal communication MWL 15 21-4-07

³⁴¹ Personal communication MWL 19 25- 4-07

Non-Muslim community

- Specific cross-cultural training should be undertaken by the health sector, with allied health personnel as well as secretaries and receptionists and general practitioners through the GP associations.
- All personnel in the Job Provider networks should undertake cross-cultural training and in areas of high Muslim population, efforts should be made to employ staff who are well trained cross-culturally and who are Islamically sensitive.

Research

- A national review of the problems of access to various services by newly arrived Muslim women should be undertaken with a view to improving services and increasing resource allocation. This review should include discussions with all MWOs involved in settlement and other services to Muslim women, to identify how best to address the needs of Muslim women new arrivals, including refugees.

Section B.7

Drivers and Barriers to Participation in Muslim and non-Muslim Women's Organisations

In this section of the research, the study explored how the participants interacted with their local MWOs and how they, and their organisations, interacted with non-MWOs. Specifically, the study explored what the drivers and barriers were to those two interactions.

Within all of the communities visited for this research MWOs are the public face of Muslim women. They play an exceptionally pivotal role in the community, providing services and advocating for Muslim women. The majority of these organisations provide government funded settlement services for newly arrived Muslim women and work closely with other service providers in this activity. One organisation provides women's domestic violence refuge services both for Muslims and non-Muslims and another runs an aged care service.

For a detailed summary of the work of these organisations see Section C of this report on Mapping Australian MWOs. This mapping exercise identifies ten key organisations. Nine of these are state based and provide a range of community services and are deeply linked to the Muslim communities they serve, while the tenth one, the Muslim Women's National Network of Australia (MWNNA) is principally a network and advocacy body.

In terms of participation within the broader community these organisations undertake many volunteer hours of community outreach and cross-cultural training to schools, educational and health facilities, professional associations and service providers including the police, among many others in the broader non-Muslim Australian community. Some organisations provide up to four such voluntary sessions per week.

However, one of the key areas of Muslim and non-Muslim community participation has been interfaith dialogue with funding provided by the Federal Government for these activities.. For some organisations this is considered a legitimate activity, however, the majority of the organisations feel that Muslim women are 'talking to the converted' and many have stopped this work to focus on outreach to areas in the Muslim and non-Muslim communities that they have identified as more pressing.

Research on MWOs is sparse, with a recent article by Yasmeen on women as citizens of Australia, detailing the activism of some of these women's organisations, making a welcome contribution.³⁴² Paula Abood, in her chapter on Arab-Australian women's activism, also provides an overview of the early work of the Muslim Women's Association (MWA) in Lakemba in

³⁴² Samina Yasmeen, 2007, Muslim women as citizens of Australia: Diverse notions and Practices, *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Vol 42, No 1 Autumn pp.41-54

Sydney.³⁴³ A research study is being presently undertaken by the University of Technology Sydney in collaboration with the MWA on 'Sanctuary and Security in Contemporary Australia: Muslim women's networks, 1980-2005'.³⁴⁴

B.7.1a Drivers to Participation in MWOs

The major driver for Muslim women's participation in MWOs is principally to be of voluntary service to the Muslim community. Additional drivers include outreach to the broader non-Muslim community and for young women to be involved in leadership activities. All participants indicated that their involvement was to have a shared sense of religious purpose, camaraderie, and to participate actively in Australian community life.

In this research, 69% of Muslim women leaders are directly involved in MWOs. The majority of research participants were active in MWOs, where they were engaged in support services to the community, cross-cultural training, interfaith activities and youth leadership as well as, in some cases, religious leadership.

The majority of research participants were also engaged in outreach to the broader community through these organisations, including to other non-Muslim organisations, non-Muslim women's service providers etc.. There is an extraordinary amount of voluntary work being undertaken by women of all ages in these organisations.

Young Muslim women feel, for some, the exceptional burden, and for others, the challenge, of being the visible face of Islam in Australia and of continually being 'on show' and having to be ambassadors for their faith at all times.

Service to the Muslim Community

Of the total research participants, some 82% are involved either as paid workers or in a voluntary capacity with an MWO. Among the leaders, 69% are involved with 52% contributing in a voluntary capacity while only 16% are paid workers. Among the focus groups, 96% are involved in MWOs, of which 28% are paid workers and 68% work in a voluntary capacity.

MWOs undertake a wide range of activities. These roles and activities include the provision of social services, settlement services to newly arrived Muslim women, community welfare services including domestic violence support, early intervention and family support services, playgroups, and working with Muslim carers, including social work and psychological counselling.

In addition, they provide housing and accommodation support, information referral and social welfare and emergency relief. Organisations also undertake capacity building, advocacy and lobbying, and research and

³⁴³ Paula Abood, 2002, Arab-Australian Women's Activism, in Ghassan Hage, ed., *Arab Australians Today*, Melbourne University Press, pp.1612-173.

³⁴⁴ <http://datasearch.uts.edu.au/hss/staff/details.cfm?StaffId=1614>

mentoring of Muslim women, especially young Muslim women, including leadership, self esteem and life skills education.

A key component of the work of MWOs involves mainly volunteer cross-cultural training with government and private agencies and non-government organisations as well as educational and service providers. Interfaith activities are also included in this volunteer work.

For all ages, sporting activities are gaining popularity with Muslim women and the MWO's support activities such as swimming classes, recreational and leadership camps for girls, walking and gym activities for older women

MWOs client base includes all ethnic groups with some organisations having contact with forty different ethnic groups. Settlement services vary among the states with Victoria supporting mainly Eritrean, Somali and Sudanese women while in Western Australia the client base is principally Afghani, Iraqi and Somali and South Australia supports mostly African women such as those of Somali, Eritrean, Sudanese, Ethiopian, and Liberian ethnic background as well as Iraqi and Afghani migrants or refugees.

All MWOs have a substantial commitment to the next generation of young Muslim women and all have young women's leadership training and various other social, and in some cases, sport and recreational activities with young Muslim women.

Community Outreach

Of those women involved with MWOs, all reported considerable contact with other women's service organisations with some 48% having contact with organisations such as Immigrant Women's Services, Women's Health Services, various state bodies dealing with domestic violence, ethnic women's organisations and many others. At the national level, some MWOs work with the National Council of Women.

B. 7.1.b Barriers to Participation in MWOs

The barriers to participation in MWOs included, for a very small number of research participants, a desire not to be identified specifically with an MWO but rather to spend time and energy integrating into the broader community. Others had family commitments and increasingly, as older women retire from volunteer positions, young women are unable to undertake this volunteer work due to family and work commitments.

The other significant barrier to more Muslim women's involvement is the significant lack of financial resources available to undertake both service provision, leadership training, and, in terms of participation with the broader community, cross-cultural training.

As with all volunteer organisations, Muslim women involved with MWOs lamented the diminishing supply of volunteers and often regretted also their

inability to spend more time on these types of activities. Juggling time, family and community commitments for some women is also problematic.

*It is also very hard to get women along, it's not because they're not interested or they have any specific objections, it's because of time and feeling overburdened with the numerous requests that they get. There's so many good things that I would like to respond to but in terms of time and pressure and family commitments I find it's hard. I want to reach out to the wider community and try and promote social cohesion and friendships and interfaith but trying to bargain out my time is difficult.*³⁴⁵

For some women, especially younger women, social reservation is also a factor:

*It's also a problem getting the younger women involved. Once they break those comfort bounds of getting involved in meetings with people who they don't know, then they actually find it a very enjoyable experience. But that nervousness of being involved in something new is a factor in participation.*³⁴⁶

Working with other MWOs

Many of the MWOs find time is the greatest barrier to working collaboratively with other MWOs. While there is some co-operation, such as the annual dinner for MWOs in NSW, there remain a number of other significant barriers to collaboration for most MWOs.

Key among these is the lack of co-ordination at both the state and national level. The MWNNA is a national body representing some of the MWOs but lack of infrastructure means that its function as a national representative body is limited, apart from advocacy at the federal government level by its President and other executive members. The lack of an effective national body representing all MWOs is a barrier to effective national lobbying and advocacy on behalf of MWOs in Australia. However, as reflected in the broader Muslim community, ethnic and sectarian divides do exist and to some extent these are also reflected in the relationships between Muslim women's organisations.

In addition, as with other service providers where there is intense competition for a limited pool of funds, this can also be a barrier to co-operation.

A major factor is also time and the availability of human resources both paid staff and volunteers to undertake such co-ordination. In addition, most paid workers within MWOs are funded under specific government funding guidelines leaving no opportunity for other activities. The amount of

³⁴⁵ Personal communication MWL 24-7-9-07

³⁴⁶ Personal communication MWL 25-7-9-07

co-operation between MWOs that is done is carried out by volunteers and for some MWO's this is not seen as a top priority.

*This is the issue with a lot of Muslim women's associations; we are always overloaded with work. You are so obsessed just providing services with the limited funds that are available that we just didn't have the time or resources or the energy to work together with some of the peak bodies like the Muslim Women's Association and Muslim Women's Network to lobby on key issues. And in a way our funding does not allow us to do that because we have to make sure we meet our funding outcomes. I know with our DIAC funding it has just got more and more specific about making sure that we did meet those outcomes.*³⁴⁷

B.7.2a Drivers to participation in non-MWOs

The majority of participants reported experiencing few difficulties in interacting and networking with non-MWOs. Several participants commented on the willingness of non-MWOs to reach out to and involve Muslim women particularly in relation to service provision co-operation.

*Generally I found that [non-Muslim] women's groups were extremely supportive. Women's groups associated with the Unions, the Women's information switchboard and some of the advisory women's bodies at the State level are very very good. They always made an effort to get in contact with us and find out about key issues and make an effort to invite us to their events and facilitate our participation in their programs.*³⁴⁸

Other MWOs prioritise their contact with other non-MWOs generally around a focus on shared needs:

*Overwhelmingly we prioritise our contact with non-Muslim women's organisations, with migrant women's organisations that focus on disadvantaged immigrant women.*³⁴⁹

B.7.2b Barriers to Interacting with non-MWOs

While in general there are good working relationships with non-Muslim women's service providers, as detailed above, some barriers do exist. For some MWO's, relationships with state or national non-Muslim women's advocacy or representative bodies can present significant barriers but this is not the case for all MWO's. In general, the major barriers include prioritising workload, the lack of religious understanding, cultural insensitivity, a perceived lack of acceptance and, for some women, language.

³⁴⁷ Participant communication MWL 19 25-4-07

³⁴⁸ Participant communication MWL 19 25-4-07

³⁴⁹ Participant communication MWL 10 1-5-07

It's the workload and the shortage of volunteers. We would very much like to [interact more with non-Muslim women's organisations] but the invitations we get or opportunities that come up usually end up falling on one or two people and so it gets to be too much. That's why we haven't gone out of our way to work with other women's organisations in the community.³⁵⁰

For some Muslim women there is the issue of a perceived lack of acceptance as well as cultural insensitivity:

It is also a matter of acceptance. You never know whether you're going to be accepted by non-Muslim women's organisations and sometimes it's easier to not make the effort.³⁵¹

They could be more educated about Muslim women. Some of them look a bit worried when a hijabi turns up and maybe they could invite Muslim women to come in and speak to their organisations more.³⁵²

We invited someone from a women's service organisation to talk about sexual health. We wanted them to talk about contraception but they started to talk about female circumcision with a group of African women and it just was not good. The women got very upset. No one is saying you can't talk to them about this issue but it's very sensitive especially for that ethnic group. So we haven't invited them back.³⁵³

This lack of acceptance and cultural insensitivity is multiplied for newly arrived Muslim women with poor language skills being an additional barrier to participation with non-MWOs.

It's very hard for our [newly arrived] women because of the language barrier not so much the culture, more the language than anything else. Lots of women have problems with it.³⁵⁴

Other Muslim women felt that there were major social and political differences that were difficult to overcome, with non-MWOs being principally middle class with a subsequently different needs focus.

They're annoying in the sense that they just don't get it. Apart from some of the migrant women's organisations who are different creatures, women's organisations have fundamentally lost sight of what they're on about. They operate almost as if they are in an equal private market and it's all about providing corporate services and that sort of stuff. They do things now like teaching women how to use the Internet for banking. Most women that we work with in the welfare sector don't even have any funding to do that sort of stuff. And certainly don't have

³⁵⁰ Participant communication 12 8-9-07

³⁵¹ Participant communication 16 19-4-0

³⁵² Participant communication 5 19-9-07

³⁵³ Participant communication 15 21-4-07

³⁵⁴ Participant communication 25 7-9-07

*money to buy computers. I don't know who they're servicing but in terms of migrant issues and how migrant women are faring in this social and political and economic environment, I think they have absolutely no clue.*³⁵⁵

Summary

In summary the key drivers to Muslim women's participation in MWOs is to provide mostly voluntary service to their communities and for young women to be involved in youth leadership programs and other social events organised by the MWOs. An additional driver is the social and religious camaraderie provided by such structures as well as the opportunity to reach out to the Muslim and non-Muslim communities through various activities. For some young Muslim women, these can include cross-cultural training with other non-Muslim youth and non-MWOs.

There were few barriers identified by the research participants regarding their non-participation in MWOs. Several referred to the preference to do voluntary work within the non-Muslim community and the lack of time to be able to do both. Other barriers included, as with all volunteers, the lack of time, mostly due to family commitments.

With regard to working with other MWOs the key barrier was time and resources as well as the lack of effective national leadership attributed by the MWNNNA to lack of resources. An additional barrier, claimed by several research participants, was due to ethnic and sectarian divisions within the MWOs. Competition for scarce funds was also a factor in lack of collaboration.

In regard to relationships with non-MWOs the key driver was the need for professional collaboration on issues around women's services such as health, domestic violence, housing etc. Some MWOs also collaborated on interfaith issues but there is growing dissatisfaction with these programs. Barriers to participation with non-MWOs included prioritising workload, the lack of religious understanding, cultural insensitivity, a perceived lack of acceptance and, for some women, language.

B.7.3 Strategies to overcome these problems.

The key strategies to overcome these barriers identified by the women leaders and youth were adequate funding for human resources and funds for cross-cultural training.

Government

Funds should be provided to MWOs identified in this research to strengthen existing cross-cultural training programs by employing designated staff to undertake such activities.

³⁵⁵ Participant communication 10 1-5-07

- Funds should also be provided for MWOs to employ designated youth to carry out youth leadership training programs and to engage in cross-cultural training in schools and other youth venues.
- At the national level support should be provided for a national consultative process to work towards a well funded representative national body for Muslim women to include MWOs and other Muslim women's groups within the community

Non-Muslim community

- At the national level of non-Muslim representative bodies efforts should be made to broaden contacts with Muslim women and through state and local women's organisations to develop contacts and outreach activities to these Muslim women's communities.
- Additional cross-cultural training should also be undertaken with national, state and local non-Muslim women's bodies.

Research

A national research project could be undertaken to identify ways in which the non-Muslim community women's organisations could facilitate the participation of Muslim women in their organisations.

Section C

Mapping Muslim Women's Organisations across Australia

This section of the report deals with the mapping of ten Muslim Women's organisations (MWOs). The first section provides a summary of the research findings and the second provides full details of all of the organisations.

The objective of this component of the research is to provide an overview of the work of key Muslim Australian women's community organisations.

In order to undertake this preliminary mapping exercise of key MWOs across Australia, a web-based analysis was undertaken and data was collected both from organisations' Internet sites, where they existed. In addition, one to one, hour long, face to face or phone interviews were conducted with the managers or executive officers of ten MWOs.

Those organisations which were part of the study were confirmed by key Muslim leaders as the major MWOs in Australia. The taped interviews were conducted according to approved ethical guidelines using an interview schedule that covered the following key areas:

- Organisation background details
- Governance
- Financial resources
- Human Resources
- Scope and nature of work and services provided
- Work with young women
- Community Relations
- Government Relations.

The MWOs that were involved in this mapping exercise are as follows, in alphabetical order:

- Islamic Women's Association of Queensland (IWAQ)
- Islamic Women's Welfare Association Lakemba Sydney (IWWA)
- Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria (IWWC)
- Muslim Women's Association of South Australia (MWASA)
- Muslim Women's Council of Victoria (MWCV)
- Muslim Women's National Network of Australia (MWNNA)
- Muslim Women's Support Centre WA (MWSC)
- Muslim Women's Welfare Association of the ACT
- Al Nisa Young Muslim Women's Group Queensland
- United Muslim Women's Association Lakemba (MWA).

Section C. 1 Summary of the Key Findings

Governance

In terms of governance, all the organisations surveyed are incorporated bodies governed by the legally required number of Board members, with overall responsibility for finances and management. All submit an externally audited annual financial report and the majority also have annual reports. Membership numbers vary. All Boards have members from a wide range of ethnicities, indicative of the heterogeneity of the communities they serve.

Specific project funding is from various levels of state, federal and local government and some organisations fundraise and receive donations. However, a considerable proportion of the work is carried out on a voluntary basis.

Five of the organisations receive DIAC funds to provide settlement services to newly arrived Muslim women. In addition, state and federal monies are provided for the MWA women's refuges and the IWAQ's aged care and community services. The IWWC of Victoria receives a range of project funds to support Victorian women and Al Nisa, a young Muslim women's group in Queensland, has received specifically targeted state and federal funds for youth activities. However, not all organisations provided details of annual budgets and so a full account of funding sources is not available.

Human Resources

In general, all of the MWOs have exceptionally minimal human resources for the nature and scope of the work undertaken and all organisations rely heavily on volunteer labour, including from all Board members.

Only three organisations have substantial staff numbers and for two of these, such staff are there to provide direct services. In the case of the MWA, they run two women's refuges and the IWAQ runs an aged care facility. The third organisation with substantial staffing is the IWWC Victoria, that provides a range of services. All organisations are dependent on volunteers for the bulk of the other work that they undertake. A large component of this work involves family support services of various kinds, outside those provided for new arrivals. Their work also involves cross-cultural training and advocacy. This cross-cultural training is carried out by request through schools, universities, technical colleges, churches and other religious organisations, professional associations, women's groups, non-government agencies, service providers, job networks and all government services in particular health, education, welfare and police.

This work is a key contribution to Islamic understanding and racial and religious harmony within the non-Muslim Australian community. The fact that such work relies principally on volunteer labour was one of the major concerns of all MWOs interviewed. In particular, the women who established these organisations, mostly in the 1990's, are ageing, and while considerable

efforts have been put into young women's leadership, they are facing the situation of many volunteer organisations in Australia, that of finding a new generation of volunteer workers. Young women are mostly in paid employment and are not able to undertake the volunteer work of their predecessors.

Scope and Nature of Work

The scope and nature of the services provided by these organisations varies but in general the focus is the Muslim women's community in their state, new arrivals through settlement services, specific services such as refuges or aged and community services and, for some, interfaith activities with the non-Muslim community.

Full details of the nature and scope of the work undertaken by these individual organisations are provided in profiles of each of these in the following documents. In summary the key services are:

Direct Services:

- Settlement services
- Domestic violence and refuge services
- Aged care and community services
- Family support including housing/parenting/ relationship skills.

Community Development:

- Capacity building
- Sport and Recreation programs for women
- Leadership skills
- Research on various issues, publication and distribution
- Support to new arrivals
- Women's conferences

Young Muslim Women:

- Various young Muslim women's programs especially leadership training
- Recreational and leadership camps
- Newsletters and Journals
- Annual dinners or fun nights
- Mentoring and facilitating the establishment of young Muslim women's organisations
- Religious Study groups
- Sport and Recreation including girls' soccer teams
- Individual case work
- Conferences.

Non-Muslim Community

- Cross-cultural training
- Interfaith work
- Lobbying, advocacy and media work around a range of issues/ poverty/housing/domestic violence.

Community Relations

This area of the mapping exercise explored MWOs community relations with other MWOs, non-MWOs, the Muslim community and the media. The section referred to here in relation to MWO and non-MWO relationships complements the data gathered from Muslim women leader interviews and the focus groups detailed in Section B.7

In response to questions about the relationship with other MWOs, most reported having alliances with other MWOs and in relation to direct service provision, where necessary, referring Muslim women to the relevant organisations for services, as in the case of the MWA's women's refuge. Some, as in South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia and the ACT, are the only MWOs in those states and not all provide direct services.

All organisations reported good relations with the Muslim community and they also reported having the respect and general support of the religious and community leaders and community organisations.

All organisations reported very good relations with other non-Muslim women's service organisations especially in such areas as domestic violence, family support, new arrivals, child care, women's health, sport and recreation etc.. All MWOs also reported good relations with various women's ethnic committees and migrant resource centres. In the case of the MWNNA they reported good relations with various national non-Muslim women's bodies.

The MWOs undertake considerable cross-cultural training with an exceptional number of hours being given voluntarily. As with all community sectors the number of volunteers is diminishing. This cross-cultural work is a significant point of participation within the broader Australian community and is a major factor in helping to promote community harmony. Lack of funding for this key activity is seriously hampering the ongoing development of this significant aspect of the work of all MWOs. However, several organisations have received community awards for their service to the community.

In relation to the media, two of the ten organisations reported good relations with the media and both of those have been working on that relationship over many years and had, as well, received funding to undertake specific media awareness training of journalists. The IWWC in Victoria has also produced an excellent guide on Islam and on Women in Islam for media personnel. Several organisations also have designated media personnel on their management committees.

However, in several states, namely Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia, there was a negative response to the question of media relations. Several MWO participants noted that, in spite of considerable effort to establish good relations with the media, they felt that, when they had contact with the media, they were always wrongly quoted or their views falsely portrayed. Efforts have been made to remedy this situation but so far without success.

Government Relations

The nature of the relationship of MWOs with state, federal and local government is principally centred around funding for specific services or specific projects. Details of these are listed with each MWO profiled below.

MWOs report having good relations with local governments, particularly with regards to specific local projects, as well as with a range of state government service providers. Most MWOs are represented on a range of relevant local and state government committees or Boards and these are also listed below with each MWO's profile. The MWNNA was represented on the Muslim Community Reference Group 2005-06.

Identified Specific Needs

The MWOs identified needs that are specific to their organisations but there is some commonality and these are listed as follows:

Family Support Services

- Support for a 'One Stop Shop' information and referral service, to meet the needs of all Muslim women, but in particular new arrivals, with regards to immigration, English language training, Centrelink, housing, family support etc..
- Family support services funding, with emphasis on early intervention, parenting, domestic violence and mental health.
- In WA, there is a need for a domestic violence service and a women's refuge.

New Arrivals

- Strengthening child friendly, women only appropriate English language support for new arrivals and support for workforce entry preparation.
- Educational programs for new arrivals on citizenship/ laws etc..

Youth

- Support for ongoing leadership programs and to provide a range of services to young Muslim women in all major capitals.

Cross-cultural Training

- This is a major area of need for all MWOs. The bulk of this work is being done by volunteers and the work load is excessive with needs and requests are unable to be met. A national funding package over a five year period should be provided to MWOs engaged in this important community harmony work.

Media

- For some MWOs, assistance is required to establish and maintain more productive relations with the media.

C.2 Details of Selected Muslim Women's Organisations

The MWOs that were involved in this mapping exercise are as follows, in alphabetical order:

Islamic Women's Association of Queensland (IWAQ)

Islamic Women's Welfare Association Lakemba Sydney (IWWA)

Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria (IWWC)

Muslim Women's Association of South Australia (MWASA)

Muslim Women's Council of Victoria (MWCV)

Muslim Women's National Network of Australia (MWNNA)

Muslim Women's Support Centre WA (MWSC)

Muslim Women's Welfare Association of the ACT

Al Nisa Young Muslim Women's Group Queensland

United Muslim Women's Association Lakemba (MWA)

Information provided in this section of the report has been sourced from one to one interviews with the managers of the above listed MWO's and where available, the individual MWO web page. Details provided have been approved for publication.

Islamic Women's Association of Queensland Inc.

Contact details

Ms Gilila Abdelsalam,
IWAQ Director
P O Box 1909, Sunnybank Hills Qld 4109
Tel: 07 3272 6355 / 3272 6422
Fax: 07 3272 6155
Email : galila.a@iwaq.org.au

The Islamic Women's Association of Queensland (IWAQ) is the largest Muslim women's organisation in Queensland and has been active in advocating the rights of Muslim women. It currently has an ethnically diverse membership of over 280 families throughout Queensland. IWAQ caters for the needs of Muslim women and their families, encompassing welfare, cultural, social and religious issues.

The major work of the Association is the provision of aged care services to the Brisbane Muslims and the multicultural community. IWAQ is a registered aged care provider, supporting its aged community with personal care, home support etc. It is the only such aged care provider to offer such services to Muslims and multicultural clients in Australia. IWAQ runs the Salam Overnight Respite Cottage as well as offering Extended Aged Care at Home for clients with dementia (EACHD), Community Aged Care Packages (CACP) program, and Home and Community Care (HACC).

In addition the Association is involved in providing settlement services to newly arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants as well as a disability support program for post school students with intellectual disability.

Establishment date

1992

Membership numbers

280 families

Governance:

Director

Ms Galila Abdelsalam,

Legal/Charitable/ Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status

Registered as an incorporated body, DGR approved.

Background, skills and numbers of Governing Board

IWQA has 7 Board members with a range of ethnicities including Egyptian, Bosnian, Pakistani and Indian. Their professional backgrounds include community development, business, administration and public health.

Financial Management

By staff and independent accountant and overseen by the Management committee.

Financial Audit

Annual financial audit.

Annual Report

Yes

Funding

Federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) for settlement services, joint state and federal for HACC, State for disability services and Federal Department of Health and Ageing for aged care services.

Objectives

- To cater for the needs of women and their families;
- To encompass the welfare, cultural, social and religious needs of the community;
- To facilitate activities for women and their families to network in the community;
- To provide employment opportunities;
- To lead in participation with all levels of Government on the needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Muslim communities.

Human Resources

Staff/ positions/ roles

There are 14 paid mostly full-time workers

Coordinators for each project – (HACC, Disability, Aged Care)

Certificate 3 training in aged care also provided

The 14 positions include Director, Finance Administration, Front Desk, IWAQ Coordinator and 2 Settlement Officers, with the remaining 8 working in aged care.

Volunteers/ activities

The Management committee are volunteers and the Association does not have other volunteers.

Nature of Work

Target group

The target group is principally older persons of 21 nationalities with a focus on Muslims. The focus is Muslim aged care. A second target group is newly arrived Muslim migrants and refugees. The third target group is the Muslim women's community of Queensland, with IWAQ offering a range of support services, and the fourth target group is the non-Muslim community.

Type and details of services provided

Aged and community services

- Settlement Grants Program (SGP)
- National Carer Respite Program - Salam Overnight Respite Cottage
- Extended Aged Care at Home - Dementia (EACH-D)
- Community Aged Care Program (CACP)
- Home and Community Care (HACC)
- HACC Day Respite Care
- Disability Services

IWAQ is an aged care service provider, providing home and community care, community services, home care packages, overnight respite care and three days respite care. In total there are 60 packages and 40 people attend three day respite care services provided by Association.

The Association also runs the Respite Group which is an informal group of older Muslim women who meet weekly to form support networks, socialise and meet new people. The group activities include English conversation classes, basic computer skills and regular information sessions on topics such as discrimination, Centrelink, role of police etc.

Muslim community support

In addition IWAQ provides a range of social activities for Muslims, including bus trips, camps, dinners, BBQ's, fashion nights, interfaith forums, Carer forum dinners and training/information sessions.

Young Muslim women

The Association organises activities for young Muslim women, including a Muslim women's fun night focus. In 2006, some 700 people attended this event.

Interfaith

The Association is also involved in Interfaith dialogue and in 2006 organised a state wide Interfaith/Abrahamic Faith Forum.

Cross-Cultural Training

The Association provides cross-cultural training and information sessions to universities, schools, other non government organisations, the general public, all levels of government and the media, etc

Relationships with other service providers

Multicultural Communities Gold Coast (MCCGC) – aged care and network with community.

Multilink, ACCESS Inc and Logan Community Council – network and committee member in Logan Multicultural Specialist Advisory Group (LMSAG) – employment issues.

Other service providers, e.g. Spiritus, Transcultural Mental Health – for client services.

Community Relations:

Other Muslim women's organisations

There are no other Muslim women's group in Queensland, with the exception of the newly established Muslim women's youth group, Al Nisa, with whom they have a good working relationship.

Non Muslim women's organisations

The IWAQ has very good relations with Domestic violence centres, Migrant women's support services, Women's health centres and Access Inc (a multicultural organisation supporting settlement and employment).

Muslim community

The Queensland Muslim community is very supportive of the work of IWAQ but provides the organisation with no funds. The Association owns the existing premises and owns the overnight respite care centre.

Broader community

IWAQ has very good relations with the broader community and has partnerships with:

Logan Multicultural Specialist Advisory Group (LAMSAG)
Qld Trans-Cultural Mental Health Committee
Multilink
Ethnic Community Council of Logan
Multicultural Communities Council of the Gold Coast
Griffith University Multi-faith Centre.

Media

The Association tries to avoid contact with the media as they have had poor experiences in the past, but the association does have a designated media person.

Government Relations

Committees/ advisory bodies

Logan Multicultural Specialist Advisory Group (LAMSAG)
Qld Trans-Cultural Mental Health Committee

Work with young Muslim Women

The Association established Al Nisa, a Muslim youth organisation, but this is now working as a separate group outside the IWAQ.

There are five young women working for the Association in the office. From time to time they support young Muslim women. Many of the workers are young Muslim women and they organise around youth issues. The “fun” night was one such activity organised by and for young Muslim women.

The Association has a counsellor who works with young women and men to support their settlement in Australia and they also liaise with schools when problems arise.

Islamic Women's Welfare Association Sydney

Contact details

Ms Abla Kadous, President

4/180 Haldon St

Lakemba

Sydney 2195

02 9459 3009

iwwa1@bigpond.com

www.iwwa.org.au

IWWA is a non-profit organisation with over five hundred members from a number of different countries. The Association was established in 2000 to meet the Islamic needs of Muslim women from multicultural backgrounds within the Muslim community in Sydney, in general, and particularly in Canterbury / Bankstown local government areas.

The Association was founded to cater for the growing population of Muslim women in these areas, who are from various cultural backgrounds, and who are disadvantaged, due to the lack of social support networks, low socio-economic circumstances, as well as language and culture barriers which affect access to mainstream services.

Governance:

President

Abla Khadous

Executive Officer

Abla Kadous, President, plus a treasurer and secretary

Legal/Charitable/DGR status

Incorporated Charity, no DGR

Governing Board

9 members

Financial Management

By Treasurer and Board

Financial Audit

Annually to the Department of Fair Trading

Annual Report

Yes

Establishment date

2000

Membership numbers

500 members.

Funding

Grants

Have received a few small grants such as sports grant for teenagers which was used to organise Oztag; small equipment grant to help provide a safe and and enjoyable work environment for our volunteers.

Human Resources

Paid staff positions

One administrative staff person working four hours per day from donations.

Volunteers/ activities

Role to help with administration work and organisation of activities

One volunteer in the office and one on the work for unemployment benefits scheme

School work experience assistance (one or two per year)

Management committee (9)

Nature of Work

Target group

Muslim women of non-Arabic background including 37 different nationalities, in the Canterbury / Bankstown local government areas.

Scope of work

IWWA is committed to providing a service which supports the religious and emotional well-being of women, recognising the social, environmental, economic, physical and cultural factors which affect women's health.

Type and details of services provided

IWWA has set up women's support and counselling groups in order to cater for women's welfare needs. These support groups involve women who share a common problem or concern, for example, new mothers or women who are suffering illness. These groups provide meals, make occasional visits to hospitals and offer any other help, if needed.

Activities:

- The provision of religious instruction or courses in computer, cooking, flower arranging, Arabic language, first aid and whatever suits and benefits the women are organised;
- weekend activities for teenage girls ;
- fundraising dinners;
- women only dinners, at least times especially, but at other times;
- picnics for mothers and children during holidays;
- leadership training with the girls at the camps including sport, religious instruction, a day for pampering, such as hair and make up, manque massage, hand henna etc ('Day Spa') twice a year usually on a long weekend so that the providers can donate a day to the women;
- responds to inquiries such as about domestic violence etc, and refers women to the appropriate body, and, if some have financial problems, provides assistance;
- speakers from Gov bodies to explain issues in the society that can help Muslim women, such as Muslim lawyers to inform them about wills in Australia.

Relationship with service providers

Most of the time these providers are very helpful and understanding. The community wants confidentiality so individual service providers are helpful with this.

Community Relations:

With other Muslim Women's Organisations

The IWWA refers women to the MWA refuge as well as the Lebanese Association youth worker to help women with their male youth problems.

With Non-Muslim women's organisations / the Muslim community

There is not much contact with non-Muslim women's organisations due to work load. Volunteers used to go to schools and talk about comparative religion but lack of volunteers and the work load meant that this work could not be continued. Many women also have family who are not Muslim and they are invited to the Association's functions and social activities.

With the Muslim community

When there is a need the Association works closely with the Muslim community.

Media

This is reported as being one of the Association's most disappointing areas, as their experience with the media is very negative, because the media often report inaccurately what has been told. One female reporter with a history of writing negatively about Muslim women even posed as an Arabic language student.

Government Relations

Committees/ advisory bodies

Attend the local Council meetings but the Association is not on any State or local government Board officially.

The new rules relating to Centrelink have resulted in many women having to look for work, go to work or undertake study, resulting in a diminished pool of volunteers.

Funding

Fundraising dinners, stalls

Donations from some sisters

A small charge for the classes, but most are not working and can't afford to pay much for classes, so they just cover expenses.

Over the years, the management committee together with the volunteers have worked hard to raise funds, and IWWA's premises are now fully owned.

Focus on grants for teenage girls for recreational activities and gym for older women. Young women have not much to do and there are reasons why they can't go out, some have to help at home, some parents are over-protective, and so are happy if their girls are with the Association, then it can help take them out.

Work with young Muslim Women

Youth work

Camps for girls

Sporting activities

Gala dinners 3-4 times a year

Friday evening groups, both educational and social, and 25 or so attend

School holidays activities, including bowling, ice skating, swimming twice.

Art classes with around 20 to 25 participants

Many are from Arabic backgrounds but also Australian and other nationalities.

Arabic school on Saturday and Sunday up to year 10 and then girls can go on to do Arabic at school.

The Association used to have a bus to collect older women for lunches and talks, etc., but it became difficult to organise due to lack of volunteers. Initially a person was paid by a grant but when that was finished it was difficult to continue.

Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria Inc.

Contact details

Joumanah El Matrah
Executive Director
Level 1, 19 Arthurton Road
Northcote, VIC 3070
Tel: 03 9481 3000
Fax: 03 9481 3001
Email: reception@islamicwomenswelfare.org.au
<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~iwwcv/>

Islamic Women's Welfare Council (IWWC), established in 1991 is a community welfare organisation established and managed by Muslim women for Muslim women. The Council seeks to highlight welfare concerns of Muslim women, undertake political engagement, provide welfare services for Muslim women and seeks to empower Muslim women through capacity building training programs and other projects. The key to areas deemed essential to all group work training programs are leadership, relationship skills necessary to women's well-being, independence and self determination. Community projects vary considerably, and current projects focus on three issues currently impacting on women's status, which are violence, citizenship rights and media representation.

Governance

Executive Director
Joumanah El Matrah

Legal/Charitable/DGR status
Incorporated body with charitable and DGR status

Background, skills and numbers of Committee of Management
The Committee comprises up to 9 members from a range of ethnic backgrounds including South Asian, Turkish, Arabic, South East Asian and East African. The women represent different sects within Islam and have diverse skills, such as law, community development, engineering, academia and media.

Financial Management
Financial management is by the Committee of Management through the Board Treasurer, supported by the Executive Director, and the Council has an external accountant.

Financial Audit
There is an annual audit as well as external audit on specific grants.

Annual Report
Yes

Members
100

Human Resources

Staff/ positions/ roles

The Council has 8 paid positions. 1 of these is full time and 7 are part time. Of the part-time staff two of these work with the young women's program, one in the parenting program, one works with the citizenship and anti-violence legal literacy program, one with the leadership development program, one with the homework support group and two in management and administration. The staff is also very ethnically diverse as well as professionally diverse, with training in community development, youth work, gender studies, psychology and management. They are also religiously diverse, representing a variety of Islamic sects with a range of spoken languages and so are able to service a larger client base.

Volunteers/ activities

The committee of management are volunteers and other volunteers undertake specific task as and when required, depending on specific projects. At the moment the Council has one volunteer coming on a regular basis, helping mostly with research work. Also, the Council takes on social work and community development placement students.

Nature of Work

Target group

The key target group are Muslim women of Victoria and their families, young Muslim women, Muslim children, new arrivals and refugee Muslim women and the non-Muslim Australian community.

Scope and nature of work

The main purpose is to facilitate Muslim women's participation in Australian society with programs specific to Muslim women, including:

Skills development orientated to:

Capacity building

Promotion of Muslim women's rights to equality, justice and self determination and advocacy around these rights

Community education programs around citizenship and law

Parenting education programs

Relationship skills

Leadership skills

Settlement:

Settlement of newly arrived and refugee Muslim women in Victoria with DIAC grants
Providing casework on any of the issues these women face

Youth:

Leadership development programs
Young women's program facilitating communication and identity skills development

Research on specific issues relating to Muslim women:
Lobby and advocacy work with regard to poverty and housing/
domestic violence

Type and details of services provided

Providing generalist and housing support services
Providing settlement services for newly arrived and refugee Muslim women.

Education sessions on:

- Citizenship and Australian law
- Parenting
- Leadership development
- Communication skills for young women

Research into school retention rates among young Arab and Muslim women. Research into sexual and domestic violence. Research into the racial and religious vilification of women.

Lobbying and advocacy on behalf of Muslim women, including against racial, religious and gender based crimes and vilification against Muslim women.

Cross-cultural training for service providers, such as hospitals, schools, local councils and the police. This has included the development, production and distribution of printed material, including a media guide.

Relationship with service providers

The Council works with other service providers, especially those involved in settlement, housing, family support and domestic violence case work
They also provide secondary consultation to service providers that need information about the Muslim community such as:

- Migrant Resource Centres
- Royal Women's Hospital
- Victoria Police
- LaTrobe University
- Swinburne University
- Victorian Women's Legal Service

Young Women's Legal Service
Broadmeadows Legal Service
Women's Health West
Women's Health in the North
Several primary and secondary schools in Melbourne

Community Relations

With other Muslim women's organisations

The Council has relationships with various ethno-specific women's groups and has run various training programs for these women and provided some case work services to women attached to these groups.

The Council has formed alliances with Muslim Women's Organisations nationally such as the MWNNA, Muslim Women's Association of South Australia and the Muslim Women's Support Centre in Perth.

Non-Muslim women's organisations/ the Muslim community

The Council has a wide range of contacts with various non-Muslim women's organisations, mostly to do with service provision. These include:

Immigrant women's domestic violence service
Multicultural women's health centre
Women's health organisations in various sectors of Melbourne and community women's health centres
Various community legal services
Muslim liaison committee at the Royal Women's Hospital

The Muslim community

The Council has good relations with the Muslim community, as the client base is the Muslim community and the AGM has a very high attendance and interest from the community.

The broader community.

The Council works very extensively with the broader, mainstream services as much as it is able with the limited resources.

Media

In general the Council has good relations with the media. The Council produced and launched a manual on Islam in Australia in 2005 specifically designed for the media and this was well received. The Council has a designated media representative on the management committee.

Government Relations

Committees/ advisory bodies

- Project Respect Committee of Management
- Department of Justice, Multilingual Community Education Project Steering Committee
- Muslim Liaison Committee to the Royal Women's Hospital
- CMYI Statewide Multicultural Youth Issues Network
- CMYI Youth Policy Forum and Multicultural Sports Network
- AMES IHSS Consortium and Providers Roundtable
- AMES IHSS and SGP Settlement Services Forum Action Group
- Spectrum Intergenerational Parent Conflict Committee
- Primary Care Partnerships Vitamin D Deficiency Stakeholder Network
- Advisory Committee Human Rights Law Resource Centre
- Advisory Group: Centre for Australian African Women's Issues
- Advisory Committee Islamic Women's Health Promotion, Department of Human Services
- Project Member; Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service And Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, Engaging Multicultural and Faith Communities in Prevention of Violence against Women
- Project Member; CERES and AMES Catering social enterprise program
- Funding

Funds

Financial Year 2005-06

Income: \$454,000

Government Funds:

DIAC (settlement)
 FACS (SILC project)
 FACSIA (Cornerstones project)
 Attorney General's (Islam opposes violence against women project)
 Dept of Victorian Communities
 City of Yarra (handicraft skills)

Philanthropic Funds:

Invergowrie Foundation (homework projects)
 The Myer Foundation

The Council only accepts funds from the local community in the form of membership fees.

Work with young Muslim Women

All Council programs work with young women, however due to young women's vulnerability, the Council has a designated program specifically for

young women, which employs two part- time workers to focus specifically on working with young women in various contexts. Their work involves:

Supporting newly arrived young Muslim women in high schools.
Providing individual case-work referred either from the schools or the individual women themselves.
Homework support groups
Cross-cultural and religious sensitivity training for youth service organisations and schools, both public and private, in urban and rural Victoria, for students as well as for staff who work with young Muslims.
Bi-annual young Muslim conference from urban and rural areas, with over 100 young Muslim and non-Muslim women attending.
Regular newsletter for young Muslim women

Specific Needs

- Family violence
- Financial assistance (poverty alleviation)
- Family and relationships
- Mental health
- Legal
- Youth
- Accommodation
- Citizenship

Muslim Women's Association of South Australia Inc (MWASA)

Contact Details

Ms Dora Abbas, Acting Chairperson
Room 4, Ground floor
Torrens Building
Adelaide SA 5000
Tel/Fax: 08 8212 0800
E-mail: mwa222@hotmail.com

The Muslim Women's Association of South Australia (MWASA) is a welfare organisation that helps to settle new Muslim women refugees and migrants and provides support to help them integrate into the wider Australian community.

Established 14 years ago in 1993, the MWASA also undertakes social activities and aims to help Muslim women in South Australia by promoting their interests and supporting them and their families. The organisation also has an extensive program of cross-cultural education within the broader Australian community, working to promote relevant knowledge about Islam and understanding of different cultures, values and belief systems, to help to overcome prejudice and intolerance.

Governance

Acting Chairperson
Ms Dora Abbas,

Legal/Charitable/DGR status

The MWASA is incorporated and has charitable status but does not have DGR.

Skills and numbers of Governing Board

There are presently six members of the management committee with management, education, nursing and accounting skills. There is a wide ethnic range including Arab, Malaysian, Chinese, Afghani, Indian, English and Australian backgrounds.

Financial Management

The financial management of the organisation is undertaken by the management committee.

Financial Audit

There is an annual financial audit

Annual Report

The MWASA produces an annual report

Membership

About 300

Funding

Approximately 75 % of funding is provided principally from DIAC for settlement services to support newly arrived Muslim women. The Association also raises a small sum of money from donations with a membership fee of \$5.00 annually.

Human Resources

Paid staff positions

The organisation employs 4 part-time staff all working in community development. In total the Association has 52 hours (of paid time and volunteer workers, not including management) per week over the 4 part-time positions. One staff member is also a part time cross-cultural trainer and there are two part-time settlement workers. There is no paid administrator or paid manager. These administrative responsibilities are undertaken by the volunteer Management Committee.

Volunteers/ activities

For each program there are volunteers. In the past there were up to 60 volunteers but now there are up to 40.

Nature of Work

Target group

The target groups are new Muslim women arrivals including refugees and migrants as well as settled Muslim women, aged Muslim women and Muslim youth. The non-Muslim Australian community is also a target group.

The Association's present day target group are new arrivals, mainly Iraqis, Afghans, Uzbeks and Somalians, as well as Sudanese, Ethiopians and Eritreans. In all, some 40 ethnic groups are recipients of the Association's services. These include, among others, Afghans, Lebanese, Palestinians, Jordanians, Syrians, and Saudis as well as Iranians.

The clients and general women in the community who participate are from a wide range of ethnic groups, including Turkistani, Arab, Lebanese, Egyptian, Asian, Turkish and European.

Scope and nature of work

The work involves settlement services, information sessions, helping new arrivals to access education, health services etc. Parenting courses now are being targeted to the cultural needs of the arrivals, and, as many come from traumatic backgrounds, some mental health seminars are also provided. The

work also involves English language teaching, cross-cultural training, interfaith dialogue, support for Muslim women and for Muslim aged, education and Muslim youth mentoring.

Parenting Programs

The numbers attending vary but the parenting programs attract up to 70 persons. Usual sessions have about 20 or 30 participants, but for more sensitive issues, such as women's health, these are limited to smaller numbers.

Settlement Services

This involves direct case work with individuals and families that might involve counselling, linking to services or assistance with material support for settlement, as well as helping them to connect with the broader community. The average client load per week will vary, but in any one week the Association could have anything from ten to twenty individual cases. In total, the Association has about 300 or 400 one-to-one settlement support services per year.

Community Development Programs

The work of MWASA also involves English classes, as well as support for recreational activities and help with social needs and self-esteem. In addition, first aid classes, learning to drive and health seminars on relevant women's health issues are also offered. The Association has also organised yearly picnics with over 1,000 people, as well as bus trips for the elderly, mothers and daughters camps, and, previously youth camps, which are now organised and run by the youth themselves. The Association also produces a quarterly newsletter.

Cross-cultural and diversity training

The cross-cultural training involves volunteers speaking to education sector, service providers, the health sector, community groups and church groups about Muslims and their practices, to raise awareness and help the broader Australian community to relate to them in a more positive manner. In all, some 200 or more cross-cultural awareness sessions are undertaken annually to help promote harmony within the community. The bulk of this cross-cultural training is carried out by volunteers.

One key area of cross-cultural and diversity training is in the education sector, with the MWASA providing training for educators and students in schools. The Association also lends out a school resource kit suitable for primary and secondary students, which contains the following: prayer mats, prayer clothes, Quran, set of overheads, compass, laminated pictures, story books, head scarves and Eid cards. School visits to the mosque are organised, as are annual mosque open days.

The educational seminars provide staff and students with an insight into:

- an historical and demographic profile of Muslims in South Australia;
- beliefs and practices of Muslims - similarities and differences;
- the position of women in Islam and the Muslim world;
- challenging existing stereotypes.

The Muslim Women's Association also organises guided tours of Adelaide's mosques (mainly two) and produces information for distribution on mosques in South Australia, as well as fact sheets providing information about Muslims and their practices.

Relationship with service providers

The Association has an excellent relationship with a variety of service providers, including the Migrant Resource Centre, Equal Opportunity Commission, Women's support services, other service providers, as well as the job providers.

Community Relations

Other Muslim women's organisations

The MWASA is the only Muslim women's organisation in South Australia and they work with all religious trends and ethnic groups. At the national level they are members of the Muslim Women's National Network and the Muslim Women's Association of NSW, as well as the Muslim Women's Association and the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Vic.

Non-Muslim women's' organisations

The MWASA has very good excellent relationship with other local women's organisations such as the Lebanese Women's Association, the Women's Information Service, The Vietnamese Women's Association, Women's groups associated with the Unions, the Women's information switchboard and advisory women's bodies at the State level.

MWASA also shares information and has shared programs with a number of service providers. MWASA interacts with the Migrant Resource Centre, Australian Refugee Association, Middle Eastern Community Council, and various church groups, women's groups, Multicultural SA Advisory Council, Centrelink, hospitals, community centres, schools and police, as well as the prisons.

Muslim community

The Association is very well accepted for the work that they do with new arrivals as well as all the work that they did after September 11th. They are also greatly respected for the long-standing work they have been doing for Muslim women in South Australia.

Broader community

Extensive cross-cultural training is done with a broad range of community groups, health and education sectors, police, churches and non-government agencies. The Association also works with some with Rotary clubs as well as the broader business community, undertaking cross-cultural training.

Media

The Association's relationship with the media is not well developed and they hold the view that the media often misrepresent their interviews, at times seriously so, to the point that the Association now has some reluctance in talking with the media. The SA Equal Opportunities Commission set up a meeting with the editor of the Advertiser to raise awareness of the women's concerns about Muslim women's media representation.

Government Relations

Committees/ advisory bodies

The MWASA is a member of the women's advisory body of Multicultural SA, and has been asked to be on the Multifaith Committee and Migrant Resource Centre Board. There is a need expressed to work more closely with the Government and the Association is working together with other Muslim groups to have a state-wide Muslim group that will represent South Australian Muslims.

Work with young Muslim Women

In an individual capacity, members of the MWASA have undertaken Muslim women's study groups and they also work with the young volunteers and support the youth workers who are employed in the Association. The Association also supports young Muslim women through leadership training and it has helped to establish youth organisations such as Youthemerged.

Youthemerged

Youthemerged is a small youth organisation and, although incorporated, a registered charity and active in fundraising, it has not, to date, despite several

attempts, received Government funds for youth projects. They run very successful youth camps that are designed to empower Muslim youth and improve their self-esteem. In all, the group has had four camps attracting between 80 to 100 youth to each. The duration of each camp is from four or five nights and six days.

In addition they are involved in Clean Up Australia Day, and are planning to do a tree planting exercise with another Muslim youth organisation. According to Youthemerged representatives, Muslim youth in South Australia are very disconnected from the community. The generation of youth that have attended the Islamic College have been raised with Muslims, but other young Muslims, because of the scattered nature of the community in Adelaide, have had limited contact with the wider Adelaide Muslim community, unless their families have encouraged it.

Youthemerged and other youth committees are gender mixed and generally engage in social activities such as barbeques and film nights, as well as religious study groups and organising seminars and talks that involve religious speakers from Sydney and Melbourne. They also arrange various enrichment programs, including discussions with young married couples on issues such as how to cope with married life, parenting, how to be a better person and a better citizen, etc.

In May 2007, these groups, as well as the Association, working with IWWC Victoria, were involved in the Muslim women's Fashion Show for service providers, teachers etc.

Work with non-Muslim youth groups

To date there has been no such interaction apart from some youth interfaith dialogues, but there is a possibility of contact with groups such as Christian Youth and with other groups who are working with disadvantaged youth.

Summary of Identified needs.

The key area of need is funds for administrative support to undertake the range of services, cross-cultural training, community liaison and Muslim youth leadership programs that the Association undertakes.

The Association undertakes considerable cross-cultural training with an exceptional number of hours being given voluntarily. As with all community sectors, the number of volunteers is diminishing. This cross-cultural work is a significant point of participation within the broader Australian community and is a major factor in helping to promote community harmony. Lack of funding for this key activity is seriously hampering the ongoing development of this significant aspect of the work of this and other Muslim women's Associations.

There is a significant need to develop relations with media, government, the business sector as well as non-Muslim women's and non-Muslim youth groups.

Muslim Women's Council of Victoria Inc.

Contact Details

Ms Asfhan Ecrahain
Executive Officer
Level 1 No 247 Flinders Lane
Melbourne 3000
Phone: 03 9654 4683
igwg@bigpond.com.au

The Muslim Women's Council of Victoria was previously the Islamic Girls' Group. It was established in 1998 and incorporated in 2002. The Council undertakes various educational activities, provides support and assertiveness training to Muslim and non-Muslim women from the Horn of Africa and supports Muslim women and children in the lower-socio economic areas of Melbourne and undertakes recreational activities with young Muslim women.

Governance:

Executive Officer
Asfhan Ecrahain

Legal/Charitable/DGR status
Incorporated but does not have DGR

Background, skills and numbers of Governing Board
There is a Management committee of 6 with a range of skills including: teaching, accounting, social work, finance, migration law and a university student. The Board represents a number of ethnic groups.

Financial Management
The Community Development Officer has a finance background and is supported by the Treasurer and the accountant.

Financial Audit
Annually

Annual Report

Membership numbers
70.

2007-08 Funding Sources
Victorian Multicultural Commission
Myer Foundation: to set up office and some capital costs.

Total \$ 90,000

Human Resources

Staff/ positions/ roles

Executive Officer Asfhan Ecrahain 19 hrs per week

Community Development Officer Farida Tijani: 25 hrs per week

There are six key portfolio areas within the Council. These include are fundraising, education, legal services and media. These activities are shared between the EO and the CDO.

Volunteers/ activities

There is a core number of 8 volunteers plus the executive committee members as well as others that the organisation is able to call on.

Nature of Work

Target group

The key target group are Muslim women and girls and women from the Horn of Africa located in the lower socio-economic areas in the western, northern and south eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

Scope and nature of work

The work involves a range of activities including:

- Health education

- Cross-cultural education in schools

- Legal service with free advice to community relating to human rights and citizen's rights for lower socio-economic groups

- Recreational activities for young women including the establishment of the Muslim women's soccer team

- Interfaith work with young Muslims and youth of other faiths

- Web site development

- Newsletter to members and IWC

- Work with the Horn of Africa group in assertiveness training

- Older women's walking group

Cross-cultural training

The Council undertakes various programs of cross-cultural work especially with public and private schools during Harmony Week. But overall there are not enough human resources yet to respond to requests.

Work with young Muslim Women

The Council is presently revising how to work with Muslim girls as the youth group is not functioning, but they are in the process of re-establishing this.

Work with younger women involves mainly recreational activities, including a Muslim women's soccer team in Reservoir, assertiveness training with young women from the Horn of Africa and after school tutoring in housing commission areas.

Community Relations:

Other Muslim women's organisations

Mostly the Council works autonomously to date but they are trying to build networks and relationships, especially with the Islamic Women's Welfare Council.

Non-Muslim women's organisations/ the Muslim community

Not yet

Once the English classes are established and the women gain more confidence in their language skills they will seek out non-Muslim women's organisations.

The Muslim community

The Council has contact with the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) and the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) as well as with some Islamic businesses through which they advertise and receive some donations.

The broader community.

The council has a good relationship with Victoria University and various Migrant Resource Centres. They also have a stall at the Royal Women's Hospital and have well established and good relationships with the Victorian police. The Council also has contact with other non-Muslim community organisations in relation to specific events, but these are minor relationships and are on a needs basis.

Media

There are not strong ties with the media as yet but the Council is working on this issue.

Representation on Government/non-government committees and advisory bodies

To date the Council is not represented on any Government or non-government committees or advisory bodies.

Muslim Women's National Network of Australia (MWNNA)

Contact details

President Mrs Aziza Abdel Halim AM
Executive Officer
PO Box 213 Granville NSW 2148
Email: info@mwnna.org.au
Telephone: + 61 2 96396394
www.mwnna.org.au

Established in 1990 the Muslim Women's National Network of Australia is a multicultural Muslim Women's Organisation that represents a network of Muslim women's organisations and individuals throughout Australia. Individual members include lawyers, corporate managers, journalists, teachers, university students and home managers. Membership is drawn from a broad mix of ethnic backgrounds from the Middle East, South East Asia, the Pacific Islands, Africa, Europe and America as well as Australian born.

The MWNNA's objectives are as follows:

- The education of Muslim women and girls, to know and appreciate their Islamic rights and duties;
- Advocacy with government and non-government institutions on behalf of Muslims, especially women and children;
- Maintaining good relations with Australians of other faiths and joining with them in interfaith meetings and events;
- Assisting refugees and others in need of help in the society.

Governance:

Executive Officer

President Mrs Aziza Abdel Halim AM

Legal/Charitable/DGR status

Incorporated only.

Background, skills and numbers of Governing Board

The multi-ethnic management committee comprises 4 members, the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. The committee members are of Fijian, Egyptian, Lebanese and Anglo-Australian heritage and their professional backgrounds include an academic, journalist, retired school teacher and community leader and an accountant.

Financial Management

Financial management is by the Management Committee

Financial Audit

Yes

Annual Report
Yes

Membership numbers

There are 7 Muslim women's organisations that are affiliated to the MWNNA with a combined membership of around 2,000, plus 50 individual members.

Funding

Funds are received from membership fees, donations and funds from the Government for specific projects. In the 2005- 2006 financial year, the MWNNA received \$ 9,600 from DIAC for a series of Bridge Building projects. There are insufficient funds for paid staff outside specific project monies.

Human Resources

Paid staff

There is no paid staff.

Volunteers/ activities

In 2007 the Board of four people were all volunteers with the Treasurer and President being the main volunteers. Over the years there have been many volunteers at different stages.

Nature of the work

Target group

Muslim women across Australia

Scope and nature of work

Mostly education, advocacy and linking with the non-Muslim organisations, as well as providing advice to government re policy development on matters relating to Muslim women, through the Federal Government's Office for Women and the now disbanded Muslim Community Reference Group.

Specifically the MWNNA undertakes:

Networking between Muslim women of all ethnic groups throughout Australia;

Represents the views of Muslim women to Federal, State and Local Government and to government agencies throughout Australia;

Helps to bridge the cultural gap between Muslim and non-Muslim communities and between communities and government agencies;

Holds information workshops and seminars to inform Muslims and non-Muslims about religious and cultural issues which affect Muslim women in Australia;

Hosts local and overseas speakers to advise and inform participants about the Islamic view on topical issues;

Provides educational advice to Islamic and non-Islamic schools and educational institutions;

Sponsors English language classes for Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) Muslim women in conjunction with TAFE Outreach;

Provides speakers on Islamic issues to interested groups and organisations;

Engages in Interfaith activities, working with the Uniting Church and Roman Catholic Church to explore common issues;

Supports research on Muslim minority communities;

Provides culturally appropriate counselling in cases of family breakdown;

Contributes to Australian media on Islamic issues;

Produces a quarterly newsletter of local Muslim news and issues of importance to Muslim women;

Undertakes prison and hospital visits.

Type and details of services provided

The MWNNA does not provide direct services to Muslim women in Australia.

Work with young Muslim Women

There is no formal program; however, in 2007 the MWNNA supported a two day SILC project with the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria, to undertake a project in NSW with young women.

Relationship with service providers

Not relevant.

Community Relations

With other Muslim Women's Organisations

Nationally the MWNNA has bi-annual contact with its 7 state based Muslim Women's organisation affiliates. Regionally, the MWNNA is affiliated with the Regional Islamic *Dawah* Council of South East Asia, who fund the MWNNA's conference every second year. They also belong to the Muslim Women's Movement of South East Asia and the Pacific. The network also has contact with Bosnian and Pakistani Muslim women's groups.

There is an annual NSW meeting of Muslim Women's organisations and the MWNNA attends this meeting.

With non-Muslim women's organisations

The MWNNA is a member of the Australian Women's Coalition, one of the national Women's Secretariats funded by the Federal Government's Office for Women, a member of Pan Pacific Women (PPSEAWA) and a member of the Women's Interfaith Network (WIN). They have good relations with Girl Guides and with Jewish women's organisations including the Jewish Women's Council. They also work with Unifem and have had some contact with Zonta.

With the Muslim community

The President is the Deputy Chair of the Regional Islamic *Dawah* Council of South East Asia and the Pacific Muslim Women's movement.

With the broader community.

The MWNNA has contact with the Girl Guides and with a range of religious and women's organisations. They also have good contact with Catholic and Jewish religious structures and developing relations with the Uniting Church.

Media

The President has regular contact with the media, especially The Australian Newspaper, SBS and ABC TV and radio and the Secretary also undertakes numerous media tasks.

Government Relations

Committees/ advisory bodies

Muslim Community Reference Group 2005-6

Funding

2005- 2006 Financial Year

The MWNNA received \$ 9,600 from DIAC for a series of Bridge Building projects that included:

The production of a video, "Under One Sky", seeking to build relationships between Muslim and Jewish women.

A meeting with 100 women from the National Council of Women for an information and exchange session about Islam.

A Seminar on "Violence against women" at Auburn Town Hall

Lunch seminar with 60-70 members of the North Sydney Writers' Group.

Funds were also received to conduct research on women's use of mosques in NSW.

Current funding has been received for printing and national distribution of the 'Did You Know?' book. This book aims to address the misinterpretation and misapplication of Islam as it affects the role, position and rights of Australian Muslim women and the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims. The book will be distributed widely across Australia through schools, universities, public libraries, migrant resource centres, government departments and federal, state and local politicians.

Specific Needs

The key problem the MWNNA faces is the lack of funds for long term development. They are not a service organisation and as a consequence lack funds for infrastructure and organisational expansion and development.

Summary of Identified needs.

The key area of need is funds for administrative support to undertake the range of services, cross- cultural training, community liaison and Muslim youth leadership programs that the Association is engaged in.

Muslim Women's Support Centre WA (Inc)

Contact Details

Ms Wajma Padshah
Settlement Program Manager and Welfare Coordinator
Phone: 08 9451 5696 Fax: 08 9451 3483
Postal Address: P.O. Box 1398 East Vic Park 6981
Email: info@mwsc.com.au
www.mwsc.com.au

Founded in 1987 and incorporated in 1992, MWSC WA (Inc) is a specialised agency working with the Muslim community, to promote better health, self-esteem, personal and spiritual growth as well as the general wellbeing of Muslim women and their families. MWSC also works in cooperation with other service providers, to promote positive relationships and understanding.

Governance

Legal/Charitable Status

The MWSC WA is an incorporated, not-for-profit body without DGR status and is not a registered charity.

Governing Board

There is no executive officer but the management committee comprises nine members including a President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. The committee, all Muslim, is ethnically mixed. The background of the committee includes professional nurses, academics doing PhD's and housewives.

Financial Management

The financial management of the MWSC WA is undertaken by the Management Committee and the Treasurer.

Financial Audit

The organisation has an external audit annually.

Annual Report

The MWSC WA produces no annual report.

Members

114 members (varies)

Human Resources

Paid Staff

The MWSC WA employs 6 part time staff. The staff are also of various ethnic

origins and includes Muslims as well as non-Muslims. The organisation employs two settlement officers, one for four days a week and one for three days. The administrative officer is employed for two days per week. All these positions are fully funded by DIAC. A Parenting Development Officer is employed for two days and her position is funded by the WA Department for Communities.

Volunteers

There are 25 to 30 registered volunteers but only 5 to 10 are active. The organisation's regular volunteers provide support from a couple of hours to a day per week. Total volunteer hours per week are approximately 2-3 hours. In addition, the management committee members contribute many volunteer hours, approximately 10-15 per week.

The types of activities supported by volunteers include the following:

- English conversation classes;
- Assistance with administration;
- Assistance with social support for clients;
- Transportation of clients;
- Assistance with events; Fundraising; Cross-cultural training.

Nature and scope of work

Target group

The target groups of MWSC WA are Muslim women, youth and their families. Another target group is the broader Australian community through cross-cultural training.

Scope and nature of work

The scope and nature of the work includes information, referral, advocacy and support, with the client base for settlement services being principally Afghan, Somali and Arabic speakers. MWSC also provides support for women experiencing family and relationship difficulties and works with other specialised agencies to meet their needs.

Settlement Services

Funded by DIAC, this program provides free and general settlement support, information, referral and advocacy, to best serve the needs of newly arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants. This service also includes group work and activities such as information sessions, English conversation classes etc.

Parenting Information and Support

Funded through the WA Office of Multicultural Interest's Community Relations Integration Office project, this program aims to assist mothers in furthering their parenting skills and enhancing their overall wellbeing.

Emergency Relief

Providing material support to families in financial crisis.

Volunteer Program

The volunteering program recruits interested individuals and supports them to develop skills in order to assist families and individuals in need.

Playgroup (AnNur Playgroup)

Conducted weekly from Langford, the playgroup is for mothers with children five years and under.

Youth Activities

A range of activities and events for young Muslim women, including the 'Annual All Girls Formal', and annual 'All Girls Camp'.

Tarbiyyah Program for Youth and Students

This program includes *Qur'an* reading, memorisation, explanation (*Tafseer*); and the biography of Prophet Muhammad.

Islamic Education and Life skills Education for Women

This program is conducted monthly by qualified facilitators.

Police Outreach Program

Qualified Police Officers provide direct services to clientele in a more comfortable, less intimidating environment each month.

DoCEP Outreach Program

A qualified Education Officer from the Labour Division provides information each week on employment rights and entitlements, as well as assisting those who may be experiencing problems in their current workplace.

Carers Support Group

Facilitated support group aims to provide an avenue for social support for family carers each month.

Cross-Cultural Training

The MWSC WA also undertakes extensive cross-cultural training with a number of government services, departments and with community groups. The MWSC is also involved in training health providers including nurses at the

children's and women's hospitals in Perth. To date no work has been done with General Practitioners.

Interfaith work

The MWSC WA participates in community interfaith activities, but with limited resources, is concentrating on facilitating Muslims and non-Muslims to meet in various social settings.

Specific Programs for Young Muslim women

A Youth sub-committee organises mosque tours and other interfaith activities but is also focusing on bringing Muslim and non-Muslim youth together in social activities. One example is the Annual All Ladies Formal, involving Muslim and non-Muslim girls, where both are able to celebrate, dance and socialise without the hijab, giving the non-Muslim girls an insight into one aspect of the lives of young Muslim women.

Relationship with Government and service providers

The MWSC WA has a good relationship with its relevant service providers as well as the relevant state and federal governments and the non-government sector.

Funding

Core funding for community settlement services for Muslim women is provided from DIAC. This also includes some funding for networking, which includes cross-cultural training. Other funding sources include, in Western Australia, the Office for Women's Policy, Office for Multicultural Interests, and Carers WA (NGO). MWSC WA has also received funding from the Muslim Community Cooperative (Australia) Ltd, a not-for-profit Muslim community organization.

Community Relations:

The MWSC WA has considerable contact with non-Muslim organisations especially those providing welfare services, where they collaborate on projects, service delivery, work program projects and information sessions, including some non-Muslim women's organisations. They have also collaborated with Centrecare on a youth camp for new arrivals and collaborate with the Gowrie Community Services Centre, ASeTTS (the WA Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors) and Communicare to provide various activities and information sessions for refugee and humanitarian entrants.

The Muslim community

The MWSC WA has contact with Daral-Shifaah, which is a Muslim organisation that undertakes leadership training, research and parenting courses, but they do not meet regularly and have not yet collaborated on

specific projects.

They also have contact with Islam Australia, Da'wah Association of WA, the Australian Islamic College and other Muslim schools in WA. As part of the MWSC's objectives, they seek to promote cooperation between associations promoting similar objectives to theirs and are open to working with and collaborating with associations, whether they are Muslim or non-Muslim, that share a similar ethos.

The broader community.

The MWSC WA receives referrals from many community and church groups and conducts discussions and participates in various church and community activities such as the annual Pancake Day, Clean Up Australia Day etc. They also get invitations from schools to participate if they are having a multicultural day or fete.

The MWSC also works with the Young Business Women of WA but have not yet developed a relationship with the local Business Councils and are beginning to work with Rotary. Recently the organisation has begun work with the Ethnic Disabilities Advocacy Centre to assist Muslim carers.

Media

Has contact with local newspapers and has promoted the Quit Project through them. MWSC WA has also been invited by talk back radio to comment on various issues pertaining to Muslim women.

Positions held on Government or Non Government committees or advisory bodies

Domestic violence stakeholder committee (Department for Communities)

Specific needs

Crisis accommodation for Muslim women.

Additional funds for cross-cultural training
A Centre to group together all activities and programs.

Muslim Women's Welfare Association of the ACT

PO Box 39, Mawson ACT 2606

Contact details

Kerri Hashimi

Kerri [hashmi@optusnet.com.au](mailto:kerrihashmi@optusnet.com.au)

Tel: (02) 6231 4800

Or

Zuraida Shelmerdine

zuraidashelm@gmail.com

Tel: (02) 62910080 – after 6 pm

Mob: 0424 288 722

Establishment date

1993

Membership numbers

A network of around 100.

Funding

Very little. 2006 Women's grant from ACT Chief Minister's Dept to help women learn to drive. Some women, especially new arrivals, are isolated at home and have few people to help them to drive. The grant has helped 10 women to drive and get their licences, with the program being judged as being very successful.

Governance:

President

Zahara Sanusi

Legal/Charitable/DGR status

Incorporated until Nov 2007

Background, skills and numbers of Governing Board

4 executive and 6 committee members

Diverse ethnic group with Australian, Bangladeshi, Vietnamese, Egyptian, Indonesian, Malaysian, Fijian, Somalian and Indian members, mostly professional people or retired professional people, public servants, community worker, and housewives.

Financial Management

Voluntary Treasurer

Financial Audit

Annually

Annual Report

No annual report

Human Resources

Staff/ positions/ roles

No staff employed and no intention to do so as yet.

Volunteers/ activities

All Board members and committee members are volunteers
Approximately two hours a week, to around 25 or more functions per year.

Nature of Work

Target group

Muslim women (2007- approximately 2,000 in the ACT) and the broader community

Scope and nature of work

To support Muslim women;

To build bridges between Muslim and non Muslim women with social events and interfaith activities;

To provide cross-cultural talks and training involving public speaking on Islam at schools, churches, Rotary, old peoples homes, to local country town community health workers;

Assisting families with Muslim women's funerals.

Type and details of services provided

No specific services provided outside cross-cultural training and getting Muslim women in touch with each through friendship groups, during the month of Ramadhan for recitation of the Quran, and at feast times such as Eid gatherings.

Newsletter

Intermittently, 3 or 4 per year. Covers local issues in the community and is sent out by email.

Fundraising

Dinners usually for a specific fundraising purpose.

Relationship with service providers

Not relevant.

Community Relations:

With other Muslim women's organisations

No other Muslim women's organisation in the ACT

Non-Muslim women's organisations

CWA

The Muslim community

The MWWA ACT is independent and talks with all groups.

The broader community.

Migrant Resource Centre, schools, churches and co-operates with the Canberra Islamic Centre in various functions.

Media

No real profile, and don't do media work. Concerned that the media generally get things wrong and so the organisation keeps a low profile.

Government Relations

Committees/ advisory bodies

ACT Muslim Advisory Council

Work with young Muslim Women

We help publicise and support the playgroup for young Muslim mothers.

Needs:

There is a need for a Muslim women's organisation and for a full time community worker to work especially with isolated women and newly arrived women who can't drive and find it difficult to get out.

Need to work more actively with the media.

Human resources with applying for and managing grants.

Al Nisa Young Muslim Women's Group, Queensland

Contact details:

Contact Person:

Aliyah Deen

PO Box 1586

Sunnybank Hills,

QLD 4109

Phone: 0421 890 838 – 0418 813 732 is the current number

Email: thesecretary@alnisagroup.com.au .

www.alnisagroup.com.au

Al-Nisa was established in July 2005 to act as an advocacy body and to provide young Muslim women in Queensland with support and opportunities to express themselves.

Objectives:

The objectives of Al-Nisa are to:

- build leadership capability within the youth of the Muslim community and in particular young women;
- advocate on behalf of Muslim young women;
- promote a positive image of Islam and Muslim women and youth;
- provide social, sporting and recreational activities to young Muslim women;
- encourage young Muslim women to learn more about their religion;
- unite young Muslim women under a one banner;

Governance:

Executive Officer:

The organisation does not have a CEO - but the youth workers act as spokespersons and their work program is managed by a volunteer in collaboration with the management committee

Legal/Charitable/DGR status

Incorporated, registered charity, no DGR

Background, skills and numbers of Governing Board

The Board comprises 7 elected youth between 18 and 25 plus 4 older non-elected advisers. The background of the management committee includes university students, office administration, and youth workers.

Financial Management

The elected treasurer, advised by an older financial adviser and under the control of the Board, undertakes financial management.

Financial Audit

There is an annual financial audit and all government grants are independently audited.

Annual Report

Yes

Members

There is a membership base of around 40

Funding

2006-07 - total grants \$133,000

Human Resources

Staff/ positions/ roles

There are two full time and 3 part time staff and two casual staff and all are paid. The youth workers, one male and one female, are full time on a 2 year contract that expires in 2009. The part time and casual staff are on contracts expiring in the first quarter of 2008. There is also a part-time research position.

Volunteers/ activities

Volunteering is done mostly by the management committee. There is not a large pool of volunteers.

Nature of Work

Target group

Muslim youth, principally young women 16 and over, but in 2007 this target group has been expanded to involve young Muslim males as well.

Scope and nature of work

Research work;

Youth work that includes: youth services such as youth referrals, information, interfaith, networking;

Social and recreational activities such as the "Girls Day Out";

Education - at this stage, mainly training programs for management committees through grants funding;

Cross-cultural training focusing mainly on interfaith work, but no formal cross-cultural training program has yet been developed and delivered.

Type and details of services provided

- youth services;
- advocacy through representing Muslim youth at the State and Federal government level and speaking to social and political groups;
- educational nights including religious educational seminars that address contemporary issues; (not currently happening)
- building leadership through contributing to the planning and implementation of activities such as social events like the Girls Day Out and movie nights, recreational activities such as girl camps, sport days and sports such as soccer, volleyball and basketball etc;
- research on Islamic Civilization and information on the contribution of Islam to humanity in areas such as medicine, maths, science, astrology and a range of other disciplines, to be exhibited in public spaces such as libraries and schools and in regional areas;
- building positive relations between the Australian Muslim communities and the Queensland Police Service (QPS) Senior Women, with research aimed at providing information, developing resources and strategies and identifying communication procedures to improve relations between the Muslim community, and, in particular, QPS senior women.

Community Relations:

With other Muslim women's organisations

There are no regular meetings with other Muslim women's organisations but Al Nisa has formed a loose alliance with "My Unity", a Muslim youth group of the Islamic Federation of Australia, and with the Muslim Youth Associations within the Universities. They have also been involved in joint Iftar during Ramadan with IFA and IWAQ.

Non-Muslim women's organisations/ the Muslim community

None at this stage, as they were only incorporated in 2005

The Muslim community

Islamic Women's Association of Queensland gave birth to Al Nisa but the IWAQ's target group is now different, as they are focusing on aged care.

The broader community.

No relationships at this stage as an organisation, but at the individual level, for example, one of the members works with the Lions Club, another works on human rights issues etc.

Media

The group put out a media release with the launching of the research project funded by DIAC and continued to inform the local media (community media) of their various functions.

Government Relations

Committees/ advisory bodies

The group has been represented on:

- The Muslim Community Reference Group in Qld
- The Queensland Senior Police Women's Syndicate, for the duration of the research project with the police

Funding has been received for:

Research grant – from Multicultural Affairs Queensland

Salary for police liaison worker- from Queensland Police Senior Women's Syndicate and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship Grant. This is a research grant from DIAC to conduct a research project on relations with the Muslim community and Police in Qld. The Police Senior Women's Syndicate is a partner in the research process.

Information program for management committee- from Qld Government - Multicultural Affairs Qld. This is a training program on the roles and responsibilities of Management committees

Research into Islamic Civilization – from Federal Government through DIAC and from Multicultural Affairs Qld.

Issues facing young Muslim youth - Federal Government DIAC funding to conduct a Summit to identify issues facing young Muslim youth

The local business community gave a small amount of establishment funding but no other funds are collected from the community.

The organisation was registered in February 2006 and had an income of \$1000 establishment funding.

In 2006-07 the total grants money received was \$133,000

Work with young Muslim women

The principal aim of the organisation is working with young Muslim women. But has also start working with young Muslim men and a male youth worker has been employed.

MY Services (Muslim Youth Services)

A small organisation formed by Al-nisa, has been established to work principally with young Muslim youth. Supported by a full time male and female community development workers, MY Services aims to:

- build leadership capability within the youth of the Muslim community and advocate on their behalf;
- unite young Muslims and to build bridges of understanding and engagement amongst their different groups and with the broader community.

Contact Details:

Male: Taufan Maward

Phone: 0431 252 026

Email: taufan@myservices.net.au

www.myservices.net.au

Female: Shaima Khan:

Email: shaimak@myservices.net.au

Phone: 0402 529 395

The group will support Muslim young people by:

- identifying needs and promoting appropriate strategies to address them;
- providing information on youth related issues, advice and referral;
- providing individual and group support and advocacy;
- undertaking community development work;
- networking with service providers to highlight the needs of young Muslim people;
- providing education about young Muslims to service providers and the broader community.

Needs

At the organisation level

Developing the capacity of the people involved in the organisation both as workers (youth workers) and as volunteers, including the management committee, in areas such as governance, conflict resolution, networking and service delivery

At a youth level

Knowledge about how to access services, interaction with the mainstream community, access to culturally and religiously relevant services including

sporting venues; having a voice at the community level; addressing issues of identity, mentoring, and role models within the community

At a community level

Understanding the needs of young people and the issues they face living as a minority, and engaging young people.

Generally the organisation needs funding to employ a part-time manager and an administrator to enable it to continue to grow, as its current rapid growth is reliant on volunteer individuals with relevant knowledge of the system.

United Muslim Women's Association (MWA)

Contact details

Ms Maha Karyem Abdo, Manager
47 Wangee Rd
Lakemba, NSW, 2195, Australia.
Phone: (02) 9750 6916
Fax: (02) 9750 7913
Post: P O Box 264 Lakemba NSW 2195
Email: info@mwa.org.au
Web site: mwa.org.au

The United Muslim Women's Association is a community-based organisation, located in Lakemba in Sydney's western suburbs. Established in 1983, the MWA specialises in the delivery of services to Muslim women and their families in NSW. It is the largest and most active Muslim women's organisation in Sydney and represents a wide range of ethnicities.

The Association provides settlement support services and promotes Muslim women's participation and involvement in Australia's culturally and religiously diverse society. The Association also manages two women's refuges, one in Lakemba established in 1986 and more recently another set up in Bankstown. Specific services include women's refuges, settlement services, community education and development, advocacy, counselling, information and referrals and religious and social activities, youth leadership and a wide ranging program of cross-cultural training.

Governance:

Executive Officer

The MWA executive officer is Mrs Maha Karyem Abdo

Legal/Charitable/DGR status

The MWA is an incorporated body but is not registered for DGR (tax deductibility) status

Background, skills and numbers of Governing Board

The Association has 11 elected Board members with a range of medical, legal, and social skills. The ethnicity of the Board Australian, Lebanese, Turkish, Bosnian, Indonesian, Palestinian and Banghali.

Financial Management

Undertaken by the manager, the Board Treasurer, a book-keeper and an accountant.

Financial Audit

The MWA undertakes an annual financial audit

Annual Report

The organisation produces an annual report

Membership

There are approximately 3,000 members and up to 800 financial members around Australia, but most members are located in NSW.

2005-06 Funding Sources

Government

DIAC for direct settlement services for new arrivals. Funds one position
Dept of Education for Arabic school
DOCS- SAAP women's refuge in Lakemba and Bankstown
Local Bankstown and Canterbury Council funds for harmony projects
and an International Women's Day project.

Fundraising

2008 is the 25th anniversary of the MWA, events on the theme of leadership in the past, present and future will be celebrated via many events organised for late 2008 and early 2009.

Donations

Local women also give donations to support the work of the organisation.

Funds in 2006-07

Approximately \$ 900,000

Vision and Objectives

The vision of the MWA is:

To provide Australian Muslim women with opportunities to enable them to actively participate in and contribute to Australia's culturally and religiously diverse society.

The objectives of the MWA are:

To improve the level of access and equity, and participation of Muslim women in all facets of Australian life.

To identify and respond to issues of concern preventing Muslim women's participation.

To improve the quality of service provision.

To provide information, education and training on Islamic practices and beliefs with a view to correcting misinformation and misconceptions about Muslim women.

To provide Australian Muslim women with opportunities to enable them to actively participate in and contribute to Australia's culturally and religiously diverse society.

To highlight a positive image of Muslim women in all aspects of life

To promote greater dialogue, social harmony and community relations with Australia's culturally and religiously diverse society

The MWA aims to achieve these objectives by:

Working in partnership with all groups and service providers, through interactive liaison with their management, staff, volunteers and relevant stakeholders and groups.

In addition, the MWA aims to promote greater dialogue, social harmony and good community relations with Australia's culturally and religiously diverse society by:

Promoting sustainable outcomes through self-sufficiency, initiatives and income generating ventures;

Continuously improving the quality and range of services;

Responding to identified and emerging needs of its diverse clients;

Highlighting a positive image of Muslim women in all aspects of life;

Increasing opportunities that encourage greater involvement and participation;

Increasing knowledge and skills of Muslim women to enable them to achieve their full potential as individuals and as members of society;

Ensuring that the principles of social justice, access and equity and other government initiatives and programs reflect the specific needs and aspirations of Muslim women.

Human Resources

Staff/ positions/ roles

5 full-time and 5 part-time positions as follows:

MWA Central office

Paid full-time position of Executive Officer

Arabic community language teachers- NSW Dept of Education

Settlement services program officer funded by DIAC.

Muslim Women Support Centre (MWSC - Lakemba)
4 Full-time and two part-time positions funded by SAAP

Bankstown Women Support Centre
2 Full-time and 2 part-time positions funded by SAAP

Volunteers/ activities

11 management committee members plus other volunteers. In total, on a regular basis MWA will have at least 20 volunteers at any one time, plus more for specific projects. In addition there are 2 trainee volunteers working at the BWSC.

Nature of Work

Target group

The key target groups are Muslim women and their families including children as well as young girls, youth and the aged in NSW and the broader Australian community.

Scope and nature of work:

Type and details of services provided

The MWA provides a range of welfare and social support services to Muslim and non-Muslim women across Sydney and works actively in partnership with all groups and service providers to provide programs and services to its clients. It also provides settlement services to newly arrived migrants in the South Western area of Sydney.

In summary the MWA provides the following services:

- Women's refuge
- Direct settlement services to new arrivals
- Community development services including family support
- Support to aged Muslims
- A range of family services
- Youth leadership
- Sport and Recreation
- Advocacy and Interfaith
- Counselling

Women's Refuge

The Muslim Women's Association (MWA) has a well-established 20 years record in meeting the needs of women in the South Western area of Sydney who have suffered from domestic violence.

The MWA's initial refuge was at Padstow, with a 12-bed facility supported by four staff. With support from the Department of Housing and a Department of Community Services (SAAP), they now have premises with four rooms for women and children as well as one room for single women. This facility provides programs, support and services to Muslim women of all background and in the past they have accommodated non Muslim women. More recently the Association was asked by the Department of Community Services to managed a women's refuge in Bankstown for the general Australian community. The Bankstown facility provides services to a high number of Indo-Chinese women. Both facilities provide a twenty four hour, seven day, on call service, working with the domestic violence service hotline and the police.

In addition, the MWA provides supported accommodation for women not in the refuge. With the support of the Department of Community Housing they manage three houses for women with older children and in partnership with Women's Housing they manage a few flats for single women. In all of these facilities, skilled staff provides case management services.

The work in early intervention includes a wide range of educational activities. The centres provide written information by way of pamphlets, booklets etc In addition they are involved in campaigns with local domestic violence committees, informing women about issues, throughout the year, but more specifically during domestic violence month. They have also worked with SBS radio to develop a radio program around these themes for the Arabic as well as the broader community.

For nearing 25 years, the MWA has provided case management support to some hundreds of women and have provided supported accommodation services for well over 2,000 women and double that of children and young people.

Leadership training

The MWA has been doing leadership camps for young Muslim women for over 18 years and this includes sporting activities such as basketball, volleyball, baseball and soccer. These have been a very successful component of the MWA's program, with hundreds of young women benefiting from these programs.

Advocacy

The association is very active in advocacy, undertaking education programs for service and community organisations, as well as taking a pro-active response to major community concerns, such as the public debate on the *hijab*. The Association also works to address issues of racial discrimination and vilification and helps Muslim women to address this issue through forums and education packages on women's rights. The Association is also actively involved in the national Harmony program and receives small grants (\$3,000 in 2006-7) from local councils to undertake harmony work within the community.

Cross-Cultural Training

The Association undertakes a considerable amount of volunteer cross-cultural training in public and private schools, TAFE's, Universities, government agencies and departments, hospitals etc. Each year numerous volunteer hours are given to local universities to run sessions for health and social work students.

Interfaith

The MWA is very active on inter-faith issues with school and teacher visits to the association and local mosques, school education programs, *iftar* dinners, and other community and interfaith activities. They are also involved with other communities through women's networks associated with the Catholic Church in Redfern.

Health Promotion

In conjunction with the Department of Sport and Recreation, the Council pools and several other local organisations the MWA has been able to develop swimming opportunities for all the women of the area. This work started over ten years ago with Liverpool Council for the use of Miller swimming pool, then with Campbelltown Council, and later involved Lidcombe, Kogarah, Auburn and Roselands and Bankstown Councils. Some of the pools provide learn to swim classes and others provide leisure swimming as well as learn to swim programs. Several young Muslim women have been trained as swimming instructors and now work in these women only pools. These facilities are also well supported by local non-Muslim women.

Through the Department of Sport and Recreation the MWA, has also trained six young women as trainers to run aerobic and gentle exercise classes. These classes are ongoing at the MWA. The Association also has several walking groups, including a special walking group for women with prams and a group for the elderly.

Muslim Women's Youth Work

Leadership Training

The MWA is very active in Muslim women's youth leadership training, holding its 15th annual young women's camp in 2007. This program has supported hundreds of young women in leadership, identity and self-esteem, many of whom have gone on to leadership positions in the Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

Youth Magazine

Young women of the Association have also designed and implemented a marketing strategy to promote "Reflections" - a youth magazine about Muslim women designed to target schools and service providers.

www.reflections.org.au

School holiday activities

The Association offers this program to young Muslims providing outings and recreational activities during school holiday periods.

Health promotion including Soccer

The MWA has also facilitated the establishment of a Muslim girls' soccer team that includes Australian born women as well as new migrants and refugees from Bosnia, and Iraqi and Albanian Muslim girls

The following activities were also organised:

- Gentle exercise programs for elderly women
- Training of young Muslim Women Aerobic instructors
- Establishment of a Muslim Women Volleyball Team
- Sport for fun at Auburn Basketball centre
- Establishment of the first Multicultural Muslim playgroup

Relationship with service providers

The MWA has an extensive network with service providers and has excellent working relationship with all of these providers:

- Sydney women's counselling services
- Bankstown women's health services
- Bankstown area multicultural network
- Jannawi Child and Family Centre
- Korana Child and Family Centre
- Community services
- Women's services
- Sport and Recreation services
- Health services
- Legal services
- Education Services (Schools, TAFE, and Universities)
- MRC's (Auburn, Canterbury-Bankstown, Campbelltown, Cabramatta, Mt Druitt, Parramatta)
- Domestic Violence Response Team
- Youth Centres in various local government areas
- Elderly services, NGO and Govt services.

Community Relations:

With other Muslim women's organisations

The MWA has provided support and guidance to many Muslim women groups around Australia, such as Al Zahrah Muslim Women's Association in Arncliffe, the Illawarra Muslim women Association in Wollongong and a Muslim women's group in Newcastle. The MWA had its 1st National Muslim Women's Conference in 1992 and as a result of one of the recommendations, Muslim women from around Australia met at the end of the conference to organise and set up their own independent Muslim women organisations in every state around Australia. As a result of this conference Muslim women organisations were established in Victoria, Adelaide, Brisbane, Tasmania, Perth and Canberra

Non-Muslim women's organisations

Vietnamese Women's Association and with representatives of the Lao, Cambodian and Chinese communities. Plus other women's service organisations listed above.

The Muslim community

The MWA has very good relationships with the broader Muslim community and is a member of the Islamic Council of NSW.

The broader community.

The MWA works actively with the broader non-Muslim community through the organisations listed above as well as through its cross-cultural and interfaith activities. In addition it also has contact with:

Migrant Resource Centres,
Centrelink Advisory Committee
The local domestic violence committee
The inter agency committee
Multicultural Health advisory committee
Department of Education advisory committee
Affordable Community Housing
St George Women housing
Women's resources centre
Neighbourhood Centres
Creating Links Family Centre
Immigrant Women's Speak out
Australian Arabic Communities council
Tripoli and Mina association
Bhanin and Alminyeh association
Life care Family Centre

And others.

Media

The MWA has a working relationship with the media, has undertaken various media training sessions for Muslim women and has participated in seminars for media to help raise their awareness about Muslim women's issues. This work, to foster better understanding of the role and achievement of Muslim women and correcting misconceptions portrayed in the media, has been a major task for the organisation.

Participation in Government and non government committees/ advisory bodies

The MWA participates in the following bodies:

- NSW Premiers Advisory Council
- Sport & Recreation Ministerial Taskforce
- DoCS domestic violence advisory committee
- DoCS foster care advisory committee
- Anti Discrimination Board Advisory Committee
- Dept of Fair Trading
- NESB ADB Advisory committee
- Various Local Council Advisory Committees
- Community Education Board

MWA has successful partnerships with a range of service providers including listed above as well as:

- Sydney women counselling Service
- Life care Family Centre
- Jannawi children services
- Community Relations Commission
- Kids start children service
- Youth Multicultural Community Association
- The corner Youth centre
- Miller TAFE access and equity program
- Bankstown TAFE outrage program
- Australian Law Reform Commission
- Environment protection Authority
- Community Relations Commission Harmony Reference group

Identified Needs

The MWA has identified the need to provide Muslim women in Western Sydney with the services of a 'one-stop shop' with the MWA providing information and referral services about immigration, English language training, Centrelink, housing, family support etc. At the moment this work is being done on a volunteer basis but the need is greater than the Association can presently provide for.

The following are key areas of need identified by the MWA:

Funding for:

Family Support Services - Early intervention (FACS):

To support women and children in need as well as to expand parenting classes. Funds are needed for each of the MWA women's refuges to employ a family worker for its early intervention program, as the Muslim women have identified the need for direct services. At the moment this support is being provided on a volunteer basis but the needs are not being met.

Newly migrated women (DIAC direct settlement services):

More assistance for English language classes and preparation for workforce participation. The Association needs two positions to support this newly arrived community with outreach into Lakemba, Bankstown, Canterbury and Auburn. At the moment volunteers, working with the Migrant Centres, are doing this work. It is increasingly difficult to meet the needs of this group of women, many of whom are skilled but are having difficulty in accessing the workforce. Paid skilled workers are needed to run a range of services, including referrals, as well as educational programs for these women, including information about laws and rights in Australia.

The Association has run a very successful English language pilot program with AMES and the Department of Health, focusing on health issues of interest and concern for women. A worker is needed to run and co-ordinate these much needed English language programs.

Youth worker to support youth leadership programs

The next generation of Muslim women needs to be provided with ongoing leadership programs and support is needed to provide a range of services to young Muslim women in Western Sydney

Cross-cultural trainer

The Association needs a full-time cross-cultural worker to respond to the many requests to reach out to the broader non-Muslim Australian community. This work is being done but is difficult to continue with existing volunteers.

Appendix 1 Literature Review

This study seeks to identify Muslim Australian women's participation in Australian community life and to explore their involvement in the educational system, the workforce and personal business ventures. The study will also explore their friendships social and family life, including sport, as well as their contact with key government sectors such as health, welfare, housing, police etc. This literature review has sought to identify relevant literature on Muslim women in these various sectors of Australian community life.

Overall there is a scarcity of research on Muslim women in Australia, however, with the growing number of Muslim women attending university and going on to higher degrees it is anticipated that in the very near future this situation will change.

The history of Muslim women in Australia is covered in the general histories of Muslims in this country, Qazi, (1994)³⁵⁶ and Cleland (2002),³⁵⁷ while the practice of Islam in Australia is addressed in texts such as those by Abdullah Saeed in 2001,³⁵⁸ and 2004.³⁵⁹ Islamic law, as it applies to women, is dealt with in Hussain's work of 2001³⁶⁰ and 2004.³⁶¹ Internationally, issues of gender and Islam are addressed in Ahmad's³⁶², Mernissi's³⁶³ and Wadud's work, among others.³⁶⁴

One area of Muslim women's identity that arouses much Australian public comment, and has not been well researched, is that of Muslim women's dress codes. Alia Imtoul's recent scholarly work is the exception to this.³⁶⁵

³⁵⁶ Ahmad Ashfaq Qazi, 1994, 'Islam and Muslims in Australia' in ed. Htalib and T.Hashim *Islam, Muslims and the Modern State*, St Martins Press New York, pp 317-337..

³⁵⁷ Bilal Cleland, 2002, *The Muslims in Australia A Brief History*, Islamic Council of Victoria.

³⁵⁸ Abdullah Saeed, 2001, *Muslim communities in Australia*, University of New South Wales Press.

³⁵⁹ Abdullah Saeed, 2004, *Muslim Australians: their beliefs, practices and institutions*, Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and the Australian Multicultural Foundation in association with the University of Melbourne.

³⁶⁰ Jamila Hussain, 2001, 'Family Laws and Muslim Communities', in eds Abdullah Saeed and Shahram Akbarzadeh, *Muslim Communities in Australia*, pp.161-187, University of News South Wales Press. Sydney...

³⁶¹ Jamila Hussein, 2004, *Islam: its law and society*, Federation Press, Sydney.

³⁶² Leila Ahmad, 1992, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, Yale University Press,.

³⁶³ Mernissi, F. 1994, *Women in Islam*, Blackwell, Oxford, UK.

³⁶⁴ Amina Wadud, 1999, *Qur'an and Woman: Reading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, Oxford University Press.

--- Amina Wadud, 2006, *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam*, Oneworld Press, Oxford, UK

³⁶⁵ Alia Imtoul, 2006, 'A little bit of a slave?': towards a theorisation of the 'hijab in state schools' debate in Australia, *Feminist Media Studies* 6(1).

---Alia Imtoul, 2005, 'Cover your Face for the Photograph Please': Gender Issues, the Media and Muslim Women in Australia, *Journal of Australasian Studies*.

---Alia Imtoul, 2005, 'Is being Australian about being white?', Australian Whiteness, National Identity and Muslim Women' in ed Riggs, D.W. *Taking up the challenge: Critical race and whiteness studies in a post-colonising nation*. Adelaide: Crawford House Publishers.

Joumanah El Matrah's comments in her "Stolen Voices of Muslim Women" are an important critique of this issue.³⁶⁶ Earlier works by Santi Rozario (1998),³⁶⁷ and Alma (1994) also address this discourse.³⁶⁸

The issue of the *hijab* has also become part of youth popular culture in Australian literature with the release of Randa Abdel-Fattah's book, 'Does my head look big in this?' which explores youth religious, social and cultural identity.³⁶⁹ Abdel-Fattah's article in the SMH Good Weekend of February 2007, titled 'Veils and Vegemite', also explores issues of Muslim women's identity.³⁷⁰ Public comment in mainstream media is also very common, with articles like Cooke's (2007)³⁷¹ and Riley's as typical examples.³⁷²

Public media comments by other Muslim women, such as Fatima Shah (2004)³⁷³ and Nadia Jamal (2006), have contributed to what, at times, is a heated debate on this issue within Australian society.³⁷⁴

The Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria has undertaken several pieces of social research on Muslim women in Victoria. One, published in 2003, illustrates the international global events that have affected the lives of Muslim women, in particular those who are identifiably Muslim though their dress.³⁷⁵ The report identifies the physical attacks, attacks against women's property and against Muslim women at public gatherings, the verbal harassment of women in public spaces and attacks against Muslim women's institutions that took place after September 11, 2001. This report is supported by evidence given by Muslim women during meetings held by HREOC data gathering for the *Isma* Report released in 2004.³⁷⁶

This political climate affects how Muslim women use the public space, but little research has been done on this topic until recently, with Whitton and

---Alia Imtoul, 2005, 'Religious Racism and the Media: Representations of Muslim Women in the Australian Print Media', *Outskirts: feminisms along the edge* vol 13.

<http://www.chloe.uwa.edu.au/outskirts/current/volume13/imtoul>

³⁶⁶ Joumanah El Matrah, 2005, 'Stolen Voices of Muslim Women', *The Age*, April 22.

³⁶⁷ Santi Rozario, 1998, 'On Being Australian and Muslim: Muslim Women as Defenders of Islamic Heritage', *Womens Studies International Forum* 21 no. 6 pp 649-661.

³⁶⁸ Alma, M. 1994, 'Lifting the Veil: A Study of Muslim women in the Canterbury-Bankstown area', *Education Links*, no.48 Winter, pp.26-28.

³⁶⁹ Abdel-Fattah, Randa, 2005, *Does my head look big in this?* Pan Macmillan Australia Sydney.

³⁷⁰ Randa Abdel-Fattah, 2007, 'Veils and Vegemite', *Sydney Morning Herald, Good Weekend* February 17 p.51-52.

³⁷¹ Dewi Cooke 2007, 'Muslim women unveil why they marry faith with dress', *The Age*, March 30 www.theage.com.au/news/national/muslim-women-unveil

³⁷² Mark Riley and Kelly Burke, 2002, 'PM Veiled comments on how Muslim women dress' AAP November 22' www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/11/21/10376978806923.html

³⁷³ Fatima Shah, 2004, 'There's enough room under the burqa for personal choice', *The Age*, January 8.

³⁷⁴ Nadia Jamal, 2006, 'There is more to Muslim women than a head scarf', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 October.

³⁷⁵ Joumanah El Matrah, 2003, 'Living in apprehension and fear: the experience of Muslim women', *Australian Mosaic* no.3, Winter, pp.31-32.

³⁷⁶ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2004, *Isma-Listen Report*. HREOC, Sydney.

Thompson's (2005)³⁷⁷ academic paper on this issue making a valuable contribution to addressing the specific needs of Muslim women in urban spaces.

However, the first academic work carried out specifically on Muslim children and their educational experiences and needs was that done by Irene Donohoue-Clyne in the 1990's.³⁷⁸ The focus of her work was an exploration of the attitudes and expectations in Islamic schools of Muslim children and their parents.

More recent work by Sanjakdar, explores the health issues of Muslim youth in school.³⁷⁹ In the area of welfare there has been little academic work on Muslim children; however a 2001 report on the success of Muslim foster care in NSW indicates how effectively this issue is being handled in the Muslim community.³⁸⁰

In the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Report *Isma – Listen*, released in 2004, the experiences of racial and religious discrimination against Arab and Muslim children were detailed. The report concluded that while Muslim children overall felt physically safe and culturally accepted in the school environment there were nonetheless reported incidences of abuse and bullying, and reported incidences of teachers and staff ignoring racist behaviour and direct discrimination.³⁸¹

These experiences were also identified in Mansouri's study, with teachers' lack of interest and low expectations of school achievement being key factors in disengagement from school.³⁸² These findings mirror that of the 2004 HREOC report *Isma-Listen*, where, in addition, students reported lack of support from teachers over incidents of student racial and religious discrimination and a perceived lack of understanding of students' cultural and religious backgrounds.³⁸³

More recently Dr Abe Ata from the Australian Catholic University carried out a survey exploring the attitudes to Muslims of over 550 school students in years 10 and 11 in Victoria. His research revealed that more than half of the school

³⁷⁷ C. Whitton and S. Thompson, 2005, 'When cultures collide: planning for the public spatial needs of Muslim women in Sydney', *State of Australian Cities Conference*.

³⁷⁸ Clyne, Irene Donohoue., 1998, 'Cultural Diversity and the Curriculum: the Muslim experience in Australia'. *European Journal of Intercultural Studies* 9, 3, 279-289.

---- Donohoue-Clyne, I. 1997, 'Seeking Education for Muslim Children in Australia', *Muslim Education Quarterly*, vol.14, no.3, p.11.1997

³⁷⁹ Fida Sanjakdar, 2002, 'The Health issues of Australian Muslim youth: What every teacher must know', *Education Links*, no. 64, pp. 27-30.

³⁸⁰ Roude, N; Krayem, M; Abdallah, A M. 2001' Muslim foster care project: a successful model of partnership between the Muslim community and the Department of Community Services in NSW'. In: *One child's reality, everyone's responsibility: proceedings, 8th Australasian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect*. Melbourne, Vic: Department of Human Services.

³⁸¹ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Report, 2004 *Isma-Listen*, HREOC, pp. 57-60

³⁸² Fethi Mansouri and Annelies Kamp, 2007 op. cit., p.95

³⁸³ HREOC, 2004, *Isma-Listen Report*, p.59.

children view Muslims as 'terrorists' and the same number believe that they 'behave strangely'.³⁸⁴ His findings illustrate that these students lacked any true knowledge of Muslims and Islam and that the education system is not providing them with that knowledge or understanding.³⁸⁵

Although such a situation exists some Muslim communities are trying to remedy this situation. An example of such work is that undertaken in 2004 by the Migrant Information Centre of Eastern Melbourne, through its Communities Together Project. This project involved students and teachers from six local schools undertaking successful Islamic sensitivity training.³⁸⁶

Mary Costello's article in *The Age* 'Australian Students under the Minaret', about the King Khalid Islamic College in Melbourne, is also a positive contribution to the public debate on Islam. The article notes the commitment of the school to interfaith and interschool activities, all measures aimed at facilitating students' participation in non-Muslim Australian community life.³⁸⁷

While there have been few academic studies of Muslim women's university experience, published work by Christine Asmar has contributed to our understanding of the specific problems faced by Muslim Australian women on university campuses. Asmar found that overall her research participants felt that attending higher education was an enjoyable experience. The students did not feel discriminated against on the basis of their religion or dress and there were no reports of discrimination by university lecturers or support staff.³⁸⁸

Nayeefa Chowdhury's more recent paper on the role of Australian-based Muslim student associations also provides insight into Muslim campus experiences, exploring both *da'wah* (spreading the work of Islam) and interfaith dialogue.³⁸⁹ Religious conservatism was the topic on the ABC's Radio National Religion Report in September 2007 where views that included segregation of males and females and the necessity to adhere rigidly to prayer times even when sitting exams were aired.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁴ Chee Chee Leung, 2006 *Children cast judgement on Muslims*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* Feb 6.

³⁸⁵ Abe W. Ata, 2007, *Moslem Arab Portrayal in the Australian Press and in School Textbooks*, http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_9/Ata.htm

³⁸⁶ Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne), 2004, *Communities Together: A Model for Promoting Harmony and Understanding of Australian Muslims Project*, Evaluation Report, Sept

³⁸⁷ Costello, M. 2005 'Australian Students under the Minaret', *The Age, Education*, 13 June, p. 4.

³⁸⁸ Asmar, C., Prude, E. Inge, L. 2004. 'Unwelcome sisters?' An analysis of findings from a study of how Muslim women (and men) experience university', *Australian Journal of Education*, Vol 48, No 1, pp.47-63.

³⁸⁹ Nayeefa Chowdhury, (n.d.) 'Presenting Islam: The role of Australia-Based Muslim Student Associations'.

³⁹⁰ Stephen Crittenden, 2007, *Barriers to inclusion*, ABC Radio National, Religion Report, Sept 12. <http://www.abd.net.au/rn/religionreport/stories/2007/2030244.htm#transcript>

There has also been considerable public debate about English language skills among the Muslim Australian population. Rida's (2001) paper on Muslim women's access to English classes identified the lack of information about available classes and also the lack of accessible women only classes as key factors.³⁹¹

In a study conducted with women refugees in Western Australia, the researchers found also that access to English language classes was problematic for Muslim women new arrivals and refugees. Common concerns were childcare arrangements, mixed gender classes, inadequacy of hours allocated per person and the level of the courses, either too high or too low. Some women refugees had specific difficulties resulting from trauma, affecting their ability to concentrate.³⁹²

This need for child-friendly and women only literacy classes for new arrivals is also confirmed by the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium.³⁹³

A similar situation exists in the In the case of the rural Victorian town of Cobram. A Monash University study of newly arrived Muslim migrants in the town indicated that around 57% of Muslims have low levels or no English language skills. The lack of ESL training in the town has also contributed to performance difficulties in school-aged children, affected employment prospects and impacted on unemployed Muslim women.³⁹⁴

In relation to participation in the workforce, research in this area has until recently focused on specific ethnic communities. For instance, Michael Humphrey carried out extensive research work in the 1980's and 1990's on the Lebanese community in Sydney, examining this community's settlement and employment patterns. His 1984 paper, 'Family, family, work and unemployment: A Study of Lebanese settlement in Sydney', focuses on the male ethnic in Lebanese employment patterns.³⁹⁵ Kathryn Betts' and Healy's (2006) more recent publication on the social disadvantage of Lebanese Muslims in Australia also explores employment and other social issues.³⁹⁶

Kabir and Evans' paper explores the historical trends of Muslims in the Australian labour market from 1980 to 2001 and there is some reference to

³⁹¹ Rida, A. and M. Milton, 2001, 'The Non-joiners: Why Migrant Muslim Women aren't Accessing English Language Classes', *Prospect*, vol 16, no.1, pp 35-48,

³⁹² Suzy Casimiro, Peter Hancock and Jeremy Northcote, 2007, Isolation and Insecurity: Resettlement issues among Muslim women refugees in Perth Western Australia, *Australian Journal of Social Issues* Vol. 42, No. 1 Autumn.

³⁹³ Helen Macrae and Jacinta Agostinelli, 2002, 'Women and Literacy in Australia' *Adult Literacy and Numeracy Research Consortium, Nathan, Queensland Centre*.
http://www.staff.vu.edu.au/alnarc/onlineforum/AL_pap_macrae.html

³⁹⁴ Centre for Muslim Minorities and Islam Policy Studies, 2006, *Social Integration of Muslim Settlers in Cobram*, Monash University, July p. 121-13.

³⁹⁵ Humphrey, M. 1984, 'Family, work and unemployment: A Study of Lebanese settlement in Sydney', *Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIEA) Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra*.

³⁹⁶ Kathryn Betts and E. Healy, 2006, 'Lebanese Muslims in Australia and social disadvantage', *People and Place*, vol. 14 no.1.

the specific situation of Muslim women.³⁹⁷ Collins' chapter on Arab entrepreneurs in Australia explores the role of the family, including women, in Arab small enterprises. The research identified, in a national survey of the ownership structure of small businesses in 1996 that 61.5 % of the survey sample were business women from a Middle Eastern background who owned their own businesses. This percentage of ownership can be compared with 63.6% of Australian women business owners from an English speaking background.³⁹⁸

There has been no research published on Muslim Australian women's participation in their own enterprises; however, according to anecdotal evidence, Dr Christina Ho of the University of Technology is presently undertaking research on this issue.³⁹⁹

Some recent studies have included Muslim women's experiences in the workforce in their broader analysis, including the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission *Isma-Listen* Report of 2004 that highlighted racial and religious discrimination as key barriers to Muslim workforce participation. The report also identified Muslim women's dress as a significant barrier as well.⁴⁰⁰

The positive benefits of volunteering in networking for work participation have also been identified in research undertaken by Volunteering Australia and the Australian Multicultural Foundation in 2006. The research found that young Muslim women are more inclined to be involved in community and welfare based volunteering. The AMF research also found that 'the idea that volunteering formed a significant part of being a good community member emerged as a common cultural norm among Muslim youth'.⁴⁰¹

Several research studies have been undertaken on Muslim women new arrivals and refugees, identifying the specific problems faced by these women. This research identified difficulties and barriers including preparation for employment with skills upgrades, qualification recognition and English language acquisition. These barriers to employment are experienced by the majority of CALD migrants and refugees, but Muslim women face additional barriers.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁷ Nahid Kabir and Raymond Evans, 2003, 'Muslims and the Australian Labor Market, 1980-2001', *Immigrants and Minorities*, Vol.21, No. 3, pp 70-95, November.

³⁹⁸ J. Collins, 2002 'Arab Entrepreneurs in Australia', in *Arab Australians Today*, ed. G. Hage, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, p.102.

³⁹⁹ See <http://datasearch.uts.edu.au/hss/staff/socinq/details.cfm?StaffId=1614>

⁴⁰⁰ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2004, *Isma-Listen* Report, HREOC Sydney pp. 60-64

⁴⁰¹ Volunteering Australia, 2006, *Muslim youth's experience of and attitudes towards volunteering*. www.volunteeringaustralia.org

⁴⁰² Yasmeen, 2001, S. 'Settlement Needs of Muslim Women in Perth: A Case Study'. in ed. A. Saeed and S. Akbarzadeh, *Muslim Communities in Australia*. Sydney, University of New South Wales Press. Kamalkhani, Z., 2001, 'Recently Arrived Muslim Refugee Women Coping with Settlement', ed. Saeed.A & Akbarzadeh, S. *Muslim Communities in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney. pp. 97-115,. Suzy Casimiro, Peter Hancock and Jeremy Northcote, 2007, Isolation and Insecurity: Resettlement issues among Muslim women refugees in Perth Western Australia, *Australian journal of Social Issues* Vol. 42, No. 1 Autumn.

Muslim women's friendships, as part of their social life, are not an area that has been researched well in Australia. Hanifa Deen's book 'Caravanserai: journey among Australian Muslims', provides insight in the social life of some Muslim communities⁴⁰³. In addition, Randa Abdel-Fattah's fictional account provides a popular cultural insight into young Muslim women's lives.⁴⁰⁴

The issue of marriage among second generation Muslim women in Australia has not been addressed in the literature as far as can be determined. Birrell and Healy's work on out-marriage and the survival of ethnic communities in Australia, which covers the years 1996 to 1998, shows that only a small minority of second generation Australians choose partners who originate from the same country. The exception to this is people from the Middle East.⁴⁰⁵ Such research has not been carried out on the Muslim community to date.

While not specifically addressing the issue of Muslim women, Zevallos' article explores some of the key issues facing second generation migrant women in Australia.⁴⁰⁶ Overseas, this issue has been explored in greater depth, with works by Vertovec and Rogers, et al, making a significant contribution to our understanding of second generation Muslim youth identity.⁴⁰⁷

According to Mandaville's study, Muslim youth are also increasingly using TV, video and the Internet to access key sites of socialising as well as religious discourse. Magazines such as Q-News and The Muslim News, which cover a range of issues including marriage, sexuality and contraception, provide young Muslims with access to Islamic thought and debate on these key issues.⁴⁰⁸,

In Australia, Noble, Poynting and Tabar's work on Lebanese male youth in Western Sydney demonstrates that Muslims and other migrant and second generation male youth move with ease between multiple social and cultural identities.⁴⁰⁹ In this study, while group membership is defined by their 'Lebanese-ness' (even though they were not all Lebanese), there was a clear religious identification by Muslim boys in relation to religious taboos, prayer,

⁴⁰³ Hanifa Deen, 2003, *Caravanserai: journey among Australian Muslims*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

⁴⁰⁴ Randa. Abdel-Fattah, 2005, *Does my head look big in this?* Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney.

⁴⁰⁵ Birrell, B., Healy. E., 2000, 'Out-marriage and the survival of ethnic communities in Australia'. *People and Place* vol.8 no.3, pp.37-46.,.

http://elecpress.monash.edu.au/pnp/free/pnpv8n3/v8n3_5BirrHealy.pdf

⁴⁰⁶ Zevallos, Z. 2005, 'It's like we're their culture: second Generation Migrant women discuss Australian culture', *People and Place*, vol.13, no.2, pp.41-49,

⁴⁰⁷ Vertovec, Steven and Alistair Rogers, 1998, *Muslim European Youth- Reproducing ethnicity, religion and culture*, Ashgate, UK.

⁴⁰⁸ Mandaville, P. 2002. 'Muslim youth in Europe', in *Islam, Europe's second religion*, eds. S. Hunter & C. Buchanan, Praeger, Westport USA. pp. 219-229.

⁴⁰⁹ Greg Noble, Scott Poynting, Tabar, 1999, 'Lebanese youth and social identity', in eds. R. White, *Australian youth subcultures: On the margins and in the mainstream*, Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, Hobart, pp.130-37..

fasting and the Qur'an. Their identity was based on religion "I mostly say I am Muslim because that is the main thing".⁴¹⁰

Poynting and Noble's various studies on the Arabic, principally Lebanese, community, details the various male sub-cultures that exist within that community, but little of that research specifically addresses young Muslim women.^{411, 412} However, identity is subject to re-interpretation, with Muslim youth having multiple group memberships, and demonstrating considerable flexibility in moving within different social contexts.

The political climate in Australia regarding attitudes and prejudice, affects how Muslim women use the public space. Little research has been done on this topic until recently, with Whitton and Thompson's (2005) academic paper on this issue making a valuable contribution to addressing the specific needs of Muslim women in urban spaces.⁴¹³ More recently the Issues Deliberates 'Australia Deliberates-Muslim and Non-Muslims in Australia' has identified a number of key issues of concern for Muslims and non-Muslims.⁴¹⁴

Sport is a major activity in Australian culture and is a significant arena of community participation. Concerns about the involvement in sport and recreational activities of women from CALD backgrounds have resulted in a number of studies by researchers including Vescio,⁴¹⁵ and Taylor.⁴¹⁶ More recently Cortis and Muir have also researched this issue.⁴¹⁷ National interest in women's involvement in sport has also resulted in a 2004 Senate Committee report on women in sport and recreation in Australia.⁴¹⁸

While barriers exist for non-CALD Australian women, there are specific barriers that have been identified that CALD women face in relation to accessing and participating in sport and recreation in Australia. The Senate report confirmed research studies that CALD women had lower rates of sport participation than women born in Australia and that 'barriers to their participation included lack of information, language and communication problems, family and cultural traditions and racism'. The report also identified the difficulties of sporting bodies in addressing these needs, including

⁴¹⁰ *ibid* p.133.

⁴¹¹ *ibid*.pp.130-37.

⁴¹² Scott Poynting, 2002, 'Bin Laden in the suburbs: attacks on Arab and Muslim Australians before and after 11 September', *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, vol.14 no.1, July.

⁴¹³ C. Whitton and S. Thompson, 2005, 'When cultures collide: planning for the public spatial needs of Muslim women in Sydney', *State of Australian Cities Conference*..

⁴¹⁴ Issues Deliberates, 2007, *Australia Deliberates: Muslims and non-Muslims in Australia*, Canberra Australia. http://www.ida.org.au/content.php?p=overview_of_the_dp

⁴¹⁵ J. Vescio, 1999 'An exploration of sports participation by girls from non-English speaking backgrounds', *ACHPER healthy lifestyles journal* Vol 46, No. 1, pp. 14-19,.

⁴¹⁶ Taylor T. 2001, 'Cultural Diversity and Leisure: Experiences of Women in Australia'. *Loisir et Societe Culture et mode de vie* Vol. 24, No 2, Autumn.

www.erudit.org/revue/ls/2001/v24/n2/000194ar.html

⁴¹⁷ Natasha Cortis and Kirsty Muir, 2007, 'Participation in Sport and Recreation by Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women', *Social Policy Research Centre Report*, February..

⁴¹⁸ Australian Parliament Senate Committee, 2006, About Time! Women in sport and recreation in Australia Report, Sept 6: http://www.aph.gov.au/senate_environment

'resources, understanding, or willingness to accommodate the particular needs of women from different cultures.'⁴¹⁹

A 2006 report commissioned by the Federal government's Office of Women also identified a number of significant barriers to CALD women's involvement in sport, including those directly impacting on Muslim women as well. These barriers include sporting dress codes, cultural issues around family responsibilities and family expectations and the cultural environment of sporting organisations around difficulties of 'fitting in' and being accepted.⁴²⁰ Evidence revealed that despite the large number of migrants residing in many communities and the range of policies and strategies recommended by researchers and State Sporting Organizations, most sport and active recreation clubs were unaware of, reluctant to, or unable to provide opportunities for people from culturally diverse backgrounds.⁴²¹

However, while this research addresses sporting issues for CALD women, among whom there would be some Muslim women, as in other areas of Australian life, little research has been carried out on the broader population of Muslim women and their participation in sporting activities. Whitten and Thompson's paper on the spatial needs of Muslim women in Sydney briefly addresses the issue of women's access to sporting facilities.⁴²² And a recent paper on Muslim Australian women in sport by McCue has highlighted the barriers that exist for Muslim women's involvement in sport in Australia, but overall there is a scarcity of research in this area.⁴²³

Internationally there has been some research on Muslim women in sport, including Radzi's work on Muslim sports women in Malaysia, which makes an important contribution to the subject.⁴²⁴ In Europe, Norwegian researcher Walseth has contributed significantly to understanding Muslim women's involvement in sport in Norway and in Egypt. Among other findings, such research in Europe points to sport as a significant factor in helping Muslim women integrate into the non-Muslim broader society and to access employment through sporting networks.⁴²⁵

⁴¹⁹ *ibid* p. 51

⁴²⁰ Natasha Cortis and Kirsty Muir, 2007 'Participation in Sport and Recreation by Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women', *Social Policy Research Centre Report*, February pp. 8-17

⁴²¹ Clare Hanlon and Coleman, D., 2005, Recruitment and retention of culturally diverse people by sport and active recreation clubs, Centre for Aging, Rehabilitation, Exercise and Sport, Victoria University.

⁴²² Carolyn Whitten and Susan Thompson, 2007, *When Cultures Collide: Planning for the Public Spatial Needs of Muslim women in Sydney*, Social City 07, http://www.aph.gov.au/library/INTGUIDE/sp/muslim_australians.htm

⁴²³ Helen McCue, 2006, 'Sport as an arena of social inclusion/exclusion for young Australian Muslim women', *Not another hijab row: New conversations on gender, race, religion and the making of communities Conference*, University of Technology Sydney, Dec 10

⁴²⁴ Wirdati Mohammad Radzi, 2006, *Muslim women and sports in the Malay world*, Silkworm Books, Thailand.

⁴²⁵ Walseth, K. & Fasting, K. 2003, 'Sport as a Means of Integrating Minority Women', *Sport in Society*, Vol.7, No.1, Spring, 2004 see also, Walseth, K. & Fasting, K. 'Islam's View on Physical Activity and Sport, Egyptian women interpreting Islam', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Vol.38 No.1, . Walseth, K. 2006, 'Young Muslim Women and Sport: the impact of Identity work', *Leisure Studies* Vol 25, no.1, 75-94, January.

In relation to sports activities in schools, a study undertaken by Davidson and Tremayne, on the conflicts involved in teaching Personal Development Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) to Arabic and non-Arabic year nine students in western Sydney high schools, highlighted some of the barriers to sport participation in schools. These included dress, mixed sex activities, public display during physical activity, religious observances and lack of parental and community encouragement.⁴²⁶

Another area that was identified as a problem area for CALD persons in the literature of the 1970's and 1980's was the health system and as a result cross cultural training was implemented in nurse and allied health worker training programs. The higher degrees undertaken by nurses over these past two decades is evident in the research now available on issues relating to culture and religion in a health setting.

The majority of Muslim women access the health care system during and after pregnancy. Various studies have looked at key issues faced by Muslim women during this significant time. Tsianakas & Liamputtong found that Muslim women surveyed in the Melbourne metropolitan area were, in general, satisfied with the antenatal care and prenatal testing services provided. However the study revealed that there was a need for better communication and for health providers to recognise the need for Muslim women to be attended by female doctors and health workers.⁴²⁷ The study also found that health workers needed to take into account individual women's preferences and personal circumstances when providing services for women of an Islamic background. Tsianakas' other work also focuses on this issue.⁴²⁸ A study in Queensland by Vose confirms these specific needs and identified "the need for privacy; problems with male staff; the importance of covering the body; problems with diet and communication; preference for female care givers and spiritual needs".⁴²⁹

Indicative of the cross-cultural training that has taken place in the past decade is [Cioffi's](#) study of midwives in western Sydney health settings. This study contributes to the literature on this issue, with midwives revealing their knowledge and support for religious and cultural preferences of Muslim

⁴²⁶ Neil Davidson and Bob Tremayne, 1998, Personal Development Health and Physical Education in a cultural context: Perspectives of Arabic and non-Arabic speaking year nine students in four western Sydney high schools, University of Western Sydney.

⁴²⁷ Tsianakas, V & Liamputtong P, 2002, 'What women from Islamic background in Australia say about care in prenatal testing and antenatal care', *Midwifery*, Vol, 18 No, 1, pp 25-34.

⁴²⁸ Tsianakas, V. & Liamputtong, P, 2001, 'Pregnancy, Prenatal Testing and Abortion: A Perspective from Muslim Women in Australia', *Australian Journal of Primary Health*, vol.7.no.2. pp.15-23.

Tsianakas, V 2002, 'The reproductive health of Muslim women'. *Healthsharing Women* vol.12 no.3, Feb. pp.11-14.

⁴²⁹ Vose, C; Thurecht, K, 1999, 'What is different when you have a baby in a new country?' in ed Rice, P.L, *Living in a new country: understanding migrants' health*. Ascot Vale, Vic: Ausmed Publications, pp.43-55.

women. These included being aware of the need for modesty, and a place for prayer, gender preferences, and the imperative of visiting by others.⁴³⁰

Another example of this cross-cultural training is the work in Western Australia, training Islamic community workers to provide religiously, culturally and gender sensitive programs for the management of depression including postnatal depression.⁴³¹ A study on the Lebanese Muslim community in Western Sydney on immunisation illustrates the need for nurses' awareness in addressing Muslim cultural and religious needs.⁴³²

While in some sectors of the health system health workers have been educated about religious and cultural needs of Arabic, Central Asian and South East Asian immigrants, more recent arrivals from northern Africa, including Somalia and Sudan, some of whom are Muslims, are now accessing the health care system. Manderson and Allotey's work tells of 'conflict with hospital services, medical mismanagement and negative outcomes of procedures and treatment', with misperceptions and misunderstandings of medical events including stories of "pork injections," and rejection of "black babies".⁴³³

Jeanine Blackford and Annette Street's work illustrates that while progress has been made on understanding religious and cultural needs of patients from CALD backgrounds, the cultural and 'western liberal feminist' framework of the majority of nurses points to the need for more cross-cultural work to be done.⁴³⁴

The lack of cultural understanding by some individual staff working in the service provision area as well as lack of understanding of Australian culture by some women, especially for new arrivals, was also a barrier. These issues

⁴³⁰ Cioffi J. 2004, 'Caring for women from culturally diverse backgrounds: midwives' experiences', *Journal of Midwifery Womens Health*, Vol,49, No. 5, Sep-Oct p. 437.

⁴³¹ Tina Tse, 2002, 'Islamic Community Worker Training Program for the Management of Depression', Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health (AeJAMH), Vol. 1, Issue 2,

⁴³² Deborah Brooke, Akram Omeri, 1999, 'Beliefs about Childhood Immunisation among Lebanese Muslim Immigrants in Australia', *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, Vol.10, No 3, pp. 229-236..

⁴³³ Lenore Manderson and Pascale Allotey, 2003, 'Storytelling, Marginality, and Community in Australia: How Immigrants Position their Difference in Health Care Settings', *Medical Anthropology*, Vol, 22, No, 1, January-March.

⁴³⁴ Jeanine Blackford, Annette Street, 2002, 'Cultural conflict: the impact of western feminism(s) on nurses caring for women of non-English speaking background', *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, Vol, 11 No.5, pp. 664-671.

have been well researched and reported on by Yasmeen,⁴³⁵ Kamalkhani⁴³⁶ and Casimiro.⁴³⁷

In the area of psychiatric services and in spite of the many difficulties faced by Muslim migrants to Australia, especially those so called “boat people” who arrived in Australia after 2001, many of whom were held for long periods of detention, research shows that suicide among Muslims is rare. Research undertaken by Nooria Mehraby (2005)⁴³⁸ illustrates that the low suicide rate among Muslims can be explained by religious beliefs which ‘can play a substantial role in suicide prevention and provide an essential framework of meaning that can sustain life in times of great distress’. This study provides guidelines for practitioners for appropriate cross-cultural counselling with Muslim clients when a suicide does occur. Mehraby’s earlier work (2003)⁴³⁹ explores the specific issues relating to the provision of psychotherapy to Islamic clients who are facing loss and grief.

Other research by Kamalkhani, 2001,⁴⁴⁰ Yasmeen, 2001,⁴⁴¹ Bouma, and Brace-Govan⁴⁴² and Nahid Kabir in 2003⁴⁴³ and 2005,⁴⁴⁴ and Northcote⁴⁴⁵ point to the difficulties experienced by Muslims, and in particular by Muslim women as refugees and new migrants in Australia. The 2005 Ethnic Community Council’s report on issues affecting young men and women refugees highlights the specific problems faced by young refugees including English language training, access to the job market, identity and social inclusion issues.⁴⁴⁶

⁴³⁵ Yasmeen, S. 2001, ‘Settlement Needs of Muslim Women in Perth: A Case Study’. in ed. A. Saeed and S. Akbarzadeh, *Muslim Communities in Australia*. Sydney, University of New South Wales Press.

⁴³⁶ Kamalkhani, Z. 2001, ‘Recently Arrived Muslim Refugee Women Coping with Settlement’, ed. Saeed, A. & Akbarzadeh, S. *Muslim Communities in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney. pp.97-115.

⁴³⁷ Suzy Casimiro, Peter Hancock and Jeremy Northcote, 2007, Isolation and Insecurity: Resettlement issues among Muslim women refugees in Perth Western Australia, *Australian Journal of Social Issues* Vol. 42, No. 1 Autumn.

⁴³⁸ Nooria Mehraby, 2005, ‘Suicide: its pathway, perception and prevention amongst Muslims’, *Psychotherapy in Australia* vol.11 no.2 Feb pp.60-65. ,

⁴³⁹ Nooria Mehraby, 2003, ‘Psychotherapy with Islamic clients facing loss and grief’, *Psychotherapy in Australia*, vol.9 no.2 Feb pp.30-34..

⁴⁴⁰ Kamalkhani, Z., 2001, ‘Recently Arrived Muslim Refugee Women Coping with Settlement’, in ed Saeed, A. & Akbarzadeh, S (ed) *Muslim Communities in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney. pp. 97-115.

⁴⁴¹ Yasmeen, S. 2001, ‘Settlement Needs of Muslim Women in Perth: A Case Study’. in eds. A. Saeed and S. Akbarzadeh, *Muslim Communities in Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney.

⁴⁴² Bouma, G. and J. Brace-Govan, 2000, ‘Gender and Religious Settlement: Families, Hijabs and Identity’, *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, vol.21, no.2, pp.159-175.

⁴⁴³ Nahid Kabir, 2003, ‘Muslims in Australia: the new disadvantaged’, *Brisbane Line*, 11 November.

⁴⁴⁴ Nahid Kabir, 2005, ‘Muslims in Australia: immigration, race relations and cultural history’, *Sydney Papers*, vol. 17 no. 2, Autumn.

⁴⁴⁵ Jeremy Northcote et. al., 2006, ‘Breaking the isolation cycle: the experience of Muslim refugee women in Australia’, *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, vol.15 no.2,

⁴⁴⁶ Ethnic Communities’ Council of NSW, 2005, ‘Issues Affecting Refugee Young People’, *NESB Youth Issues Network*, March.

Although the loss of social relationships through displacement causes much grief and sadness,⁴⁴⁷ according to other research findings of Celia McMichael,⁴⁴⁸ Islam provides an enduring 'home' that is carried throughout displacement and resettlement. Islam is articulated through women's use and construction of space, daily practices, forms of interaction, and modes of thinking about their lives. Further, Islam offers a meaningful framework of practice and ideology that sustains women during the hardships of exile, displacement and resettlement and in times of emotional distress.

A key area of Australian society where Muslim women have excelled is in the establishment and running of successful Muslim women's organisations to address the various needs of Muslim women. Again however, there has been very little research on the scope and impact of these Muslim women's services.

A recent article by Yasmeen on women as citizens of Australia, detailing the activism of some of these women's organisations, makes a welcome contribution to the literature.⁴⁴⁹ Paula Abood, in her chapter on Arab-Australian women's activism, also provides an overview of the early work of the Muslim Women's Association (MWA) in Lakemba in Sydney.⁴⁵⁰ A research study is being presently undertaken by the University of Technology Sydney in collaboration with the Muslim Women's Association on 'Sanctuary and Security in Contemporary Australia: Muslim women's networks, 1980-2005'.⁴⁵¹ The results of this Australian Research Council funded research will undoubtedly make a substantial contribution to our knowledge of Muslim women's networks in Australia.

Leaders of Muslim women's organisations have been exceptionally active in the public media and have also participated in numerous conferences address the broader community on the work of their organisations. Maha Abdo Krayem, Director of the United Muslim Women's Association (MWA) has presented many talks on advocacy and interfaith dialogue including that to the

⁴⁴⁷ Celia McMichael and Lenore Manderson, 2002. 'Somali Women and Well-Being: Social Networks and Social Capital among Immigrant Women in Australia', *Key Centre for Women's Health in Society*, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.

⁴⁴⁸ Celia McMichael, 2002 'Everywhere is Allah's Place': Islam and the Everyday Life of Somali Women in Melbourne, Australia', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol.15 No 2, pp.171-188..

⁴⁴⁹ Samina Yasmeen, 2007 Muslim women as citizens of Australia: Diverse notions and Practices, *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Vol 42, No 1 Autumn pp.41-54

⁴⁵⁰ Paula Abood, 2002, Arab-Australian Women's Activism in Ghassan Hage, ed., *Arab Australians Today*, Melbourne University Press, pp.1612-173.

⁴⁵¹ <http://datasearch.uts.edu.au/hss/staff/details.cfm?StaffId=1614>

2003 NCOSS Conference,⁴⁵² and has written on the work of the MWA,⁴⁵³ and on relations with police.⁴⁵⁴

The Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria, led by Joumana El Matrah, has also been a major advocate for Muslim women with numerous public statements, and several written works about the Council, and in addressing other issues relevant to Muslim women.⁴⁵⁵ The Council has also produced several publications including a media guide for general information on Islam and women.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵² Maha Abdo Krayem, 2003, 'Advocacy and faith based organisations', in, *Advocacy: NCOSS Conference*, March..

http://www.ncoss.org.au/bookshelf/conference/download/advocacy/M_KrayemAbdo-paper.pdf

⁴⁵³ Muslim Womens' Association, *Reflections* Issue 6 September 2005-06
www.reflectons.org.au

⁴⁵⁴ Maha Abdo Krayem, 1999, 'Muslim women and the police', *The Future of Australian Multiculturalism: Reflection on the Twentieth Anniversary of Jean Martin's The Migrant Presence* pp,103-105,

⁴⁵⁵ Joumanah El Matrah, 2003, 'Living in apprehension and fear: the experience of Muslim women'. *Australian Mosaic*, no.3, Winter, pp.31-32.

---Joumanah El Matrah, 2004, 'Muslim women in Victoria following September 11th terrorist attacks in America'. *Healthsharing Women*, vol.12 no.3, Feb, pp 1-4.

---Joumanah El Matrah, 2005, 'Stolen Voices of Muslim Women', *The Age*, April 22.

⁴⁵⁶ The Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria's media guide for general information on Islam and women.

Appendix 2 Bibliography

- Abbasi-Shavazi, M.J. & Jones, G.W., 'Socio-economic and demographic setting of Muslim populations'. *Working papers in demography no.86*, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 2001
<http://demography.anu.edu.au/Publications/WorkingPapers/86.pdf>
- Abdel-Fattah R., 'Muslim women are not idiots', *The Age*, 6 December, 2001.
- Abdel-Fattah R., *Does my head look big in this?* Pan Macmillan Australia Sydney, 2005
- Abdel-Fattah R., 'Veils and Vegemite' *Sydney Morning Herald, Good Weekend*, pp.51-52, 17 February, 2007.
- Abdo Krayem M., 'Advocacy and faith based organisations', in *Advocacy: NCOSS Conference*, March 2003.
http://www.ncoss.org.au/bookshelf/conference/download/advocacy/M_KrayemAbdo-paper.pdf
- Abdo Krayem M., 'Muslim Women and the Police', *The Future of Australian Multiculturalism: Reflection on the Twentieth Anniversary of Jean Martin's 'The Migrant Presence'*, pp, 103-105, 1999.
- Abe W. Ata, *Moslem Arab Portrayal in the Australian Press and in School Textbooks*, 2007.
http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_9/Ata.htm
- Abood P., 'Arab-Australian Women's Activism', pp 161-172 in ed. Hage, G. *Arab Australians Today*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2002
- Aktepe B., 'Services and Needs Audit of the Victorian Muslims Community' *Islamic Council of Victoria, September 30th*, 2003
- Alma, M. 'Lifting the Veil: A Study of Muslim women in the Canterbury-Bankstown area', *Education Links*, no. 48, Winter, pp.26-28, 1994
- Ahmad L., *Women and Gender in Islam: the Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, Yale University Press, 1992,
- Akbarzadeh S., *Islam and the West: Reflections from Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, 2005
- Aly W., 'The Hilali row has fuelled a siege mentality', *The Age*, 7 November, 2006
- Ashfaq Qazi A. , 'Islam and Muslims in Australia' in ed. H. Mutalib and T. Hashim, *Islam, Muslims and the Modern State*, St Martins Press, New York, pp 317-337, 1994.

- Asmar C., 'Muslim Students and their Course Experiences in Australian Universities', <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/aboutus/Muslimstudents.pdf>
- AsmarC., 'A Community on Campus: Muslim students in Australian Universities', in eds. Abdullah Saeed and Shahram Akbarzadeh, *Muslim Communities in Australia*. Sydney, UNSW Press, pp, 138-160, 2001.
- Asmar, C., Proude, E. & Inge, L., 'Unwelcome Sisters?' An analysis of findings from a study of how Muslim women (and men) experience university', *Australian Journal of Education*, Vol 48, No 1, pp.47-63, 2004.
- Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC), *Islamic Schools in NSW*, Oct 2005. <http://www.afic.com.au/smNSW.htm>.
- Australian Parliament Senate Committee, *About Time! Women in Sport and Recreation in Australia Report*, 6 September 2006. <http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/environment>
- Bazeley, P., *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo*, Sage Publications, London, UK, 2007.
- Betts K., 'Immigration and Public Opinion: Understanding the Shift', *People and Place*, vol. 10 no. 4, 2002.
- Betts K., & Healy, E., 'Lebanese Muslims in Australia and Social Disadvantage', *People and Place*, vol. 14 no. 1, 2006.
- Birrell B., 'Second Generation Australians', *Report for the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs*, April 2002, www.immi.gov.au/research/publication/2gen/
- Birrell B., & Healy, E., 'Out-marriage and the Survival of Ethnic Communities in Australia', *People and Place* vol.8, no.3, pp.37-46, 2000. http://elecpress.monash.edu.au/pnp/free/pnpv8n3/v8n3_5BirrHealy.pdf
- Blackford J, & Street A., 'Cultural conflict: the Impact of Western Feminism(s) on Nurses caring for Women of non-English Speaking Background', *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, Vol 11, No 5, pp. 664–671, 2002.
- Bloul R., 'Veiled Objects of (Post)-Colonial Desire: Forbidden Women Disrupt the Republican Fraternal Space', *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, Vol.5, No.1-2, pp.113-123, 1995.
- Bouma, G. & Brace-Govan, J., 'Gender and Religious Settlement: Families, Hijabs and Identity,' *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp.159-175, 2000.
- Brooke D., 'Beliefs about Childhood Immunisation among Lebanese Muslim Immigrants in Australia', *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, Vol. 0, No.3, pp.

229-236, 1999.

Butcher M & Thomas M., ed., *Ingenious, Emerging Youth Cultures in Urban Australia*, Pluto Press, Melbourne, 2003.

Casimiro S. Hancock P. & Northcote J., Isolation and Insecurity: Resettlement Issues among Muslim Women Refugees in Perth Western Australia, *Australian Journal of Social Issues* Vol. 42, No. 1, Autumn 2007.

Centre for Muslim Minorities and Islam Policy Studies, *Social Integration of Muslim Settlers in Cobram*, Monash University, July, pp. 121 ff., 2006.

Leung C., 'Children cast judgement on Muslims', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 February, 2006.

Chowdhury N., 'Presenting Islam: The role of Australia-Based Muslim Student Associations', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 26, No. 2, August 2006.

Cioffi J. 'Caring for women from culturally diverse backgrounds: midwives' experiences', *Journal of Midwifery Women's Health*, Vol. 49, No. 5, pp.437 ff, Sept-Oct 2004.

Coleman D. & Hanlon C., *Recruitment and Retention of Culturally Diverse People by Sport and Active Recreation Clubs*, Centre for Ageing, Rehabilitation, Exercise and Sport, Victoria University, 2005.

Cleland B., *The Muslims in Australia: A Brief History*, Islamic Council of Victoria, 2002.

Collins, J. 'Arab Entrepreneurs in Australia', in *Arab Australians Today*, ed. G.Hage, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, pp.92-127, 2002

Cooke D., 'Muslim women unveil why they marry faith with dress', *The Age*, 30 March, 2007. www.theage.com.au/news/nationa/muslim-women-unveil

Cortis N. & Muir K., 'Participation in Sport and Recreation by Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women', *Social Policy Research Centre Report*, February, 2007.

Costello, M. 'Australian Students under the Minaret', *The Age, Education*, 13 June, p. 4, 2005.

Crittenden S., *Barriers to inclusion*, ABC Radio National, Religion Report, September 12, 2007.
<http://www.abd.net.au/rn/religionreport/stories/2007/2030244.htm#transcript>

Davidson N. & Tremayne B., *Personal Development Health and Physical Education in a Cultural Context: Perspectives of Arabic and non-Arabic speaking year nine students in four Western Sydney high schools*, University of Western Sydney, 1998.

Deen H., *Caravanserai: Journey among Australian Muslims*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2003.

El Dena F., 2007, 'Muslim women say discrimination must stop' ABC Radio Australia, 9 March, 2007.

www.abc.net.au/ra/connectasia/stories/s1867726.htm

Donohoue-Clyne I., 'Cultural Diversity and the Curriculum: the Muslim experience in Australia', *European Journal of Intercultural Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp.279-289, 1998.

Donohoue-Clyne, I. 'Seeking Education for Muslim Children in Australia', *Muslim Education Quarterly*, vol.14, no.3, p.11, 1997.

Dreher, T. & Ho, C., "Not another hijab row': New conversations on gender, race, religion and the making of communities', *Transforming Cultures eJournal*, vol. 2, 2007.

Dreher T & Simmons F., 'Australian Muslim Women's Media Interventions', *Feminist Media Studies*, Vol. 6, No.1, pp. 117-120, 2006.

Dunn K., 'Australian Public Knowledge of Islam', *Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies*, Vol.12, No.1. pp .5-32, 2005

Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW, 'Issues Affecting Refugee Young People', *NESB Youth Issues Network*, March, 2005

Fija B., & Sonn C., 'Pakistani-Muslim Immigrant Women in Western Australia: Perceptions of Identity, Culture and Community'. *Network*, issue 16. pp. 18-27, 2004.

UWE Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research, 3rd Ed.* Sage Publications, London UK, 2006.

Gordon, J, 'Isolated, Rejected, Young Muslims Battle Culture Divide', *The Age*, p.5, 24 August, 2005.

Hassan R., 'Muslim Minority-Majority Relations in Australian Society. A Sociological Analysis', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol 12, no.2, pp 298-9, 1991.

Ho C., 'Cronulla, Conflict and Culture: How can Muslim women be heard in Australia?'. *UTS public lecture*, 5 September, 2006
www.uts.edu.au/new/releases/2006/september/images/utsspeakers/13.html

Ho C., 'Muslim Women's New Defenders: Women's rights, nationalism and Islamophobia in contemporary Australia', *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 30, pp. 290 -298, 2007.

Humphrey, M. *Family, Work and Unemployment: A Study of Lebanese settlement in Sydney*, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIEA) Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1984.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, '*Isma-Listen: National consultations on eliminating prejudice against Arab and Muslim Australians*', HREOC, Sydney, 2004.
http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/isma/report/index.html

Hussein J., *Islam: its Law and Society*, Federation Press, Sydney, 2004.

Hussein J., 'Family Law and Muslim Communities', in *Muslim Communities in Australia*, eds. Abdullah Saeed and Shahram Akbarzadeh, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, pp.161-187, 2001.

Imtoul A, "'A little bit of a slave?' Towards a Theorisation of the Hijab in State Schools' debate in Australia", *Feminist Media Studies* vol.6, No.1, 2006

----- 'Cover your Face for the Photograph Please: Gender Issues, the Media and Muslim Women in Australia', *Journal of Australasian Studies*, 2005.

----- 'Religious Racism and the Media: Representations of Muslim Women in the Australian Print Media', *Outskirts: Feminisms along the edge* vol 13, 2005
<http://www.chloe.uwa.edu.au/outskirts/current/volume13/imtoul>

---- 'Religious Racism and Freedom of Expression: Muslim Women in Australia', in ed. Joseph Suad, *Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures, Vol 2 – Family, Law and Politics*, Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden pp. 175-177, 2005.

----'Is being Australian about being white? Australian Whiteness, National Identity and Muslim Women' in ed. Riggs, D.W. *Taking up the Challenge: Critical Race and Whiteness Studies in a Post-colonising Nation*, Crawford House Publishers, Adelaide, 2005.

Inglis C., Elley J., & Manderson L., *Making Something of Myself: Educational Attainment and Social and Economic Mobility of Turkish-Australian Young People*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1992.

[Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs Volume 26, August 2006](#)

Issues Deliberates, 2007, *Australia Deliberates: Muslims and non-Muslims in Australia*, Canberra, Australia.
http://www.ida.org.au/content.php?p=overview_of_the_dp

Jamal N., 'There is more to Muslim women than a head scarf', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 October, 2006.

Johns A. & Saeed A., 'Muslims in Australia: The Building of a Community', in *Muslim Minorities in the West: Visible and Invisible*, eds. Yvonne Haddad & Jane Smith, Altamira Press, Walnut Creek CA, pp.195-261, 2002.

Kabir N. & Evans, R., 'Muslims and the Australian Labour Market -1980-2001', in *Immigrants and Minorities*, vol.21, no.3, November, pp.70-95, 2003.

Kabir N. & Moore, C.' Muslims in Australia: the new disadvantaged?', *The Brisbane Line*, November 2003.

<http://www.brisinst.org.au/resources/brisbaneinstitutekabirmooremuslim.html>

Kabir N., 'Muslims in Australia: immigration, race relations and cultural history', *Sydney Papers*, vol.17, no. 2, Autumn, 2005.

Kamalkhani, Z., 'Recently Arrived Muslim Refugee Women Coping with Settlement', ed. Saeed. A & Akbarzadeh, S., *Muslim Communities in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney. pp. 97-115, 2001

Kids Help Line: 'Racial intolerance reflected in bullying'. *Kids Help Line*, Nov 2004.

<http://www.kidshelp.com.au/research/Newsletters/KHLNewsletterNovember2004.pdf>

Leishman M., 'Rising Tide of Xenophobia threatens Australia's Coast', *The Common Language project*, March 12th 2007.
www.commonlanguageproject.net

Liamputtong P., in Rice ed., *Living in a New Country: Understanding Migrants' Health*, Ausmed Publications, Melbourne, 1999.

Luckman S, 'People like that: Images of Multiculturalism in the Media'. *Australian Mosaic*, Vol.5 No.1 pp. 24-26, 2004.

Macrae H. & Agostinelli J., 'Women and Literacy', *Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium*, Nathan Qld, 2002.

http://www.staff.vu.edu.au/alnarc/onlineforum/AL_pap_macrae.html

Mandaville, P. 'Muslim Youth in Europe', in eds. S. Hunter & C. Buchanan, *Islam, Europe's Second Religion*, Praeger, Westport USA. pp. 219-229, 2002.

Manderson L. & Allotey P., 'Storytelling, Marginality, and Community in Australia: How Immigrants Position their Difference in Health Care Settings', [*Medical Anthropology*, Vol.22, N0.1, Jan-March, 2003](#)

Mansouri F., 'Multicultural Education and Racism: The case of Arab-Australian Students in Contemporary Australia', *International Education Journal*, vol.6, no.4, pp.516-529, 2005.

Mansouri F. & Kamp A., Structural Deficiency or Cultural Racism: The Educational and Social Experiences of Arab-Australian Youth in Melbourne, *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 42, No. 1 pp.87-02,2007.

El Matrah J., 'Muslim Women in Australia', *The Religion Report*, ABC Radio National, 26 January, 2005.

El Matrah J., 'Muslim women in Victoria following September 11th terrorist attacks in America'. *Healthsharing Women* vol.12 no.3 Feb, pp 1-4, 2004

El Matrah J., 'Islamic Women's Welfare Council profile. Women against Violence' *An Australian Feminist Journal*, no.8, July, pp.77-79, 2000.

El Matrah J., 'Stolen Voices of Muslim Women' 22 April, 2005.
<http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/14819.htm>

El Matrah J., 'Living in Apprehension and Fear: the Experience of Muslim Women'. *Australian Mosaic* no.3, Winter, pp.31-32, 2003.

Mehraby N., 'Suicide: its Pathway, Perception and Prevention amongst Muslims', *Psychotherapy in Australia*, vol.11, no. 2, Feb. pp. 60-65, 2005.

Mehraby N., 'Psychotherapy with Islamic Clients Facing Loss and Grief', *Psychotherapy in Australia*, vol. 9, no.2, Feb. pp. 30-34, 2003.

McCue H., 'Sport as an Arena of Social Inclusion / Exclusion for Young Australian Muslim Women', in *Not another hijab row: New conversations on gender, race, religion and the making of communities Conference*, University of Technology Sydney, 10 December, 2006.

McInerney D. Davidson N. & Suliman R., 'Personal Development, Health and Physical Education in a Cultural Context: Perspectives of Arabic and Non-Arabic Speaking Background Year Nine Students in Four Western Sydney High Schools', *University of Western Sydney*, 1998.

McLeod, J. & Yates, L. "Who is 'us'? Students negotiating discourses of race and national identification in Australia". *Race Ethnicity and Education*, vol. 6 no.1, pp. 21-49, 2003

McMichael C., "'Everywhere is Allah's Place" - Islam and the Everyday Life of Somali Women in Melbourne, Australia,' *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol.15, no.2, pp.171-188, 2002.

McMichael C. & Manderson L., 'Somali Women and Wellbeing: Social Networks and Social Capital among Immigrant Women in Australia', *Human Organization*, Vol. 63, No.1, pp.88-100, 2004

Muslim Women's Organisations, *Reflections*, Issue 6, September 2005.
www.reflections.org.au

Mernissi F, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society*, Saqi Books, UK, 2003.

Noble G. Poynting S., & Tabar, 'Lebanese Youth and Social Identity', in ed. R. White, *Australian Youth Subcultures: On the margins and in the mainstream*, Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, Hobart, pp.130-37, 1999.

Northcote J. et al., 'Breaking the Isolation Cycle: the Experience of Muslim Refugee Women in Australia', *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2006.

Poynting S., 'The Resistible Rise of Islamophobia: Anti-Muslim Racism in the UK and Australia before 11 September 2001', *Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 43, No. 1, pp.61-86. 2007.

Poynting S. & Noble G., 'I don't have my freedom': Arab and Muslim Australians, Experiences of Racial Hatred, Abuse and Violence since 11 September'. The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) Conference 2004. <http://www.tasa.org.au/conferencepapers04/content.html>

Poynting S. & Noble G., 'Dog-whistle' Journalism and Muslim Australians since 2001', [*Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy*](#), No 109, November, pp. 41-49, 2003

Poynting S., 'Living with Racism: the Experience and Reporting by Arab and Muslim Australians of Discrimination, Abuse and Violence since 11 September 2001', *Report to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission*, April, 2004.

Poynting S., "'Bin Laden in the suburbs': Attacks on Arab and Muslim Australians before and after 11 September", *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, vol.14 no.1, July, 2002.

Radzi W.M., *Muslim Women and Sports in the Malay World*, Silkworm Books, Thailand, 2006.

Rida, A. & Milton, M., 'The Non-joiners: Why Migrant Muslim Women aren't Accessing English Language Classes', *Prospect*, vol.16, no.1, pp.35-48, 2001.

Riley M. & Burke K., 'PM Veiled comments on how Muslim women dress', *AAP*, 22 November, 2002.
www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/11/21/10376978806923.html

Roude, N., Krayem, M. & Abdallah, A M, 'Muslim Foster Care project: a successful model of partnership between the Muslim community and the Department of Community Services in NSW', in *Proceedings, 8th Australasian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect.*, Victorian Department of Human Services, Melbourne, 2001.

Rozario S., 1998, 'On Being Australian and Muslim: Muslim Women as Defenders of Islamic Heritage', *Women's Studies International*, Forum 21, no. 6, pp 649-661, 1998.

Saeed A., 'Muslim Australians: their Beliefs, Practices and Institutions', *Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and the Australian Multicultural Foundation in association with the University of Melbourne*, 2004.

Shah F., 'There's enough room under the burqa for personal choice', *The Age*, 8 January, 2004.

Stapleton J., 'I'm not fresh meat: Muslim women hit back', *The Australian*, 30 October, 2006.

Stephen S., 'Guilty of Being Muslim', *Green Left*, 1 November, 2005

Strong G., 'Dinky-di Aussie Muslims', *The Age*, 4 August, 2005

Sunbul, A., 'An analysis of relations among locus of control, burnout and job satisfaction in Turkish high school teachers', *Australian Journal of Education*, vol.47, No.1, pp.58-72, 2003.

Saeed A. & Akbarzadeh, S., ed., *Muslim Communities in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney. 2001.

Sanjakdar F., 'The Health Issues of Australian Muslim youth: What every teacher must know', *Education Links*, no. 64, pp. 27-30, 2002.

UTS *Transforming Cultures*, 'Sanctuary and Security in Contemporary Australia: Muslim Women's Networks, 1980-2005', ARC linkage Grant. www.transforming.cultures.uts.edu.au/news_events/muslim

Taylor, T. 'Cultural Diversity and Leisure: Experiences of Women in Australia'. *Loisir et Societe Culture et mode de vie*, Vol. 24, No 2, Autumn, 2001. www.erudit.org/revue/lis/2001/v24/n2/000194ar.html

Thomas, D.R. & Dyll, L. 'Culture, Ethnicity and Sports Management: A New Zealand Perspective', *Sports Management Review*, Vol 2, pp.115-132, 1999.

Tse T., 'Islamic Community Worker Training Program for the Management of Depression', *Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health (AeJAMH)*, Vol.1, Issue 2, 2002.

The Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria, *Media Guide for General Information on Islam and Women*, 2005.

Tsianakas, V & Liamputtong, P., 'What women from Islamic backgrounds in Australia say about care in Prenatal Testing and Antenatal Care', *Midwifery*, Vol.18, No.1, pp.25-34, 2002.

Tsianakas, V. & Liamputtong, P., 'Pregnancy, Prenatal Testing and Abortion: A Perspective from Muslim Women in Australia', *Australian Journal of Primary Health*, vol.7, no.2. pp. 15-23., 2001.

Tsianakas, V., 'The Reproductive Health of Muslim Women', *Healthsharing Women*, vol.12, no.3, pp.11-14, Feb. 2004.

Vertovec S. & Rogers A., *Muslim European Youth - Reproducing Ethnicity, Religion and Culture*, Ashgate, UK, pp 10-14, 1998.

Vescio, J. 'An Exploration of Sports Participation by Girls from non-English Speaking Backgrounds', *ACHPER Healthy Lifestyles Journal*, vol. 46, no.1, pp 14-19, 1999.

Vose, C & Thurecht, K. 'What is different when you have a baby in a new country?' in Rice, P.L., ed., *Living in a New Country: Understanding Migrants' Health*. Ascot Vale, Vic: Ausmed Publications, pp 43-55, 1999.

Wadud A., *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform and Islam*, Oneworld, Oxford, 2006.

Wadud A., 'A'ishah's Legacy', in 'Islam: Resistance and Reform', *New Internationalist*, May 2002.

Walseth, K. & Fasting, K. 'Sport as a Means of Integrating Minority Women', *Sport in Society*, Vol.7, No.1, Spring, 2004

Walseth, K. & Fasting, K. 'Islam's View on Physical Activity and Sport, Egyptian women interpreting Islam', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Vol. 38, No.1, 2003

Walseth, K. 'Young Muslim Women and Sport: the Impact of Identity Work', *Leisure Studies* Vol. 25, No.1, pp. 75-94. January, 2006

Whitten C. & Thompson S., *When Cultures Collide: Planning for the Public Spatial Needs of Muslim Women in Sydney*, Social City 2007, http://www.aph.gov.au/library/INTGUIDE/sp/muslim_australians.htm

Yasmeen, S., 'Settlement Needs of Muslim Women in Perth: A Case Study', in ed. A. Saeed & S. Akbarzadeh, *Muslim Communities in Australia*. Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2001.

Yusaf I., 'Muslims must speak out or be condemned for their silence', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 April, 2005.

Yusof F. & Siedlecky S., 'Family Formation Patterns among Migrant Women in Sydney', *Journal of Biosocial Science*, Vol. 28, no. 1, pp 89-99, 1996.

Zevallos, Z. 'It's like we're their culture: Second Generation Migrant Women discuss Australian Culture', *People and Place*, vol.13, no.2 pp.41-49, 2005.