Muslim Community Organisations and Leadership in Australia

Submitted by

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Abstract

Contemporary Islamophobia, strengthened by its intersectionality with overlapping phenomena, such as racism and protectionist attitudes towards migration, has impacted and affected Australian Muslim communities in a variety of ways. Muslim community organisations (MCOs), often serving as the link between Muslim communities and government, media and wider society, are consistently required to navigate the challenges that arise amidst the socio-political context in which they operate.

By exploring the socio-political context and developing an enhanced understanding of the overall structure of MCOs in Australia, this thesis identifies and examines the key contemporary challenges facing Australian MCOs. Through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with twenty-four representatives of MCOs from across the five Australian cities with the largest self-identifying Muslim populations (Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide), this research provides a new and valuable insight into issues that are both contemporarily important and significant for Australia’s future.

After separating MCOs into three categories (peak bodies, collective religious leadership and community groups), this thesis identifies several key themes that emerged from the interviews representing internal challenges to MCOs. These included: the generation gap, employment of imams, diversity of Muslims in Australia, and staff, funding and governance. It then explores Islamophobia as an external challenge, addressing how it affects MCOs and some of the ways in which they have responded. Finally, building on the discussion in previous chapters, it discusses how the nature of MCOs’ relationships are shaped by these internal and external challenges.

This qualitative research provides a comprehensive, yet accessible introduction to Australian MCOs and assists researchers and organisations intending or committed to working with Australian MCOs to better understand their natures and realities.
Candidate Declaration

I, Ryan Edwards, declare that this thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other materials used.

This thesis is fewer than the maximum word limit in length exclusive of tables, the bibliography and appendices.

Ryan Edwards
August 2018
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, my sincere gratitude to my two supervisors Dr Muhammad Kamal and Dr Christina Mayer. Thank you for your guidance, support and encouragement over the duration of my candidature.

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Finally, and perhaps most importantly, to the twenty-four representatives of Muslim community organisations across Australia, thank you for taking the time to talk to me and share your experiences and insights. I am eternally grateful for the moments we spent together – in cafés, mosques, offices and homes – and look forward to crossing paths again.
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<td>ABC</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACNC</td>
<td>Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFIC</td>
<td>Muslims Australia – Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (formerly Australian Federation of Islamic Societies)</td>
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<td>AFP</td>
<td>Australian Federal Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMARA1H</td>
<td>Australian Muslim Advocates for the Rights of All Humanity</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMWA</td>
<td>Australian Muslim Women’s Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANIC</td>
<td>Australian National Imams Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOIV</td>
<td>Board of Imams Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAIR</td>
<td>Forum for Australian Islamic Relations</td>
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<td>FAMSY</td>
<td>Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth</td>
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<td>HREOC</td>
<td>Human Rights Equal Opportunity Commission</td>
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<td>ICNSW</td>
<td>Islamic Council of New South Wales</td>
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<td>ICQ</td>
<td>Islamic Council of Queensland</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICV</td>
<td>Islamic Council of Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICWA</td>
<td>Islamic Council of Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>IICSA</td>
<td>Islamic Information Centre of South Australia</td>
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<td>IRAUS</td>
<td>Islamic Relief Australia</td>
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<td>ISCV</td>
<td>Islamic Shia Council of Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISD</td>
<td>Islamic Society of Darwin</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISG</td>
<td>Islamic Society of Geelong</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISIS</td>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (otherwise known as IS or ISIL)</td>
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<td>ISSA</td>
<td>Islamic Society of South Australia</td>
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<td>IWAA</td>
<td>Islamic Women’s Association of Australia (formerly Islamic Women’s Association of Queensland)</td>
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<td>LMA</td>
<td>Lebanese Muslim Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCO</td>
<td>Muslim Community Organisation</td>
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<td>MCSO</td>
<td>Muslim Civil Society Organisation</td>
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<td>MFIS</td>
<td>Malek Fahd Islamic School</td>
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<td>MIA</td>
<td>Markaz Imam Ahmad</td>
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<td>Muslim Student Association</td>
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<td>MWASA</td>
<td>Muslim Women’s Association of South Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>MWNNA</td>
<td>Muslim Women’s National Network Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>MWSC</td>
<td>Muslim Women’s Support Centre Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>MYWA</td>
<td>Muslim Youth Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBS</td>
<td>Special Broadcasting Service</td>
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<td>UMIS</td>
<td>University of Melbourne Islamic Society</td>
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<td>UMMA</td>
<td>United Muslim Migrant Association</td>
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<td>UWAMSA</td>
<td>University of Western Australia Muslim Student Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>UWSMSA</td>
<td>University of Western Sydney Muslim Student Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>WIC</td>
<td>Werribee Islamic Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>YMA</td>
<td>Young Muslims of Australia</td>
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Introduction

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, no minority religious community has captured media attention to the same extent as Muslims have in the West. International and domestic events linking Islam, Muslims and violence, have led some sectors of the Australian media to promote assumptions that define Islam as culturally incompatible with Australian society and Muslim migrants, in particular, as a threat to national security. This notion is given substance by the fact that the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks of 2001 were Muslim, that those recently seeking political asylum in Australia have predominantly been Muslim, and that Australia’s recent military engagement has been primarily in Muslim-majority countries.

Grotesque images of beheadings and mass murder too often serve as the wider public’s entry point into what are complex debates about the struggle for Muslim loyalties. Shaped and reinforced by political unrest in Iraq and Syria with the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), ‘home-grown terrorism’, such as the Martin Place hostage crisis, that are predominantly framed through

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4 The September 11 attacks of 2001 (commonly referred to as “9/11”) were a series of attacks against American civilians and the United States Department of Defense that were allegedly organised and carried out by members al-Qaeda. Four commercial flights were hijacked with two flown into the World Trade Centre building in New York, one into the Pentagon in Washington, and the fourth crashing into a field in Pennsylvania. About 3,000 people lost their lives in the attacks.
8 The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is also referred to as al-Dawla al-Islāmiyya fi al-Iraq wa al-Shām (DAESH), Islamic State of Iraq and al-Shām (ISIS), Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or simply Islamic State (IS).
9 In December 2014, an armed Man Haron Monis walked into the Lindt Chocolate Café in Sydney’s Martin Place and took seventeen people hostage. Monis, who was on bail for a series of violent offences, including being an accessory to the murder of his ex-wife, was in Australia after being granted political asylum. Monis
their relation to Islam rather than the accompanying socio-political elements involved, a modern form of racism has emerged – Islamophobia – in which Islam is portrayed and believed as irrational, barbaric and sexist, and as inferior to Western cultures.\textsuperscript{10}

Utilising existing orientalist ideas and terminology that emphasise Muslims and Islam as the “other”, Islamophobia has meant that Muslims have increasingly become the subject of a type of everyday and institutional racism that targets them as illegitimate members of the Australian community.\textsuperscript{11} Islam has come to be seen as an “enemy” of Australia.\textsuperscript{12}

Part of the public relations problem that the Australian Muslim community is facing, is that wider society tends to view the Islamic faith as monolithic. This is consistent with how Islam is often viewed in the West. The mere use of the term ‘Islam’ to explain the diverse Islamic world is an irresponsible over-generalisation that is problematic and counterproductive.\textsuperscript{13} According to Edward Said, present in this approach is an assumption that ‘the West’ is greater than and has surpassed the stage of Christianity – its principal religion; whereas, the world of Islam, its varied societies, histories, and languages notwithstanding, is still mired in the religion, primitivity and backwardness.\textsuperscript{14}

Within the discourse surrounding Muslims in Australia, Muslim community organisations (MCOs) and their representatives are often seen and judged through the perception of their responses to incidents of terrorism and violence involving Muslims. This can be said to constitute a demand that is

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{10} Ruunymede Trust, \textit{Islamophobia: a challenge for us all} (London: Ruunymede Trust, 1997).

\textsuperscript{11} Farida Fozdar, “‘They want to turn to their religion. But they should turn to be Australians’: Everyday Discourses About Why Muslims Don’t Belong in Australia,” in \textit{Muslim Citizens in the West: Spaces and Agents of Inclusion and Exclusion}, eds. Samina Yasmeen and Nina Markovic (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014), 93.

\textsuperscript{12} Fethi Mansouri, Michele Lobo and Rim Latrache, “Chapter 9: Negotiating Norms of Inclusion: Comparative Perspectives from Muslim Community Leadership in the West,” in \textit{Migration, Citizenship and Intercultural Relations: Looking through the Lens of Social Inclusion}, eds. Fethi Mansouri and Michele Lobo (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 132.

\textsuperscript{13} Fethi Mansouri, “Muslim Migration to Australia and the Question of Identity and Belonging,” 29.

best represented by then Prime Minister Tony Abbott’s comments in 2015 regarding the threat of ISIS and the need for Muslim leaders to speak out against terrorist acts:

> Everybody, including Muslim community leaders, need to speak up clearly because, no matter what the grievance, violence against innocents must surely be blasphemy against all religion ... I’ve often heard Western leaders describe Islam as a ‘religion of peace’. I wish more Muslim leaders would say that more often, and mean it.\(^\text{15}\)

A comment such as this, coming from the most powerful elected official in Australia, helps illustrate part of the challenge confronting MCOs and MCO representatives in Australia.

### 0.1 Research Problem

Given the Australian public’s heightened exposure to Muslim terrorism and violence over the last two decades, Muslim community leaders are often called upon by politicians and media figures alike, to speak out against terrorist acts committed in the name of Islam.

Australian Muslim leaders are growing increasingly frustrated at this situation – either they condemn or are themselves condemned. Then Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) President Ghaith Krayem captured this attitude in 2014:

> We don’t feel the need any longer to have to go out there and be judged every single time something occurs overseas ... We have made that statement so fundamentally clear that it’s actually insulting ... [that] we have to restate it every single time. We are sick and tired as a community of being put in the spotlight every single time something occurs, when there is absolutely no genuine engagement with Government around the genuine and fundamental issues our community is facing.\(^\text{16}\)

As Krayem’s statement indicates, Australian Muslim leaders are seeking to broaden the boundaries of how Islam is discussed within Australia as well as furthering their political participation. His frustration emerges not only because many Muslim leaders have been vocal and succinct in their

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abhorrance to Muslim terrorists, but also due to his belief that the Government is not actively seeking to engage with Muslims as communities.

Many representatives of MCOs share Krayem’s frustrations and feel like they are effectively sidelined from Government policy decisions regarding their communities.\(^\text{17}\)

However, the absence of legitimate or meaningful engagement between Government and MCOs has not stopped various Governments in Australia introducing and implementing policies that directly or indirectly target Muslim communities.\(^\text{18}\) Over the last few decades, an industry has developed in which an array of organisations –institutions of government, education providers, non-government organisations (NGOs), religious organisations and so on – apply for and receive funding to focus on addressing specific “problems” identified in sections of Muslim communities. Often such programs are positioned as helping to increase social cohesion or enhance community relations.\(^\text{19}\)

Despite the development of this industry, there is little in the form of a complex and comprehensive study focusing on the make-up, structures and divisions of Australian MCOs. Numerous useful and informative studies have focused on aspects of MCOs and in a variety of ways (see Scope and Significance of the Research), but the field can benefit from a broader and contemporary approach to Australian MCOs.

**0.2 Objectives & Research Questions**

The overriding objective of this thesis has been to provide a multi-faceted appraisal of the history, the institutions and the diversity of community leadership among Muslims in Australia.

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\(^{18}\) Georgina Cole, “The systemic marginalisation of Muslim Australian voices: To what extent can Deliberative Democratic theory provide a response?” (Ph.D., University of Melbourne, 2017), 22-30.

While this thesis has been conducted to assist policy makers, it was also conducted, in part, to assist Australian Muslims in developing strong, capable, responsive and stable organisations, and provide an insight into the best ways for this to be achieved.

Through a careful analysis of relevant literature, content/textual analysis, community observation and, most importantly, direct engagement with twenty-four representatives of MCOs (see Appendix A: List of Participants) from across the five Australian cities with the largest self-identifying Muslim populations (Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide), this research provides a new and valuable insight into issues that are both contemporarily important and significant for Australia’s future.

This research has focused on exploring Australian MCOs, identifying some of the challenges they face in pursuing their aims and visions, and appreciating the nature of their relationships with other organisations.

In seeking to satisfy the ambition of this thesis, this research examines five key questions, which also serve as the basis for its structure (see 0.6 Thesis Outline):

1. Considering the history of Australia’s Muslim communities, what are the relevant contextual themes and debates related to their emergence?
2. What is the collective structure and the individual structures of important institutions of representation and leadership for Australian Muslim communities?
3. What are the internal challenges impacting the sustainability and effectiveness of Australian MCOs?
4. How does Islamophobia, and the intersection of Islamophobia with other related phenomena serving to limit access to social capital for minority groups, manifest and impact Australian MCOs?
5. What is the nature of key social and political relationship participating MCOs have?
0.3 Scope and Significance of the Research

In a socio-political environment characterised, in part, by concepts of fear, hatred and misunderstanding, a vast body of literature from a broad spectrum of disciplines has sought to develop understanding about the relationship Australian Muslims have with their country and its institutions. While several academics, including Abdullah Saeed, Shahram Akbarzadeh and Mario Peucker, have made valuable contributions to our understanding, few studies have sought to comprehensively address the role of MCOs and the challenges they face in the contemporary Australian context.

One academic and community activist to make a substantial contribution to this field is Nora Amath. In her 2014 Ph. D. thesis, and subsequent book *The Phenomenology of Community Activism: Muslim Civil Society Organisations in Australia*, Amath provided a detailed analysis of Muslim civil society organisations (MCSOs). Based on 30 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 15 MCSO actors in Australia, Amath’s study sought, in part, to “explore how Muslim civil society actors have responded to challenges of the Australian socio-political context and the perceived impact these experience had on them,” while presenting “the experiences and narratives of Muslim civil society actors in Australia from their own lived experience and in their own words.”

Amath’s research mapped 486 MCSOs in Australia, while providing a thorough insight into the nature and aims of many organisations and their responses to the September 11 attacks. She also addressed how Islam has manifested and been utilised in the contemporary Australian socio-political environment, as well as the implications for future inter-community relations and Islam in Australia.

While Amath’s research has helped address the need for studies that comprehensively address the role of Muslim community leadership groups and the challenges they face in the contemporary

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Australian context, there are still several dynamics associated with Australian MCOs that could benefit from further analysis.

This thesis builds on Amath’s work and helps develop a greater appreciation for the issues facing MCOs in contemporary Australia. Whereas the focus of Amath’s fieldwork was predominantly on grassroots community development groups, this research is targeted at a broad variety of leadership organisations. These included representatives of collective religious organisations, representatives of Muslim peak bodies, as well as a collection of representatives from the grassroots community-based organisations that Amath utilised. This was so as to provide, in part, an analysis of how and when these groups interact with each other, the nature of these relationships and whether their aims and visions, as well as their means to achieving them, align.

Further literature relevant to the various subjects, concepts and frameworks referenced in this thesis have been approached on a “when-and-as-needed” basis. This serves as the most approachable means of relating this thesis with existing literature.

0.4 Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This research relied on qualitative research techniques to attain its conclusions, while embracing methods approaching grounded theory as a means of both shaping and responding to the research questions.

Grounded theorising involves a set of techniques which emphasises the creation of theoretical statements from the inspection of data. A grounded theory is discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to the phenomenon it represents. Therefore, as Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin suggest, “data

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collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge.”

Briks and Mills write that fundamental to a grounded theory research design is the process of concurrent data generation and analysis. To achieve this:

The researcher generates or collects some data with an initially purposive sample. The data from these initial encounters is coded before more data is collected or generated and the process of analysis repeated. It is this concept that differentiates grounded theory from other types of research design that requires the researcher either initially to collect and subsequently analyse the data, or to construct a theoretical proposition and then collect data to test their hypothesis.

Much in the same way, Mattoni contends: “Researchers are supposed to begin their data analysis early in their investigation so that they can refine the way in which they observe the data while they continue to collect them.”

In grounded theory, data is analysed through methods of coding. Coding is about labelling segments of data so as to simultaneously categorise, summarise and account for each piece of data. Coding consists of at least two phases – initial coding and focused coding – but it is not a linear process, and researchers move back and forth between the different phases of coding (despite doing more initial coding at the beginning than the end of the study). In the initial coding (or ‘open coding’) phase, the researcher breaks the data down into discrete parts, which are closely examined and compared for similarities and differences, with assumptions questioned or explored and leading to new discoveries. As a result of doing the initial coding, researchers will eventually ‘discover’ the most

25 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
significant or frequent initial codes that make the most analytical sense. In focused coding, these codes are identified or constructed as focused codes and used to sift through large amounts of data.  

After a period of concurrent data generation and analysis, theoretical saturation (when enough data is gathered) should be reached and the theory finalised and written.

One of the goals of grounded theory is for the theory to be comprehensible and make sense to both the participants who were studied, as well as to those practising in the area. This thesis, through its structure, content and presentation, has consciously attempted to achieve this goal.

In order to gather and analyse data, this research relied on the following techniques: semi-structured in-depth interviews, content/textual analysis and community observation.

0.4.1 Semi-Structured in-Depth Interviews:

To justify engagement with MCOs, this research relied on the views and testimony of twenty-four representatives of a wide variety of ethnic and cultural communities from around Australia. These participants have allowed for a relatively high level of confidence that the views gathered are reflective of a wide section of community organisations (see Chapter Two). The data were gathered and analysed to best represent views on numerous issues and obtain valuable information pertaining to the nature of MCOs in Australia.

Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Melbourne and participants were provided a plain language statement (see Appendix D) and required to sign a consent form (see Appendix E).

These face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews formed the qualitative research basis of this thesis. The flexibility of this interview structure allowed for greater and more detailed

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33 Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, Basics of Qualitative Research, 23.
communication. With the assistance of an interview guide (a written list of topics that were to be covered), the semi-structured format provided sufficient control over the direction of the interview, while also allowing for new leads to be followed when appropriate.\textsuperscript{34}

Open-ended questions were used as they did not limit the answers to those constructed by the researcher. Furthermore, studies have shown that people responding to potentially intrusive questions are least threatened when they can offer their own answers to open-ended questions.\textsuperscript{35}

The open-ended question method has received some criticism in academic circles. Those that prefer alternative question methods argue that the diversity of answers, for instance, makes it difficult to analyse the responses.\textsuperscript{36} As a result, particular attention was paid to ensuring that the questions remained unambiguous, but not leading. Care was taken to avoid constructing what Patrick Champagne has termed “opinion for opinion polls” – that is, a questionnaire in which the questions often prove much more interesting than the answers because they rather directly reveal the preoccupation of the researcher.\textsuperscript{37}

The design and nature of the interviews meant that they were able to flow and divert in accordance with the mood and tone of the discussion, which was crucial.

Through the course of the semi-structured interviews, it was important to consider that, even though the objective of pure knowledge distinguishes the interview from most of the exchanges in everyday life, it remains a social relationship.\textsuperscript{38} As a result, the interview is subject to the different parameters that can influence the relationship between people.\textsuperscript{39} It was important to reflect on the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Fowler} Ibid, 240-41.
\bibitem{Ibid} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
complex relationship that exists between the interviewer and respondent.\textsuperscript{40} Karl Nunkoosing reflects on the interview as a power relationship wherein the power of the interviewer and potential resistance from the respondent raises issues of authenticity, consent and the projection of the interviewer's own self (their status, race, culture and gender).\textsuperscript{41} Similarly, in his \textit{theory of practice}, Bourdieu discusses the many distortions embedded in the structure of the research relationship – many of which relate to the nature of the social relationship between interviewer and respondent.\textsuperscript{42} Issues such as these cannot be and were not easily attended; however, an awareness of them was needed in order to anticipate the challenges of interviewing and presenting respondents' views and opinions as authentically as possible.\textsuperscript{43}

Asking appropriate questions and relying on respondents to discuss their experiences requires patience and skill,\textsuperscript{44} and this drove the interviews conducted by this research. To ensure that the views of the interviewee were captured and reflected as effectively as possible, a number of interview techniques were used.

Crucial to conducting a successful interview is being able to effectively probe the individual into eliciting a truthful response – that is, “to stimulate a respondent to produce more information, without injecting yourself so much into the interaction that you only get a reflection of yourself in the data.”\textsuperscript{45} On occasion, the most efficient way of prompting a revealing response is to remain silent, thus allowing the respondent time to reflect on their thoughts and experiences long kept

\textsuperscript{40} John W. Creswell, \textit{Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2007), 140.
\textsuperscript{42} Pierre Bourdieu, “Understanding,” 608.
\textsuperscript{43} John W. Creswell, \textit{Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design}, 140.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, 141.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 196.
unsaid or repressed. As Bourdieu writes:

*Active and methodical listening* – combines a total availability to the person being questioned, submission to the singularity of a particular life history – which can lead, by a kind of more or less controlled imitation, to adopting the interviewee’s language, views, feelings, and thoughts – with methodical construction, founded on the knowledge of the objective conditions common to an entire social category.

In regard to the interviews conducted for the purpose of this thesis, negotiating the social and religious distance between interviewer and respondent and limiting the effects of what Bourdieu calls the “intrusion effect” was crucial. He wrote:

Researchers who are socially close to their respondents provide them with guarantees against the threat of having subjective reasoning reduced to objective causes, and having choices experienced as free turned into objective determinisms uncovered by analysis.

Given that this researcher is not immediately socially close to many of the respondents, it was important that he familiarise himself, to the greatest extent possible, with the numerous issues and realities facing the wider Australian Muslim community (see Content/Textual Analysis and Community Observation), so as to partially overcome these perceptions of distance. Likewise, open communication with the respondents served to decrease their potential fear of being patronised or objectified.

With the explicit permission of the participants, these interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed as part of the research documentation. Permission was sought before publishing the names and institutions of the participants. It was important to acknowledge here Bourdieu’s warning that tape recorders reinforce the social relation between the respondent and researcher that can produce a powerful effect of censorship. Therefore, as the interviewer, this researcher remained

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46 Pierre Bourdieu, “Understanding,” 615.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid, 615-16.
mindful of this fact and endeavoured to provide an atmosphere that limited the potential for non-truthful expression. Giving the respondent control over the tape recorder is one technique that has been used by other researchers with relative success, and, as such, it was utilised as a method in this study.

Of the twenty-four semi-structured interviews conducted in this research, twenty-two provided permission for their names to be published, whilst twenty were recorded. Participants that were not recorded were offered an opportunity to review the notes of the interview and make any adjustments they deemed necessary.

Following a process set out by Kathryn Roulston, there were three stages to the analysis of the interview data: data reduction, data reorganisation and data representation.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim during the data reduction stage. However, sections in which the discussion had minimal use to the answering of the research questions were subsequently reduced and often replaced by brief summaries or descriptors. In the rare event that the redacted material became useful, the brief summaries served to identify the part of the recording that needed to be revisited.

Care was taken throughout the process of transcribing the recorded interviews. Even the most literal form of redaction can be said to represent a translation or interpretation; however, according to Bourdieu, “the intrusion of the analyst is as difficult as it is necessary.” He wrote:

In taking the responsibility for publishing these discourses which, as such, are placed, as Benveniste says, “in a pragmatic situation implying a certain intention of influencing the interlocutor,” the analyst not only has to accept the role of transmitter of their symbolic efficacy, but, above all, risks allowing people free play in the game of reading, that is, in the

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spontaneous (even wild) constructions each reader necessarily puts on things read.\(^{54}\)

So as not to shirk from the responsibilities of the researcher, the interviews were personally transcribed.

The interview data were categorised during the data reorganisation phase using the data analysis computer software program NVivo.

Given the semi-structured nature of these interviews, some moments of the conversations referred to multiple discussion topics simultaneously. Using nodes allowed for interview data to be organised under multiple titles of relevancy. The interview data was reorganised on a case by case basis – meaning one interview was reorganised at a time. The same reorganisation principles applied to each interview.

During the data representation stage, initial coding and focused coding were carried out. In the initial coding phase, data were coded into nodes – allowing for related data to be organised and gathered in the one place. Examples of the labelling of these nodes included, for instance, “challenge – funding” or “insular community”. During the focused coding phase, certain nodes which were frequently brought up by “sources” (individual interviewees who discussed the topic or issue) and with a relatively substantial rate of “reference” (how many times the topic or issue was mentioned across all interviews) were compared and grouped according to the developing themes that were emerging. For instance, during this phase nodes such as “insular community” and “divisions between communities” were linked as a subcategory of the encompassing internal challenge of Diversity of Muslims in Australia (see 3.4 Diversity of Muslims in Australia).

\(^{54}\) Ibid, 623.
In line with the principles of grounded theory as suggested by Birks, Mills, and Mattoni, the processes of data reduction, data reorganisation and data representation were completed concurrently during and after each period of interviews.

Initial interviews took place in Melbourne and Geelong in August and September 2016, before interviews of participants from Adelaide and Perth in late October and November 2016. Further interviews were conducted with other participants from Melbourne in February and March 2017, before participants from Sydney and Brisbane were interviewed later in March. Following further interviews with relevant individuals in and around Melbourne in May through July 2017, a comfortable sense of theoretical saturation was reached; however, one final interview was permitted in Melbourne in December 2017 to gain further insight and benefit analysis in one specific area (though the interview was administered in a manner consistent with previous interviews).

Since grounded theorising involves collecting data in episodes punctuated by periods of data analysis; it cannot occur if data collection takes place at a single point in the research process. As such, throughout the gaps between the periods in which the interviews took place, as well as during stages with an intense interview schedule, the data were examined and re-examined in light of developing themes and principal features. This fed into improving the interview guide and, subsequently, the development of key themes and, in time, the construction of the framework of the structure of this thesis.

0.4.2 Content/Textual Analysis:

The thorough analysis of primary sources such as public statements, blogs, online web series, websites and interviews provided greater understanding of the issues currently facing MCOs in Australia.

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Drisko and Maschi argue that researchers can use content analysis “to identify and document the attitudes, views, and interests of individuals, small groups, or large and diverse cultural groups.”\(^{56}\) Utilising and analysing the aforementioned primary sources and materials provided an insight into the aims and visions of MCOs and MCO representatives and, in turn, fed into and shaped the discussion topics for the semi-structured interviews.

Furthermore, thorough content/textual analysis of secondary sources formed part of the foundational basis of this research. There has been – especially in the last two decades – and continues to be, significant literature published on Muslims in the West and this research was analysed, embraced and challenged to help formulate ideas. Specifically, there have been a few key works on Muslim community leadership in Australia and these are discussed within the relevant sections of this thesis.

**0.4.3 Community Observation**

Community observation was effective in this study. As a non-Muslim researching MCOs, immersion in relevant social media platforms, online forums, websites, Muslim community politics and social events were crucial to developing an appreciation for challenges and issues facing Australian Muslim communities, as well as for gaining a degree of confidence from the participants. Establishing a rapport with members of Muslim communities and acting in a way that participants could feel comfortable was of benefit to this thesis. However, it was important to consider that while using community observation as a research method, when appropriate, one must maintain mental and emotional distance, objectivity and integrity, so that proper analysis of what has been seen and observed can take place.\(^{57}\)

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Observation has been described as “the fundamental base of all research methods” in social science.\(^{58}\) However, participant observation has been described as “the most ethically problematic of social research methods, because it’s thoroughly manipulative.”\(^{59}\) Even though one may attempt to passively observe a community, for instance, objective observation can be difficult to achieve.\(^{60}\)

In order to remain as objective as possible throughout community observation, the researcher remained mindful of a number of useful techniques and theories.

Recently postmodernists from a variety of disciplines have emphasised the importance of understanding researchers’ “situations” (e.g. their gender, social class and ethnicity) as part of interpreting the products of their research.\(^{61}\) As in the interviews, this research remained mindful of the social relationship between researcher and members of Muslim communities in Australia so as to best reflect the reality of MCOs in Australia.

Particular attention was paid to controlling language used so as not to objectify the participants.\(^{62}\)

For example, using a phrase like “your mosque” rather than “the mosque” in order to emphasise the fact that the account is that of the participant and avoiding the perception that the researcher is sliding unconsciously between role of narrator and participant.\(^{63}\)

In a more practical sense, it was important to plan observational sessions and to design an observational protocol as a method for recording notes in the field. Following the observational method set out by John W. Creswell,\(^{64}\) the early observational sessions started with limited objectives and were aimed at simply immersing oneself in the community, whereas later sessions

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\(^{61}\) Ibid.


\(^{63}\) Ibid.

\(^{64}\) John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 134-35.
provided more data or insight for analysis. Likewise, stressing the accessibility of the thesis and thanking participants for their assistance were also important.\(^65\)

0.5 Limitations

As a non-Muslim researching MCOs, there was the possibility of cultural or spiritual roadblocks arising. Although having completed an Honours in Islamic Studies at the University of Melbourne enabled for a degree of understanding of Islam as a religion, as well as an appreciation for a diverse range of Muslim experiences, having no direct spiritual or historical relationship with Islam was, at times, somewhat problematic. For instance, on occasion participants were asked to politely explain or elaborate on the use of a word or term with which the author was not strictly familiar. Whilst infrequent, this did serve to interrupt the natural flow of some interviews.

While this thesis strives to be objective and impartial, the author acknowledges his own \textit{habitus}\(^66\) and that he is still influenced by the pre-existing positions and perspectives held in relation to the subject matter, and that he is not entirely impartial in the interpretation of data and subsequent findings.

Furthermore, although this research aimed to develop a level of understanding of Australian MCOs beyond or detached from the prevailing research trend in Australia and in the West wherein research into Muslim communities is often conducted on the premise of a heightened association between Islam and violence, it is only natural to presume that the communication between researcher and interviewee was impacted, to varying degrees, by this phenomenon. There were times throughout the interviews when some participants would either visibly suggest or audibly express an uncertainty or a reluctance to provide insight into a particular line of enquiry. Although these moments were rare, they need to be acknowledged in that they provide an insight into the

\(^{65}\) Ibid, 135.

\(^{66}\) According to Bourdieu, each person has a set of dispositions to respond more or less spontaneously to the world in particular ways.
impact of the politicisation of Muslims in the West and how that impacts the nature of communication between Muslim and non-Muslim – or specifically, in this case, between Muslim subject and non-Muslim researcher.

Furthermore, while this study includes a diverse range of MCOs, it can be said to deal overwhelmingly with MCOs that typically associate with the industry (see 0.2 Objectives & Research Questions) – those organisations that work with MCOs on improving social cohesion and/or community relations. While many MCOs can be included under this categorisation, by no means are they all, and these groups do not reflect the overall diversity of the MCO landscape in Australia. There exists an array of organisations that do not associate with this industry and for a variety of reasons. Though they are an important dimension, this thesis does not explore them; nor does it claim that the views presented by the participants of this research are necessarily reflective of theirs or their values and vision. As such, references to Australian MCOs within this thesis can be said to be exclusive of these groups.

0.6 Thesis Outline

Largely through an examination of the White Australia Policy and ‘Multiculturalism’, Chapter One acknowledges and explores the history of Australia’s Muslim communities. While introducing and discussing relative themes and discussions, it debates the reality and legacy of the White Australia Policy and analyses the impact of the transition toward a ‘multicultural society’ on the nature and development of Australian Muslim communities. This chapter provides an appreciation for the socio-political environment in which MCOs in Australia have formed, as well as some of the realities in which they operate. In doing so, it provides a foundation from which to commence a thorough analysis of MCOs in Australia.

Chapter Two provides an insight into the overall structure of MCOs in Australia. Through contemporising Abdullah Saeed’s three-tier categorisation (corporate leadership, non-corporate leadership and collective religious leadership) of Muslim community leadership in Islam in
Australia, it tracks how and why the dynamics have changed since Saeed’s book was published in 2003, and recategorises and approaches MCOs as either peak bodies, collective religious leadership organisations or community groups. It then contrasts two peak bodies – the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) and the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) – to determine the relationship between peak bodies and Muslim communities and some of the ways in which peak bodies can be said to impact these communities. The chapter also considers the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) and discusses its formation, its legitimacy and its scope of influence – both religious and political. Finally, Chapter Two introduces and discusses the four sub-categories within community groups – mosques boards and committees, women’s leadership organisations, community centres and associations, and youth groups and Muslim student associations. By focusing on how MCOs are collectively and individually structured, this chapter provides the basis for a comprehensive exploration of the challenges confronting Australian MCOs.

Chapter Three deals with some of the internal challenges facing MCOs in Australia as raised by the participants of this research. Specific challenges are addressed under the parameters of four volatile, yet overriding themes – the generation gap, employment of imams, diversity of the Muslim community, and staff, funding and governance. Within the discussion around the differences between generations of Australian Muslim communities, the patriarchal nature of many MCOs in Australia, the reluctance of existing leaders to transition out of their roles, inadequate training and mentoring practices, and an inability to secure leaders appropriately qualified for their positions, are all explored as contributing to a sense of distance between generations. Through approaching the challenges associated with the employment if imams in Australia through the perspectives of MCO representatives, this chapter lends its voice to existing studies – old and new – that have highlighted this issue. Chapter Three also aims to emphasise the diversity of Australia’s self-identifying Muslim population and explores how the insular nature of some communities and divisions between groups

\[67 Abdullah Saeed, Islam in Australia (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2003), 132-142.\]
serve to challenge the effectiveness of certain MCOs. Finally, this chapter will discuss the relevant challenges associated with the administration of MCOs that, while arguably universally consistent throughout community organisations regardless of their religious or political affiliations, are worthy of exploration in this thesis so as to contextualise these as they apply and intersect with the aforementioned challenges specifically relevant or prominent within Australian MCOs.

Islamophobia as the major external challenge confronting Australian MCOs is the primary concern of Chapter Four. After reflecting on some of the limitations and the validity of existing definitions of Islamophobia, this chapter explores how this contemporary phenomenon intersects with overlapping phenomena, such as racism, historical protectionist attitudes, and attitudes to women, to limit access to social capital – to varying degrees – for different Muslim communities in Australia. Through a discussion of four major themes – the ‘good’ Muslim narrative, the public relations problem, institutional Islamophobia and direct threats – and how they apply to and impact MCOs specifically, Chapter Four will contend that Islamophobia, as it has manifested in Australia, represents a significant challenge to MCOs as it limits the parameters of their public engagement and puts a strain on their limited resources.

The final chapter identifies and reflects on several key social and political relationships experienced by Australian MCOs. Chapter Five firstly highlights the relationship between the media and MCOs, and explores some of the ways in which Australian MCOs were said to be directly affected by prevailing motivations of media institutions. It engages with the nature of this relationship through a focus on how Australian Muslims can be viewed as media ‘cash cows’, the Murdoch press in Australia and the nature of engagement between participating MCOs and the media. Motivated by Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) policies introduced by various Australian governments, this chapter highlights the complex relationship between MCOs and Government and how the nature of that relationship can cause issues within MCOs and lead to further divisions within Muslim communities. This chapter finishes with an exploration of relationships between MCOs and other
religious and non-religious organisations, as well as developing relationships between some MCOs and Indigenous Australian organisations.
1 Australian Muslims in Socio-Political Context

1.1 Introduction

The Australian Muslim community is a small, but expanding community, which can be considered one of the most diverse religious groups in Australia today. Australian Muslims, by virtue of the diverse social and geographical origins which have brought them and/or their ancestors to Australia from a variety of different cultural, denominational, linguistic and national backgrounds, are culturally and theologically plural. Indeed, referring to them as one community downplays these important aspects of difference, and even opposition, that exist within this ‘community’.

Australian Muslim communities are also relatively new and developing communities. Owing to the success and endurance of the White Australia Policy, the overwhelming majority of Australian Muslims largely have their roots in the political shift from the White Australia Policy to a ‘multicultural’ Australia during the 1960s and 1970s. That being said, influential groups of Muslims have been present in Australia both before and after European settlement.

Makassan fishermen journeyed annually to Australia’s northern coast from perhaps as early as the fourteenth century and continued to do so until the trade was outlawed by the South Australian government in the early twentieth century. The Makassan fishermen left their mark on several...
Indigenous communities, with evidence of intermarriages and a Makassan influence identified in some local art and rituals.\textsuperscript{72}

Similarly, Afghan cameleers,\textsuperscript{73} who helped to industrialise Australia’s interior during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, tended to have amicable relations with the Indigenous communities they interacted with.\textsuperscript{74} Arriving mainly between 1860 and around 1910, the so-called ‘Afghan cameleers’ were the first group of Muslims to settle in Australia. A few Muslims (or “Mohammedans” as they were recorded) settled in Australia during the convict period, but, not in significant numbers.\textsuperscript{75} The ‘Afghans’ used their camels to transport food, water, building materials, furniture and equipment to isolated pastoral stations, mines and government camps and returned equipped with wool, ore and other products.\textsuperscript{76} Given their effectiveness and the relative low cost of their employment (compared to ‘white’ workers), by 1901 ‘Afghan’ camel drivers in Australia are estimated to have numbered between 2,000 and 4,000.\textsuperscript{77} They worked mainly in the separate colonies of South Australia (which at the time included the Northern Territory), Western Australia, Queensland and New South Wales.\textsuperscript{78}


\textsuperscript{73} The term ‘Afghan’ is somewhat contentious. Anna Kenny argues the term is perhaps inaccurate and a superficial cliché that misrepresents the reality of the “multiple cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the cameleers.” Anna Kenny, “Australia’s Early Muslim Settlements,” in \textit{Australia’s Muslim Cameleers: Pioneers of the Inland 1860-1930s}, eds. Philip Jones and Anna Kenny (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2007), 22. Most of the cameleers were Muslim and hailed from the provinces of modern-day Pakistan and Afghanistan, but some Sikhs and Hindus from India were lumped together under the ‘Afghan’ banner. Hanifa Deen, “Excavating the Past: Australian Muslims,” \textit{The La Trobe Journal (Special Issue) – Isolation, Integration and Identity: the Muslim experience in Australia} No. 89 (May 2012): 63-64. Nahid Kabir, \textit{Muslims in Australia}, 41.

\textsuperscript{74} Pamela Rajkowski, \textit{In the Tracks of the Cameleers} (North Ryde, NSW: Angus and Robertson, 1987), 167.

\textsuperscript{75} Nahid Kabir, \textit{Muslims in Australia}, 3-4.


\textsuperscript{77} Nahid Kabir, \textit{Muslims in Australia}, 42-43.

Unlike the Makassan fishermen, the ‘Afghan’ men had a lasting impact on Australia’s European history given they were able to establish mosques, some of which are still standing today.\(^{79}\) However, the desire and relative success of Australia’s European settlers to ensure a ‘White Australia’ meant that the ‘Afghan’ presence diminished in the early twentieth century and they were unsuccessful in establishing an ongoing Muslim community.

Australia’s migration policy has historically been discriminatory against Muslim communities. As Galligan, Boese and Phillips identify in *Becoming Australian: Migration, Settlement, Citizenship*, Australian migration has always had dual political and economic purposes: to increase the population of a vast continent with people who would make good liberal democratic citizens; and to boost the national workforce with suitable workers. Australian Governments selected not just any people and workers, but those who fitted its political and economic requirements with the attributes for becoming part of ‘Australia and its people.’ Those desired attributes have changed substantially over time.\(^{80}\)

Up until the 1960s and 1970s, Australia’s selection criteria for migrants were officially centred on ethnicity or, more accurately, skin colour. The *Immigration Restriction Act* 1901, which officially launched the White Australia Policy, was the result of a long-held desire in Australia to create a predominantly British and ‘white’ Australia.\(^{81}\) For the majority of the twentieth century, the White Australia Policy dictated that Muslims, with the exception of a small number of Albanians, were largely unable to establish significant, lasting communities in Australia.

The decline and termination of the White Australia Policy is likely the single greatest contributor to the establishment of permanent Muslim communities in Australia. Since the 1960s, Muslim


migration from a variety of locations, including significant groups initially from Turkey and Lebanon, has occurred – usually in bursts, depending on the push and pull factors associated with the decision to migrate to Australia. In several cases, migration of Muslims to Australia has been centred on escaping violence and conflict; however, family-reunion and economic migration are some of the numerous reasons why many have settled in Australia.

The history of Muslim communities in Australia can be characterised, in part, by misunderstanding, ignorance, discrimination and, as with the White Australia Policy, blatant racism. Throughout Australia’s history, Muslims have often been on the outskirts of mainstream society. From the ‘Afghan’ cameleers to recent refugee arrivals, Muslims in Australia have frequently been victim to vilification, suspicion and social disadvantage. However, an awareness of this history and the social-political context of Muslims in Australia serve to assist in the development of an understanding of the structure of MCOs in Australia and the challenges that they and their communities face.

1.2 The White Australia Policy

The White Australia Policy officially began at federation in 1901, but its roots were long established in the preceding decades. As indicated, in part, through the treatment of the ‘Afghan’ cameleers, Australia has a long history of racial exclusion. The ‘Afghan’ men were unable to bring women or children to Australia and were subject to various forms of persecution from the largely British settlers, many of whom detested their presence on both racial and economic grounds. The treatment of the ‘Afghans’ is a revealing chapter in the history of Muslims in Australia.

As the demand grew for camels as a means of transport, so too did the need for the more economically viable ‘Afghan’ cameleers, and this threatened the survival of the European horse and bullock teamsters as a form of outback transport. In the early 1890s, Australia experienced an

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82 Nahid Kabir, Muslims in Australia, 44.
83 Christine Stevens, Tin Mosques & Ghantowns: A History of Afghan Cameleers in Australia (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1989), 139.
economic crisis and a shortage of employment opportunities. As economic conflict intensified, so too did racism, fear and hatred. There were raids on ‘Afghan’ camps, verbal and physical attacks, and racist propaganda was circulated. In December 1893, the *Brisbane Courier* ran with an article entitled, ‘The Afghan Camel Invasion’, which included the line, “The Afghan as the pilot of the ‘ship of the desert’ (camel) is even more dreaded and detested than the ubiquitous Chinaman.”

This disdain for the ‘Afghans’ continued into the twentieth century. In 1903, one disgruntled Broken Hill resident wrote:

> It is not their adaptability [that appeals to those hiring Afghans]. It is the mean servile spirit of these aliens which makes them so popular amongst money-grubbers.

Intellectual H. M. Musakhan, who was an influential leader of the early Australian Muslim community, was crucial to the construction of the Perth mosque (1905). He spoke out against what he saw as the unjustified targeting of his community. Responding to complaints from many European ‘Colonials’, he argued:

> Most of the Colonials without having personally ever seen or known the faults of any Afghans or other Asiatics would readily sign any petition against them without ever troubling to find out the truth ... Any charge, however unfounded, if laid against any Asiatic race, is taken for a fact and gospel truth, as Europeans [particularly the English-speaking races] with a few exceptions, seem to have a natural antagonism against dark colour.

There are some similarities between the nature of the discussion regarding ‘the Afghan problem’ during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries and the nature of the discussion regarding asylum seekers in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. For instance, in a 2001 letter to

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84 Nahid Kabir, “Australia and the Pacific,” 381.
85 Christine Stevens, *Tin Mosques & Ghantowns*, 140.
the editor, the author exhibits similar xenophobic traits to that of the Broken Hill resident quoted previously. The author wrote: “The refugees wrecked their own countries and are now doing a good job of wrecking ours.”

The deterioration of the economy in 1891 and the severe economic depression that followed contributed to a climate of increased racial hostility. The introduction of the Immigration Restriction Act (1901), which formed the basis of the White Australia Policy, along with the development of a comprehensive railway system that reduced the need for camels, meant that the population of ‘Afghans’ in Australia declined. Furthermore, after the First World War, the camel industry was transferred into the hands of White Australians who had handled camels in Egypt and Palestine.

According to modern critics, racism was at the core of Australia’s early immigration policy and its nationalism. Australian historian Wang Gungwu writes:

The idea of White Australia may have been enshrined in the Immigration Restriction Act (1901), but the Act simply marked the climax of at least forty years of agitation during which the idea was fully shaped and justified.

Historically, Australia is largely an immigrant nation that is the product of conscious social engineering to create a particular kind of society – a ‘white’, British society. Fundamental to the future growth and prosperity of Australia, according to Australia’s second Prime Minister Alfred

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95 Wang Gungwu, “Foreword,” in Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation, Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard eds. (Crawley: University of Western Australia, 2003), vii.
96 James Jupp, From White Australia to Woomera, 5.
Deakin, was the “determination to maintain a ‘White Australia’.“⁹⁷ It was the one matter on which members of the Commonwealth Government were allegedly united.⁹⁸

In 1900, one year before Australian federation and the subsequent introduction of the *Immigration Restriction Act* (1901), there were three or four significant ‘non-white’ migrant groups in Australia that were identifiable not only by their physical ethnic distinctiveness from the majority British migrants, but also their nominal association with religions other than Christianity.⁹⁹ These non-Christian groups made up around 3% of the total population of Australia in 1901, a proportion that would not be re-established until 1996.¹⁰⁰

Among other things, the *Immigration Restriction Act* (1901) empowered any customs officer to reject a potential migrant if they failed to satisfy certain entry criteria, such as the ability to “write out a dictation and sign in the presence of the officer a passage of fifty words in length in a European language directed by the officer.”¹⁰¹ It was understood, though it was not stated, that this dictation test should be in a language not known to the unwanted immigrant.¹⁰²

Australia remained committed to the White Australia Policy for the majority of the twentieth century and defended its principles vigorously on the world stage. For instance, in 1919 Prime Minister Billy Hughes successfully campaigned to exclude a racial equality provision in the League of Nations Covenant, much to the displeasure of the emerging global power Japan.¹⁰³ The defence of

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⁹⁸ Ibid.
⁹⁹ Hilary M. Carey, “Australian Religious Culture from Federation to the New Pluralism,” in *Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation*, Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard eds. (Crawley: University of Western Australia, 2003), 81.
¹⁰⁰ Ibid.
¹⁰¹ *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* (Cth) s 3a.
the White Australia Policy was often based on the idea that bringing anyone that looked different into Australia would provoke social unrest in a totally homogeneous ‘White’ British society.\textsuperscript{104}

The Census results of 1921 indicated that Australians, in terms of skin colour, were fast becoming a homogenous people.\textsuperscript{105} Exclusive of “full-blood” Indigenous Australians (Indigenous Australians were not officially counted by the Census until 1967), there were only 30,975 “full-blood non-Europeans” and 17,616 “half-castes” living in Australia, compared to a “full-blood Europeans” population of 5,387,143.\textsuperscript{106}

\subsection*{1.2.1 Muslims during the White Australia Policy}

In the context of Muslims in Australia, the White Australia Policy made it extremely difficult for Muslims from the Middle East and Africa to migrate and settle in Australia. Asian Muslims, too, found it near impossible to settle in Australia; however, Muslims from Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia were present in small but significant numbers on the north and north-west coast of Australia in the early post-federation period.

Known collectively as ‘Malays’, these men (women and children were not allowed to accompany them) were employed as labourers and crewmen in the pearling industry but were required to return to their homelands during the off-season. In 1901 there were approximately 1,600 ‘Malays’ in Australia; and in 1910, their numbers had increased to 2,191; however, the population declined after the First World War when demands of better pay and conditions were rejected and several divers were deported under legal pretext.\textsuperscript{107}

The only real exceptions to Muslims migrating and settling in Australia during the early period of the White Australia Policy were Albanian Muslims, who, owing to their complexion, met the race

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Jupp} James Jupp, \textit{From White Australia to Woomera}, 9.
\bibitem{Lyng} J. Lyng F. R. G. S. \textit{Non-Britishers in Australia}, 7.
\bibitem{Deen} Hanifa Deen, “The First World War,” 455.
\end{thebibliography}
Albanian Muslims began to migrate to Australia for largely economic reasons during the 1920s. They entered in small numbers and although they are said to have kept a low profile, they did establish one of the first mosques in Melbourne. The migrants were predominantly male and arrived with the aim of earning enough money to send back home and support their families.

Despite their complexion, Albanian Muslims were not regarded as ideal migrants. The term ‘white alien’ was widely used to describe a non-British European and in the mid-to-late 1920s Australia introduced numerical limits (quotas) and excessive landing money requirements to prevent Albanians, Germans, Austrians, Bulgarians, Hungarians and Turks entering Australia in significant numbers. Despite these barriers, Albanian Muslims continued to trickle into Australia during the 1930s. The 1933 Australian Census recorded 766 males and 4 females of Albanian birth.

During the Second World War, the Albanian migrants were viewed as ‘enemy aliens’ and some were interned. Albania was occupied by Italy during the war and, as a result, Albanians were alleged to be a potential fascist threat.

The ‘Afghan’ community, already declining owing to the introduction of mechanised transport in the late nineteenth century, was further impacted by the White Australia Policy. Denied citizenship, and with job opportunities decreasing, many returned to their homelands. The dwindling numbers

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109 Hanifa Deen, “Muslims in Australia 1901-75,” 446.
114 Hanifa Deen, “Muslims in Australia 1901-75,” 446.
115 Nahid Kabir, “Australia and the Pacific,” 381.
combined with the already disproportionate number of men to women made it increasingly difficult for those who remained to retain their Islamic identity.117

1.2.2 Between the World Wars

At the 1919 Paris Peace Conference that followed Germany’s application for an armistice in November 1918, Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes argued determinedly and successfully against the inclusion of a racial equality clause in the League of Nations Covenant.118 This served to heighten tensions between Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom during the interwar period.119

Hughes’ opposition to the racial equality clause can be seen as evidence of Australia’s ongoing commitment to ‘white’ superiority during the interwar period. From the end of the First World War until after to the conclusion of the Second World War, the numbers of self-identifying Muslims in Australia never reached 0.1% of the total Australian population.120 Indeed, during this period, the numbers steadily declined as the White Australia Policy prevented the arrival of any more ‘Afghans’,121 and many returning to their places of origin.

The aforementioned Albanian Muslims failed to migrate in significant numbers during this period to counter the declining ‘Afghan’ presence.

120 Hilary M. Carey, “Australian Religious Culture from Federation to the New Pluralism,” in Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation, eds. Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard (Crawley: University of Western Australia, 2003), 85.
121 Ibid.
1.2.3 Impact of the Second World War on Government Policy

Unlike the First World War, the Second World War threatened Australia domestically. The attacks on Australia’s northern shores by Japan and the discussion surrounding the infamous ‘Brisbane Line’ defence plan – a proposal to abandon the lightly populated northern portion of the continent in favour of supporting the cities south of a hypothetical line between Brisbane and Perth – had left much of the population feeling vulnerable.\textsuperscript{122}

Population building to ensure military security and economic prosperity had been a priority in Australia since federation in 1901, but the Second World War increased the urgency.\textsuperscript{123} ‘Populate or Perish’, a slogan first used by Billy Hughes in 1937, was revived and promoted by Australia’s first Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell.\textsuperscript{124} In a speech to parliament in 1945, he said:

\begin{quote}
If Australians have learned one lesson from the Pacific War now moving to a successful conclusion, it is surely that we cannot continue to hold our island continent for ourselves and our descendants unless we greatly increase our numbers.\textsuperscript{125}
\end{quote}

In 1947, with demobilisation after the war complete, the non-British or “foreign” population of Australia was measured at 0.51%\textsuperscript{126} The White Australia Policy had been successful in creating the ‘white’, predominantly British society envisioned by the nation’s first federal politicians.

The Second World War displaced tens of millions of people, both in Europe and elsewhere, which created an enormous refugee problem for the recently established United Nations, of which Australia was a founding member.\textsuperscript{127}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{124} James Jupp, \textit{From White Australia to Woomera}, 11.
\end{footnotes}
Despite a sense of growing urgency to populate and the refugee crisis, in the immediate post-war years Australia initially found it difficult to depart from its “White Australia” traditions. Even though Calwell had welcomed the idea of Australia becoming a ‘melting pot of races’, the priority was still British migrants.\textsuperscript{128}

The United Kingdom-Australia Free and Assisted Passage Agreements, known colloquially as the ‘Ten Pound Pom’ scheme, became operative in March 1947.\textsuperscript{129} The scheme ran until 1972;\textsuperscript{130} however, British migrants did not arrive in numbers large enough to satisfy the government’s needs.\textsuperscript{131}

Australia’s growing desire to increase its population combined with humanitarian obligations emerging from the global political situation led to an adjustment of its migration policy. There was still an emphasis on maintaining a strict control of migration and in prioritising British migrants,\textsuperscript{132} but the Government’s decision to accept 4,000 displaced persons in 1947, and 12,000 in each succeeding year, from the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) meant that many non-British Europeans began arriving in substantial numbers.\textsuperscript{133}

Between 1947 and 1954 Australia received 170,000 displaced persons from a variety of ethnic and vocational backgrounds.\textsuperscript{134} Care was exercised to ensure that those selected to come to Australia would “fit smoothly” into Australia’s “way of life”.\textsuperscript{135} As Minister for Immigration (and later Prime Minister) Harold Holt wrote in 1953, “We Australians have an unenviable reputation for insularity and intolerance.”\textsuperscript{136}

\textsuperscript{128} Arthur Calwell as quoted in “Australia as Melting-Pot of Nations,” The Argus, 9 February 1945, p.4.
\textsuperscript{129} A. James Hammerton and Alistair Thomson, Ten Pound Poms: Australia’s Invisible Migrants (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 30.
\textsuperscript{130} Sarah Mirams and Merredith Southee, Australia 1918-1950s (South Melbourne: Cengage Learning Australia, 2015), 168.
\textsuperscript{131} John Lack and Jacqueline Templeton, Bold Experiments, 8.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid, 8-9.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid, 11.
\textsuperscript{135} Brian Murphy, The Other Australia: Experience of Migration (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 105.
Australia was among the countries accused of ‘creaming off’ the single and healthy – especially fit men suited for labouring. The Government took care in portraying that its departure from its British-based migration policy was being carried out responsibly with a view to meet the well-known labour requirements of the nation.

By 1961, Australia’s “non-British” population had greatly increased. The Australian Census of 1961 reported that 4.99% of the population (exclusive of “full –blood Aboriginals”) was comprised of people born outside of Britain and Australia. The “Total Foreign” population came from nations such as Italy (29% of ‘total foreign’ population), the Netherlands (14%), Greece (12%) and Germany (12%); however, there were also significant numbers from Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

Throughout the post-war years and into the early 1960s, despite a significant European refugee crisis increasing migration flows around the world and international political pressure, as well as pressure from local activist groups, to drop the racially discriminatory policy, Australia managed to retain its commitment to the White Australia Policy. However, owing to this pressure and a variety of other factors, Australia’s commitment to the White Australia Policy began to wane through the 1960s.

**1.2.4 The End of the White Australia Policy**

In the years preceding the Whitlam Government’s formal outlawing of the White Australia Policy in 1972, several strategic initiatives softened Australia’s racially discriminatory migration dogma. Policies such as the *Colombo Plan*, a ground-breaking scheme established by nations of the Commonwealth that allowed students from Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Pakistan, India and

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138 Brian Murphy, *The Other Australia*, 105.
140 Ibid.
elsewhere in the region, to study in Australia’s tertiary institutions, played a substantial role in easing the entrenched anti-Asia attitudes historically possessed by a broad section of Australians.¹⁴²

Likewise, the implementation of the *Australian-Turkish Assisted Passage Scheme* in 1968 represented a major turning point in the history of Muslims entering Australia.¹⁴³ The agreement, signed in October 1967, allowed for the assisted passage to Australia for “selected workers and their dependants.”¹⁴⁴ For the first time in Australia’s history, Muslim women and children were allowed to come to Australia.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, families were encouraged to come and women were questioned by authorities about their willingness to work.¹⁴⁶ By the end of the agreement in 1975, nearly 19,000 Turks had arrived.¹⁴⁷ Turkish Muslim families arriving under this scheme represented the first wave of large-scale Muslim migration to Australia and laid the foundations for the growth of Muslim communities in both Melbourne and Sydney.¹⁴⁸

### 1.3 Multicultural Australia

Elected to office after twenty-three years of Liberal/National Coalition rule, the Gough Whitlam-led Labor Government completed what the Coalition started in the 1960s by terminating the White Australia Policy and advocating multiculturalism as the dominant theme of immigration and settlement policy.¹⁴⁹

Australia’s departure from the White Australia Policy was driven by three key factors: Australia’s openly racist policies were in stark contrast to the new global discourse on human rights that was

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¹⁴⁶ Ibid.
developing in the aftermath of the Second World War; Australia’s desire to develop closer bonds with its regional neighbours was hampered by its discriminatory migration policy; and, the economic boom in Australia was leading to a need for foreign labour to fulfil domestic demand.150

With the termination of the White Australia Policy, no longer was discrimination based on race, colour or nationality permitted by law.151 However, the new migration policy was by no means open slather, remaining tightly controlled by the Australian Government which set limits on migration intakes under specific categories such as family reunion and refugees.152 Under the new system, selection of migrants was skill-orientated as Australia strived for economic growth.153

The Whitlam Government’s termination of the White Australia Policy and attempt to create a multicultural Australia has been called the single greatest contributor to an increased and permanent Muslim presence in Australia.154 However, despite the arrival of Turkish families through the Australia-Turkish Assisted Passage Scheme indirectly signifying that Australia was more open-minded to Muslim migration, the Muslim population did not significantly increase in the years immediately following the end of the White Australia Policy. This changed with the outbreak of civil war in Lebanon in 1975/76.155

The Lebanese have a relatively long history of migration to Australia, but prior to the civil war, the vast majority of Lebanese migrants arriving in Australia were either Maronite or Melkite Christians.156 After civil war broke out in Lebanon, Lebanese Muslims began migrating to Australia in

150 Mario Peucker and Shahram Akbarzadeh, Muslim Active Citizenship in the West, 13.
151 Bilal Cleland, The Muslims in Australia, 74.
152 Brian Galligan, Martina Boese and Melissa Phillips, Becoming Australian, 54-55.
153 Ibid.
154 Joshua Roose, “Contesting the Future: Muslim Men as Political Actors in the Context of Multiculturalism” (Ph.D., University of Melbourne, 2012), 80.
155 Mario Peucker and Shahram Akbarzadeh, Muslim Active Citizenship in the West, 13.
significant numbers. By 1981, around 17,000 Lebanese Muslim migrants were said to be living in Australia.\textsuperscript{157}

If considered as one coherent community, this made Lebanese Muslims the largest ethnic group within the Muslim community at the time.\textsuperscript{158} Indeed, Australians born in Lebanon or claiming Lebanese ancestry have, alongside Turkish Australians, constituted the two largest Muslim communities in Australia since the 1980s.\textsuperscript{159} However, the Lebanese Muslim community is anything but coherent and can be sub-categorised according to issues of faith, class, origin (region, city, village in Lebanon) and so on.\textsuperscript{160} The Lebanese-Muslim communities in Australia mirror the theological diversity of the Muslim communities of Lebanon.\textsuperscript{161}

In New South Wales and Victoria, where the majority of post-war migrants landed, Muslim migrants were at a great disadvantage as, unlike Christian migrants, they had few comparable religious societies to assist them and had to create these organisations from virtually nothing.\textsuperscript{162} Furthermore, like many other migrant groups, Lebanese Muslims had to deal with discrimination, limited job opportunities, intolerance towards the Islamic dress code and resistance to the construction of mosques.\textsuperscript{163} The establishment and development of community organisations is discussed at length in Chapter Two.

\textsuperscript{157} Bilal Cleland, \textit{The Muslims in Australia}, 75.
\textsuperscript{158} Mario Peucker and Shahram Akbarzadeh, \textit{Muslim Active Citizenship in the West}, 13.
\textsuperscript{162} Bilal Cleland, “The History of Muslims in Australia,” 27.
\textsuperscript{163} Nahid Kabir, \textit{Muslims in Australia}, 143.
Conflict, war, political instability and economic devastation in regions including Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Balkans, and in and around the Horn of Africa, has led to an increasing number of Muslims seeking refuge in Australia during the last few decades.\textsuperscript{164}

Most refugees arrive in Australia under the officially endorsed program sponsored by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), while smaller numbers have attempted, both successfully and unsuccessfully, to enter Australia via boat, circumventing official immigration procedures.\textsuperscript{165}

Boat arrivals are a particularly divisive issue in the Australian political scene – best highlighted by the 2001 ‘Children Overboard’ affair, where the Howard Government falsely accused asylum seekers of throwing children overboard in order to secure rescue and passage to Australia, and the 2010 Christmas Island boat disaster where 48 people were killed when their boat sank off the coast of Christmas Island. The overwhelming majority of asylum seekers arriving by boat since 1999 have been Muslims from the Middle East.\textsuperscript{166} Social attitudes towards Muslims in Australia can be said to be influenced by the debates around asylum seekers (see Chapter Four).

\textbf{1.3.1 The 2016 Census}

Australia’s Muslim population has steadily increased since the dismantling of the White Australia Policy in the late 1960s and early 1970s (see Table 1.3.1.1). According to the 2016 Census, 604,240 self-declared Muslims are living in Australia, which translate to 2.58\% of the national population.\textsuperscript{167} This is significantly greater than in 2011 when the Census recorded 476,291 self-identifying Muslim

\textsuperscript{164} Mario Peucker and Shahram Akbarzadeh, \textit{Muslim Active Citizenship in the West}, 13.
\textsuperscript{166} Robert Manne, “The Road to Tampa,” in \textit{Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation}, Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard eds. (Crawley: University of Western Australia, 2003), 170.
\textsuperscript{167} Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016). \textit{2016 Census for Housing and Population}. TableBuilder. Findings based on use of ABS TableBuilder data.
Australians at 2.21% of the overall population and means that the Muslim percentage of the overall Australian population has increased in every national census since 1947 (see Table 1.3.1.1).

Table 1.3.1.1 outlines the rising number of self-identifying Muslims in Australia between 1911 and 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Number Identifying</th>
<th>Percentage of overall population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>3,908</td>
<td>0.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>1,877</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>2,704</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>22,311</td>
<td>0.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>45,205</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>76,792</td>
<td>0.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>109,523</td>
<td>0.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>147,507</td>
<td>0.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>200,885</td>
<td>1.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>281,578</td>
<td>1.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>340,385</td>
<td>1.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>476,291</td>
<td>2.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>604,240</td>
<td>2.58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

Some Muslim leaders have speculated that a number of Australian Muslims are failing to disclose their religion during the Census because they fear persecution and that the numbers are actually greater than those that have been documented.168 The 2016 Census was particularly controversial given the Australian Bureau of Statistics announcement that, for the first time, it would retain all the names and addresses it collects.169

Regardless of the overall accuracy of these figures, Muslims are certainly representative of a growing community in Australia. Among the five major religions of Australia (Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism), Islam was the second fastest growing between 2011 and 2016. Self-

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identifying Muslims in Australia grew by 26.86% compared to 2011 figures, which was second only to growth in followers of the Hindu faith (59.80%).

Table 1.3.1.2: Self-identifying Muslims in Australian Census 2016 – States and Territories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Number Identifying</th>
<th>Percentage of state/territory population</th>
<th>Change since 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>267,658</td>
<td>3.58%</td>
<td>+22.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>197,032</td>
<td>3.32%</td>
<td>+28.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>50,647</td>
<td>2.05%</td>
<td>+29.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>44,880</td>
<td>0.95%</td>
<td>+31.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>28,547</td>
<td>1.70%</td>
<td>+46.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>9,882</td>
<td>2.49%</td>
<td>+33.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>2,497</td>
<td>0.49%</td>
<td>+46.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>2,338</td>
<td>1.02%</td>
<td>+46.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Territories</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>16.56%</td>
<td>+3.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>604,240</td>
<td>2.58%</td>
<td>+26.86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

As indicated in Table 1.3.1.2, New South Wales and Victoria continue to be the states with both the largest Muslim populations and the largest percentages (relative to the state/territory’s overall population) of Muslims in Australia. All other states and territories grew by a proportion of their 2011 Muslim population by more than New South Wales and Victoria, but not at levels high enough to suggest an imminent change in the existing dynamic. However, South Australia’s figures certainly stand out, with the state’s Muslim population almost doubling between 2011 and 2016. In the unlikely event that population growth continues according to this 5-year trend, South Australia would leapfrog Queensland and Western Australia and become the third most populous state or territory for Muslims in 2041, while Victoria would leapfrog New South Wales in 2046.

Compared to the total population, Australian Muslims are significantly more likely to be ‘first generation’ Australians. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘first generation’ Australians
are people living in Australia who were born overseas. Of those identifying as Muslim in the 2016 Census, 63.60% were born overseas, which is significantly higher than the overall national figure of 33.27%.

Table 1.3.1.3 indicates the top twenty countries where self-identifying Muslims in Australia were born as indicated in the 2011 and 2016 Censuses; the percentage of the Muslim community that that figure represents; and the change of that specific community as a percentage between 2011 and 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of birth</th>
<th>2011 Total</th>
<th>Percentage of Muslim Population</th>
<th>Country of birth</th>
<th>2016 Total</th>
<th>Percentage of Muslim Population</th>
<th>Five-year change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Australia</td>
<td>179,080</td>
<td>37.60%</td>
<td>1. Australia</td>
<td>219,936</td>
<td>36.40%</td>
<td>+22.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Lebanon</td>
<td>33,560</td>
<td>7.05%</td>
<td>2. Pakistan</td>
<td>54,728</td>
<td>9.06%</td>
<td>+106.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pakistan</td>
<td>26,464</td>
<td>5.56%</td>
<td>3. Afghanistan</td>
<td>42,705</td>
<td>7.07%</td>
<td>+63.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Afghanistan</td>
<td>26,043</td>
<td>5.47%</td>
<td>4. Lebanon</td>
<td>34,192</td>
<td>5.66%</td>
<td>+1.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Turkey</td>
<td>25,311</td>
<td>5.31%</td>
<td>5. Bangladesh</td>
<td>33,506</td>
<td>5.55%</td>
<td>+41.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Bangladesh</td>
<td>23,665</td>
<td>4.97%</td>
<td>6. Iraq</td>
<td>21,137</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
<td>+37.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Iraq</td>
<td>15,395</td>
<td>3.23%</td>
<td>7. Turkey</td>
<td>20,605</td>
<td>3.41%</td>
<td>-18.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Iran</td>
<td>12,686</td>
<td>2.66%</td>
<td>8. Iran</td>
<td>18,106</td>
<td>3.00%</td>
<td>+42.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Indonesia</td>
<td>12,241</td>
<td>2.57%</td>
<td>9. India</td>
<td>15,650</td>
<td>2.59%</td>
<td>+54.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. India</td>
<td>10,126</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
<td>10. Indonesia</td>
<td>13,848</td>
<td>2.29%</td>
<td>+13.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>8,707</td>
<td>1.83%</td>
<td>11. Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>9,841</td>
<td>1.63%</td>
<td>+13.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>7,603</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
<td>12. Somalia</td>
<td>7,161</td>
<td>1.19%</td>
<td>+32.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Malaysia</td>
<td>7,224</td>
<td>1.52%</td>
<td>13. Malaysia</td>
<td>7,159</td>
<td>1.18%</td>
<td>-0.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Fiji</td>
<td>7,191</td>
<td>1.51%</td>
<td>14. Fiji</td>
<td>7,023</td>
<td>1.16%</td>
<td>-2.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Somalia</td>
<td>5,422</td>
<td>1.14%</td>
<td>15. Egypt</td>
<td>6,191</td>
<td>1.02%</td>
<td>+31.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Egypt</td>
<td>4,716</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
<td>16. Syria</td>
<td>5,701</td>
<td>0.94%</td>
<td>+93.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Singapore</td>
<td>3,424</td>
<td>0.72%</td>
<td>17. Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>5,561</td>
<td>0.92%</td>
<td>-26.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Sudan</td>
<td>3,097</td>
<td>0.65%</td>
<td>18. Sudan</td>
<td>4,066</td>
<td>0.67%</td>
<td>+31.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Syria</td>
<td>2,950</td>
<td>0.62%</td>
<td>19. Singapore</td>
<td>3,751</td>
<td>0.62%</td>
<td>+9.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. South Africa</td>
<td>2,827</td>
<td>0.59%</td>
<td>20. Kuwait</td>
<td>3,577</td>
<td>0.59%</td>
<td>+47.26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

---


On the surface, Table 1.3.1.3 indicates that Australian Muslims communities are relatively new, diverse and developing migrant communities. This is further emphasised by the finding that only 3.87% of Australian Muslims indicated that both their parents were born in Australia, compared to 47.31% of the total population, and that 87.04% of Australian Muslims indicated that both their parents were born overseas, compared to 34.40% of Australians overall.\(^\text{172}\)

However, it is somewhat misleading to suggest that Australian Muslim communities are new and developing. While it is true, as indicated in Table 1.3.1.3, that in terms of country of origin, Australian Muslims are widely diverse, specific communities have established a firm presence in Australia over a number of years. This is particularly true of the Lebanese community, and to a lesser extent, the Turkish community, as Table 1.3.1.4 indicates. Of the 219,936 Australian born Muslims surveyed in the 2016 Census, 19.57% identified that their mother was born in Lebanon and 23.94% identified that their father was born in Lebanon.\(^\text{173}\)

**Table 1.3.1.4: Country of Birth of Parents of Australian-born Muslims**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of birth</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage of Muslim Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>95,710</td>
<td>15.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>89,850</td>
<td>14.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>34,503</td>
<td>5.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>30,836</td>
<td>5.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>24,893</td>
<td>4.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>21,023</td>
<td>3.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>11,339</td>
<td>1.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>10,778</td>
<td>1.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>9,791</td>
<td>1.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>7,711</td>
<td>1.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>7,503</td>
<td>1.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>6,180</td>
<td>1.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>5,907</td>
<td>0.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>4,526</td>
<td>0.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>3,938</td>
<td>0.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>2,510</td>
<td>0.42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

\(^{172}\) Ibid.

\(^{173}\) Ibid.
Although Lebanese and Turkish Muslims have historically been the two major Muslim communities in Australia, the fact that Pakistani Muslims more than doubled between the 2011 and 2016 censuses – in doing so leapfrogging Lebanese-born Muslims and becoming the largest national group of foreign-born Muslims by some distance – is certainly significant. Likewise, the increase in Muslims arriving from countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq and India is noteworthy. An increase in arrivals from certain nations and cultural groups can be said to represent a challenge for existing MCOs in Australia, as is explored in 3.4 Diversity of Muslims in Australia.

Arabic was still the most popular language among Australian Muslims with just over 1 in 4 indicating that they spoke the language at home. English was the next most likely language to be spoken at home but was some way behind in second place – see Table 1.3.1.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage of Muslim Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>170,220</td>
<td>28.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>87,440</td>
<td>14.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>64,326</td>
<td>10.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>44,240</td>
<td>7.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>40,796</td>
<td>6.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dari</td>
<td>28,244</td>
<td>4.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazaraghi</td>
<td>20,397</td>
<td>3.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>15,399</td>
<td>2.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>13,557</td>
<td>2.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>12,778</td>
<td>2.11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Australian Muslims are predominantly located in cities more so than rural locations with the 2016 Census revealing that only 1.24% of Australia’s 604,240 Muslims live “not in any significant urban area” – meaning not near significant towns or cities with a population of less than 10,000.174

174 Ibid.
Finally, many of the MCO representatives interviewed in this study emphasised the relative youth of their communities, which is supported by the latest census data. The Australian Muslim population is significantly younger than other faith groups as Table 1.3.1.6 indicates:

Table 1.3.1.6: Age as Percentage of Religious Group in 10-Year Increments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>8.74%</td>
<td>10.08%</td>
<td>16.33%</td>
<td>19.04%</td>
<td>16.63%</td>
<td>14.41%</td>
<td>9.72%</td>
<td>3.39%</td>
<td>1.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>10.88%</td>
<td>11.99%</td>
<td>10.09%</td>
<td>11.25%</td>
<td>13.76%</td>
<td>14.31%</td>
<td>12.95%</td>
<td>9.04%</td>
<td>5.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>17.05%</td>
<td>8.59%</td>
<td>20.35%</td>
<td>30.60%</td>
<td>11.41%</td>
<td>6.22%</td>
<td>3.73%</td>
<td>1.48%</td>
<td>0.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>21.42%</td>
<td>15.29%</td>
<td>18.94%</td>
<td>19.70%</td>
<td>11.68%</td>
<td>7.05%</td>
<td>3.80%</td>
<td>1.62%</td>
<td>0.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>12.30%</td>
<td>10.97%</td>
<td>9.55%</td>
<td>11.67%</td>
<td>12.92%</td>
<td>12.11%</td>
<td>14.80%</td>
<td>8.55%</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religions</td>
<td>14.82%</td>
<td>8.16%</td>
<td>22.93%</td>
<td>25.16%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>8.76%</td>
<td>5.86%</td>
<td>2.29%</td>
<td>0.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secular/No</td>
<td>15.35%</td>
<td>12.90%</td>
<td>18.55%</td>
<td>16.17%</td>
<td>13.35%</td>
<td>10.92%</td>
<td>7.79%</td>
<td>3.39%</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

Australian Muslims that are 19 years of age or less accounted for 36.71% of the entire Muslim population in 2016. The same age bracket accounted for significantly less of the overall population of other religious groups with Christianity (22.87%), Judaism (23.27%) and Hinduism (25.64%) all paling in comparison. This issue of a generation gap is explored in more detail in Chapter 3 (see 3.2 The Generation Gap).

1.3.2 Muslims and “Multicultural” Australia

In the late twentieth century there was a growing trend in theory and practice that defined multiculturalism as a popular political philosophy for democratic countries around the world. These multicultural perspectives were based partly on the notion that learning about other peoples’ cultures would reduce prejudice and discrimination in society and incorporates the belief that

contact with other cultural lifestyles will reduce ignorance and prejudice of the dominant population.\textsuperscript{176}

Support for multiculturalism as a political philosophy in the twenty-first century has rapidly declined.\textsuperscript{177} When discussing multiculturalism in its current context, the tendency to link migration with cohesion and social order reflects and resonates with much older debates that question the willingness of migrants to integrate, and focus on their perceived preferential access to job opportunities and social welfare.\textsuperscript{178} As Lavalette and Penketh explain, “These discourses have been effective, and have led to increasing attacks on migrant populations across Europe, made worse by declining economic opportunities and austerity measures.”\textsuperscript{179} As a result, commitment to multiculturalism among Western nations has been undermined.

Several theorists identify rising anxiety towards Muslim migrants after the September 11 terrorist attacks as another likely cause of a declining appreciation for multiculturalism.\textsuperscript{180} Geoffrey Brahm Levey writes: “Much of this disquiet [towards multiculturalism] relates to the presence or anticipation of Muslim immigrants in the community, the salience of religious identity in the public sphere, and public fears aroused by Islamic militancy.”\textsuperscript{181} The animosity towards Muslim migrants is arguably at its highest in Europe, where Muslims frequently comprise a significant proportion of the total migrant population, but the effects have also been felt in Australia, even though Muslims make up a much smaller percentage of new migrants.\textsuperscript{182}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{178} Michael Lavalette and Laura Penketh, \textit{Race, Racism and Social Work}, xi.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{180} Michael Murphy, \textit{Multiculturalism}, 1. Geoffrey Brahm Levey, \textit{Authenticity, Autonomy and Multiculturalism}, 1.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
In Australia, a nation with an established protectionist history and fear of the ‘other’ (see 1.3.3 The “Us and Them” Dynamic), this discourse framing Muslims as problematic has been widely embraced.

Within the context of the pursuit of the policy of multiculturalism,183 fierce debates have emerged in academic circles regarding what ‘multiculturalism’ is and represents within the Australian context. Ghena Krayem provides a thorough exploration of the changing definitions of multiculturalism in Australia under the various federal governments since Whitlam, arguing: “since its inception in the 1970s, the term has been used by various governments in Australia for different purposes.”184

Multiculturalism is fundamentally a secular concept with a focus on ethnic heritages and affiliations.185 Ethnicity is used here not simply to describe a mere aggregate of people, but rather a self-conscious collection of people who, through shared experiences, possess some degree of coherence and solidarity that unites them.186 Australia’s ongoing commitment to multiculturalism has allowed certain ethnic groups to claim that religion is an extension of their identity and, as Peucker and Akbarzadeh write, deserving of “the same degree of protection and recognition as the non-religious components.”187 However, the dominant perspective of Australian multiculturalism, which is based on the assumption that public religion is on the decline, remains that immigrants will be assimilated into Australian society through individualism and secularisation.188 Many Australians tend to see Islam as resistant to change, and, through transnational association with political Islam movements, potentially subversive.189

While the Australian dynamic generally fits nicely into the greater context of Islam and the West, Australia is a unique case in several ways. For instance, unlike in Europe, where Muslims are not separate from European history, but arguably interwoven and an essential component of the

183 Ibid, viii.
184 Ghena Krayem, Islamic Family Law in Australia, 59-69.
185 Mario Peucker and Shahram Akbarzadeh, Muslim Active Citizenship in the West, 2.
186 Michael Lavalette and Laura Penketh, Race, Racism and Social Work, x.
187 Mario Peucker and Shahram Akbarzadeh, Muslim Active Citizenship in the West, 2-3.
189 Ibid.
continent’s history, Muslims in Australia are, with some aforementioned exceptions, a relatively new phenomenon.

Despite the White Australia Policy having formally ended in the 1970s, recent literature examining multiculturalism in Australia can emphasise the ongoing dominance of ‘Whiteness’ in Australian society. In his exploration of Australian multicultural society, Ghassan Hage outlines how Australian multiculturalism, as ‘White’ multiculturalism, works to “mystify, and to keep out of the public discourse, other multicultural realities in which White people are not the overwhelming occupiers of the centre of national space.” This conceptualisation of white privilege is influenced, in part, by French philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault and his understanding of governmentality or “the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics” by which power is exercised. Having defined ‘White’ as an unconscious self-perception that encompasses both ‘Anglo’ Australians and the many ‘non-Anglo’ Australians, who define themselves through “the White nation fantasy,” Hage argues that debates on multiculturalism in Australia are dominated by ‘White’ Australians, who can be considered masters of national space, and the decision-makers on who enters and who is excluded from entering that space. Definitions of ethnicity also emerge from this dominant group. The arguments made here play into Said’s ‘us and them’ dynamic, in which the other is reduced into a passive object of government.

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Christian Joppke points out that “it is logically impossible to recognise all cultures as equal,” and, therefore, the majority group’s value system will always be dominant over minority groups.\(^{196}\) Consequently, concern over the degree in which a minority group declares their belonging to the dominant value system will always be present within the dominant group.\(^{197}\)

The tradition in the West of Muslim ‘othering’, which often approaches Islam as monolithic and fails to acknowledge the diversity of Islamic practices, while largely overlooking the numerous ways in which so-called ‘Muslim values’ accord with so-called ‘Western secular values’, can result in Muslim Australians being depicted as suspects.\(^{198}\)

1.3.3 The “Us and Them” Dynamic

Despite the policy of multiculturalism being actively pursued by the successive governments of Gough Whitlam, Malcolm Fraser, Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, it was perhaps unrealistic to expect Australia’s largely ‘white’ population, established in the preceding two-hundred years, to immediately and wholeheartedly give up on a long-held and established desire for Australia to remain a ‘white’ nation.\(^{199}\) What may be observed during Australia’s short history since federation in 1901, according to Gungwu, “is a gradual, if at times painful, evolution from being British and white to becoming Anglo-Celtic and white and then, after the end of the Second World War, further moving towards being Judaeo-Christian and white.”\(^{200}\) While many Australians have embraced the ideas of multiculturalism; elements within Australian society have continued to argue for the basic principles of ‘White Australia’ to be upheld. In many ways, this has contributed to the ongoing existence of an ‘us and them’ dynamic in Australian society.


\(^{197}\) Ibid.


\(^{200}\) Ibid.
The ‘us and them’ dynamic has a long history in Western society – especially in regard to religion and race. The African slave trade, the persecution of Irish Catholics in America and the treatment of European Jews during the Third Reich are a few of numerous examples in which the ‘us and them’ dynamic has split society with devastating results. In regard to the West and the so-called ‘Muslim World’, a reservoir of cultural suspicions, clichés and mutually serving representations that divide the two worlds into separate and irreconcilable peoples, litter the history books.\textsuperscript{201}

In the contemporary discourse concerning ‘Islam and the West’, the debate surrounding the ‘us and them’ dynamic can be said to have been instigated by Edward Said’s 1978 book \textit{Orientalism}. When embarking on a discussion of the theme of Islam and the West, Said’s \textit{Orientalism} is an almost obligatory reference.\textsuperscript{202}

\textit{Orientalism} is the coherent form of language in which certain unwritten rules appeal to a prevailing doxa that operates as conventions that define what can and cannot be said about Arabs and Islam.\textsuperscript{203} Said noted that the European colonial period saw the West approach the East (Said focused on the Arab/Islamic world) with a sense of superiority – intellectually, politically, culturally and militarily – and that for the Westerners, this superiority justified the dominance and domestication of the Orient.\textsuperscript{204} Said wrote:

\begin{quote}
For every Orientalist, quite literally, there is a support system of staggering power, considering the ephemerality of the myths that Orientalism propagates. This system now culminates in the very institutions of the state. To write about the Arab Oriental world, therefore, is to write with the authority of a nation, and not with the affirmation of a strident ideology but with the unquestioning certainty of absolute truth backed by absolute force.\textsuperscript{205}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{201} Tareq Y. Ismael and Andrew Rippin eds., \textit{Islam in the Eyes of the West: Images and Realities in an Age of Terror}, (London: Routledge, 2010), 5.
\textsuperscript{203} Yassir Morsi, “The Muslim Question and the Liberal Solution” (Ph.D., University of Melbourne, 2013), 44.
\textsuperscript{204} Halim Rane et al, \textit{Islam and the Australian News Media}, 5.
\end{flushright}
For Said, the ‘us and them’ or ‘Westerner and Orient’ dynamic was instigated and shaped by the colonial relationship between ruler and subject. The dominant colonialist was able to create an image of the Orient as an exotic ‘other’, while simultaneously justifying the West’s dominance over the East.206

In the contemporary Australian context, some see Muslims or “them” as a problem for ‘multiculturalism’,207 while others disagree and identify the problem as being Australia’s general sense of insecurity.208 The origins of these ongoing contemporary debates surrounding the accommodation of Muslims into a ‘multicultural’ society are widely accepted to have emerged from the 1989 worldwide protests centred on Salman Rushdie’s novel The Satanic Verses.209

Published on 26 September 1988, Rushdie’s novel immediately caused controversy with many Muslims enraged by the perceived attack on their religion, culminating in the famous fatwa issued in 1989 by Ayatollah Khomeini calling for the death of the author and the complicit publishers.

Simultaneously, Westerners were generally taken aback by the reaction of Muslims, which many perceived as an attack on the freedom of speech.210 More recently, much publicised and dividing events that emphasise the apparent clash between the freedom of speech and Islam have been seen in France with the 7 January 2015 shooting of staff of Charlie Hebdo after the magazine repeatedly published caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad – perceived by many Muslims as blasphemous.

Events such as these and the relative growth of Muslim populations in some Western nations, have served to consolidate the image of Islam and Muslims as being incompatible with Western society.

Muslims are often depicted as enemies of the West, and thus as challenges to a hegemonic multicultural society.\footnote{Fethi Mansouri et al. “Negotiating Norms of Inclusion,” 132.}

In the fallout from the Rushdie Affair, several academics openly questioned the compatibility of Islam with Western society. Perhaps the most notable to do so was American Samuel Huntington. Huntington’s 1993 journal article \textit{The Clash of Civilizations}\footnote{Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” \textit{Foreign Affairs}, No. 72, Vol. 3 (Summer 1993): 22-49.} was the cause of much controversy. It was later expanded and published in 1996 as a book \textit{The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order}, in which Huntington called Islam “a different civilization” whose followers “are convinced of the superiority of their culture”, while being “obsessed with the inferiority of their power.”\footnote{Samuel P. Huntington, \textit{The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order} (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 217.}

Huntington’s ideas are typical of a continuing strand of essentialist scholarship that Yahya Sadowski has branded, in reference to Said’s \textit{Orientalism}, as “New Orientalism.”\footnote{Yahya Sadowski, “The New Orientalism and the Democracy Debate,” \textit{Middle East Report}, No. 183, Political Islam (July – August 1993): 14-21.} In discussing issues such as democratisation and modernisation in Muslim-majority nations, like their Orientalist predecessors, New Orientalists still perceive Islam as the determining explicative variable for the understanding of Muslim societies.\footnote{Dietrich Jung, “The Origin of Difference,” 20.} Discussing the post-Cold War world, Huntington argues that among Muslim-majority countries, “the prospects for democratic development seem low.”\footnote{Samuel P. Huntington, “Will More Countries Become Democratic?” \textit{Political Science Quarterly} 99, No. 2 (1984), 216.} One of the factors in this, according to Huntington, is what he describes as the Islamic revival.\footnote{Ibid.} Though Huntington later claimed that Muslim violence was “not inherent in the nature of Islam as a religion,”\footnote{Samuel P. Huntington, “America in the World,” \textit{The Hedgehog Review} (2003), 14.} his generalised thesis that Muslims are largely resistant to democratisation certainly plays into the “us and them” dynamic.
Since the 2001 September 11 attacks on the US, the subsequent ‘War on Terror’, and the well-publicised events and wars linking Islam with violence that have followed, including multiple terrorist attacks and the rise of IS in Iraq and Syria, exposure to the ‘Islam and the West’ field has increased dramatically, with the resultant discourse suggesting an encounter between two incompatible and homogenising cultures – the secular West and the religious Islam.

Across the West, issues and events involving Muslims have frequently been at the top of the news agenda and are likely to continue to attract significant media coverage in the foreseeable future. In Australia, Peter Manning found that media reports frequently mixed up issues involving potential domestic terrorism threats with the arrival of (mostly Muslim) asylum seekers and that a large number of articles on the ‘Lebanese gang rapes’ (60% of those analysed by Manning) mentioned the words “Islam” or “Muslim”, drawing an explicit connection between the alleged perpetrators’ religion and the crimes.

This has led to several challenges – direct or indirect – of the policy of multiculturalism. An effect of the debate in Australia between those arguing for an essentially ‘white’ Australia (though ‘whiteness’ is rarely mentioned directly) and those arguing for a more open and inclusive Australia is that the ‘other’ is made into a passive object. According to Ghassan Hage, the debate itself largely marginalises the migrants most directly concerned and whose voices are only heard in the

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219 The ‘War on Terror’ refers to the US-led military campaign that started in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks on the United States. Led by President George W. Bush, a coalition of like-minded nations agreed to pursue designated terrorists and regimes accused of supporting them. In 2013, President Barack Obama announced that the US was no longer pursuing a War on Terror, but the term continues to be used by politicians and the media. Massimo Calabresi, “The War on Terror is Over – Long Live the War on Terror,” *Time*, 16 June 2014. http://time.com/2873297/boko-haram-iraq-bergdahl-war-terror/.


mainstream media on very rare occasions.\footnote{Ghassan Hage, \textit{White Nation}, 17.} This reduction of the other into a passive object of
government, Hage writes, “is one of the main theses of Edward Said’s \textit{Orientalism}.\footnote{Ibid.}"

The ‘us and them’ dynamic is a lived experienced for many Australian Muslims. Writing on her
experiences of Islamophobia after the Zaky Mallah controversy on the ABC television program
\textit{Q&A},\footnote{On 22 June 2015 Zaky Mallah – a man who pleaded guilty to threatening to kill an ASIO officer – appeared live on the ABC’s \textit{Q&A} and made controversial comments regarding the Abbott Government’s role in pushing Australian Muslims to join ISIS. His appearance on the show caused controversy and criticism from the Abbott Government and led to an independent review of the program’s audience selection policy, panel selection, subject selection and social media strategy.} Randa Abdel-Fattah wrote:

\begin{quote}
We have become caught in the tyranny of Muslim as adverb. Watching Muslim. Walking Muslim. Talking Muslim. Driving Muslim. Every action is over-determined by our Muslimness with the result that we are implicated in the speech and actions of strangers, and the overarching narrative of the ‘war on terror’.\footnote{Randa Abdel-Fattah, “Lumped In With Zaky Mallah: Randa Abdel-Fattah On The Debate We Can’t Seem To Have Responsibly,” \textit{Newmatilda.com}, 23 June 2015, https://newmatilda.com/2015/06/23/lumped-zaky-mallah-randa-abdel-fattah-debate-we-cant-seem-have-responsibly.}
\end{quote}

As the exploration of the “us and them” dynamic indicates, many Australian Muslims regularly
experience external objectification and racism from vocal sections of Australian society. Internally,
within Muslim communities, this is a source of concern. The leaders of community organisations are
often tasked with articulating these concerns to the wider Australian public and government bodies,
while also providing guidance to the communities they represent. Therefore, these leaders, and the
institutions from which they gain their exposure, are exceptionally important.

\subsection*{1.3.4 Social Exclusion and Disadvantage}

Recent discussions on social exclusion have expressed that exclusion entails not simply economic
and political deprivation, but social and cultural dimensions which also entail notions of agency and
socioeconomic barriers.” Their research analysing data from three Australian Censuses (2001, 2006, and 2011) found that Australian Muslims consistently under-perform the national average on key indicators such as the unemployment rate, income and home ownership. Furthermore, Noble argues that the rising tendency to dehumanise Muslims as the ‘other’ has further diminished their participation, both socially and culturally excluding them from Australian society. Research conducted by Noble and Poynting found that some Muslims felt that they had been reduced to non-befitting categories – of Muslim, terrorist, rapist, Arab, and so on. This reduction to these categories, writes Noble, “is both the removal of the capacity to be acknowledged as ‘fully human’ and the removal of Australian-ness, or the capacity to be legitimate citizens.”

In a representative sense, Muslims in the West tend to be poorly represented at the various levels of government. This certainly applies to Australia, where despite the presence of several local Muslim councillors in parts of New South Wales and Victoria with sizeable Muslim populations, Ed Husic (Labor), Anne Aly (Labor) and Mehreen Faruqi (Greens) are the first three self-identifying Muslim members of Federal Parliament. The Parliament of Australia consists of 226 seats (150 MPs and 76 Senators) – meaning that although self-identifying Muslims represent 2.58% of the Australian population, they account for 1.33% of Federal Parliament.

What encompasses political participation is the topic of debate amongst academics. On top of direct membership to a political party, Abdulkader H. Sinno identifies engagement with media

228 Marie Peucker, Joshua Roose and Shahram Akbarzadeh, “Muslim Active Citizenship in Australia,” 282.
229 Ibid.
231 Ibid.
232 Ibid.
235 Accurate as of 23 August 2018.
organisations through, for instance, a letter to the editor, as direct political participation, while Al-Momani et al. understand political participation to include “a broad range of behaviours directed toward influencing the political scene.” The internet, in regards to online blogs, social media posts and petitions, represents a reasonably new avenue for political participation; however, much of the literature on the internet as a means of political participation suggests that patterns will largely reproduce those of off-line participation.

The general understanding is that certain social groups are better and others worse off at realise themselves in politics. In understanding why this is so, it is useful to employ Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic violence. Bourdieu’s theoretical approach is consciously geared towards understanding how power impacts both subtle and less visible and observable ways to shape the lives of individuals and, collectively, social groups. Symbolic violence is the main mechanism, for Bourdieu, by which distinctions between individuals and groups and forms of domination predicted thereupon are reproduced in society.

Symbolic violence, gentle, invisible violence, unrecognised as such, chosen as much as undergone, that of trust, obligation, personal loyalty, hospitality, gifts, debts, piety, in a word, of all the virtues honoured by the ethics of honour, present themselves as the most economical mode of domination because it best corresponds to the economy of the system. In other words, individuals are subjected to forms of violence, but are not necessarily conscious of it and do not necessarily perceive it to be so. They may be treated as inferior, denied resources, limited in their social

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237 Kais Al-Momani et al, Political Participation of Muslims in Australia, 12.
mobility and aspirations; however, this situation seems to them to be the natural order of things.\textsuperscript{244} Applied to the context of political participation of Australian Muslims, symbolic violence can be said to have had a hand in the poor socio-economic standing of Muslims and also in preventing a widespread and meaningful political contribution.

The poor economic standing of Australian Muslims \textit{vis-à-vis} the rest of the Australian population is utilised by some groups to claim Muslims are more susceptible to unemployment. Given that economic disadvantage is disempowering and can increase the probability of alienation from mainstream society, many Muslims have struggled to find a voice in Australian society.\textsuperscript{245} MCOs – seemingly unable to break away from the discourse regarding Muslims in the West – are battling to provide a substantial voice for their diverse communities.

\subsection*{1.4 Conclusion}

In order to fully appreciate the challenges facing MCOs in contemporary Australia, it has been important to first acknowledge and explore the history of the nation’s Muslim communities. Likewise, exploring relevant themes and debates concerning Muslims in Australia will provide a foundation that serves to contextualise the challenges discussed in the chapters that follow.

Although a Muslim history in Australia can be traced back to the presence of Makassan fishermen on the northern shores in the years immediately preceding European settlement, and many Afghan and Indian cameleers helped industrialise Australia’s vast interior in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Australian Muslim communities can still largely be considered as new and emerging.\textsuperscript{246} The ‘success’ and endurance of the White Australia Policy ensured that a significant Muslim

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\end{thebibliography}
population in Australia was unable to establish itself until after the policy was dismantled in the late 1960s and early 1970s.247

Nevertheless, these early instances of Muslim interaction with Indigenous and European Australians are an important part of Australia’s Muslim history. Though the Makassan fishermen and the ‘Afghan’ cameleers came from vastly different cultural backgrounds – categorised together only because of their shared faith, which in itself would likely have differed substantially – their stories are, in several ways, remarkably similar. Both groups have a documented history of amicable relations with local Indigenous communities; both groups impacted rural and isolated sections of Australia; and both groups struggled to develop an ongoing presence in Australia because of government legislation.

Under a policy of ‘multiculturalism’, Australia’s Muslim communities and overall Muslim population have grown significantly. As indicated by the 2016 Census, they continue to grow and diversify.

However, the White Australia Policy, and the racist and protectionist attitudes that underpinned it have left a legacy that has proven difficult to shake. Islamophobia – a term that can be used, in part, to describe much of the anti-Islam or anti-Muslim phenomena discussed in this chapter, and that is further explored through the experiences of the participants of this research in Chapter 5: *Islamophobia: The External Challenge* – has attached itself to this legacy. Muslim communities in Australia continue to be ‘otherised’, with Islam regularly perceived as incompatible, or even hostile, to Australian or Western ‘values’.

This is the socio-political environment in which MCOs in Australia have formed and continue to form and operate. It represents an exceptional situation, unparalleled among religious institutions in contemporary Australian society.

2 Muslim Community Organisations in Australia

2.1 Introduction

Before looking at the various challenges facing Muslim community organisations (MCOs) in Australia, and the nature of their relationship with other relevant actors, it is important to develop an understanding of the structure of Muslim leadership. It is important to address three key questions: Firstly, who are these MCOs? Secondly, what are they? And, finally, if they are interconnected, and if so, how?

MCOs in Australia have existed, in some form, since the late nineteenth century when members of the small Muslim communities in Perth and Adelaide rallied together to fund the construction of a mosque in their respective cities. While building new mosques remains a focus of some sections of the Australian Muslim community, the aim and role of MCOs have expanded over time as organisations attempt to meet the communities’ changing needs.

In his 2003 book Islam in Australia, Abdullah Saeed divided Muslim leadership in Australia into three distinct categories: Corporate leadership, non-corporate leadership and collective religious leadership.

Saeed separated corporate leadership into the three tiers of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC): Islamic societies of each state and territory, an Islamic council for each state and territory, and the national-peak body – AFIC or, as it is also known, Muslims Australia.

Non-corporate leadership was described as including both religious leaders, such as imams, and informal community leaders who, while coming from a variety of vocational backgrounds, may have

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249 Abdullah Saeed, Islam in Australia, 132-142.
been involved in activities intended to serve and benefit the community, such as the setting up of mosques.\textsuperscript{251}

Finally, Saeed identified \textit{collective religious leadership} as the formal organisation of religious leaders as an official group that would nominate imams or one single leader to represent the religious values of Australian Muslims.\textsuperscript{252} Saeed noted under the category of \textit{collective religious leadership} that there had “not been many significant attempts to bring together nominated religious leaders,” nor had there been an attempt to nominate or elect “a single religious leader to represent the entire population of Australian Muslims.”\textsuperscript{253} In late 2006, however, the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) was established as, in the Council’s own words, “the only central, Islamic body that holds key representation from Australian-based Muslim clerics.”\textsuperscript{254} As of 2017, the organisation claimed to have “in excess of 95 imams registered with ANIC as active members.”\textsuperscript{255}

Most of what Saeed identified as the issues and challenges for Muslim leadership organisations remain, and some have grown exponentially in the subsequent years. In the area of corporate leadership, for instance, Saeed’s warnings as to the diminishing influence of AFIC appear to have been more than justified. As allude by the overwhelming majority of those interviewed for this study, the failure of AFIC to effectively address the developing wants and needs of Australian Muslim communities has arguably left their network, with some exceptions, largely obsolete and in urgent need of reform. Furthermore, tensions within and between Australia’s Muslim communities continue to impact the structures of Muslim leadership in Australia. This has led to a shift in the dynamic of Muslim leadership in Australia, which has meant that many new MCOs have emerged over the last decade or so, to fulfil community needs and address areas of ongoing concern. Since

\textsuperscript{251} Ibid, 132-34.
\textsuperscript{252} Ibid, 140-41.
\textsuperscript{253} Ibid, 140.
9/11, for instance, and due to the increased politicisation of Muslim communities, the number of MCOs in Australia has increased significantly.\textsuperscript{256}

Despite the developments within the Muslim community that have occurred since Saeed’s book was published, the basic three-category structure at the core of his work retains its relevancy and, with a few minor structural adjustments and terminology changes, remains a useful way of approaching MCOs in Australia.

This chapter will separate MCOs into three categories: peak bodies, collective religious leadership and community groups.

The section on peak bodies will contrast two of the major Muslim peak bodies in Australia: the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) and the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV). Through an exploration of the history, organisational structure and services provided by each of the peak bodies, it will determine their effectiveness. Likewise, through an analysis of the leadership, membership and consultative processes of the two organisations, it will evaluate their representativeness and relationship with Muslim communities in Australia.

The Australian National Imams Council will be the focus of the section on collective religious leadership. It will discuss how and why the organisation has risen to relative prominence, outline its vision moving forward, and determine its scope of influence and legitimacy amongst Australian Muslim communities.

The final section of this chapter will define and identify four types of Muslim community groups: mosque boards and committees, women’s leadership organisations, community centres and associations, and youth groups and Muslim student associations.

\textsuperscript{256} Nora Amath, \textit{The Phenomenology of Community Activism}, 62.
Using a combination of content/textual analysis, community observation and the information revealed in the semi-structured in-depth interviews, this chapter will explain the overall structure of Muslim community leadership in Australia. In doing so, it will lay the foundations for a wider discussion on relationships involving MCOs and on the specific challenges that they face in the subsequent chapters.

2.2 Peak Bodies

The Preamble to the Constitution of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) outlines the organisation’s desire “to promote religious, social and cultural welfare of the Muslims throughout Australia.” As an organisation, its primary motivation is to both represent, and improve the lives of, Muslims in Australia. Furthermore, AFIC and its state and local affiliates are largely composed of lay leaders, rather than religious leaders. While the Australian National Imams Council can be considered a religious group, AFIC and its state councils are more accurately defined as peak bodies.

Rose Melville defines a peak body as follows:

A peak body is a non-government organisation whose membership consists of smaller organisations of allied interests. The peak body thus offers a strong voice for the specific community sector in the areas of lobbying government, community education and information sharing between member groups and interested parties.

Peak bodies have played an important role in helping to establish Muslim communities in Australia. AFIC, as the national peak body for Australian Muslims since 1964, has affected the lives of many Australian Muslims. The establishment of a significant proportion of Islamic infrastructure in Australia is, in part, the result of their initiative and that of their local state representatives. For

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257 Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Constitution 2011, Preamble.
instance, AFIC representatives played a significant role in the establishment of many Islamic schools and mosques.\textsuperscript{260}

Under the category of \textit{corporate leadership}, Saeed outlined the three-tiered system of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils. He wrote: “Muslim societies and associations, in theory at least, are networked through the relevant state Islamic councils. All state councils are then represented at a national level by AFIC.”\textsuperscript{261}

In a contemporary sense, however, the reality presented by several of the participants of this study challenges Saeed’s admittedly theoretical conception of AFIC. For many, the leadership within AFIC is no longer representative of the grassroots of the Australian Muslim community or their aims and values.

As will be discussed, the links between the AFIC Executive and the State Councils, and the links between the State Councils and local Islamic Societies, are no longer strong enough to warrant their inclusion under the one categorisation of \textit{corporate leadership}.

This section of the chapter will focus on two \textit{peak bodies} – AFIC as the national peak body and the Islamic Council of Victoria as the peak body for Victorian Muslims. The local Islamic societies that make up the membership of peak bodies will be discussed later in this chapter under the category of \textit{community groups}.

Superficially, it may seem odd to compare a state council with its national peak body; however, as this discussion will indicate, in practice, these two organisations are remarkably different and remain only loosely connected. As will be explained, the conceptual structure of AFIC is that of a peak body, but in practice it is anything but; whereas the ICV, for the most part, is a functioning Muslim peak body.

\textsuperscript{260} Bilal Cleland, \textit{The Muslims in Australia}, 79.
\textsuperscript{261} Saeed, \textit{Islam in Australia}, 138.
2.2.1 Case Study: The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC)

Before analysing the current state and prospects of AFIC, it is important to contextualise the organisation through a brief exploration of its history. In the mid-1950s, as the Muslim population in Australia was slowly beginning to increase, the first Islamic societies were established in New South Wales and Victoria. In 1964, several societies came together and formed the Australian Federation of Islamic Societies (AFIS) to provide a sense of unity among Australian Muslims.

The vision for AFIS was, according to the organisation’s first president Dr Abdul Khaliq Kazi AM, relatively straightforward:

> The vision simply was no group of Muslims, in this big continent, should feel all alone in this whole world. So, they have a sense of belonging. They have a sense of direction. And somebody can go out to help them and so on.

Despite their best intentions, AFIS struggled to be a unifying national force for Australian Muslim communities. With division between groups and a lack of Muslim unity still a grave concern amongst the religious leadership, a two-man delegation from Saudi Arabia arrived in 1974 to investigate the needs of the local Muslim community in Australia.

Regarding the state of AFIS, one of the Saudi advisors, the Moroccan-born Dr Ali Kettani, made the following observation:

> The continental dimensions of Australia made it very difficult for a two-level national body to be effective. Things became worse as all multi-national Muslim organisations started to disintegrate into their national components.

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262 Bilal Cleland, “The History of Muslims in Australia,” 27.
263 Abdul Khaliq Kazi, in interview with author, Melbourne, 4 December 2017.
264 Bilal Cleland, “The History of Muslims in Australia,” 27.
In order to counter what he perceived as the inadequacies of AFIS, Kettani made the following recommendations:

1. The gradual transformation of Islamic societies based on ethnic, national, racial or sectarian ground into one based purely on geography.

2. The local Islamic societies in each state should form an Islamic Council which would represent the entire Muslim community in that state.

3. All the Islamic Councils in the different states and territories of Australia should form a Federation of Islamic Councils.266

In 1975, Kettani’s recommendations were accepted by AFIS and the three-tier organisational structure he proposed – local societies and mosques, state and territory councils, and the national umbrella body – became the basis for the transformation of AFIS into the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC).

Skipping ahead to 2017 briefly, it is difficult to make the argument that any of the three recommendations that Kettani made have been properly implemented. Societies with specific ethnic affiliations continue to make up a sizeable proportion of state council memberships. Over 30% of the member organisations listed in the ICV 2016 Annual Report refer to a national or ethnic group in their name;267 however, this is likely under-representative of the overall reality. According to ICV Executive Director Nail Aykan, the community remains “ethnically segmented” with new groups of Muslim migrants still looking to establish their own centres.268 Furthermore, as will be discussed, state councils (with some possible exemptions) cannot accurately claim to be representative of the majority of Muslims in a state, let alone the entire state’s Muslim community. Finally, the third recommendation is technically accurate; however, the failure to satisfy the first and second recommendations means the third is somewhat irrelevant.

266 Ibid, 22.
Nevertheless, in the two or so decades that followed its formation in 1975, AFIC played a substantial role in developing community infrastructure and as an advocate for Australian Muslim communities. As a young organisation, it was able to achieve much of what it had set out to achieve.

This view was supported by participants of this study. Speaking to this point, former president of the ICV Ghaith Krayem suggested AFIC’s early success was reflective of the Muslim community of that era:

I think it’s a reflection of the community generally [and] the timeline of the community. The people who set up AFIC were really well-intentioned individuals ... It was set up with really good purpose and intent and [it] was able to do what it was originally set up to do.\(^\text{269}\)

According to Kettani, reflecting on the state of AFIC in 1996, the system he proposed succeeded for many reasons.

1. The desire of the Australian Muslim community to unite under one national organisation found support in almost all Australian political parties, at both state and national levels.

2. The representation of the Muslim-majority nations that would have been interested in controlling the Muslim community was weak in the beginning. When it became stronger later (Turkey, Saudi Arabia), the Muslim community was already irreversibly organised.

3. The influence of foreign Muslim ambassadors in trying to control and influence the Muslim community was limited, as Canberra was remote from centres of Muslim concentration.

4. The system of organisation of the Australian Muslim community was good enough to absorb the major ethnic, religious or political diversities of the community.\(^\text{270}\)

The fact that the four AFIC presidents before the year 2000 were from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, including Indo-Fijian, Lebanese, Pakistani and Singaporean, goes some way to legitimising Kattani’s final point.\(^\text{271}\)

\(^{269}\) Ghaith Krayem, in interview with author, Melbourne, 12 July 2017.

\(^{270}\) M. Ali Kettani, “Challenges to the Organisation of Muslim Communities in Western Europe,” 22-23.

2.2.1.1 AFIC in Theory & Practice

Much of the initial success of AFIC must also be proportioned to the fact that it was relatively well-resourced. To support and strengthen AFIC in the aftermath of its formation, Saudi Arabia and a coalition of Gulf States recognised AFIC as the sole Australian authority for issuing halal certificates.272 This preferential treatment lasted until the early 1990s when halal certification was de-centralised;273 however, AFIC continues to maintain a presence in this area.274 Saudi Arabia also provided an initial $1.2 million to be spent on the development of Islamic infrastructure in Australia – notably the building of mosques and Islamic schools.275 Evidently, AFIC has received funds from Saudi Arabia at various times throughout its history. In the late 1980s, King Fahd provided a $1 million gift for the purchase of land in Sydney’s West where Malek Fahd Islamic School, named in his honour, was established in 1989.276

With the resources provided through halal certification and donations, AFIC helped establish schools in New South Wales (Malek Fahd – est. 1989), Victoria (Islamic College of Melbourne – est. 2011), Queensland (Islamic College of Brisbane – est. 1995), South Australia (Islamic College of South Australia – est. 1998), Western Australia (Langford Islamic College – est. 2004) and the Australian Capital Territory (Islamic School of Canberra – est. 2015). In the 1980s, AFIC also established King Khalid Islamic College in Victoria (now Australian International Academy); however, tension between AFIC and the School Board eventually led to the school’s formal separation from AFIC.277

AFIC owns the land and the buildings from which these schools operate. As such, the organisation receives an annual rental income from each of the schools. An independent audit, completed in

272 Bilal Cleland, The Muslims in Australia, 79.
275 Bilal Cleland, The Muslims in Australia, 79.
277 Peter Jones, “Islamic Schools in Australia,” The La Trobe Journal, 89 (May), 38.
March 2017 on behalf of the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC), determined that AFIC had a total income of $5.77 million in the financial year ending June 2016, and had a comprehensive income, minus expenses, of $2.05 million.\(^{278}\) AFIC’s 2015 Financial Report that they submitted to the ACNC valued their total assets at over $64 million.\(^{279}\) The independent audit also found that AFIC “lacks appropriate governance mechanisms that enable them to pursue their not-for-profit purpose in a clear and consistent manner” and that the organisation has “gaps in the financial controls environment, which may hinder good financial governance and expose the organisation to excessive amounts of financial risk.”\(^{280}\)

AFIC’s status as an accredited charity is under threat. An ACNC investigation in 2017 identified several concerns regarding the organisation’s governance, including its status as a not-for-profit entity, accountability to its members, and ability to identify and navigate conflicts of interest.\(^{281}\)

AFIC was given a number of undertakings which it is in the process of satisfying. The organisation had complied with the undertakings of the previous Enforceable Undertaking Summary from 2016.\(^{282}\)

While AFIC has unquestionably played a significant role in the development of Islamic infrastructure in Australia, the state of the organisation in 2017 was shambolic, which the ACNC investigation served to highlight. Of the Muslim community leaders interviewed in this study who had detailed


\(^{280}\) Ibid.

\(^{281}\) “Enforcing Undertaking Summary: Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Incorporated, 7 July 2017,” Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, 14 July 2017.

\(^{282}\) Ibid.
opinions on AFIC, not one spoke positively about the current state of the organisation and several
were pessimistic regarding its future.\textsuperscript{283}

The organisation has been riddled by internal conflict and power battles, which have often ended up
in court, while accusations of corruption and financial mismanagement – especially in relation to
AFIC-affiliated schools\textsuperscript{284} – have caused serious damage to the organisation and the Muslim
communities that they are designed to represent.

In relation to AFIC, allegations of corruption were relatively widespread among the interviewees
who had strong opinions on AFIC.

One participant was quite forthright regarding their own views on AFIC:

\begin{quote}
AFIC – some people call it the ‘Australian Federation of Islamic Corruption’. Some people call
it the ‘Australian Federation of Islamic Incompetence’. I call it the ‘Muslim Mafia’. You can
quote me on that.\textsuperscript{285}
\end{quote}

Similarly, one of the participants had the following to say regarding corruption within AFIC and the
affect it has on the community:

\begin{quote}
There’s corruption as well. I mean, I’m very blunt with this ... At [a] grassroots level, at the
state level and the federal level ... Disputes end up in court and end up in supreme courts.
Litigation [is] very expensive and it’s a drain on the community, and it’s ongoing, and this has
been going for the last 20 years. So, if you do a search on Austlii, do ‘AFIC’, there’s Westpac
litigation, there’s corruption, there’s state council ... action against AFIC and vice-versa.\textsuperscript{286}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{283} See Aykan, interview; Krayem, interview; Silma Ihram, in interview with author, Sydney, 15 March 2017;
Ahmed Zreika, in interview with author, Adelaide, 31 October 2016; Zubeda Raihan, in interview with author,
Sydney, 16 March 2017; Nora Amath, in interview with author, Brisbane, 23 March 2017; Kazi, interview.
\textsuperscript{284} Sam Buckingham-Jones, “AFIC used Malek Fahd Islamic School as a funding ‘milk cow’,” \textit{The Australian}, 18
as-a-funding-milk-cow/news-story/d1765da433dbf65b947a2d780ad3f3e8.
\textsuperscript{285} Anonymous, in interview with author, 2016-17.
\textsuperscript{286} Anonymous, in interview with author, 2016-17.
AFIC often dedicate significant resources to legal challenges. In 2015, for instance, AFIC spent $254,569 on legal expenses.\(^{287}\)

As the above quote refers, the relationship between AFIC and some of the state councils has, on various occasions over the last few decades, become tense.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the relationship between the Islamic Council of NSW (ICNSW) and AFIC became strained. The Executive Committee of AFIC decided to intervene in ICNSW, replace the elected chairman and appoint a caretaker committee to run its affairs.\(^{288}\) This led to the formation of the Muslim Council of NSW, which was registered and replaced ICNSW as the state representative of AFIC, until they themselves fell out with AFIC in 2009. In 2017, the state representative of AFIC for NSW is United Muslims NSW.\(^{289}\)

Krayem spoke to the conflict between the Muslim Council of NSW and AFIC in the late 2000s:

> Basically, it was a dispute between the AFIC leadership at the time and the state council. And the way the AFIC is structured, it is very easy for them to engineer circumstances to disaffiliate a state council. So that's what they did. They disaffiliated the state council, then went and created a new body, which 12 months later, they had a disagreement with. So, they got rid of them. That's the history of it. That's how it happened.\(^{290}\)

The constitution of AFIC creates a situation and environment in which the President and the members of the Executive Committee can manipulate the structure of the organisation to their benefit.

As set out in its constitution, the leadership of AFIC consists of three branches of power: The Executive Committee, the Federal Council and the Federal Congress.

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\(^{288}\) Islamic Council of NSW and Anor. v The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils and Ors. [2000] NSWSC 115 (2 March 2000).


\(^{290}\) Krayem, interview.
The Executive Committee consists of the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Secretary, Assistant Treasurer and a further three Executive Members. All of these are voluntary positions.

The Federal Council of AFIC consists of the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer of AFIC, and the President/Chairmen of each State Council.

As of 2017, there were officially 9 State and Territory Islamic Councils:

- The Islamic Council of Christmas and Cocos Islands
- Islamic Council of Queensland
- Islamic Council of the Northern Territory
- Islamic Council of South Australia
- Islamic Council of Tasmania
- Islamic Council of Victoria
- Islamic Council of Western Australia
- Islamic Council of the ACT
- United Muslims NSW

The Federal Congress consists of the Executive Committee and the Federal Council, while every Society that is a member of AFIC is entitled to send one delegate to represent them when the Congress meets to vote on the priorities and direction of the peak body.

The positions of president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer are elected every three years by a delegate of each State Council and a representative of the Executive Committee (usually the President).

This voting system is an area of concern for many members of AFIC given it provides the more populous states like Victoria, which has a Muslim population of just under 200,000, with the same voting rights as that of Christmas Island and Cocos Island, which have a combined Muslim population.

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291 *Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Constitution 2011*, Sec. 17.
292 Ibid, Sec. 14.
293 Ibid, Sec. 12.
294 Ibid, Sec. 32 (d).
of close to 800. Likewise, theoretically, the standing President of AFIC has the same say in who the
next president will be as the entire state of New South Wales, with a Muslim population of just
under 270,000.

The positions of assistant secretary and assistant treasurer are appointed by the President and the
three executive members are appointed by the Federal Congress, on the recommendation of the
President. This means that within the Executive Committee, the President has, either indirectly or
directly, selected five of the nine committee members. This gives the President the potential to have
an enormous amount of influence over the organisation.

One way in which the President or powerful individuals within AFIC can manipulate circumstances in
their favour is through “buying” the votes of the smaller state councils. Dr Kazi elaborates:

One society council is easier to buy. You do them a favour; they ask for $10,000, because
[they] need renovations. It’s easy, so they work for you. Whereas to get a council vote from
here [Victoria], you’ve got 30 societies; you’ve got to bribe 20 of them. It’s harder. And yet
they are only one vote.

Likewise, as Krayem alluded to in his comments on the conflict between AFIC and the NSW
representative bodies, another way in which this manipulation has allegedly been carried out, is
through the creation of “fake societies” or “fake councils.”

An investigation into the state councils of AFIC by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) in
2015 found that several prominent leaders within Muslim communities were concerned about the
use of “paper societies” – societies constructed in name only by filing relevant paperwork with
authorities – to gain power within AFIC. The article alleged that such practices were a concern in

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295 Australian Bureau of Statistics.
296 Ibid.
297 Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Constitution 2011, Sec. 17.
298 Kazi, interview.
299 Krayem, interview.
300 Alison Branley, “Muslim state councils accused of running unaccountable ‘dictatorships’, ‘ABC, 27 June
the ACT, NSW and South Australia. Neil El-Kadomi from Parramatta Mosque explained how this process worked. He said:

I can make three or four societies and register them with Fair Trading and I become a society ... They have members who are grandchildren, underage, their wives, their kids, only to show they have members ... Actually, they have no members, they are only a paper society just to get a vote.301

These “paper societies” then have a vote in electing state council executives, who in turn elect the AFIC Executive Committee. Voting is not proportional, so if one society has 1,000 members and the other has 100, they are each delegated one vote. It is in this way that the structure of AFIC can be manipulated at state level to suit the needs of an individual or faction.

The practice of using “paper societies” to control councils can lead to a disconnect between AFIC and the community. In South Australia, for instance, participants in this study emphasised their organisation’s lack of a relationship with the Islamic Council of South Australia.

One participant expressed their disdain:

The Islamic Council of South Australia is based on 13 fake organisations ... [By] fake organisation ... I mean ... there is just one person running the society ... They have no action, no activity on the ground. [They] just meet when they have an election and the president just elects the president of AFIC.302

Hasan Yunich, President of the Islamic Information Centre of South Australia (IICSA), emphasised that IICSA had nothing to do with the Islamic Council of South Australia and that personally he was uncomfortable with how they operated:

It does look a bit funny how it’s set up. So, the Council, I’ve never seen them do anything to serve the community. [There is a president and an executive] but it’s tied back down to AFIC [and] to the school [Islamic College of South Australia] ... So, I have no idea what the ins and the outs of the organisation are, but I look at it going, "Yeah, I’m not comfortable with

302 Anonymous, in interview with author, 2016-17.
Finally, the Muslim Women’s Association of South Australia indicated they had no real relationship with ICSA and Dora Abbas, the organisation’s chairperson, mentioned that she supported Islamic schools formalising their independence from AFIC.  

2.2.1.2 Schools’ Crisis

An area of concern for many Muslim communities in Australia is education. One of the objectives of Islamic schools in Australia is to provide education for children to enable them to function effectively in Australian life while remaining faithful to their religion. In her thesis *Seeking education: the struggle of Muslims to educate their children in Australia*, Irene Donohoue Clyne states that Muslims in Australia “believe that without positive teaching about Islam and Islamic cultures their children will be lost,” emphasising their concern that Australian schools ignore Islamic culture.

Some academics have criticised the institutional framework of Australian public schools which, for instance, limits special religious education to forty hours per year, arguing that such provisions prejudice communities that wish to learn about their belief systems. Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron argue that learnt prejudices can lead to biased decision-making that validates pupils from the dominant socio-cultural background over those who are not.

In the context of the Australian education system, inherent behaviour or communication styles from within the curriculum and media may subtly alienate and disadvantage Muslim schoolchildren.

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Public schools, while not overtly opposing Islamic values, have been said to devalue them by omission. As Barbara Giles writes, “Islamic schools render it possible for the Muslim community to participate in a modified curriculum that accommodates their religious needs.” This is consistent with the experiences of many Australian Muslims who confess feelings of alienation from the Australian education system because they believe the curriculum ignores or devalues their culture.

Evidently, there is a pressing desire, shared by many within Australia’s Muslim communities, to have their children attend Islamic schools.

Unfortunately, AFIC schools have been a major source of controversy. Most recently, several of their affiliated schools have faced accusations of malpractice, non-compliance and financial mismanagement, which led to an investigation into all AFIC-affiliated schools.

In Adelaide, following a tumultuous period of uncertainty, the Islamic College of South Australia closed in June 2017 after the Federal Government announced it was cutting approximately $4 million in funding. The school had appeared on the brink of rectifying the Government’s concerns regarding governance and financial issues, but an apparent power struggle between AFIC and the school board, which culminated in a string of resignations in February 2017 ultimately led the Government to lose the belief that the necessary reforms were possible. Immediately after its

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312 Irene Donohoue Clyne, “Educating Muslim Children in Australia,” 125.
closure, however, the school was purchased by the Perth-based Australian Islamic College and reopened as the Australian Islamic College Adelaide.315

Similarly, Australia’s largest Islamic school, Sydney’s Malek Fahd, was granted a last-minute, but temporary reprieve in July 2017 when the Federal Court ordered the Government to release $6.5 million in federal funding that had been held back after an independent audit found the school’s former board was making a profit.316 The Administrative Appeals Tribunal had previously upheld the Department of Education’s decision to strip funding after it found that the school was operating for profit through millions of dollars in inflated rent payments and loans made to AFIC.317 Malek Fahd is suing AFIC for approximately $45 million over transactions between 2000 and 2015.318 In November 2017, AFIC agreed to a court order to transfer $10 million to Malek Fahd and the ownership of the Beaumont Hills campus, which is estimated to be worth around $12 million, but made no admissions.319 The school’s future remains uncertain.

The Islamic School of Canberra and the Islamic College of Brisbane have experienced similar issues owing to their association with AFIC.320

The issues with the AFIC-affiliated schools have substantially harmed the relationship between AFIC and members of Australian Muslim communities – especially in areas directly affected.

As Aziz Khan, Secretary of the Islamic Council of Western Australian, noted, AFIC’s decision to set up schools was a noble one; however, the structural problems at the core of the organisation and the inability of leaders to move on has inevitably led to their downfall. He said:

> The idea was a good, noble idea – to set up schools in each state – which they did, and which employed people and educated students. Good intentions. But the problem of corruption, transparency, accountability, it's still there at this present moment. Leadership is a big issue. There should be an inquiry on these things.\(^{321}\)

The issues plaguing AFIC schools cannot be separated from the corruption and governance problems identified in the ACNC investigation and are representative of the failure of AFIC’s leaders and structure.

### 2.2.1.3 Leadership and Power Battles

Over the last decade or so, AFIC has experienced several abrupt changes within its executive leadership as individuals and rival factions, with various motives and aims, have battled for control of the organisation. This has led to somewhat of a ‘musical chairs’ of leadership, wherein the same people depart and then return to positions of power.

For instance, Aziz Khan said:

> There’s a recycling that’s going on ... The same old faces that come back and take power. That’s the biggest problem we have – why we’re dysfunctional.\(^{322}\)

In the fallout of the schools’ controversy, the dysfunction surrounding AFIC’s leadership reached new heights. Owing to confusion and disagreements over election processes and resignations, the period between March 2016 and May 2017 was a tumultuous and embarrassing time for AFIC.

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\(^{321}\) Aziz Khan, in interview with author, Perth, 2 November 2016.

\(^{322}\) Ibid.
The period saw:

- An allegedly chaotic meeting of AFICs Federal Congress in March 2016 at which some of the attendees were accused of physical intimidation.\(^{323}\)

- The NSW Supreme Court being called upon to determine AFIC’s Executive Committee after confusion over the legitimacy and outcome of the March meeting and whether Hafez Kassem remained president or if Shahjahan Khan headed an Interim Executive Committee.\(^ {324} \)

- Kassem remain in the role of president before resigning in July 2016 and being succeeded by Keysar Trad.\(^ {325} \)

- Kassem declaring in January 2017 that he had only taken a leave of absence and was resuming his role as president.\(^ {326} \)

- A group of former executive committee members, arriving at AFIC’s headquarters late at night with a locksmith; entering the Zetland office; allegedly installing themselves as the Executive Committee; passing motions of no-confidence in all other committee members, including Trad; and, opening a new bank account.\(^ {327} \)

- The NSW Supreme Court being called upon again to determine AFIC’s Executive Committee.\(^ {328} \)

- The reinstatement of Trad and the other “removed” Executive Committee members on the provision that they hold fresh elections as soon as possible.\(^ {329} \)

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\(^{324}\) Muslims New South Wales Inc v Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Inc [2016] NSWSC 960 (8 July 2016).

\(^{325}\) “Media Statement: Keysar Trad elected President of Muslims Australia,” \textit{Muslims Australia: Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Inc.} 28 July 2016.


\(^{328}\) The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Inc v Hafez Kassem [2017] NSWSC 206 (3 March 2017).

• Rateb Jneid defeating Trad and Khan to be elected president at the 53rd AFIC Congress in May 2017.\textsuperscript{330}

Jneid’s election seemingly closed the chapter on this particular leadership ordeal (see 2.2.1.6 AFIC in 2018: Re-establishing community trust?).

2.2.1.4 AFIC & Muslim Communities

The controversy surrounding the AFIC-affiliated schools, reinforced by the leadership disputes and comments that then AFIC President Keysar Trad had made regarding violence against women,\textsuperscript{331} led to a level of national attention, both from within the Muslim community and externally, that AFIC has rarely experienced throughout its history. The increased national attention on AFIC can be said to have directly affected many MCOs – even though many have no formal link or relationship with the organisation.

AFIC was set up, in part, to be an advocacy body representing all Australian Muslims. Indeed, the organisation’s website continues to make the claim that AFIC aims to meet the ongoing needs of the community by “articulating the interests of Australian Muslims in political advocacy and social justice.”\textsuperscript{332}

Previous studies have indicated that tensions with the leadership structure have meant that Australian Muslims do not feel that AFIC represents them.\textsuperscript{333} Those interviewed in this study reinforced this view, suggesting that AFIC is anything but representative of their beliefs and values.


\textsuperscript{333} Ghena Krayem, Islamic Family Law in Australia, 75.
Academic and community advocate, Nora Amath, who works with several MCOs in Queensland and around Australia, spoke of how the perception that AFIC speaks and acts for all Australian Muslims can be particularly annoying for representatives of MCOs. She said:

I guess, unfortunately, the public don’t see the complexity of AFIC with organisations, with our organisation, and that they don’t represent [us] at all. But how do you convey that? [They say], “the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, he’s your president.” Well, no. There’s no democratic voting process. It’s the way deals are made in the back rooms that I just have no idea [about].

If the responses of the participants in this study are considered, the relationship between AFIC and MCOs is essentially non-existent.

Several of the representatives of Muslim women’s leadership groups (see 2.4.2 Women’s Leadership Organisations) indicated that, despite being sizeable and influential organisations, they had no support from or engagement with AFIC. The recent leadership battles were said to have made the prospect of engagement even more difficult.

The AFIC Constitution states that one of the organisation’s objectives and purposes is: “To promote, organise and encourage religious, cultural and recreational Muslim youth activities.” However, the representatives of youth groups and Muslim student associations (see 2.4.4 Youth Groups and Muslim Student Associations) interviewed in this study indicated that they had either not heard of AFIC or had no recent history or interaction with them or their state bodies. In cases where the youth representative was aware of AFIC or the local state council’s existence, there was little evidence of an existing relationship between the organisations. For instance, Maryam Khan of the Western Australia youth group Muslim Youth Western Australia (MYWA) – a not for profit organisation started up by a group of young Western Australian Muslims committed to providing a representative body for all young Muslims in the state – expressed that while the organisation was

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334 Amath, interview.
335 Abbas, interview. Raihman, interview.
336 Raihman, interview.
337 *Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Constitution 2011*, Sec. 7 (1) (f).
not hostile to AFIC and its local council, there was not much interaction or engagement between them.  

According to Krayem, one of the factors in the deteriorating relevancy of AFIC amongst community groups is that AFIC became increasingly insular after the schools were built – choosing to direct its focus towards its financial prospects and position. For the most part, they were left to do so while MCOs emerged to fulfil community needs. He said:

> It became a business around schools and halal certification. It completely lost the ball when it came to representation. And the reality was ... there wasn't an impending driver that was gonna change that. Things were relatively smooth. The issues were pretty minor. There was plenty of organisations on the ground that were dealing with those things. So, they were left to run their own devices. And the community was happy the schools started to get built, because there was a real need for it. But, they then just kept going down that path and it became very insular. And so, it was almost impossible for genuine community engagement to happen with AFIC.  

For better or worse, AFIC has undoubtedly helped shape Muslim communities in Australia. Through the building of mosques, schools and various other forms of Islamic infrastructure, AFIC has impacted the lives of many Australian Muslims. However, given its recent dysfunction and lack of engagement with many Australian Muslims, a question that often arose in conversation with the participants of this study was: Is AFIC still important? And if it is, how do you improve the organisation?

The recent drama with AFIC-affiliated schools has shown how the organisation, through the assets they have accumulated throughout their history, still directly impacts many within Australia’s Muslim communities.

Despite having little legitimacy amongst members of Australian Muslim communities, AFIC does, in a way, still play an advocacy role. Its leaders are often asked by media outlets to provide social commentary on issues relating to Muslims and Islam, which often puts them at the forefront of

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338 Maryam Khan, in interview with author, Perth, 1 November 2016.
339 Krayem, interview.
wider society’s interaction with Australian Muslims and Australian MCOs. For instance, speaking at an event in Ipswich, Nora Amath was asked about AFIC president Keysar Trad: “I said, ‘What about Keysar Trad?’ … [The audience member responded], ‘He’s supposed to be your leader.’ I was like, ‘He’s not my leader. He’s not anyone’s leader that I know [of].’”

Incidents such as these have led some leaders within the community to argue that instead of attempting to fix AFIC, the national peak body should be disbanded. Several commentators on Muslim issues in Australia have been highly critical of AFIC, with Sydney-based commentator Irfan Yusef labelling it “a rotting carcass.”

In a 2009 study conducted by Nahid Kabir, a former AFIC president commented: “Muslims in this country have come from over fifty odd countries. They have come from different cultures, with different philosophies, different problems, so it is a Herculean task to hope for a united front on the Muslims, even though that was the main objective of the AFIC.” The feedback from participants of this research, and an in-depth analysis of their recent public history, suggests AFIC is comprehensively failing to satisfy this objective.

2.2.1.5 The Future of AFIC

Some of the participants were sceptical regarding AFIC’s future. One participant argued that any attempt to improve AFIC would be futile:

AFIC has proven the case that it is ineffective and irrelevant … AFIC is toxic. It is irrecoverable. You could bring superman in [and it still wouldn’t be fixed] … The best thing to do is to knock it down … They have failed and disappointed the Muslim community big time … It’s doomed … so my attitude is, I’m not gonna waste any time on [them].

340 Amath, interview.
343 Unidentified former AFIC president as quoted in Nahid Kabir, “Islamic Issues in Australia,” 458.
Nail Aykan had the opinion that the geographical reality of Australia meant that the idea that a centralised peak body could retain legitimacy was hard to accept. He said:

I subscribe to a school of thought – if I could put it that way – that there should be no national peak Muslim body ... Australia is too large a continent to be able to bring volunteers together, with no funds.

Proud of the ICV, which Aykan described as “virtually the only functioning, effective, peak Muslim body in the whole country,” he used the example of the recent failings of AFIC to suggest that each state needed to prioritise their own community – free from the unwanted interference of a national peak body:

Our priority should be to invest on each state functioning. [Having] effective, relevant voices, for their local populations ... rather than having a body which sits above you where you have politics, power, personalities, incompetence [and] corruption taking place, as is the case with AFIC. It just drains people’s energies and my argument is, ‘Get your priorities straight, everybody. Fix your own backyard. Get your act together in your own state.’

Aykan went on to suggest that in an ideal scenario, using modern technology, the representatives of each state body would have an ongoing relationship with each other in order to share ideas and discuss issues, “but you don’t need some overarching body that somehow you need to report to.”

Ghaith Krayem, on the other hand, saw the value in having a national representative body that could advocate for Australian Muslims:

I think we do need a national voice. I’m not necessarily convinced any more that it has to be a single voice. I think there can be organisations that play different roles.

For AFIC to assume this advocacy role, however, Krayem acknowledged that serious changes would be needed. However, he was optimistic regarding the prospect of these changes taking place:

There are some signs now [that AFIC is improving], because external factors have driven people. But the structure is still not right now. The problem with AFIC is it just never evolved ... We’re not a migrant community [any more]. AFIC still runs as if its main focus is to help

345 Ibid.
346 Ibid.
347 Krayem, interview.
new arrivals, because that’s what ... the focus [was] forty years ago. That’s what was needed, and it’s just continued that way. And the community has just diverged.\textsuperscript{348}

In his previous role as president of the ICV, Krayem indicated that he had attempted to make changes he thought would improve AFIC:

\begin{quote}
I put up a motion to the 2015 AFIC Conference to essentially set up an education trust. Move all of the real estate into the trust. And you can do it in a way where AFIC still has some involvement but runs it separately. And then AFIC can play the role of an advocacy body ... So, I don’t think we need the one body that does everything, but I think we’re hurting by not having a national voice that isn’t at least recognised. It may not be ... accepted by everyone, but at least [it could] be recognised by a significant number of the community as being representative of the community.\textsuperscript{349}
\end{quote}

Ayman Islam, General Manager of the ICV, was of a similar mind to Krayem, stating that it would be a shame for AFIC to fall apart. He said:

\begin{quote}
That’s sort of that ICV view is that they’ve made a lot of mistakes and it’s not what it used to be, but in the past, going back maybe twenty or so years, they had a lot of foresight. There was actually good intention. They actually started some really good Islamic schools and the whole accreditation. And it would be a shame to lose that. I think it would be a loss if we lost the body entirely. So, I think there’s scope there to work within the wider community.\textsuperscript{350}
\end{quote}

To return AFIC to something approaching its past glory, Islam suggested broadening its constrictive structure and opening it up to new stakeholders. He continued:

\begin{quote}
I’d like to see more representation as well. So, it wouldn’t just be state councils, but it might be more representatives or more active leaders around the community ... I think that will be really helpful, because you are also finding that organisations are duplicating work and if you’re doing something in Queensland or South Australia, why not share those resources and build that capacity?\textsuperscript{351}
\end{quote}

Some of the other community representatives interviewed for this study had a range of opinions on if and how AFIC could be improved. There were those that took the opinion that dysfunction and

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{348} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{349} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{350} Ayman Islam, in interview with author, Melbourne, 7 July 2017.
\textsuperscript{351} Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
chaos was embedded within AFIC and any efforts to improve it would require energy that they felt would be better placed ensuring their own organisations continue to serve their communities.

For instance, speaking about IICSA’s attempts to set up a school in Adelaide, Hassan Yunich said:

> The AFIC thing is a whole other ball game ... We’re starting up a school here and [while] we don’t want their school here to go down ... they might see it as competition. One of our core philosophies is we don’t get involved with the community politics as much as we can. Sometimes we are at the centre of it ... [But we] try not to be.\(^\text{352}\)

There were those that thought that through joining a state council they could, in time, influence AFIC in a positive way. For instance, speaking about the Islamic Women’s Association of Australia’s in principle agreement to become a member of the Islamic Council of Queensland, Nora Amath said:

> For us to join a peak organisation, we want to make sure that it is completely based on egalitarian ... and not patriarchal and not misogynist [principles]. We won’t be part of that conversation. However, we also recognise that if we are not part of that conversation, we can’t change that conversation. It works both ways.\(^\text{353}\)

Amath did express that IWAA had benefited from having “dismissed ourselves from that conversation” in the past, which had allowed it to grow as an organisation; however, she continued:

> Now is the right time to say, “We are well-established, you can see what we’ve done.” And I think that we are ready to be able to change that conversation within some of the more patriarchal structures out there. So, without being hard-hitting from day one I guess, there’s a bit of wisdom in that, perhaps.\(^\text{354}\)

Encouraging young Muslim leaders to become involved in AFIC and its state affiliates, while improving the pathway to leadership positions by rectifying the leadership circus of recent times was one suggestion alluded to by several of the participants.

For instance, Aziz Khan said:

\(^{352}\) Yunich, interview.  
\(^{353}\) Amath, interview.  
\(^{354}\) Ibid.
What I’ve observed is, since I’ve been with ICWA at the state level, and my personal experience: we are not encouraging the young people, the youth, to leadership level. Indeed, it was, in part, the perception that the Islamic Council of Queensland was embracing younger members of the community that encouraged long-serving community leader and founder of the *Islamic Women’s Association* (previously the Islamic Women’s Association of Queensland) Galila Abdelsalam to finally become a member of the ICQ – twenty-five years after she had formed the organisation.

I think the Islamic Council [of Queensland] started to introduce young people with modern opinions and ability to manage with (a) more open mind. So, I really appreciate that. So, that a number of young people managing with a new style – with a culture of Australian culture.356

As Nora Amath makes clear, fixing AFIC is no easy task and would take significant efforts on the part of many community leaders. Many of who are already working to the point of exhaustion on a variety of other concerns. She said:

The reality is that Muslim community leaders are just exhausted ... you’ve spoken to enough community leaders to know this is all on a voluntary basis – the majority of things we do. And so, to now say, “Let’s get involved in AFIC, let’s get involved,” is another layer of [sigh] ... and there aren’t too many of us to be able to do that. So, that’s just a constant pull.357

Regardless of whether and how AFIC can be fixed, the consensus of the participants was that it needs fixing. The organisation has a variety of problems, including financial transparency, accountability, representation, leadership, school and resource management, and is in desperate need of reform if it is to remain relevant.

In its current form, AFIC is a complete failure as a peak body. A peak body, according to Melville, should provide a strong voice for the community in the areas of lobbying government, community

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355 Aziz Khan, interview.
357 Amath, interview.
education and information sharing both internally and externally.\textsuperscript{358} As indicated through the
allegations of corruption and poor governance, and the drama surrounding the executive leadership,
AFIC-affiliated schools and its insular nature, AFIC can no longer be said to satisfy any of the
requirements of a peak body with any degree of consistency or authority.

2.2.1.6 AFIC in 2018: Re-establishing community trust?

After the completion of the originally scheduled semi-structured in-depth interviews, AFIC made
several key organisational changes to satisfy the requirements of the enforceable undertakings that
the ACNC imposed, as well as addressing ongoing community concerns, such as those raised by
several of the participants of this study, and to re-instit a greater degree of confidence after a
particularly controversial period. As these changes were made after the completion of the
interviews, it is difficult to determine how representatives of Australian MCOs have initially
responded; however, several of these changes are briefly addressed below, as they are arguably
indicative of the current AFIC executive committee’s acknowledgement of the organisation’s past
faults and a desire to reposition it as a meaningful and representative Muslim peak body.

Firstly, AFIC has sought to address uncertainty surrounding AFIC-affiliated schools (see 2.2.1.2
Schools’ Crisis). After transferring $10 million to Malek Fahd Islamic School (MFIS), as well as
ownership of the Beaumont Hills campus (estimated worth of $12 million), prior to the
commencement of a court hearing, the new AFIC executive committee has “worked tirelessly to
identify and resolve the issues that it inherited.”\textsuperscript{359} According to new AFIC president Dr Rateb Jneid,

\textsuperscript{358} Rose Melville, \textit{Changing roles of community-sector peak bodies in a neo-liberal policy environment in
Australia}, 8.

\textsuperscript{359} “Supreme Court Decisions on Dispute between AFIC & MFIS,” \textit{Muslims Australia – Australian Federation of
Islamic Councils}, 12 December 2017.
“Both AFIC and MFIS now have certainty about these issues and can move on.”\footnote{Ibid.} As of September 2018, the only outstanding issue between MFIS and AFIC was around the costs of the court case.\footnote{Ibid.}

Secondly, after his company was hired to assist AFIC in satisfying the requirements of the ACNC, Ghaith Krayem was eventually appointed as AFIC’s chief executive officer (CEO). Krayem’s vision for AFIC is addressed, in his own words, at various times throughout this thesis, and after his appointment, he commented that his role was “absolutely ... to influence the board [and] to put to them things that I think AFIC needs to do to correct what was going on.”\footnote{Krayem, interview.} Several of the changes that Krayem theorised as beneficial to AFIC prior to his appointment as CEO have begun to take place. For instance, Krayem previously expressed a desire for all AFIC’s school property to be put in a trust (see p.84).\footnote{Krayem, interview.} Speaking after his appointment, he said: “AFIC has no role in any of the schools. They are all independent and run by the communities in those states. AFIC is just the landlord of the property, and that is how we deal with the schools now.”\footnote{Krayem, follow-up interview.}

Thirdly, seeking direct feedback and input from its members, AFIC began a series of consultation sessions with State Councils and members in August 2018 and introduced financial changes – instigated by Krayem and reviewed by independent governance experts – to address and resolve matters identified by the ACNC.\footnote{“Member Update,” Muslims Australia – Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, 7 August 2018.}

Finally, in seeking to re-affirm its position as an advocacy body, AFIC has produced multiple press releases responding to media or political comments or stories. For instance, in mid-August 2018, following a speech by Queensland Senator Fraser Anning suggesting Australia should ban Muslims from settling in the country and hold a plebiscite on whether to return to a European-only...
immigration system, AFIC responded with a press release criticising the speech as “morally repugnant and factually wrong.”

AFIC’s actions since the new executive committee took over in May 2017 are representative of an organisation that has acknowledged past faults and taken action to address them. As these changes are in their infancy, it will be interesting to track how AFIC develops in the coming months and years.

367 “Press Release,” Muslims Australia – Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, 16 August 2018.
2.2.2 Case Study: The Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV)

The Islamic Council of Victoria (previously the Islamic Society of Victoria) was formed in 1957.

Although the Muslim community in Victoria was relatively small at the time, the organisation’s membership included representatives from a variety of cultural backgrounds, including those from ‘Arab’, Turkish, Yugoslav and Indian Muslim communities. The organisation joined the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (then AFIS) in 1964 and remains the state representative body for Victoria.

As the peak body for Victorian Muslims, the ICV envisions itself as a key advocacy organisation that provides a variety of social and religious services to members of the community. It aims to fulfil this vision through, in part, advocacy consultation and cooperation with government, other faith communities, service providers, the media, and the general public; promotion of an accurate, informed and positive understanding of Islam, Muslims, and issues of importance to Muslims; empowerment and encouragement of the Muslim community to be actively, responsibly and positively integrated into mainstream Australian society; development of capacity within the Muslim community, provision of special services to improve the welfare of disadvantaged groups in the Muslim community; and the “facilitation of cooperation, unity, and positive working relationships within the Muslim communities and with the broader community.”

The ICV says it represents over sixty member societies and an estimated 200,000 Victorian Muslims. Historically, it is a predominantly Sunni organisation, and that remains the case today. In 2017, the Islamic Shia Council of Victoria (ISCV) was launched to represent the Victorian Shi’a community. Members of the ICV leadership attended the launch to express their support for the new organisation.

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368 Bilal Cleland, “The History of Muslims in Australia,” 27.
The effectiveness of the service provided by the ICV to Muslim communities in Victoria makes it somewhat unique amongst the state and territory bodies of AFIC. Of the five states visited as part of this study, the ICV stands out as the most effective peak body affiliated to AFIC. However, it could be argued that Queensland, and, to a lesser extent, Western Australia also have functioning AFIC-affiliated peak bodies that are publicly serving the community.

2.2.2.1 Organisational Structure

The Executive Board of the ICV is elected by representatives of the member societies every two years. It is currently a ten-person board consisting of the roles of president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary and two elected executive members, as well as a further four executive members/advisory executive members, who are appointed by the elected members of the Executive Board. As with AFIC, all of the roles on the Executive Board are voluntary.

Regarding the Executive Board, Nail Aykan issued praise. He said:

The Executive is volunteers and every single volunteer - especially during my period in the role of CEO - have been genuine people who want to give. There's no take.371

The allegations of corruption that have plagued AFIC were, according to Aykan, not a problem in the ICV, because the ICV has limited funds. As a result, those who were willing to dedicate their time and effort to the organisation’s success were perceived as genuine and trustworthy people.

He continued:

We have no money and I always say, “It’s a privilege to be poor.” I mean we have some funds to manage operations and stuff ... We’ve got a few dollars in the piggy bank – halal piggy bank ... but no one comes to the ICV with greed. So, we only attract genuine volunteers. Remember, the ICV’s foundation is based on volunteers, it was founded by volunteers and is still run by volunteers.372

371 Aykan, interview.
372 Ibid.
The Executive Board of the ICV is supported by two permanent and professional staff members: The Executive Director and the General Manager. These roles are filled by Nail Aykan and Ayman Islam, respectively, both of whom participated in this study.

Historically, the ICV has employed people on a sessional basis in order to deliver programs related to specific government or community grants; however, they have recently employed a policy advisor and media person to create an enhanced sense of structure and help the organisation grow.

Former ICV president Ghaith Krayem explained why he believed this was necessary. He said:

If you go back five years ... we had Nail and, while we had other people, they were all very specific to grants ... Nail was the only employee, if you like, who could in any way do anything outside of service delivery ... So, all of the lobbying, the advocacy, was all done by the board ... who were all volunteers. And so ... it was not sustainable. We had to get things shifting and moving. Now it's really good. There's Nail, there's Ayman, there's a policy person [and] there's a media person ... It's starting now to evolve and develop, which should make it a little bit easier.\(^{373}\)

The ICV staff continue to operate at the organisation’s offices on Jeffcott Street, West Melbourne.

2.2.2.2 Representativeness and Diversity

MCOs in Australia have often been accused of being either ethno-exclusive or dominated by a specific ethnicity (see Chapter Three).\(^ {374}\) It is difficult to make this argument when talking about the ICV, which is a source of pride for many of its members and representatives.

The multi-ethnic nature of the ICV was seen as one of the organisation’s strengths, according to Ayman Islam:

It's very multi-ethnic as well. So that's a unique thing about us [ICV]. There's no specific, dominating [group] ... We're all from different countries of origin. [It's] real diversity and I think that's a strength.\(^ {375}\)

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\(^ {373}\) Krayem, interview.

\(^ {374}\) Abdullah Saeed, “Islam in Australia Since the 1970s,” 450.

\(^ {375}\) Islam, interview
Likewise, Nail Aykan added:

One of the other advantages of Victoria is that no one ethnic group dominates. If you check our board, we’ve got 10 board members and we’ve got 7 ethnic groups. And that is not by engineering. That is just by representative sample.\(^{376}\)

Aykan attributed this to the reality of the Muslim community in Victoria, which is not dominated by any ethnic community (see 3.4.2 State by State Analysis). He credited the ICV’s perceived success in the area of ethnic diversity to what he believed to be a spirit of multiculturalism that had been embraced by Victoria’s Muslim communities:

I wholeheartedly believe that the spirit of multiculturalism in the wider society has found its way into the Muslim community’s psyche of intra-multiculturalism within the community ... So, I think, because the way Victoria has really brought home the message of multiculturalism, the Muslim community adopts and practices intra-multiculturalism. Which I believe has been another advantage [for the ICV].\(^{377}\)

To a degree, this inclusiveness can be said to journey across theological lines as well as ethnic or cultural. For instance, Shaykh Mohammad Ramzan indicated that the Victorian arm of Minhaj-ul-Quran – a Pakistan-based international organisation founded by Pakistani politician and Sufi scholar, Dr Muhammad Tahir ul-Qadri\(^{378}\) – is an affiliated member of the ICV.\(^{379}\)

However, some were critical of what they perceived as the ICV’s exclusion of Victoria’s Shia community. For instance, Reem Sweid said:

The ICV is pretty good ... They are open to ... engagement and it's feeding back ... The only thing is, and I’ve told them this, they’re not representative of the Shia community. And I think that you can’t really call yourself a peak body if you are [not representing the Shia community].\(^{380}\)

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\(^{376}\) Aykan, interview.

\(^{377}\) Ibid.


\(^{379}\) Shaykh Mohammad Ramzan, in interview with author, Geelong, 7 July 2016.

\(^{380}\) Reem Sweid, in interview with author, Melbourne, 16 June 2017.
As discussed, Victoria’s Shia community have recently established their own state representative body the Islamic Shia Council of Victoria (ISCV), but Sweid argued that it was “ridiculous” that the Shia community could not be incorporated into the ICV.381

Another area in which Australian MCOs often receive criticism, is in the lack of female representation in leadership positions.382 Unlike AFIC, and many of the other state councils, the ICV has arguably made some significant progress in this area.

Ghaith Krayem explained:

There are some mosques committees now that have female committees, but very few of them are there as part of the leadership. And look, that’s a historical thing that we’ve gotta get through. But yeah, it is changing. And one good thing about the ICV is we’ve really pushed hard on this. The fact that the ICV now has, I think, three elected [female] board members, was a huge step.383

The ICV elects its Executive Committee every two years – the positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and a further two members are voted upon by attending and financial members, while three ordinary members are appointed by the incoming Executive Committee on the recommendation of the President.384

Krayem went on to emphasise that this had been an organic development. He said:

They’re not appointed, they are elected by the membership. Which I stress to people: That’s the old uncles, who still run the old grassroots organisations. [They] elected these three young women onto the board. And then there’s a couple of others who get appointed too ... It’s a really good thing and it’s one that needs that top-down drive to get some change at the grassroots. It’s really hard coming up [from the grassroots].385

381 Ibid.
383 Krayem, interview.
385 Ibid.
As with the multi-ethnic nature of the ICV, Ayman Islam saw the organisation’s increased female representation as a strength. He said, “I’d like to think we are leading in that way… So that’s really exciting. It’s really positive.”

In terms of overall representation, the ICV claims to represent approximately 200,000 Victorian Muslims, which is, according to the 2016 Census, approximately every Muslim in the state. There are no official numbers, but it is likely that if all of the members of the ICV’s member societies were counted, the figure would not comprise of every Victorian Muslim. Therefore, as a peak body, the ICV does not see itself as only representing its members.

According to Ayman Islam, in order to represent as many Muslim community members as possible, the ICV must consult with a variety of people – both within and outside the organisation. He said:

> We try to consult with members on a regular basis. That's our best form of engagement. We try to get out to each one of them; try to work out how they're feeling; where the pulse of the community really is; what similar things do they want to do. And we try to reconcile what we're seeing trend-wise, outside of our member societies, because the reality is, even though the ICV is unique because it's set up through its member societies, it's also essentially the representative body for all Muslims around Victoria and the reality is that there is a lot of Muslims that don't associate with those members. We need to be mindful of all of that. So, it's a bit of a balancing act, trying to reconcile the two.

Navigating the difference of opinion that exist within Victoria’s diverse Muslim community, while simultaneously seeking to represent and advocate for those communities is one of the greatest challenges for a peak body like the ICV.

### 2.2.2.3 ICV Services

The ICV envisions itself as a key advocacy organisation that provides a variety of social welfare services to members of the community – but what does the organisation do in support of this claim?

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386 Australian Bureau of Statistics.
387 Islam, interview.
The services provided by the ICV can be broken down into four dynamic categories: religious, social, professional and networking.

Religious Services

In the area of religious services, the ICV coordinates several initiatives to support Victoria’s Muslim communities. For instance, the headquarters of the ICV also doubles as a city mosque. Friday sermons are offered on site by the in-house imam and religious services coordinator.

In partnership with the Halal Food Bank, the ICV claims to distribute between 15-20 packages of halal food to those in need each month. Furthermore, during Ramadan the ICV partners with the Community Care Network to provide hot meals to feed the homeless.

Furthermore, the ICV coordinates the Qard Hassan No Interest Loan Scheme, which provides interest-free loans of up to $1,000 to people on low incomes for the purchase of essential household goods and services and, since 1994, the ICV has offered a prison chaplaincy service to Muslim prisoners. There are currently ten trained chaplains that provide pastoral care in prisons across the state.\textsuperscript{388}

Social Services

The ICV advocates for Victorian Muslim communities with government, non-government organisations, education providers and religious institutions. They have a section on their website promoting surveys, petitions and actions that they support and also use their various social media platforms to draw attention to key campaigns. For instance, in 2017 they ran a Positive Muslim Stories social media campaign, which included sharing the inspirational stories of 25 Muslim women, 25 Muslim youth, 25 ICV veterans, 25 member society leaders and 25 community leaders.\textsuperscript{389}


The ICV has partnered with various organisations on a range of research projects. Previous reports have covered how MCOs promote social cohesion, the impact of ‘Muslim visibility’ on bridging social capital, and a guide to assist non-Muslim health care professionals caring for Muslim patients. In 2017, they released the ‘ICV Guidelines for Muslim Community-University Research Partnerships,’ which intended to “educate, inform and facilitate respectful, collaborative and beneficial research relationships between the Victorian Muslim community and the wider university research community.”

The ICV will, on occasion, provide their support to human rights campaigns. For instance, in 2017 the ICV took on an active role in promoting the human rights of Rohingya Muslims experiencing persecution and political violence in Myanmar. They held a public rally in Melbourne “to demonstrate solidarity with the oppressed Rohingya minority in Myanmar.”

They also release a weekly newsletter containing news relevant to Muslim communities and promoting community events.

**Professional Services**

In partnership with a variety of education institutions and philanthropic organisations, the ICV works to offer a range of professional development opportunities to members of Victorian Muslim communities. For instance, the ICV worked with Victoria University in 2017 to deliver the ASPIRE program for young high-achieving Muslim women. The program aimed to help the participants become leaders and influencers within their communities.

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The ICV has a history of seeking to provide programs aimed at increasing the leadership potential of young Victorian Muslims. General Manager of the ICV Ayman Islam was one such individual who benefitted from a youth leadership program the ICV ran in partnership with La Trobe University (see 3.2.4 Training and Mentoring).

Networking

Another area in which the ICV aids, and which transcends all three of the categories discussed above, is through providing networking opportunities. As a relatively well-functioning peak body, the ICV has relationships with a variety of organisations and the knowledge that comes with that. Therefore, the ICV is well-placed to assist with putting like-minded individuals and groups together, while ensuring that the organisation does not become over-burdened.

Speaking of the ICV’s networking role, Nail Aykan said:

One of our approaches is to strengthen other key institutions – for us not to do everything. If there are groups out there, who I call boutique operators, who specialise in a particular area, rather than us doing it [we leave it to them] ... Because I’m of Turkish background, there's a Turkish saying: “If you've got flour, give it to a baker,” which means he'll know how to convert it into bread. So, you leave it to the experts ... It's important that we actually invest support in certain groups, who are trying to establish their own base.

According to Aykan, it is vital in today’s socio-political environment that organisations within the Muslim population are able to work together. He continued:

Our attitude is one of synergising – of cooperation. If we can't be cooperative [and] ... collaborative within our own communities, well then you don't have much hope to expect collaboration and cooperation from the wider society. So, you've gotta lead by example ... We are trying to provide as much support to as many organisations or groups, who are trying to provide a particular service.

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393 Islam, interview.
394 Aykan, interview.
395 Ibid.
Despite its relatively stable foundations, the ICV, as a workplace, can often be chaotic.\textsuperscript{396} The reason for this, according to Aykan, is that community organisations are, by nature, reactive:

[The] community space is a reactive space. It’s not a Muslim-specific thing. You could do a survey, and I’m sure there has been a lot of research, in all community organisations they would have similar issues. They are always, predominantly, a reactive space.\textsuperscript{397}

Given this reality, the ICV actively tries to partner with other organisations, outside of their member societies, who can take a greater responsibility than the ICV for the delivery of key programs.

According to Aykan, two-thirds of his time is dedicated to working with non-Muslim stakeholders:

I work heavily with engagement with non-Muslim groups. Whether they are governments; whether they’re NGOs; whether they’re private. We have around 60 member societies, but we also have around 70 non-Muslim stakeholders. It’s a reciprocal partnership in that they need us as much as we need them, for the sake of social cohesion. We are all trying to serve, either a need or [to] solve a problem.\textsuperscript{398}

With so much energy spent on relationship management, the potential for the ICV to instigate or develop their own programs is limited. As a result, networking is essential to the ICV, as they lean heavily on Muslim communities – both from within ICV member societies and outside – to take the initiative and create programs. Although, according to Ayman Islam, the ICV does try and push people in a certain direction. He said:

We try to work in consultation with members and try to push them through into areas [that] we think will be fruitful in the long term ... because often they’ll come up and say, “Look, we’ve got concerns with the youth, or we might have concerns with this.” So, we approach them and say, “Hey, have you thought about doing this,” or even try to link them together... and say, “Hey, have you spoken to this particular member society? How about we introduce you guys? Let’s try and build that together.” So, a lot of [the role of the ICV] is that networking and [to] try and bridge that gap.\textsuperscript{399}

The ICV launched Project Mosaic as a means of encouraging these sort of interactions to take place.

The scheme provides small grants between $500 and $1500 to “aspiring Muslim community leaders”

\textsuperscript{396} Islam, interview.\textsuperscript{397} Aykan, interview.\textsuperscript{398} Ibid.\textsuperscript{399} Islam, interview.
who have ideas for mini-projects or events that are “sustainable, ground breaking and cater to the various needs of their local community.” Projects supported by this scheme have included \textit{Lighting the Darkness} – transforming the ICV office into “a unique space where 60 women from diverse ethnic backgrounds and age groups congregated to experience a program centred on mental and physical wellbeing” – and the \textit{AAFRO Community Engagement Forum} – which “aimed at enabling parents from the local African community to realise the value of education and regular school attendance.”

\subsection*{2.2.2.4 AFIC and the ICV}

Historically, the relationship between the ICV and AFIC has been relatively stable and good-willed; however, over the last few decades, it has become notably strained. This has led to a complicated association between the ICV and its national peak body.

For the most part, AFIC has very little to do with the ICV and, as the comments by Aykan, Islam and Krayem indicate, the ICV actively plays down the association. Unlike several of the other state and territory councils, the Executive Committee of AFIC holds very little influence or leverage over the ICV.

During the AFIC-affiliated schools’ crisis, which affected the Islamic College of Melbourne, the ICV avoided scrutiny as they have no association with the school. The College was established in 2011 after tension between AFIC and its original Melbourne-based school, King Khalid Islamic College, ended in the school terminating their association with the peak body and renaming the school the Australian International Academy.\footnote{Peter Jones, “Islamic Schools in Australia,” 38.}

\footnote{Ibid.}
Referencing how the Executive Committee of AFIC had, in the past, threatened state councils with disaffiliation, Ghaith Krayem said:

They tried that [disaffiliation] a couple of times with the ICV. The difference is they have very little leverage over the ICV. So, the ICV is the only state [council], for example, now, which has no interest in an AFIC school. In every other state, what happened was they were appointing state council people into the board of the schools and what have you. ICV had nothing to do with it. And every time they asked, we’d say, “No, we want nothing to do with it. We’re not in the business of running schools.”

Unlike several of the other state councils, the ICV has genuine support from a number of community organisations. This makes it quite difficult for the Executive Committee of AFIC to threaten the ICV with disaffiliation.

Krayem explained:

The ICV has done much better than any other state body around having a proper grassroots membership and so … every time the AFIC tried to sort of put pressure on [us] … the ICV would obviously say, “If you want to disaffiliate, then fine. Go ahead. We’ve still got forty or fifty organisations, who are all supportive of what the ICV does.”

If the ICV were to cease being a member of AFIC, it would still have relatively strong community support to continue to act as the representative body for Muslims in Victoria.

AFIC does retain some influence over the ICV in that their office is owned by AFIC, who also run their small Melbourne office from the building. The ICV lease the building from AFIC every five years.

2.2.2.5 The ICV & the Board of Imams Victoria

One area in which the ICV far exceeds AFIC is in their relationship with their local collective religious leadership organisation the Board of Imams Victoria (BOIV). The ICV has an amicable and, many would argue, mutually beneficial relationship with the BOIV; whereas in Sydney, where both AFIC and the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) are based, participants emphasised that there is

403 Krayem, interview.
404 Aykan, interview.
basically no relationship between the two bodies. For more details on the BOIV and ANIC see 2.3

Collective Religious Leadership.

Representatives of the ICV will regularly meet with imams from the BOIV to discuss issues, provide support and look at options for possible collaboration.

Speaking to how the ICV view the relationship with the BOIV, Aykan said:

One of our approaches is to strengthen other key institutions – for us not to do everything ... It's important that we actually invest support in certain groups, who are trying to establish their own base. And the BOIV is one of them. They are specialising in areas that concern the sheikhs and the theologians, specifically ... So, the BOI, ever since its inception ... has had an excellent working relationship with the ICV and also, at one stage, they used to have an office here ... The BOI is an important institution which needs ... much support.405

The Sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne expressed that the BOIV has a good relationship with the ICV and they do many things together.406 This opinion was shared by the Secretary of the BOIV Sheikh Muhammad Nawas Saleem, who voiced an equally positive view of the relationship.

Sheikh Nawas said:

[In] Victoria, the ICV and Board of Imams work together. So, it is both religious and civil ... It depends on personality [for it to work or not work]. How united you are ... and also the culture. The ICV – we had this culture of listening to each other and engaging with each other for quite a long time. So, it came like that.407

The ICV and the BOIV collaborate in a variety of ways. For instance, in 2016, the BOIV indicated that some of their members could benefit from a more thorough understanding of the principles of Australian law. As a result, the ICV partnered with Victoria University’s Sir Zelman Cowen Centre

405 Ibid.
406 Sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne (name withheld per request), in interview with author, Melbourne, 27 August 2016.
and, with the support of the Scanlon Foundation, delivered a series of workshops aimed at
developing knowledge in that area.\textsuperscript{408}

The two organisations also collaborate on social welfare campaigns that benefit the community. For
instance, using the issue of domestic violence prevention as an example, Aykan spoke of how, in
practice, the ICV partnership with the BOIV works.

Aykan said:

\begin{quote}
In applying for grants, we partner with each other ... So, one organisation will run it with the
support of the other ... Domestic violence isn't necessarily after the fact but is a matter of
prevention and education. The sheikhs have the ear of a predominantly male audience every
week and it's just gotta be group fed. But the imams have got to be supported with relevant
material. They are, let's just say, the messenger, but someone's gotta administer the
message. So, our role could be that we work with all the necessary authorities and agencies,
collect information, [edit it] ... and then they will convey the message.\textsuperscript{409}
\end{quote}

Having a strong, co-dependant relationship between corporate and religious leaders is often
beneficial to the community. According to Krayem, such a relationship is the ideal scenario in the
structure of Muslim leadership in Australia.

Krayem said:

\begin{quote}
They've gotta work together and one thing, I think, that's been really good in Victoria is that
the Board of Imams and ICV have done that. The Board of Imams have always deferred to
the ICV on the political and the ICV has always deferred to the Board of Imams in terms of
religion ... Both those things fall down occasionally ... but by and large, the two bodies have
worked really well.\textsuperscript{410}
\end{quote}

In Victoria, the relationship between the two main corporate and religious organisations was
deemed to be successful; however, on a national level, between AFIC and ANIC, the experience was

\textsuperscript{408} “Community and school legal programs,” \textit{Sir Zelman Cowen Centre}, accessed 5 October 2017.
\textsuperscript{409} Aykan, interview.
\textsuperscript{410} Krayem, interview.
considered notably different. According to Krayem, “That [collaboration] hasn’t happened on a national level for a whole range of reasons.”

One of the reasons as to why the relationship between AFIC and ANIC was virtually non-existent, according to Sheikh Nawas, was related to the infighting that has plagued the Sydney-based AFIC over the last few decades.

Sheikh Nawas said:

In Sydney, it invented itself ... because of the internal politics of AFIC. So, one organisation is sacked, and it loses its [link to the imams], and another organisation is created ... So, which one is aligned to the imams? So, the imams kept themselves out of it ... ANIC has nothing to do with [AFIC].

Given that the link between the BOIV and ANIC, which is its national body, is relatively strong, the ICV does have an indirect relationship with ANIC. According to Aykan, this was just an added “bonus” of a strong relationship with the BOIV. He said, “It's in sync; that's fine. Great. It's just a bonus. But as long as we cover our own backyard. We work with the BOIV ... and it works great.”

2.2.2.6 The ICV and the Victorian Government

One of the key roles of the ICV is to advocate on behalf of Victorian Muslim communities. As such, their relationship with government bodies is crucial to their effectiveness as a peak body. Given the current socio-political climate, maintaining a good relationship with governments while retaining legitimacy within the community can be an exceptionally difficult task.

As has been acknowledged in Chapter One, since the September 11 attacks in 2001, Muslims have entered the consciousness of wider Australia, and subsequently Australian governments, to a far greater degree. This reality, in many ways, shapes the dynamics of the relationships between MCOs.

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411 Ibid.
412 Aykan, interview.
and governments (see 5.3 MCOs and Governments), and the ICV – as one of the most prominent and influential MCOs – is not immune from its impacts.

Nail Aykan elaborates:

Recently, and this is very unfortunate, the Muslim community have been consumed by CVE [Countering Violent Extremism] ... [But] someone has to be there to be the congruent; be the bridge; and, help everybody calm down and cooperate in trying to solve what is essentially a whole of society problem. You can’t attend to certain issues without that key representative body.413

As this comment indicates, despite the volatile socio-political environment, the relationship between the ICV and the Victorian Government can be characterised as predominantly sound. This is especially true in their relationship with the State Government, who provide a variety of program-specific grants that, in most cases, increase the capacity of the ICV to serve Victoria’s Muslim communities. The effectiveness of this relationship, Aykan believes, is due to Victoria’s strong embracement of multicultural values.

Aykan said:

The multicultural, multi-faith, the social cohesion wicket, in Victoria, is strong, is solid. And the Muslim communities have benefit from the leadership from the top – from the State Government. [And it’s] bipartisan ... their commitment to genuine multi-culturalism. The interfaith communities have always been incredibly supportive. So, we are beneficiaries of a very solid foundation, here in Victoria, of genuine social cohesion.414

For the most part, as the above statement indicates, the ICV works very well with the State Government; however, occupying the space between community representative and political ally can be quite difficult in a volatile socio-political environment.

Speaking of how the ICV attempts to approach the challenge, Ayman Islam said:

It’s a balance ... being that representative voice for our community ... In the past, we've tried to do a lot more community forum consults where we invite Government down to try and talk ... And some of the responses and the way that [goes] ... sometimes it’s successful,

413 Ibid.
414 Ibid.
sometimes it's not.\textsuperscript{415}

When it is not successful, the relationship between the ICV and Government can become stretched as the ICV tries to navigate specific issues and themes.

Ghaith Krayem explained:

Generally, [the relationship between the Government and the ICV] works pretty well ... I think that the challenge is the expectations around what a body like the ICV can and should [be] ... The problems are when there's an expectation that the ICV or any representative body can't have public discussions which are counter to what a sitting government agenda is. And that definitely happened ... when I was there. I remember ... I was in a meeting with a senior adviser to a Government minister, who very clearly said to me, “If you keep going down this particular road you are going down, then there's going to be a problem with the Government.” I said, “Well our role isn't to support Government, our role is to do the things that our community needs doing ... We're going to continue to do that and if that's a problem for Government, then that's a problem for Government.”\textsuperscript{416}

According to Krayem, the expectations that governments have regarding organisations like the ICV differs to how the ICV defines itself.

Krayem continued:

So that tension is there ... because the Government has this view that bodies like the ICV should toe the line and only have these conversations behind closed doors. Now the problem with having those conversations behind closed doors is everybody else has them in public. The Government doesn't stop talking about these issues. They go out and say what they're going to say. Other people go out and say things. If we're only having these difficult conversations behind closed doors then that's when, internally, our constituents say, “Hang on a minute, what the hell are you guys doing?” We have an obligation to show that we are representing our constituents.\textsuperscript{417}

As Krayem’s comments indicate, navigating the restrictions placed on them as a Muslim representative organisation in a society largely hostile to and/or suspicious of Muslims, is one of the significant challenges the ICV faces. Members of Australia’s Muslim communities are frustrated by

\textsuperscript{415} Islam, interview.
\textsuperscript{416} Krayem, interview.
\textsuperscript{417} Ibid.
the realities of their socio-political environment and have no qualms in directing that frustration at an organisation like the ICV, if they are seen to be feeding it.

Like Krayem, frustrated by a situation in which the Government seemingly expects the ICV to play a limited role cheerleading the Government’s policies, Ayman Islam said:

I think you could say that [there is a difference in how the Government and the ICV see the organisation]. I feel like it's not on a level field, if you want to describe the relationship, and I think a lot of what occurred several months ago was due to the ICV actually standing up [for itself] ... It seems to be if you're not compliant or you're not playing the part ... If you actually speak out about something that is contrary to that, you'll kind of be psyched out. So, there’s that perception.418

Islam was referring to a public spat involving the Andrews Government, Victoria Police and the ICV, over “Safe Spaces” – one of four recommendations the ICV made to a parliamentary inquiry into freedom of religion that called for “existing Commonwealth CVE and CT funding re-allocated to create safe spaces urgently needed by Muslim youth to meet and talk about a range of issues in emotional terms, where they can be frank and even use words, which in a public space would sound inflammatory.”419 Premier Andrews dismissed the idea as “troubling” and threatened to review funding the State Government provides the ICV.420

For the ICV, Premier Andrew’s funding cut threat was significant. In 2016/2017, according to ICV Treasurer Ramzi Elsayed, “Approximately 80% of ICV revenue [was] derived from programs received from State and Federal government grants.”421

418 Islam, interview.
419 “The ICV Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Inquiry into the status of the human right to freedom of religion or belief – May 2017,” Islamic Council of Victoria, 1 June 2017.
The incident was a revealing example of how the relationship between the ICV and Government can become stretched when the respective bodies disagree on an issue. It was also revealing of how the ‘good Muslim’ phenomenon – in which Muslims who ‘know their place’ in Australian society are celebrated, while those who step outside those boundaries are broadly condemned – consistently plays out in the public space (see 4.2 The ‘Good’ Muslim Narrative).

Krayem argues that the disagreement had its roots in the fallout from the ICVs decision not to renew its involvement in the Community Integration Support Program (CISP) – a Victoria Police-led program that puts prisoners with “extremist or radical interpretations of Islam” in contact with religious leaders who can challenge those views. The ICV had advised Victoria Police of their decision in the week before Yacqub Khayre, who was on parole, murdered a hotel receptionist, took an alleged prostitute hostage and wounded three police officers, before being fatally shot in an incident commonly referred to as the ‘Brighton Siege’.

Krayem explained:

After the Brighton Siege, when the media was chasing whether [Khayre] was involved in the program, a couple of the Government Ministers said, “The program was run by the ICV.” So, the ICV came out and said, “No, we don’t run this program, it’s run by Victoria Police.” I think the Government took objection – ‘passing the buck’, is what they would say … So, he [Premier Andrews] was very much, “Well if you guys are gonna try and throw us under the bus, well, we’ll show you …” I think that was how that played out.

In response to the comments of Premier Andrews and several of his ministers, the ICV decided to boycott the Premier’s iftar.424

Ayman Islam elaborated on the ICV’s reasoning:

423 Krayem, interview.
424 Iftar refers to the meal eaten by Muslims during the month of Ramadan to break fast upon the setting of the sun. Some public and private institutions, often in the spirit of ‘multiculturalism,’ will host an iftar during Ramadan. The Victorian Government’s Premier’s iftar is allegedly one of the biggest in the state.
I think with that incident we wouldn’t have gone down that line if the Government or if the Police had come out and said ... “No, it is our program.” And when they didn’t do that ... the ICV had to respond. It was disappointing that ... those conversations [between the ICV and Government] weren’t [public] ... and I think, to a greater degree, a lot more of those conversations should be made public. Particularly for the community, because the community knows that the ICV works strongly with Government.\textsuperscript{425}

Many within the community supported the decision of the ICV to boycott the \textit{Iftar}; however, that support was not universal. Reem Sweid disagreed with the decision on the grounds that the boycott would not be treated fairly in the media.

Sweid said:

You think the media is gonna treat your boycott fairly? Your boycott is going to be treated like, ‘Oh, the Muslim community has gone hysterical boycotting something.’ So, you have to be realistic about what [you do] ... because you are not going to get public support for your boycotts. They are not gonna say the facts and at the same time you are going to make yourself irrelevant.\textsuperscript{426}

Sweid suggested that the ICV should have looked at alternative options in order to make a stronger stand against the Andrews Government:

The Premier basically stabbed you in the back on an issue that is really important for your community and the best you can do is boycott? We have allies in academia, in other faiths, whatever ... We need to be able to learn to use and to ask for support.\textsuperscript{427}

Despite the occasional disagreement, like that detailed above, both the ICV and the State Government recognise the importance of maintaining good communication.

Krayem stated:

Despite all the [recent drama] ... the Government would be so far worse off if the ICV wasn’t there ... There would be certain individuals, who like to set themselves up as king makers, who would love that sort of situation. But, actually it wouldn’t be a good thing and I think both agree and see that at one level.\textsuperscript{428}

\textsuperscript{425} Islam, interview.  
\textsuperscript{426} Sweid, interview.  
\textsuperscript{427} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{428} Krayem, interview.
The relationship between the ICV and the Victorian Government is, in some ways, mutually beneficial. The ICV receives funding to run its organisation and programs, while both actors can be said to be somewhat legitimised – the ICV in that their members see them advocating to institutions of power, and the Government in that the wider public see them in dialogue and working closely with a Muslim peak body. However, the relationship is subject to the volatile socio-political environment in which it exists. Therefore, the strength of the relationship is, on occasion, tested. For the ICV, incidents like ‘safe spaces’ and the ‘Brighton Siege’ test the organisation’s relationship, not just with the Government and broader public, but crucially with the Victorian Muslim communities that the ICV attempts to represent.

2.2.3 Conclusion

This section on peak bodies has contrasted two prominent Muslim organisations with similar aims and vision – the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils and its Victorian affiliate, the Islamic Council of Victoria. It has showcased how, despite its history, AFIC is facing various challenges to remain relevant in the contemporary setting of MCOs in Australia; whereas the ICV remains a key and influential organisation. It also outlined how the ICV is a more effective Muslim peak body than AFIC. In the three key areas in which a peak body provides a strong voice for its members – lobbying government, community education, and information sharing – the ICV is far superior.

AFIC and the ICV have a shared history. AFIC’s precursor the Australian Federation of Islamic Societies was launched in Melbourne in the 1964, and for several of its formative years under the presidency of Dr Abdul Khaliq Kazi AM, it was based in the city. However, the transition of AFIS into AFIC, which made the ICV the representative body for local Victorian societies, and the switch of AFIC’s headquarters from Melbourne to Sydney, laid the foundations for the ICV’s eventual ‘unofficial’ shift away from AFIC.

429 Kazi, interview.
In the case of Victoria, the organisational structure for AFIS’s transition into AFIC can be said to have encouraged state council engagement over national engagement. The switch to an umbrella structure or state council-based system, meant the ICV was granted the same voting rights in electing AFIC’s leadership as the much smaller and less populous state councils, such as the Islamic Council of Christmas & Cocos Islands and the Islamic Council of Tasmania. As a result, local Islamic societies in Victoria, despite being able to exert a degree of influence within the structures of the ICV, were less likely to be able to exert the same influence at national level.

AFIC’s system of governance, despite the intentions of those that created it, has proven deeply flawed and has helped create the conditions in which the organisation has, for the best part of two-decades, become widely ineffective. For a system such as AFIC’s to be successful, strong grassroots organisations are required to be numerous and spread relatively evenly across the country. However, Australia’s Muslim population, like it’s overall population, remains disproportionately concentrated on the east coast of the mainland – specifically the states of New South Wales and Victoria. As a result, smaller state councils have occasionally been subject to manipulation from influential individuals within AFIC.

Given, in recent years, it has proven increasingly difficult for anyone outside of the presidency or the Executive Committee to influence significant change or reform within AFIC, the organisation’s influence and representativeness has deteriorated. Although the Federal Congress still comes together at least once a year to consult with representatives of its membership, the drama of the 2017 meeting indicates that AFIC’s consultative processes are in need of vast improvements.

However, recent changes to AFIC, including the election of a new board and appointment of a new CEO, meaningful steps to address the crisis with AFIC-affiliated schools, financial reforms, and a greater emphasis on advocacy, had indicated that AFIC may in the early stages of transitioning into an effective peak body.
On the other hand, the ICV is currently, for the most part, an effective peak body for Victorian Muslims. Attempting to collectively represent an assortment of people as diverse as Victoria’s Muslim communities (see 3.4.2 State by State Analysis), while navigating the various cultural, political and religious differences, is no easy task and has many distinct challenges. Indeed, the recent decision by representatives of Victoria’s Shia community to form the Islamic Shia Council of Victoria indicates just how difficult of a task this is, and how some Muslim communities can feel excluded from a mainstream organisation like the ICV. At various times, certain groups are bound to feel disengaged or like outcasts. Therefore, the respect that the ICV has from those who participated in this study – both from within Victoria and interstate – is noteworthy.

The ICV provides a range of religious, social and professional services to Muslim communities, while remaining relatively open for consultation with both its members and non-members.

The ICV’s relationship with the Board of Imams Victoria is of particular importance. This relationship serves to link religious and civil or social leaders of Australia’s Muslim communities, which can be said to benefit both. As is discussed in 3.3 Employment of Imams, imams in Australia are often criticised for their lack of understanding or ability to comprehend and address the various challenges of being Muslim in Australia. The relationship with the ICV can assist the BOIV in addressing challenges such as this, given the ICV is well-experienced in working with institutions that may be able to provide guidance, if necessary. Likewise, the ICV benefits in that it can work with the imams to address social issues, as indicated through their joint effort to address domestic violence.

The ICV has no doubt benefited, particularly in recent years, from its unofficial separation from AFIC – most notably during the AFIC schools’ crisis. Likewise, the organisation has benefited from the seemingly durable support it receives from its member societies.

It is by no means straightforward to run a peak body for Muslims in Australia. The diversity of the Muslim community of Australia (see 3.4 Diversity of Muslims in Australia) makes this an especially
difficult challenge. Nevertheless, the ICV has been able to do so with relative success, and while the organisation is not without its critics, given the reality of AFIC over the past few decades, the ICV deserves some credit.

2.3 Collective Religious Leadership

At the time of publication of *Islam in Australia* in 2003, Saeed maintained that there had “not been many significant attempts to bring together nominated religious leaders,” nor had there been an attempt to nominate or elect “a single religious leader to represent the entire population of Australian Muslims.” However, in September 2006, the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) was formed in an attempt at collective religious leadership on a national level. Prior to the formation of ANIC, however, groups of imams in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia had organised themselves into state bodies – “something close to a collective religious leadership,” according to Saeed.

Over the course of its short existence, ANIC has become a relatively active institution that, given the recent failings of AFIC and the desire of governments to find a Muslim voice with a marketable perception of legitimacy, has taken on an increasingly greater role in advocating for Australian Muslim communities.

The legitimacy of ANIC as a representative voice for Australian Muslim communities is a topic of debate among Australian Muslim leaders. Many argue that collective religious leadership should not be actively associating with governments or media given that their area of expertise is predominantly religious, and they often lack political nous. These debates exist even within the leadership of ANIC.

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431 Ibid, 141.
This section of the chapter will look at the structure of ANIC, its scope of influence and the services that the organisation provides to Australian Muslim communities. Through the range of opinions expressed by the participants of this study, it will further discuss how ANIC is perceived.

2.3.1 Australian National Imams Council

As Saeed outlined in *Islam in Australia*, following the September 11 attacks and the subsequent backlash against Muslims in Australia, there were increased calls for a unified Muslim voice on religious issues. These calls were coming from sections of the Australian Muslim community, but also from politicians.

The formation of ANIC was, in part, made possible by the Howard Government’s Muslim Community Reference Group. The reference group was established in August 2005, following a meeting on the threat of Muslim youth radicalisation, between the Prime Minister and several representatives of Muslim communities. At the insistence of these representatives, the Federal Government supported a two-day conference attended by over 100 imams in Sydney in September 2006, which led to the establishment of ANIC.

NIC was established “to unite the Imams of Australia under one umbrella body.” Previously, while there had been no national body representing imams, there had been several state-based organisations, such as the Board of Imams Victoria (est. 1984). ANIC is the result of state councils in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia uniting together. The formation of

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432 Ibid, 142.
ANIC can also be viewed in the context of a growing trend in the West whereby imams and religious leaders are increasingly seeking to professionalise the role.\textsuperscript{436}

In terms of official membership, ANIC claims to have over 200 registered imams; however, its website currently lists 146 as active members.\textsuperscript{437} The names of the member imams are published on the ANIC website on a state-by-state basis, while the members holding positions within the Executive Committee are also listed. The current Executive Committee includes the roles of President, Vice President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant and Mufti of Australia, while there are also ten members given the position title of Executive Member. The seventeen-man committee is largely proportional to the Muslim population of each state and consists of six representatives from New South Wales, four from Victoria, two each from South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia, and one from the Australian Capital Territory. Everyone within the Executive Committee is currently serving four-year terms from 2015-2018.\textsuperscript{438} Sheikh Shady Alsuleiman is the current president of ANIC.

As an organisation, ANIC usually meet once a year – often on the east coast (although they have met in Perth once) – however, the state affiliates can also meet locally with more frequency. For instance, the Sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne indicated that the members of the Board of Imams Victoria would usually meet once a month.\textsuperscript{439} He also revealed that a smaller group meets every week to discuss issues – not exclusively the executive committee members, but rather a group of imams discussing relevant issues that may have come up during the week in order to help each other out. He did stress though that these meeting are not social events (“not like getting together to have a coffee”); they are quite formal and needs-based.\textsuperscript{440}

\textsuperscript{439} Sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne, interview.  
\textsuperscript{440} Ibid.
2.3.1.1 A Representative Body?

It is difficult to determine how truly representative of Australia’s imams ANIC is given there exists no formal process for monitoring the number of Muslim religious professionals in Australia.

While theorising in *Islam in Australia* what a collective religious leadership organisation would look like in the Australian setting, Saeed wrote: “Because of the number of ethnic, political and theological differences that exist among Australian Muslims, it would be extremely difficult for one chosen person to acceptably represent the Muslim community as a whole.”\(^{441}\) Saeed’s observation is still relevant today and a truly representative collective religious body remains a challenging prospect.

Representatives of ANIC have indicated that, despite the differences of opinion that exist amongst the Australian Muslim community, national unity is crucial. Speaking on *OnePath Network* in 2016 as one of a panel of six Australian imams, President of ANIC Sheikh Shady Alsuleiman said:

> Especially these days – we want others to tolerate us when we don’t even tolerate each other. That’s the issue that we’ve got. We want the outsiders; we want the non-Muslims; we want the Western countries; we want others to tolerate us as Muslims and accept us; embrace us and welcome us; and, deal with us with full tolerance and acceptance and understanding. But at the same time, we as imams; we as Muslims … sometimes we don’t even tolerate each other.\(^{442}\)

Sheikh Shady continued by emphasising that religious disagreements between Australian Muslims were often more divisive amongst the general Muslim population; whereas Imams were much more tolerant of each other, but added, “I am also responsible for my students and for my members. I need to also convey that message … and tell people, ‘Look, there is space for us to disagree.”\(^{443}\)

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\(^{441}\) Abdullah Saeed, *Islam in Australia*, 140.


\(^{443}\) Ibid.
ANIC says it represents “mainstream Islam” in Australia, and as such, it is largely a Sunni organisation – as too are its state-based affiliates. While imams emphasise the importance of unity amongst the national Muslim population, the complexities of religious interpretations still play a role in the acceptance of certain imams into ANIC. For instance, it can be difficult for Imams perceived as being from outside of the mainstream Sunni understandings of Islam to join the organisation.

Shaykh Mohammad Ramzan, Imam at Geelong Mosque, shared his experience:

I tried actually, many times, to become a member [of the Board of Imams Victoria], and to ask them to become a member, and be part of that ... I have a lot of experience working with different communities – not just the imams within ourselves ... [but] the priests and rabbis, and the other faith leaders as well ... But they had some reservations about my background or understanding.444

Shaykh Ramzan is from a Sufi-orientated school of thought and is a leading member within the Australian arm of the international Sufi organisation Minhaj-ul-Quran.

However, just because an imam is not a member of the BOIV or ANIC it does not mean that they have no involvement with the organisation. When the Geelong Mosque was destroyed by fire in May 2016, Shaykh Ramzan noted that the BOIV had been particularly supportive of him and the community.

They have supported us a lot when this incident happened, and they called me, spoke to me, I spoke to them. Whenever there is anything important related [to] Muslims ... we [have] contact.445

Likewise, imams coming from overseas, as is the case with many Turkish-run mosques (see 3.3.3 Imam Selection), are occasionally involved with ANIC despite not necessarily becoming members.

Sheikh Nawas advised:

What we do in ANIC [is] we try to absorb them [imams coming from overseas] as well and [they] engage with us on issues of terrorism and training of imams and domestic violence

444 Shaykh Ramzan, interview.
445 Ibid.
and that type of thing. We bring them together and we have training programs together.\textsuperscript{446}

This thesis is not exploring the nature of the dynamics and complexities of Islamic beliefs, so it is difficult to analyse how representative of Australian Muslims religious leadership ANIC is. However, as the above statements indicate, there are circumstances in which ANIC interacts with and impacts imams outside of their membership.

2.3.1.2 Legal and Business Services

ANIC offers legal services as, in partnership with the Hills Legal Group, it offers assistance in the drafting of wills that conform to Islamic guidelines and Australian law.\textsuperscript{447} Furthermore, ANIC has recently entered the territory of halal certification and has established the ANIC Halal Authority. It has been registered and approved as a halal certifying body by the Federal Government’s Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. Including ANIC, there are twenty-two officially recognised Islamic bodies for halal certification of red meat in Australia, according to the Department’s website.\textsuperscript{448}

For purposes of exporting halal-certified red meat, there are eight nations with specific requirements that Australian exporters must receive approval from in order to export their products – Indonesia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Egypt. As of October 2017, ANIC only has the approval of Singapore.

However, according to Sheikh Nawas, who sits on ANIC’s Halal Advisory Board and is their Halal Supervisor,\textsuperscript{449} ANIC is attempting to expand their reach:

\textsuperscript{446} Sheikh Nawas, interview.
We are just trying to get recognition from ... red meat importing countries like Saudi Arabia, Arab countries, Malaysia, Indonesia ... At the moment, we have recognition from only Singapore. So, unless we have the recognition from all countries, we won’t be able to get into the business successfully, because any abattoir that exports meat, they would like to have access to all these big markets.\(^\text{450}\)

There are two providers who currently have the approval of all eight of these nations – the Islamic Coordinating Council of Victoria and the NSW-based Supreme Islamic Council of Halal Meat in Australia, while the previously discussed Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) has approval to export to most of the nations, with the exceptions being Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.\(^\text{451}\)

Sheikh Nawas elaborated that the process of getting approval from these nations was not political, but did require resources:

> First of all, they need the trust. They need to see how we implement their programs ... They come here, and they audit ... That has a cost, so we need to build a little bit.\(^\text{452}\)

Similar to how AFIC has historically used halal certification, ANIC appears to be entering this market as a means of garnering some income to assist in the administration of their organisation.

### 2.3.1.3 Influence

ANIC aims to be both a religious representative group and a force for improving Australian society. Their publicly stated vision and mission, “is to be a leading body representing mainstream Islam in Australia ... and contribute to the betterment of the Australian Islamic community and the wider Australian society at large.”\(^\text{453}\)

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\(^{450}\) Sheikh Nawas, interview.


\(^{452}\) Sheikh Nawas, interview.

As such, the scope of ANIC’s influence can be described as twofold: religious and political. As the national organisation for imams in Australia, ANIC has an important role to play religiously. In cooperation with its state affiliates, the organisation provides a variety of services to Australian Muslim communities. Politically, its role is less defined and was an area of disagreement and debate amongst some of the participants of this study. There were those, both internal and external to the organisation, who argued that ANIC’s role should be solely religious and that they should leave politics to organisations better-suited to deal with the modern political environment.

Religious Influence

As arguably the only collective religious leadership institution representing Muslims leaders in Australia, ANIC retains religious influence. The organisation imparts this influence in a number of ways. For instance, ANIC is an authority in Australia on advising Muslim communities of the commencement and conclusion of the month of Ramadan. Even those with limited knowledge of the organisation are familiar with the month because of these announcements.\footnote{Nafay Siddiqui, in interview with author, Melbourne, 11 May 2017.}

Furthermore, ANIC is responsible for the selection of the Grand Mufti of Australia. This responsibility was originally that of AFIC, but was assumed by ANIC upon their formation.\footnote{Abdullah Saeed, “Religious Leadership,” 453.} In one of their first major acts as an organisation, they oversaw the removal of the AFIC-appointed Sheikh Taj El-Din Hamid Hilaly\footnote{Hilaly courted national controversy after comments he made that were widely perceived as blaming women for inciting sexual assault. “Ethnic leaders condemn Muslim cleric,” The Age, 26 October 2006. http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/ethnic-leaders-condemn-muslim-cleric/2006/10/26/1161749223822.html.} from the position – replacing him with the Melbourne-based Sheikh Fehmi Naji El-Imam in 2007.\footnote{“Controversial sheik steps down,” Sydney Morning Herald, 10 June 2007. https://www.smh.com.au/national/controversial-sheik-steps-down-20070611-gdqcre.html.} Since Sheikh Fehmi there have been a further two Grand Muftis - Dr Ibrahim Abu Mohamed and Imam Abdel Aziem Al-Afifi, who passed away in mid-2018 and is yet to be replaced.
A Mufti is described as a religious leader empowered to make decisions of general religious importance or *fatwas*.\(^{458}\) However, the role of Grand Mufti of Australia is largely ceremomious, but the position does carry some influence – especially among the members of ANIC. Sheikh Nawas explained:

He has a say, and whatever he says has an impact ... among the Muslims ... There is a kind of impression that he controls the Muslim community. In fact, he does not, and his words are only effective to the extent that it is acceptable to the Muslim community ... In Australia, 90% maybe of Muslims are Sunnis, so when he [speaks] on major events like Ramadan and Eid, his word is carried out, because the imams who are controlling the local area [are transmitting] ... his announcement ... So, it is ... a loose kind of relationship.\(^{459}\)

Nora Amath shared her thoughts as to why the role of Grand Mufti carried little influence among many Australian Muslims.

Even though imams got together and voted for a mufti ... the fact of the matter is another Muslim will say, ‘but I don’t have to listen to you, because I have a direct relationship with God,’ and so there’s that nuance of religious hierarchy that makes it very difficult then to have any leadership that is quite structural like that.\(^{460}\)

Aykan added his thoughts on the absence of a need for a grand mufti, while emphasising ANIC’s importance:

I don’t think we need a mufti in this country ... but you do need a collective imam’s body, because they need to be able to take control of their affairs; have some synergy; have some consistency ... But the role of mufti, I feel, is a bit unnecessary.\(^{461}\)

Although the position of the Grand Mufti, while respected by many imams, is largely ceremomious, ANIC retains religious influence. Through bringing together imams from around Australia and providing a platform that encourages dialogue and collaboration between them, ANIC can be said to be providing a form of effective religious leadership to Australian Muslims. Sheikh Shady Alsuleiman said:

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\(^{459}\) Sheikh Nawas, interview.

\(^{460}\) Amath, interview.

\(^{461}\) Aykan, interview.
We, as imams, are like a group of different tradies trying to construct a beautiful building. So, you can’t say that all of the imams are with the youth; some of the imams are with the youth ... the politicians ... the elderly generations ... the Arabic speakers ... the intellectuals; [and] some imams [are] with the people on the ground. We all complement each other. That’s why we need that unity ... We need to complement each other and complete each other.  

All this considered, however, the diversity of the Muslim community in Australia somewhat undermines the religious influence of an organisation such as ANIC. This is re-enforced by the understanding, raised by Amath above and referred to by several of the participants, that structured religious hierarchy is deemed un-Islamic.

**Political Influence**

Since its establishment, which was, in part, the result of a Howard Government initiative, ANIC has consistently held a political role within the context of Australian Muslims. Its vision and mission statements include references that, it can be said, fit into the political discourse surrounding the consistent emphasis that governments’ place on social cohesion. For instance, ANIC aims to “promote harmony, cooperation and successful integration with mainstream society.”

On occasion, ANIC does distribute media releases or statements relating to issues that arguably fall outside the scope of religious issues. For instance, in November 2016, ANIC made a media release condemning Minister for Immigration Peter Dutton for remarks he made asserting that it was a mistake to allow Lebanese Muslim migrants into Australia in the 1970s because of the associated problems with terrorism experienced today.

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463 Amath, interview. Sweid, interview. Shaykh Ramzan, interview.
Part of the reason that ANIC has taken on a relatively active political role is due to the failings of AFIC as an advocacy body. For instance, Ghaith Krayem spoke of the how ANIC came to politically represent Australian Muslim communities:

> When there’s a vacuum, somebody’s gotta fill it. And there’s a vacuum, because of the dysfunctionality of AFIC. So, you know, ANIC, nationally, was the only alternative for having any sort of legitimate voice.  

With ANIC having developed into an increasingly politically active organisation, many within the community have become critical of their role. For instance, when it came to ANIC and how it had come to represent Australian Muslims politically, Nail Aykan had the opinion that their journey into this area was “beyond their limits.”

However, like Krayem, Aykan argued that the political role was something that ANIC had inherited rather than sought out. Aykan argued, “It’s not that they want to do it, it’s that there’s nobody else doing it [in New South Wales]. There’s a void.”

Krayem said that he did not think ANIC, as a religious organisation, was suited to the political role it had inherited:

> I don’t think it’s the role of ANIC, and I don’t think it should be the role of ANIC ... They’ve had to do it, but I don’t think it’s their role. I think they’ve got themselves in a little trouble, because they are playing a role that they are not equipped for.

Younger members of the community also expressed opposition to ANIC representing them politically. For example, Nafay Siddiqui was forthright when it came to ANIC politically representing Australian Muslim communities simply stating, “They don’t represent us politically.”

There was also evidence to suggest that the debate over the political role of ANIC was taking place within the organisation. Several of ANIC’s members relayed competing visions for the organisation.

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466 Krayem, interview.
467 Aykan, interview.
468 Krayem, interview.
469 Siddiqui, interview.
Some argued for an increased political role for the organisation, while others argued that their efforts in this area needed to be reduced.

Sheikh Nawas, spoke briefly of his desire for ANIC to become a more-prominent political force:

ANIC, in the future, would like to go beyond that kind of relationship to having a connection in the wider community and bring everyone together ... that may be in the future, but at the moment it is not happening.\footnote{Sheikh Nawas, interview.}

The Sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne had a slightly different view on the matter of expanding ANIC’s political role. He expressed that he did not think it was the place of imams to do politically-minded things like publicly condemn every terrorism act but did acknowledge that this is a demand that wider Australia places on imams.\footnote{Sheikh from the western Suburbs of Melbourne, interview.}

### 2.3.2 Conclusion

Through a focus on the Australian National Imams Council, this section has explored the category of collective religious leadership in a contemporary setting. It outlined the various services, both religious and social, that are offered by ANIC, and highlighted some of the opinions that exist regarding ANIC’s scope of influence and appropriate or ideal role.

In a society and time where the professionalisation of religious leaders has become a prevalent issue, the need for a collective religious leadership organisation representing Australian imams has become increasingly urgent. As such, the formation and subsequent growth of the ANIC is understandable.

Since its formation in 2005, ANIC has transitioned into an organisation of increasing significance. In many ways, ANIC’s rising prominence can be directly associated with the demise of AFIC. In the absence of an effective and relatively centralised voice that can be perceived as representative of a
large section of Australian Muslims, ANIC, through a combination of both design and necessity, has attempted (and been requested by some) to fill the void vacated by AFIC. In ANIC, various governments have found an organisation that they can work with – serving to provide evidence of community engagement and contextualise and legitimise policy initiatives.

Members of ANIC have somewhat competing views for the organisation moving forward. There are those that emphasise the religious role that an organisation such as ANIC can and should play, while others are keen to steer the organisation into a more socio-political direction and make it financially viable through the addition of a halal certification wing. Given the diversity of its membership, and the organisation’s infancy, it is perhaps logical that ANIC finds itself in this situation, and it will be interesting to observe how the organisation develops over the coming years.

As an organisation, except for religious announcements, ANIC has seemingly little direct or obvious influence on Australia’s Muslim communities. However, through its success in setting up a network in which imams in Australia, both members and non-members, can share experiences and discuss their issues, ANIC can be said to indirectly influence many Muslims who seek religious guidance and counsel. With its focus on the development of its imams, it has become an organisation of importance.

2.4 Community Groups

Over the last several decades, owing to an increasing population, the politicisation of Muslims in Australia, and dissatisfaction in existing organisations, new MCOs have emerged in significant numbers. In her 2014 thesis, Amath identified 486 organisations. She noted that while there were some older, mostly mosque-based organisations, the majority of organisations had been established post 9/11.\textsuperscript{472}

\textsuperscript{472} Nora Amath, The Phenomenology of Community Activism, 62.
Unlike the categorisations of *peak bodies and collective religious leadership*, where there are only a select few organisations that fit, the category of *community groups* is far-reaching and encompasses numerous organisations with a variety of aims, visions and purposes. Similarly, the definition that Saeed gave the category of *non-corporate leadership*, compared to his categorisation of *corporate* and *collective religious leadership*, was particularly broad and inclusive. Indeed, perhaps one of the most unifying features of these organisations is the fact that they are simply not peak bodies or collective religious leadership organisations.

Despite the various forms that they take, it is possible to subcategorise the MCOs that were represented in this research into four groups: mosque boards and committees, community centres and associations, women’s leadership organisations, and youth groups and Muslim student associations. With the exception of mosque boards and committees and Muslim student associations, which are relatively straightforward to define and group, MCOs rarely fit perfectly into these subcategories. However, as will be discussed, there are several characteristics that each share, which allows them to be grouped in this way.

### 2.4.1 Mosque Boards and Committees

Each mosque in Australia has a board or committee, which is responsible for running the mosque, collecting and distributing donations, and hiring an imam or imams to serve the religious needs of the congregation. Depending on several factors, including the size of the mosque, the personalities of the individuals involved and the length of time an imam has served, the imam may work closely with the mosque board or he may have very little to do with them.

Shaykh Ramzan explained:

> The general practice is just like the set up [of] ... other organisations ... There is the executive of the organisation ... and usually the imam is not a part of that ... He is like an employee, but every mosque has its own setup. And their own arrangements and the mechanisms are worked out within themselves. [For instance], I have a very active role both in the Executive

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and as an imam. Both roles I play.⁴⁷⁴

Throughout the history of a permanent Muslim presence in Australia, Muslim communities have retained a focus on establishing and maintaining local Islamic infrastructure. Historically, this has meant an emphasis on the construction of mosques. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the Afghan and Indian cameleers gave generously to committees that were intent on establishing mosques.⁴⁷⁵ Similarly, Turkish and Lebanese Muslims arriving during and in the aftermath of the dismantling of the White Australia Policy were equally committed to building local mosques.⁴⁷⁶ Amath found that there were 150 established mosques in Australia in 2014 – having risen from 80 in 2002, and 57 in 1994.⁴⁷⁷ Mosques are of vital importance to Muslim communities for reasons that journey beyond strictly religious. She wrote:

> It is important to note that Islamic rituals do not necessarily need to be carried out or performed in a ‘sacred’ place of worship. Therefore, for many Muslims, the building of a mosque extends beyond a need for a sacred place; it conveys a deeper sense of community and establishes their permanency in a land.⁴⁷⁸

Purchasing land, developing plans, receiving building approval and then actually building the mosque can be a lengthy and costly process. Given this process is usually funded through community donations, the burden on the community can be significant. According to Ramzi Elsayed, building a mosque can also have negative implications for inter-community relations with legal disputes over mosque applications making non-Muslims think of Muslims as “trouble-makers.”⁴⁷⁹

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⁴⁷⁴ Shaykh Ramzan, interview.
⁴⁷⁵ Mohamed Hasan Musakhan, History of Islamism in Australia from 1863-1932, 6-11.
⁴⁷⁶ Bilal Cleland, “The History of Muslims in Australia,” 27.
⁴⁷⁹ Ramzi Elsayed as quoted in Mario Peucker and Shahram Akbarzadeh, Muslim Active Citizenship in the West, 154.
While the focus of sections of some Muslim communities – having benefited from the establishment of numerous mosques over several years – has moved on from building mosques to providing other services, there are still several Muslim groups for which building mosques remains a primary focus. Asma Fahmi spoke to this, saying: “I think people are getting mosque-fatigue, to be honest. You hear about a new mosque being built all the time.”

For many new and emerging Australian Muslim communities, establishing new mosques is important. In some cases, the reason for wanting a new mosque is entirely geographic, while in other situations, the reasons can be cultural.

Some members of recently arrived communities seek to establish a mosque to act as a community centre that can unite people with shared experiences and similar backgrounds and approaches to Islam.

Nail Aykan elaborated:

The community is ethnically segmented, and they came in different waves ... One particular group is more settled than the other. So, you don’t have this homogeneous community – one Muslim [experience] – but also, you don’t have [one] settlement experience. People are at different levels. So, if you look at the Bangladeshi, the Sri Lankan, the Indonesian, the Somalian [communities], they are all trying to establish their first centres. Where if you take the others, they did it 40 years ago. They’re kind of established. But then you’ve got the recently arrived trying to establish [mosques]. So, even in Victoria, there are 16 mosque projects ... for new mosques – metro and rural. And they are all trying to establish themselves. It’s important to have a physical centre to be able to have a sense of community.

Mosques in Australia are predominantly run by a specific cultural group (see 3.4.1: Divided and Insular Communities). This is a historical trend in Australia that is, in part, the result of the method in which many mosques were initially built using funds provided by foreign governments, such as Turkey or Arab nations, or through the financial assistance of major overseas benefactors.

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480 Fahmi, interview.
481 Aykan, interview.
482 Saeed, Islam in Australia, 131.
Mosque boards or committees have usually hired an imam of the nationality of the initial funder, or at least an imam that has been educated at one of the religious schools in that nation. Thus, mosques in Australia are widely considered to be that of a specific cultural group. For instance, some of the biggest mosques in Australia – Lakemba Mosque (Lebanese) and Auburn Gallipoli Mosque (Turkish) in Sydney, and Sunshine Mosque (Turkish Cypriot) in Melbourne – are linked to a specific cultural group.

Speaking about mosques in Victoria, Nail Aykan said:

They are all ethnic based. The city mosque [in Melbourne] is about the only multicultural mosque. When I say multicultural mosque, I mean, run, managed [by representatives of various cultural groups] ... For example, one particular mosque is a Turkish-based mosque; one is a Pakistani-run mosque; one Lebanese.483

However, even though the mosque board or committee is representative of one cultural group, the congregation of the mosque is usually diverse. Mosques don’t turn worshippers away based on their cultural heritage, so many Muslims will simply worship at a mosque based on its location and convenience.

Dr Kazi elaborated on the situation at the mosque he established in Doncaster East:

I gave it the name United Muslim Migrant Association (UMMA). So, all Muslims are a part of it, but it’s basically Indians and Pakistanis that are. It so happens that in Doncaster, we have a lot of old Lebanese and Egyptians that live in this area. So, to them, UMMA has become their body too, but not organisationally. But they are a part of it as a mosque.484

Likewise, Zubeda Raihman provided another example:

For example, Rooty Hill [Mosque in NSW]. Their board is predominantly Pakistanis and yet their congregation would be a lot of Fijians, because they live around the place ... [However], they keep the doors open to everybody.485

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483 Aykan, interview.
484 Kazi, interview.
485 Raihman, interview.
Aykan expressed confidence that the cultural composition of mosque boards will diversify over time and come to more accurately represent the diversity of its congregation. He said:

What will happen is, a couple of generations later, the population dynamics will change ... [The mosque boards] will diversify. And we all hope that it will. And that's why we need to be able to support the younger generation ... You'd hope that these centres – [the] bricks and mortar – would get transferred to the future generations in a timely manner and to a diverse array of people, rather than sticking to your original subgroup.486

Despite Aykan's hopes for the future, the fact remains that the overwhelming majority of mosque boards remain dominated by a specific cultural group, as they have been throughout the history of a permanent Muslim presence in Australia.

This reality is likely to be a factor in why new and emerging Muslim communities in Australia seek to build new mosques. As mentioned, mosques are usually more than just a place to pray and seek religious guidance. They are centres for the community and, as such, new communities may see their construction as a means of retaining their links to their culture and heritage. Therefore, despite the many mosques that already exist around Australia, organisations formed with the purpose of building new mosques continue to emerge.

A distinctive trait of Australian mosque boards and committees is that they are overwhelmingly male-dominated (see 3.2.1 Patriarchal Structure). Indeed, of the limited number of participants who were asked about mosque boards, none knew of any with females on the board. However, later research did identify one woman on the Board of Directors of the Werribee Islamic Centre,487 while the United Muslim Migrant Association’s Management Committee included two women.488

486 Aykan, interview.
According to Zubeda Raihman, a lack of female representation at mosque board-level is not a trait shared by some of Australia’s Muslim-majority regional neighbours. She said:

This is not how the Malaysians and Indonesians work. In the mosque committees, they have both male and female [representation]. In Australia, they are so backward.489

Some mosques and community centres in Australia do have women committees, but, as Galila Abdelsalam noted, these committees have historically been assigned rather narrow tasks. She said:

I found the only women’s group that we had ... in 1991 ... was a women’s group in each mosque. And their only role was to support in fundraising and cleaning and kitchen jobs.490

Likewise, Ghaith Krayem noted, their role is often separate from that of the men on the board. He said:

There are some mosques committees now that have female committees, but very few of them are there as part of the leadership. And look, that's a historical thing that we've gotta get through. But yeah, it is changing.

This perception that women had a restricted role in mosques and in other MCOs was a factor in why some have chosen to set up their own organisations.

2.4.2 Women’s Leadership Organisations

Muslim women community organisations are a vital and influential sector of Muslim community leadership in Australia. There are several of these organisations around Australia offering a wide variety of services to the community. These groups cannot be easily categorised by their services offered, given the range of their focus; rather, they are categorised by their emphasis on Muslim women in their organisation’s structure. This emphasis is often reflected in the organisation’s name. Each of the five states visited in this study had at least one major Muslim women’s organisation that was relatively active within the local communities.

489 Raihman, interview.
490 Abdelsalam, interview.
There are a variety of reasons as to why women have started or joined Muslim women community organisations. Some have been launched in response to a perceived failure of existing organisations – both Muslim and non-Muslim – to adequately address the concerns of local Muslim women. For instance, a representative of one organisation said:

[The organisation] started out ... primarily because the women who set it up felt that some of the mainstream organisations weren’t necessarily meeting the needs of Muslim women - particularly in the family violence area ... And that often [they] did not meet the women's needs or made it difficult - even more difficult - for the women.491

Simultaneously, Abdelsalam suggested that some Muslim women’s organisations have been launched in response to a perception that existing organisations are patriarchal and provide limited opportunities for women (see 3.2.1 Patriarchal Structure).492 While MCOs are unlikely to be unique amongst religious leadership groups in having this problem, it is certainly a factor in the formation of Muslim women’s leadership organisations.

Alternatively, many Muslim women organisations have been created to help provide a sense of community among Muslim women in Australia and to help recently-arrived women and their families settle.

While Muslim women organisations have predominantly been founded to support (at least initially) Muslim women, the services offered by these groups can benefit a broad section of the community. Services consistently offered by the Muslim women’s organisations represented in this study include: settlement assistance, aged-care assistance, disability support, education, leadership and capacity building, domestic and family violence support, mediation, health awareness and community advocacy.

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491 Anonymous, in interview with author, 2016-17.
492 Abdelsalam, interview.
Although some Muslim women’s organisations do offer programs with a religious focus, most of the services offered tend to be more socially oriented.

Zubeda Raihman said:

In our organisation, we don’t talk about religious stuff. Religious stuff – they can go to the mosque ... So, we have more [of] the general stuff. That is our main focus. You know, looking at what the media is saying and how ... All those kind of things. And the women’s problems – if they have problems ... That is our main focus.⁴⁹³

Similarly, another representative said:

We basically are a non-religious organisation. And when we say that, what we mean is that we are able to engage with Islam as a religion, but we do not engage with a particular perspective [or] a particular version of Islam. So, we will ... not carry out any religious activities. We will not bring religion in, unless that’s what our clients request of us and, if they do, we present them with the varied sort of perspectives that are out there. And if we are unable to meet that need, then we would probably refer them to an appropriate imam in the community.⁴⁹⁴

As the statements above indicate, given their predominant focus on social issues, Muslim women’s organisations tend to be culturally diverse environments.

Wajma Padshah elaborates:

On our committee, we have women who wear the headscarf or hijab and those who don’t, but the general perception is [it’s a] Muslim centre ... Women, who may be not practising ... [thinking] am I going to be judged? Supported? ... [We are] saying, ‘Well the Centre is for everybody,’ and it is .... Over the years, it has always been like that, but especially over the past 10 years our client base has diversified.⁴⁹⁵

There is no national peak body for Muslim women community organisations; however, the indications were that there is a developing sense of unity amongst many of the groups. Several of the representatives of women’s organisations interviewed in this study shared their experiences of working with groups from other states.

⁴⁹³ Raihman, interview.
⁴⁹⁴ Anonymous, in interview with author, Melbourne, 8 March 2017
⁴⁹⁵ Padshah, interview.
For instance, Nora Amath said:

> We worked with the Muslim Women’s Association – so Maha Abdo, who I know quite well and personally. She's been our mentor in this process. They've been involved in providing service for domestic violence victims for the last 30 years and [are] a wealth of knowledge. They have been instrumental in helping us with our model.\textsuperscript{496}

Similarly, the Muslim Women Support Centre WA has also worked with Maha Abdo’s Muslim Women’s Association.

Padshah said:

> One of the projects, for example, we're working on at the moment, that's not existent in Perth, is a refuge for Muslim women or crisis accommodation. And so, we are really very keenly looking at the model that is being used in Sydney and wanting to bring that over.\textsuperscript{497}

As of late 2017, some of the women’s organisations were taking steps to form a national women’s alliance. Ghaith Krayem elaborated:

> There is some work happening amongst the women's groups to form a national women’s alliance, driven by the Muslim Women's Association in Sydney. I know that they are all having discussions about setting up ... It’s not an AFIC, it's an informal [coalition] ... I guess more of a forum where the different women’s organisations across the states can start to work a little more together and share some things rather than doing it on their own.\textsuperscript{498}

In terms of approachability, Muslim women’s community organisations were also significantly more likely to respond to requests to participate in this research. Almost one-third of those interviewed were representatives of Muslim women groups.

### 2.4.3 Community Centres and Associations

In many ways, mosques are community centres. Mosques can be considered ‘faith spaces,’ which can serve as a place of worship, a formal or social meeting place, a resource and information centre

\textsuperscript{496} Amath, interview.  
\textsuperscript{497} Padshah, interview.  
\textsuperscript{498} Krayem, interview.
or a classroom.\textsuperscript{499} In Australia, mosques have historically played a significant role in the settlement of Muslim immigrants.\textsuperscript{500} Therefore, many people would deem a mosque to be a kind of community centre.

In this study, however, ‘community centres and associations’ will refer to MCOs that exist, in many ways, to complement mosques, while often offering services that extend beyond those typically associated with the mosque. Thus, although they share several characteristics, community centres are distinguishable from mosques, and consequently the category of mosque committees, in that their reach usually extends further into the social lives of their members and communities.

There are several organisations that can be said to serve as community centres or associations. Sometimes, these organisations might be ethno-specific, as is the case with an organisation like the Sydney-based Pakistani Association of Australia or the Perth-based Bosnian and Hercegovina Cultural and Recreation Centre.

However, not all of these organisations retain ethnic affiliations. For instance, the Islamic Information Centre of South Australia, which offers a range of services, including education, sport and recreation, youth camps and classes for new Muslims, had no ethnic affiliation.

Hasan Yunich elaborates:

So, one thing about our organisation is it’s not ethnically based. And I’m really strict and really firm on that. We don’t want [that]. That’s why all our classes are in English and if we want an Arabic speaker, [then we get an interpreter].\textsuperscript{501}

Instead of an ethno-centric focus, several organisations tend to be based on geographical factors. For instance, MyCentre, which is run by the Islamic Information and Services Network of Australasia (IISNA), provides a multi-purpose facility for Muslims in Melbourne’s outer suburb of Broadmeadows

\textsuperscript{499} Nora Amath, “The Phenomenology of Community Activism,” 142.
\textsuperscript{500} Gary Bouma, Mosques and Muslim Settlement in Australia, 99.
\textsuperscript{501} Yunich, interview.
for social, educational, spiritual and recreational services. Specifically, the services offered by MyCentre include organising Islamic wills and match-making, while they have an indoor sports court for hire and an osteopath available for appointments. They also have a drug and alcohol counselling program.\(^502\)

One of the community centres involved in this study could be defined as a mini or faux peak body. The Islamic Society of South Australia (ISSA) was said to have almost 2,000 members and was responsible for running four mosques across the state. The organisation has a variety of leadership positions and organises several community activities.\(^503\)

Much like a peak body, ISSA had taken on somewhat of an advocacy role on behalf of a section of South Australia’s Muslim population. Given the AFIC-affiliated Islamic Council of South Australia was widely considered ineffective, ISSA can be seen as filling this perceived need. Zreika said, “Every week someone from any different government department, they call up, they want to come and meet us.”\(^504\)

Furthermore, in partnership with ACH Group and the Islamic Arabic Centre, ISSA is working to “provide a culturally and religiously appropriate service providing a worry-free and social lifestyle for elderly Muslim Australians while creating a favourable and practical option to life after retirement.”\(^505\)

Aged-care assistance, in particular, was deemed as an important area for development by several of those interviewed.\(^506\) The number of Australian Muslims over the age of 70 has increased marginally over the last decade (1.69% in 2006, 1.86% in 2011 and 2.43% in 2016).\(^507\) Therefore, the need to

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\(^502\) Islam, interview.
\(^503\) Zreika, interview.
\(^504\) Ibid.
develop services capable of providing religiously and culturally appropriate care was seen to be an issue that would become more urgent in the years ahead.

Finally, the last organisations represented in this research that is classified under the category of community centres and associations is Muslim Collective (previously Muslims for Progressive Values). The organisation aims to create a “vibrant, respectful space for Muslims who want to talk openly and honestly about their Islam … without fear of exclusion or judgement.”

Reem Sweid elaborated on the organisation’s foundation:

> I’ve been in Australia for nine years now and ... about two years ago, I just kind of realised that I hadn’t made any Muslim friends. And there were two things that, I think, were the impotence for me to start MPV in Australia. Firstly, because I couldn’t find a community, and when I did find people that I thought were like-minded, kind of ‘progressive’ Muslims, they were complaining about the same thing - they didn’t have any Muslim friends; they couldn’t find a community that they felt comfortable in, and so there was that missing element.

Muslim Collective offer a range of services and activities with an emphasis on celebrating diversity, intra and interfaith engagement, and engaging with Islam. These include discussion circles and social meet ups, community engagement through interfaith and intra-faith activities, and social-media campaigns like #ways to be Muslim – a campaign to celebrate Muslim diversity around the world.

2.4.4 Youth Groups and Muslim Student Associations

Youth groups and student associations are another important element of the Muslim community leadership setup in Australia. In the context of this category of organisations, the term ‘youth’ is obviously subjective. The Muslim Student Associations (MSAs), by their nature, can be said to cater for Muslim students aged predominantly between 18 and 30. On the other hand, given that many organisations focus on and offer services based around youth, Muslim youth groups are harder to

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509 Sweid, interview.
assign to a specific age bracket. Therefore, youth groups will be categorised by their emphasis on youth in their organisation’s structure. As with Muslim women’s groups, this emphasis is often reflected in the organisation’s name.

Muslims less than 30 years of age account for over 55% of the total Muslim population in Australia and, as a religious group, are significantly younger in comparison to other religious and non-religious communities. However, there was a perception that the established organisations can be a difficult environment from which younger Muslims can rise to leadership positions and express influence (see 3.2 The Generation Gap). As such, youth groups and MSAs serve, in part, as vehicles for young leaders to execute leadership.

2.4.4.1 Muslim Student Associations

Muslim Student Associations (MSAs) can provide a sense of on-campus community. They usually offer a range of religious services and/or social activities to Muslim students but vary in size and effectiveness.

The size and/or effectiveness of an MSA will depend on several factors. Firstly, and most obviously, the number of Muslims enrolled at a university will affect its membership count. However, within this study, factors such as what services and activities were offered, perceived gender-bias and religious differences, were all raised as factors that impact student participation in MSAs.

Furthermore, students are usually only at university for a period of between three to five years. This means the turnover of members in MSAs is relatively frequent and that the nature of the organisation, and its focus and aims, is subject to change, which can also impact its size and/or effectiveness.

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The University of Western Sydney MSA (Paramatta Campus) was one that was essentially reinvigorating itself after a changeover of leadership. Farhana Mollah spoke to this:

> We had really good leaders of the MSA and what happened is ... they became busy; they had jobs. So, they kind of moved on and then graduated, but what happened was they couldn't find replacements who would be able to take on their position as well. So, last semester was pretty much ... a very struggling semester for us, just because we were building up the MSA and filling all the roles that were left ... But this semester it’s all good, Al-ḥamdu lillāh, we have everyone.512

In this process of reinvigoration, according to Rizwana Haque, the MSA has become increasingly driven by the women on campus. Using the example of one of the male students she knew, Haque said:

> He doesn't see any boys there so he's like, “I don't really want to go up ...” I was pushing for more brothers to come and join, because I know there are brothers out there that see all the girls here and think, ‘Nah.’ They don't want to be part of it.513

The opposite was said to be true at the University of Western Sydney’s Campbelltown campus where Mollah indicated that the MSA had a shortage of women:

> This is the irony. Like Campbelltown campus [compared] to this campus, we're the exact opposite. They have a shortage of girls, but they have a lot of active brothers who are doing an amazing job. Whereas in us, we have a shortage of brothers, but we have a lot of sisters.514

The University of Western Australia MSA, by comparison, seemed to have a mix of both male and female members. The Association, who Marim Abdulelhadi estimated had approximately 150 members, was represented by a relatively diverse board.515

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514 Mollah, interview.
515 Marim Abdulelhadi, in interview with author, Perth, 6 July 2016.
The University of Melbourne Islamic Society (UMIS) was the biggest of the MSAs that participated in this study. It was estimated to have approximately 1,000 members, which would make it one of the biggest societies on campus.

Nafay Siddiqui said:

'It's probably the biggest, if not, the second or third biggest society on campus ... Not all [the members] are active, but I'd have to say there are a lot, because you can sort of tell at Friday prayers when everyone comes, and they have to organise two [sessions] and they are packed to the end. There's like 200-300 at least, and most people don't even come to Uni on Friday. So, it's big.'\(^\text{516}\)

In terms of gender, like the University of Western Australia MSA, UMIS had a relatively diverse committee with Siddiqui expressing that the board was approximately sixty per cent female and forty per cent male.\(^\text{517}\) This indicates that while gender-bias may impact some, it is perhaps not a widespread issue across MSAs.

Another area that can impact the overall effectiveness of an MSA is the extent that religion plays a role in the organisation. MSAs will usually include students with varying approaches and understandings of Islam. Therefore, finding that balance between being a religious and a social organisation can be challenging.

Given its size, the University of Melbourne Islamic Society had recognised this as an issue for them.

Nafay Siddiqui said:

'It's a very challenging relationship in the sense that, if the person is the president, they are also considered to have some sort of spiritual role as well. In the sense that they should be at a level where they are able to ensure that everything is done with religious values ... Now that's a really abstract concept, because what are religious values? What are your values? What are my values? They are very different. And then you've got divisions within the Muslim community. We've got Shi'ites; we've got Sunnis. That does play out as an undertone, and it's really interesting to witness that.'\(^\text{518}\)

\(^{516}\) Siddiqui, interview.

\(^{517}\) Ibid.

\(^{518}\) Ibid.
The University of Melbourne Islamic Society had developed an informal mentoring network to assist committee leaders in navigating this challenge. Siddiqui continued:

> Because it's a religious society, there's a lot of difference of opinions – like how people interpret religion ... And in order for that to run smoothly, there's often ... a couple of people that are sort of mentors - like unofficial mentors. They don't have an official role, but they are respected, and if something was to happen, it's often the president that runs ideas by them and that sort of ensures that it's swaying in a particular direction.\(^{519}\)

While these relationships are informal, they can be crucial to the success of the organisation.

Siddiqui concluded: “I reckon the effectiveness of the mentoring program really determines the effectiveness of the committee.”\(^{520}\)

As can be expected, the services offered by the MSAs that participated in this study ranged from the spiritually-focused to the more socially focused. Barbeques, games nights, picnics, day trips, Islamic awareness week and sports tournaments were common social events on the calendars of the MSAs, while some of the more spiritually-based events included Qur’anic classes, religious talks and wellbeing classes. These types of services are consistent with what is offered by MSAs internationally.\(^{521}\) The participating MSAs all organised an annual *iftar* during *Ramadan*.\(^{522}\) Alumni, families and friends were often invited meaning these were big events that required significant preparation.

Members usually pay a small annual fee of anywhere between $10-$50, while social events, such as day-trips or soccer tournaments, are usually funded by the attendees. Most MSAs are also likely to qualify for small grants and funding from their university. For instance, as of October 2017, the University of Melbourne had distributed 36% of the $4,411,535 received from the Student Services

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\(^{519}\) Ibid.

\(^{520}\) Ibid.


\(^{522}\) Siddiqui, interview. Mollah, interview. Haque, interview. Abdulheladi, interview.
& Amenities Fee (SSAF) to its student union and associations.\textsuperscript{523} According to Nafay Siddiqui, however, these grants usually only cover on-campus events. He said:

\begin{quote}
I think they have like a grant for every club and I think that generally covers the events on campus. So, for example, the field trip, or for events that we don't have [on-campus], we generally take money, like $10 if you want to go.\textsuperscript{524}
\end{quote}

Other services that were offered by some of the MSAs included lobbying university administrators for improved prayer facilities or increased halal options on campus (see 5.5 MCOs and Non-Religious Organisations). Furthermore, the MSA committees are often consulted by university leaders on Islamophobia and other forms of racism – especially when something happens that directly affects students on campus.\textsuperscript{525}

Many MSAs also actively promote and contribute to social causes. For instance, UMIS was hosting a blood donation drive on campus, whilst raising money for the cause throughout the year. Similarly, the University of Western Sydney MSA select a charitable organisation to raise money for each semester. In Semester One, 2017, they were spreading awareness and raising money for a Somalian aid group, while they had also worked with Project Change to raise funds to help educate women in Cambodia.\textsuperscript{526}

While there was evidence of some cooperation between different MSAs, there is no state or national body; however, Marim Abdulhadi said that there were plans for a Western Australian Muslim student association that could have representatives from all WA universities, with a national body to do likewise as the long-term goal.\textsuperscript{527}
2.4.4.2 Youth Groups

Muslim youth organisations are not easily defined by their nature. Organisations differ remarkably in terms of aims, values and the services offered to the community. However, youth groups are categorised together predominantly because of their shared and ultimate focus on providing opportunities to young Muslims.

Historically, in the context of MCOs in Australia, youth groups have been around for a relatively long time. For instance, the Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth (FAMSY), which has chapters in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria, has existed for over fifty years. Likewise, Young Muslims of Australia (YMA), which claims to “have roots in every state,” has been around since the late 1980s.528

In recent years, more youth organisations have emerged. Several of these have been founded owing to a perception that there is a lack of opportunity within the established framework of community leadership for young leaders to express themselves. For instance, before moving to Melbourne, Ayman Islam grew up in Darwin where he was involved with the Islamic Society of Darwin (ISD).

According to Islam, young members of the community have become frustrated by their inability to make an impact within existing organisations. He said:

> I looked at ISD, and the problem with ISD – to some respect it is replicated here [Victoria] as well – was that the mosque representation was the older generation, [which] was not really reflective of the community that was coming up. I grew up with a lot of young Muslims there, and different ideas ... and the challenges of how you get involved with that Society because they weren’t really ... recognising [those ideas] ... And you have the same issue here in Melbourne. With a lot of the different member societies, there is no recognised path for younger people to make their mark.529

Established leaders refusing to hand over control of organisations to new leaders is one of the various challenges facing Muslim community leadership in Australia (see 3.2 The Generation Gap). It

529 Islam, interview.
is important to mention it briefly in the context of youth groups, however, given the role that this frustration has played in the founding of many such organisations.

Furthermore, some groups, like Markaz Imam Ahmad (MIA) and Navigate Islam, which are focused on providing a spiritual service, have emerged in part because some young Australian Muslims cannot find the answers to their spiritual questions within established institutions, such as mosques.

Asma Fahmi elaborates:

I work with Markaz ... Basically, it is a group that was put together ... for people that feel like outsiders within the community. It’s sort of a place where it’s judgement free ... So, whatever you believe or even if you are not practising ... It’s just sort of a place to come together every month and just to socialise with people, who might not feel like they belong to one particular group, and just so that they feel welcome.

Another group called Navigate Islam, which used to be called Train the Trainers, and that's basically teaching young people about the spirit of Sharia ... Just giving them a very brief understanding of foundational principles of jurisprudence ... And just to give them an understanding of how scholars come up with their rulings and how complex it is.530

In combination with the factors raised above, advancements in modern technology have made it much easier for young Muslims to find like-minded individuals facing the same issues as themselves.

The internet and social media networks were, according to Fahmi, “another reason youth groups have been able to form.”

This was a sentiment shared by others, such as Ayman Islam:

What’s happening now is that people find there’s too much opposition, so they'll probably just go out and ... form their own organisation or they'll find a different avenue to do their idea. And they realise now that you don't necessarily have to be part of the bricks and mortar ... to get your idea [going] ... They're very innovative. They'll do crowd funding; they'll approach different influencers around the community and they'll try and get their idea across now. So, it was different when I was [younger]. You didn’t have those sorts of streams to do that. You really had the mosque and there wasn't much else.

Given these developments, it is likely that new youth groups, with specific aims and ideas, will continue to emerge in substantial numbers over the coming years.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the overall structure of MCOs in Australia in the contemporary setting. Furthermore, through revisiting Abdullah Saeed’s *Islam in Australia* and applying his categorisation of Muslim leadership in Australia to the present time, it has tracked how the overall structure of the community’s leadership has changed since Saeed’s book was published in 2003. It showed how, owing to the deteriorating influence of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, Saeed’s three category explanation of corporate leadership, non-corporate leadership and collective religious leadership, needed to be adjusted to fit the contemporary setting. As such, it separated MCOs into three categories: peak bodies, collective religious leadership and community groups.

Through contrasting two major peak bodies – the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils and the Islamic Council of Victoria – which, while being constitutionally linked, function largely in isolation from each other – it showed how peak bodies can impact Muslim communities. While acknowledging the contribution that AFIC has made to the development of Islamic infrastructure in the Australian Muslim community, through a combination of content/textual analysis, community observation and the opinions of the participants, this chapter argued that corruption, mismanagement and a lack of accountability has led to AFIC failing the community it is supposed to represent. On the other hand, the ICV was presented as a functioning peak body in that it adequately satisfied the three key areas in which a peak body provides a strong voice for its members – lobbying government, community education and information sharing. It was also relatively inclusive and diverse and had appropriate processes for community outreach and consultation.
Furthermore, the recent drama with AFIC-affiliated schools has shown how the organisation, through the assets it has accumulated throughout its history, still directly impacts many within Australia’s Muslim communities. Furthermore, given the socio-political environment of Australia, where there is a lack of understanding of Australia’s diverse Muslim population amongst the wider society, this chapter has argued that, as an organisation, AFIC retains relevancy. As such, if and how it adapts, will affect Muslim communities in Australia and should be monitored accordingly.

This chapter also considered the Australian National Imams Council as the collective religious leadership organisation for Australian Muslims and discussed the socio-political context that led to its formation. It emphasised that a growing desire and need for the professionalisation of religious leaders, combined with the increasing politicisation of Australian Muslims, meant that a collective religious organisation representing Australian imams had gathered widespread support. It also outlined ANIC’s organisational structure and representativeness. Through the opinions of the participants, it revealed some of the various and competing visions that both outsiders and ANIC’s members have for the organisation. Finally, it analysed ANIC’s scope of influence and legitimacy amongst the representatives of Australian MCOs.

While acknowledging that it is difficult to categorise some MCOs given that their services, vision and reach can be relatively broad, this chapter separated community groups into four categories: mosque boards and committees, women’s leadership organisations, community centres and associations, and youth groups and Muslim student associations. Owing to a number of factors, including the external pressure and scrutiny from wider society in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, an increasing Muslim population, and a perceived frustration at the inability to enter and exert influence in existing organisations, MCOs have emerged in significant numbers in recent years. This chapter indicated that, unlike under the categorisations of peak bodies and collective religious leadership, where there are only a select few organisations that fit, the category of community
groups is far-reaching and encompasses numerous organisations with a variety of aims, visions and purposes.

As they have done throughout the history of a permanent Muslim presence in Australia, this chapter reflected that mosques continue to serve as locations of vital importance. Thus, mosque boards and committees remain influential organisations in the overall structure of Muslim leadership in Australia. However, despite the desire of several of the quoted leaders to diversify, mosques boards remain largely dominated by specific ethnic or cultural groups. One of the effects of this is that new mosques and mosque projects continue to be pursued – usually by ethno-cultural groups with a rising population in Australia. Likewise, despite some early indications that this is beginning to change, mosque boards remain male-dominated.

As a counter, in part, to the dominance that men have in the established organisations, such as mosques, and the perception that exerting influence within these organisations can be difficult, Muslim women’s leadership organisations continue to emerge and grow in size and influence. These organisations offer a range of services to the community, including aged-care support, education, domestic violence awareness and support, support for recently arrived migrants, and much more, while several also serve as community advocates – their representatives working with governments on various projects and attending numerous community and interfaith events.

Community centres and associations offer a wide range of services to members of Australia’s Muslim communities. Several are associated with mosques and, as a result, focus mainly on providing sufficient religious support and services, whereas others have a broader societal focus with their offered services reflecting this. This category is particularly broad and encompasses many types of organisations – from an organisation such as the Islamic Society of South Australia, which runs four mosques across the state, to a group like Muslim Collective, which focuses on providing a space for progressive thought and social action. Community centres are at the forefront of a developing
movement within some of the more-established Muslim communities in Australia that, as Ayman Islam advised, “[are] moving away from building mosques to building lives.”

Finally, youth groups and Muslim student associations are the fourth and final category of community groups represented in this research. These organisations differ remarkably in terms of aims, values and the services offered to the community, but are grouped together because of their shared and ultimate focus on providing opportunities to young Muslims. As mentioned, the established organisations can be a difficult environment for young Muslims to exert influence, so youth groups and MSAs can serve as vehicles for young leaders to execute leadership.

While focusing on how MCOs are collectively and individually structured, this chapter also introduced several of the challenges facing Muslim community leadership in Australia. Some of the more notable challenges to emerge include the lack of a unified leadership, an overwhelming ethnocultural organisational division that is perhaps not in unison with contemporary times, and an often-unapologetic patriarchal structure. These and other internal challenges confronting Australian MCOs will now be explored in more detail.

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531 Islam, interview.
3 Internal Challenges

3.1 Introduction

Having outlined the overall structure of MCOs in Australia, including the categorisation of MCOs as either peak bodies, collective religious leadership organisations, or one of four subcategories of community groups – mosque boards and committees, women’s leadership organisations, community centres and associations, and youth groups and Muslim student associations, this thesis can now approach the various challenges that these organisations face.

In the context of this thesis, challenges can be considered as a situation or a theme that tests the capabilities of an organisation or group of organisations and which threatens their functionality and success. Internal challenges, like those covered in this chapter, are defined as internal because they relate to the issues and factors that may exist predominantly within MCOs, as either prevalent trends or reflections of the nature of Australian Muslim communities. External challenges, which will be discussed in Chapter Four, are defined as external, because they relate to issues and factors that exist predominantly within the broader context of socio-political life in Australia.

Internally, Australian MCOs face numerous challenges that impact their sustainability and effectiveness in achieving their aims and visions. These challenges can emerge from any of a variety of sources, including the structure of the organisation and the community that the organisation represents.

This chapter addresses four major themes that emerged from discussions with the participants of this study regarding internal challenges. These are the generation gap, the employment of imams, the diversity of Muslims in Australia, and staff, funding and governance. Much like individual organisations being difficult to assign to one category, specific challenges fit loosely into the four major themes. For instance, the largely patriarchal structure of Muslim community leadership in Australia addressed in this study as a subtheme of the generation gap could equally have been...
assigned to the theme relating to the challenge of a diverse Muslim community. However, in
deciding the structure of this chapter, priority was given to the responses of the participants, and a
significant proportion of the responders maintained that older generations were more inclined to
maintaining and functioning through a patriarchal structure.

The gap between the generations of Australian Muslims affects the community in different ways, but
it can be said to be contributing to a broad array of internal challenges facing MCOs in Australia. As
such, this section of the chapter will discuss four sub-themes that the author has linked to the
generation gap. These are the patriarchal structure of Muslim community organisations and
leadership in Australia, transition of leaders, finding the ‘right’ leader, and training and mentoring.
The generation gap is not solely responsible for these challenges; however, it is a major factor that is
present, in some way, in each of these challenges and this section will elaborate as to how and why
that is.

Imams are often influential figures within the community and have great responsibilities, so as
individuals and as leaders they are regularly scrutinised. This chapter navigates the major issues
surrounding imams in Australia that emerged through the semi-structured interviews through
discussing three subthemes: the lack of Australian-born imams, imam training and imam selection.

The diversity of the Muslim population in Australian has been well-established – both within this
study and in existing literature.532 Through looking at the divisions between different Muslim
communities and the insular nature of some communities, this section of the chapter will be
dedicated to forming an appreciation of how this diversity impacts and affects Australian Muslim
communities and MCOs. It will also address some of the ways in which the Australian Muslim
community is impacted by external events and foreign institutions. Finally, the section will move on

to discuss how this diversity, division, insular nature and foreign influence manifests in varying ways in the cities of the representatives of the participants of this study.

The fourth major theme that this chapter will discuss is the challenges that arise from issues relating to staff, funding and governance. This section will look at Australian MCOs over-reliance on volunteers to satisfy their staffing needs. Several of the participants of this study outlined a desire to professionalise MCOs; however, they accepted that challenges associated with financing such a push were hindering the process. As such, this section also discusses the avenues of funding pursued by MCOs in Australia – notably government grants and community donations. This section concludes by discussing some issues of governance associated with Australian MCOs and outlines some of the ways elections take place within MCOs and some of the reasons participants allege corruption and mismanagement can occur.

3.2 The Generation Gap

An area of concern that was evident throughout this study was the perceived gap between the older and younger generation of Muslims. Differences between generations, in terms of values and beliefs, is not uncommon in the contemporary world; nor is it a new phenomenon within the Australian context. There are likely to be consistent differences in understanding of politics, society and culture between generations of any community, and Australian Muslim communities are not immune. However, one issue mentioned by a few of the participants, for instance, in which the gap between generations of Australian Muslims is visible, was the opposition of some older family members to marriages between Muslims from different cultural backgrounds.

535 Abdulgufr, interview. Sweid, interview. Ihram, interview.
Silma Ihram gave a substantial account of how she believed the generation gap had developed within the context of the Australian Muslim communities. Regarding the first major Muslim communities to form in Australia, she said:

That first age group that came out when I first became Muslim in the ‘70s, they came out with the culture of Islam, and then they were challenged by living in a Western society ... Their understanding of Islam was, ‘Well it’s part and parcel of our culture, we don’t really think about it, we just do it.’ And some of the things they were doing were cultural and not Islamic. And so, they had all kinds of things that they thought were okay, but when they found other Muslims from other cultures, who didn’t do it, it kind of made them think about whether it was ... Then you had the next generation, who were their children, who were taught to respect and love and see themselves as Lebanese or Pakistani, or Indians, and grow up within the security of the community, but [who] often rebelled against it. [They] had a lot of questions, ended up by challenging a lot of their cultural background and going through a bit of an identity crisis, but still often ended up by remaining or marrying within the cultural community and sometimes marrying outside of it and then becoming a little bit broader. And now you’ve got this third generation, which is now growing up, who see themselves as Australian and don’t see themselves as ethnic at all, who often marry totally outside of the culture and who are really interested in learning what their religion actually is [and] if they want to follow it.536

Navigating and accommodating these varying identities between generations of Australian Muslims is an ongoing challenge for many MCOs in Australia.

In terms of community leadership, the generation gap transcends across the various positions of authority. Aziz Khan elaborated:

We have a deep disconnect between the youth; today’s youth, the 20-years-something or the teenagers, and today’s generation of leaders. That’s one ... gap. Another gap is with the religious leaders. So, there’s the gap with that leadership and then there’s a gap with parenting and kids. And these are the gaps we have in the community. And this is cross-sectional. This is each state having the same problems.537

As a result of this perceived divide between age groups, younger Muslims are seeking alternative ways to express influence other than through the established or traditional outlets. An often-used outlet for such expression is the internet and its various social-media platforms.538

536 Ihram, interview
537 Khan, interview.
new phenomenon represents an emerging challenge to the established MCOs, which have often been criticised for their poor engagement with young people. A former president of the AFIC is quoted as saying: “We have to take control of the youth. So, this is one area which I must admit AFIC has failed.”^539 The use of the word “control” here is perhaps revealing of why many younger Muslims remain disengaged from an organisation like AFIC.

The differences between generations of Australian Muslims can take many forms, but there are several realities of Muslim community leadership in Australia that serve to reinforce this divide. These include the patriarchal structure of MCOs, existing transition of leadership practices in several well-established organisations, the struggle to find qualified community advocates and leaders, and the need to instigate thorough training and mentoring practices of young and emerging leaders.

### 3.2.1 Patriarchal Structure

With the obvious exception of women’s leadership organisations, MCOs in Australia have overwhelmingly been the domain of men. Male dominance within social institutions, while certainly visible in Muslim organisations in Australia, is not a phenomenon limited to Muslim or even religious organisations. One participant interviewed on condition of anonymity said:

> I think Muslim leadership traditionally has been very much a male domain, and ... continues to be that. I think it also kind of reflects the general societal norms as well, in the sense that there is more male leadership generally as well [and] more males who are also in the media. So often what happens is, it is the men in the community that get approached. And, so it is always, [or] it tends to [be], the male view ... [that] gets talked about and reported on as well. And sometimes it does not reflect what the women might be thinking and what the women might be experiencing.^540

This trend of male-domination of Australian MCOs is particularly true of peak bodies and mosque committees and boards. The AFIC Executive Committee remains populated by only men, as does the

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^539 Unidentified former AFIC president as quoted in Nahid Kabir, “Islamic Issues in Australia,” 460.

^540 Anonymous, interview.
Board of the Lebanese Muslim Association (LMA).\textsuperscript{541} Unlike peak bodies and mosque committees and boards, Muslim student associations and youth groups are typically more diverse, which suggests that this trend may be linked to a generation gap. Gender balance within community centres and associations varies depending on the nature of the organisation; however, the prominence of Muslim women groups in the Australian scene suggests a frustration at the widely patriarchal structure of Australian MCOs.

This perception that a female voice within the community was missing was a common reason in why several participants had founded organisations – be they women’s leadership organisations or another variety of MCO.

Galila Abdelsalam spoke to how there was a real need for Muslim women groups when she started her organisation in 1991:

> When I moved to Queensland and I founded [IWAA], the only [type of] women’s group that we had [was] a women’s group in each mosque, and their only role was to support in fundraising and cleaning and kitchen jobs. And I thought that the women’s role should be beyond that ... There [was] a gap for service women [for] domestic violence, service women on issues with discrimination and other issues ... [such as] young people dropping school because of family concern for their culture and ... mixing cultures.\textsuperscript{542}

Nora Amath, who works with Abdelsalam at IWAA, had similar motivations for forming one of the organisations that she is a part of – Australian Muslim Advocates for the Rights of All Humanity (AMARAH):

> Some of the misogyny that we face within our own Muslim community – being female and in leadership – that was one of the main reasons why I started AMARAH and Galila started the Islamic Women’s Association of Queensland [now IWAA] at that time ... We wanted to take our service organisation outside of the mosque, because we didn’t want it to be dominated by a patriarchal system, because the mosque is – that’s the reality ... We have a respectful relationship with them and some of the mosques are more female-friendly in terms of the


\textsuperscript{542} Abdelsalam, interview.
leadership, but, by and large, it’s been quite frustrating.\textsuperscript{543}

Reem Sweid shared a similar sentiment, arguing that it is difficult to break the trend of male domination in Australian MCOs as women simply don’t want to work in a misogynistic environment that is systematically hostile to them. She said:

I think they [certain MCOs] are also misogynistic and no woman wants to work in a misogynistic environment. So, even if the doors are open to you, you’ll probably end up leaving.\textsuperscript{544}

Sweid elaborated that, in terms of leadership roles in Australian Muslim communities, women can often feel pigeonholed in a way that, in her mind, is not reflective of Islam as a religion or certain Muslim communities elsewhere. She continued:

It’s not about not wanting women in leadership positions, because look at how many women are running women-led organisations, and they are powerful, and they are leadership organisations. It’s about kind of putting women in boxes. As a woman, you are involved in women’s issues, that’s it. You don’t engage in general issues and that boxes them in and that’s the cultural aspect to it ... Still kind of that backward [idea that] there's women professions and women should get involved in women's issues and leave the other stuff to the men.\textsuperscript{545}

As a result, Muslim women’s community organisations, at the present time, can be considered the best or most-convenient avenue for many Muslim women in Australia to exert influence within their communities and realise their leadership goals. However, it was also considered one of the best ways to counter male dominance and strive for a leadership that is better representative of the diversity of Muslim communities in Australia. Amath elaborates:

And so, instead of trying to compete within that [patriarchal] space, and getting frustrated, we’ve just completely ... gone about our own business and that’s really our solution for how we are able to engage in that space.\textsuperscript{546}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{543} Amath, interview.
\textsuperscript{544} Sweid, interview.
\textsuperscript{545} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{546} Amath, interview.
\end{flushright}
Furthermore, Amath argued that the success of an organisation like the Islamic Women’s Association (IWAA) had enabled women to have a stronger voice in a largely patriarchal system of community representation. After enjoying a stable working relationship with the Islamic Society of Queensland in recent years, Amath elaborated that the time was right for IWAA to become a member of the ICQ and start to change these patriarchal structures.547

There are some signs that suggest that male domination of MCOs in Australia may be a declining phenomenon. For instance, the ICV elected three women to their Executive Committee at their last election in October 2016;548 however, this is not representative of the overall trend amongst Muslim peak bodies in Australia.

Similarly, against the historical trend in Australia, women are increasingly becoming committee members at certain mosques,549 but this, too, remains infrequent.

The diversity of the leadership amongst youth groups and MSAs suggests that the male-domination of MCOs in Australia may eventually decline. The University of Melbourne Islamic Society (UMIS) was said to have 8 females and 5 males on its board in 2017,550 while the leadership of the University of Western Australia Muslim Student Association (UWA MSA) was also relatively balanced between genders.551 Both these MSAs had female presidents at the time the interviews were conducted.

Young Australian Muslims seemingly tend to embrace gender diversity within leadership organisations. However, for this tendency to enter the mindset of established MCOs, these young leaders need to be given the opportunity to take on leadership roles within these organisations.

547 Ibid.
550 Siddiqui, interview.
551 Abdulrehadi, interview.
The frustration in a seemingly patriarchal structure of leadership, as evidenced through the comments of Abdelsalam and Amath and when discussing the reasons that they started their organisations, can be linked to the generation gap as this younger generation, many of whom are evidently more open to broadening the responsibilities of women in the context of Australian Muslim leadership, are simply not being provided opportunities within the established leadership frameworks. For instance, Asma Fahmi contemplated:

I wonder who are the new Waleed Aly’s that are being shut down right now. I’m just wondering, but there are amazing young people out there, who are very well-spoken and have great ideas. [But there is no platform for them].

In the current environment, older generations of leaders making way and creating a pathway to leadership for representatives of younger generations has proven to be a rarity.

3.2.2 Transition of Leadership

One of the challenges raised by several of the participants was the need for MCOs to have better practices for transition of power and a healthy turnover of leaders. With the exception of MSAs, which owing to the restricted timeframe a student remains in education, have a relatively frequent turnover of leaders, several of those interviewed spoke of the tendency of some MCO leaders to hold onto their positions for too long. This can often have negative results for the community and for the credibility of the organisation.

Aziz Khan spoke to this phenomenon:

I would say it's a human dimension and it's psychological, as well. It's about letting go. You don't wanna let go of power. Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts, and this is where things are ... It's cultural as well - why we don't have a smooth transition of power [and] why we don't have proper elections and leaders stepping aside ... I have experienced it, I have seen [it] and this is my critical observation. When you talk about leadership, this is where leadership is [and] why we lack quality leadership.

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552 Fahmi, interview.
553 Khan, interview.
Allowing leaders to remain in positions of prominence and influence for extended periods of time can have a negative effect on the broader Muslim community – especially younger Muslims, who can feel like they are not given the same platform and have limited space in which to speak out.

Without regular transitions of leadership providing the means for younger members of the community to access leadership roles in existing organisations, these young Muslims can feel disengaged, which, in turn, contributes to the sense of distance between generations.

Asma Fahmi elaborates:

I think it’s just a cycle and unfortunately, it’s going to continue until the structures change really, because the reason why they get to that position of power in the first place is because they don’t relinquish that power. Or they are able to stomp on everybody else to get there. So, until that changes, I think it is just going to be a cycle.

Silma Ihram described the absence of a regular transition of leaders as a “huge issue” for Australia’s Muslim communities, “whether it is in schools, community organisations, AFIC [or] national bodies.”

Ihram, who has previously set up two schools in Sydney – Al-Noori Muslim Primary School and the Noor Al Houda Islamic College – and was the subject of the 2005 documentary Silma’s School, argued that leaders needed to hand over control of organisations on a far more regular basis than is currently practiced. She did so while acknowledging that she was not immune from these accusations. Ihram said:

I could be accused of the same thing, but it’s not because I’m choosing to be there. I would be happy, once I’ve trained enough people, to pass over to them. And even when I was running [the schools] … I was really actively looking for that.

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554 Ihram, interview.
555 Directed by Jane Jeffes, the documentary followed the journey of Silma, her husband Baheej and their family through their bitter legal battle with Bankstown Airport Ltd and the Federal Airports Corporation. The Noor Al Houda Islamic College had leased contaminated land off the Federal Airports Corporation, who had known previously that the land was contaminated. The documentary was awarded Best Multicultural Film at the Australian International Film Festival.
556 Ihram, interview.
557 Ibid.
While expressing that leaders did need to change with greater frequency, Ihram did qualify this by highlighting that it is also a case of finding the right people to act as successors. She continued:

Even in this company here, I’ve employed so many managers hoping I can just, you know, move on, and none of them have been able to do [the job] ... I think I’m a very poor choice of managers to be honest. They probably think, ‘It’s just her.’ But I find out after they’ve done shocking things and they haven’t fulfilled what they’re supposed to do and that’s partly my leadership that is a problem in making sure people do the right thing, but it [transition of leadership] is a huge issue. 

Ihram linked the failure of some organisations to have a healthy transition of leadership to the phenomenon of tribalism in Australian Muslim communities (see 3.4 Diversity if Muslims in Australia). She said:

The problem is that, like all kinship’s and dynasties, these guys have tried to set up their children to take over ... So, unless a new big shot comes in, you are more likely, eventually, as the hipsters start to move into positions of prominence – hopefully – to get a new kind of attitude ... But [these hipsters] are a sub-culture of the Muslim community. And particularly in the Arab, Somali [and] Pakistani [communities], to a certain extent, I think ... there is still a lot of tribalism. And tribes look at leaders who are going to support their tribe; not at the welfare of the [Muslim] community.

Ihram remained hopeful, however, that with the passing of time the younger ‘hipster’ generation would eventually take over control of these organisations. She continued:

So, these hipsters are so fantastic, but they are the minority. They are an intelligent, capable, outgoing minority ... They are carrying a huge burden for the rest of the community. But then they are not part of a tribe, and so, therefore, the tribes are probably going to look after the assets for maybe another generation.

As Ihram’s comments suggest, the phenomenon of some organisations failing to initiate processes which ensure a regular turnover of leaders can be attributed to the divided and insular nature of Australian Muslim communities (see 3.4.1 Divided and Insular Communities); however, this is also a factor in the challenge to find the ‘right’ leader.

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558 Ibid.
559 Ibid.
3.2.3 Finding the ‘Right’ Leaders

Finding the ‘right’ leaders and ensuring well-trained and skilled individuals to fill positions of leadership, whilst obviously subjective, was proven to be a serious challenge for MCOs. Given the diversity and complexities of the Australian Muslim community, finding a representative that is satisfactory for a significant proportion of Australian Muslims is an exceptionally difficult task. Nevertheless, there was an overwhelming dissatisfaction amongst those interviewed in the quality of current leaders.

For instance, according to Reem Sweid, the current crop of leaders simply does not have the capacity to lead. She said, “We need CEOs, people with vision.” Nafay Siddiqui added, “You see these Muslim leaders on TV speaking about ... how it is okay to beat your wife ... and it's just like, “Wow.” How do you even say that? How can I be associated with this person?”

Several participants identified that the appropriate people were either not putting themselves forward to take up leadership roles or that they were being overlooked. Hasan Yunich elaborated on what he saw as a two-way problem:

I mean, you’ve got people running AFIC [with] big budgets, who haven’t got financial training ... But that’s the other thing, the guys who are better-qualified for these positions aren’t found or don’t feel like they’re part of the community ... So, it’s not just a blame-one-way kind of thing.

Yunich acknowledged that finding good leaders was difficult – especially in Adelaide where the Muslim community is relatively small compared to other state capitals. He continued:

Adelaide specifically – we don’t have qualified leaders. I’m not qualified. I shouldn’t be here, but I am ... [and] I’ve been brought up and shown that if you’re given responsibility, take it seriously. That’s why I’m not going to step away from it ... but we don’t have anyone that’s ...

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560 Sweid, interview.
561 Siddiqui, interview.
562 Yunich, interview.
A good leader, according to the founding president of AFIC, Dr Abdul Khaliq Kazi AO, must satisfy certain criteria. He said:

The most important issue is the quality of the person, who is holding that position ... It's not important that I should have the glory; it's important that I give glory to the organisation. This balance is not always there, but if the person is right, then of course he has that vision. If the purpose is to seek power, and facilities and name, and you've got that, then after that, you don't know what to do with it.

Ghaith Krayem believes that, as a community, Australian Muslims are “not very good at putting the right people into the right roles.” When asked if it was also a case of the right people failing to nominate themselves for these role, Krayem responded:

It’s a chicken or egg situation, isn’t it? It’s a combination of things, but we need to recognise that to take on certain roles you need certain skills. So, we should at least start from that premise.

According to Krayem, in this area, Australian Muslim communities are failing to follow the directions of their faith, which is leading to the wrong people occupying leadership roles:

Even theologically, there is actually a whole ... jurisprudence around leadership from an Islamic perspective. Just like there is with everything we do around prayers and a whole range of stuff. We don’t apply that methodology to organisational development within our community. It’s usually whoever puts their hand up – regardless of whether they are suited for the role. And then when we are actually running organisations, we think that anybody who has succeeded in a particular role, can suddenly succeed as a community leader. It doesn’t work that way.

Silma Ihram contextualised the issue of finding the right leaders as part of a wider failing of Muslim communities around the world. While questioning the intentions of many who occupy leadership positions in Australian Muslim communities, she said:

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563 Ibid.
564 Kazi, interview.
565 Krayem, interview.
566 Ibid.
So, this issue of leadership is a very, very fraught one. And I think it mirrors what is happening in the rest of the Muslim world where we’ve forgotten that it’s not about your power and your authority, it’s about the kind of person that you are, the humility that you have, and how much you want to serve the people.

However, with AFIC and the situation regarding the AFIC-affiliated schools serving as the pretext (see 2.2.1.2 Schools’ Crisis), Ihram also laid some responsibility on the community:

You have to have the right people to put you there. If your goal is to make sure that your self-interest is looked after, whether a school or association or whatever it is … then you are going to choose somebody who has that same self-interest ... But if your interest is, 'I'm concerned about the welfare of others, and I'm just one of a lot of other people, and I'm not gonna be fighting for the interests of my family, and me and my group and my tribe,' then you are not gonna be choosing somebody who has the same open mindedness. And that’s the problem with our Muslim community.

Both Ihram and Krayem seem to be of the belief that leaders are, for the most part, representative of the community. So, if you elect a flawed leader, it is likely that the community itself is flawed.

Ahmad Zreika, of the Islamic Society of South Australia, shared a similar sentiment to Ihram – linking the challenge of selecting the right leader to the challenges of satisfying a diverse Muslim community. He argued that in an organisation serving and representing Muslims from many cultural backgrounds, selecting the right leader to satisfy the various expectations that exist of what leadership can and should be is a significant obstacle. Zreika said:

The people that run the organisation, they [are] coming from overseas and they run the society [depending] on their knowledge ... So, for example, if I am from Lebanon, someone [is] from South Africa, the other from Pakistan, the other from India ... we are all Muslim ... [but] when we come to work together, everyone has a different explanation.

Some of the participants of this study expressed their ideas as to how to address the challenge presented in finding qualified and appropriate leaders. For instance, Ghaith Krayem expressed that

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567 Ihram, interview.
568 Ibid.
569 Zreika, interview.
there needs to be a greater focus on the training and up-skilling of community members to fulfil leadership roles within Muslim organisations. He said:

We need to be smarter [and] more structured in how we organise ourselves. We have enough skills within the community now to be able to do that. The challenge is actually biting the bullet and saying, ‘If you are going to be the leader of an organisation, you need to pass certain criteria.’ And if we can’t find someone who meets all those criteria, then we need to have a process that will up-skill someone. We don’t have any of that.  

Linking the challenge of finding the right leaders back to the generation gap that exists in the Australian Muslim community, Ahmed Zreika argued that, given their shared Australian upbringing, the youth were best-placed to overcome this challenge. He said:

The only people who can really [provide] good leadership in the future is the young [Muslims] who are born here … If we work with them [they can succeed], because they have the mentality, ‘Okay, this country should be run like this,’ because they know the rules … and they can understand each other. Then we can reach the leadership skill that we are asking [for].

Reem Sweid agreed that fostering and developing the youth to assume leadership roles within the community was indeed the best way to improve MCOs moving forward; however, she noted that they needed to ensure that the actions of leadership organisations now were not harming future generations of leaders. In reference to the ICVs decision to boycott Premier Andrews’ 2017 Iftar, Sweid said:

I think you foster the youth … but at the same time, not toxifying them with the victimhood mentality. The last thing you want is for them to emerge with this attitude that, ‘Oh let’s boycott,’ and think that’s the best that they can do.

Likewise, Silma Ihram, as her career as a dedicated educator would suggest, was optimistic when it came to the leadership potential of the younger generation of Australian Muslims. However, she did acknowledge that the issue of transition of leadership was relevant here as well, saying that the

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570 Krayem, interview.
571 Zreika, interview.
572 Sweid, interview.
Australian Muslim youth “are not gonna get a look in,” until the older, predominantly male, generation are replaced.\textsuperscript{573}

3.2.4 Training and Mentoring

One of the suggestions to help ensure that the ‘right’ leaders are serving in positions of prominence within Australian MCOs is through providing training to potential and existing leaders, and through mentoring programs designed to increase the leadership capabilities of young Australian Muslims.

At the present time, wide-scale training programs specifically aimed at existing Muslim leaders do not exist in this country, or, if they do, they are not well known or publicised. That is not to say that avenues do not currently exist for representatives of Australian MCOs to improve their leadership capabilities through professional training. Indeed, one of the requirements of AFIC in the aftermath of the ACNC’s investigation (see 4.2.1.1 \textit{AFIC in Theory & Practice}) was that, “AFIC is to take steps to ensure each of its responsible persons undertake a Certificate IV in Governance for Not-for-profits (or a similar certificate).”\textsuperscript{574}

However, no evidence was found to suggest that any of these courses were specifically designed to directly cover the issues and challenges faced by Muslim organisations, or even faith-based organisations, more broadly. Ghaith Krayem elaborates:

All the leadership courses they run now aren’t really leadership courses. They are leadership courses in terms of [they] up-skill people [and] do some public-speaking [and] some presentations, [but they are] not about how you run organisations; not about how you advance political issues; not about how you treat your followers. There's a whole Islamic methodology about the interaction between leaders and followers, which modern management theory is only just catching up with, but we don’t do any of that. So, if there was a piece that I would encourage [of] my own communities, [it is] we've gotta be smarter at doing that sort of stuff.\textsuperscript{575}

\textsuperscript{573} Ihram, interview.


\textsuperscript{575} Krayem, interview.
There is certainly a desire from some individuals within the community to design and instigate such a course. One of Silma Ihram’s ideas is to create a formal training course for aspiring Muslim leaders – though she does recognise that this is a difficult aspiration that would require buy-in from numerous parties.

One of the things I really wanted to do, and I’ve been talking to it, but I don’t have the resources … is to establish a diploma of Islamic mentoring or Islamic leadership or something like that, which covers all the essential attributes of what you would have as an Australian manager – understanding boards, understanding responsibilities, understanding systems, understanding all the compliance and Australian culture and counselling and converts and women and all that kind of stuff.576

Ghaith Krayem went as far as to suggest a plan to finance such a course. He said:

Ultimately, I think it comes down to resources. The community between Sydney and Melbourne in the last 2 years – rough estimate – I would say has put in between 30-40 million dollars to bricks and mortar – building centres and mosques. If we put 1% of that … [so] $400,000, we would be able to easily run a 12-month program for half a dozen people to pay them while you were training them [and] up-skilling them … [and] then put them back into organisations like AFIC, like the ICV, where they actually now start to come in there with proper skills. But you’re not picking high school or university graduates, you’re actually picking people who have been out for a few years; who’ve already got some skills; who, if they could be supported financially, could make that shift. But we don’t have that trust within the community to say, I’m prepared to put my money into an intangible. For me, that’s the real issue. How do we build trust for the community?577

For the time being, a course such as that imagined by Ihram and Krayem remains only a concept; however, with an increasing focus on the governance and practices of faith-based organisations emerging in the fallout of the release of both the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse578 and the Royal Commission into Family Violence579 (see 3.5.3 Governance and

576 Ihram, interview.
577 Krayem, interview.
Elections), there is a heightened sense of urgency to act, which may help the facilitation of such a program.

Having identified inadequate transition of leadership as a threat to their organisations, several participants outlined the proactive measures that they had taken in response. Keen to assure that the accusations of nepotism and/or dictatorial rule that plague and delegitimise some organisations are not directed at them, several of the participants highlighted formal and informal initiatives that are in place.

The ICV has partnered with several institutions to provide young Victorian Muslims with access to qualified mentors from various industries. Ayman Islam spoke about a previous leadership program for aspiring young Muslims leaders that the ICV had run in partnership with La Trobe University in Melbourne. The Muslim Leadership Program commenced in 2006 and ran annually for at least seven years. It was open to “emerging thought leaders from Muslim communities in Australia and five Southeast Asian countries including Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and The Philippines.”

Ayman, who was a participant of the course, spoke to its value. He said:

Over the course of that program ... it would've been at least seventy participants that have gone through ... And of those that have come back to the ICV, I would say five [have come back]. So, it’s pretty low. But ... it has gone out to other organisations, which I think is really important ... As long as they are contributing to other organisations to build the capacity.

Taking steps to address the need of mentoring within an organisation is not always a formal process. It can develop organically as both current and future leaders recognise its value. For instance, leaders’ simply making themselves available for guidance and direct feedback can be beneficial.

582 Ayman, interview.
Asma Fahmi shared how, when she was preparing for an appearance on the Seven Network’s *Sunrise* in the aftermath of an Islamophobic incident in which, along with her sister and mother, she had been verbally assaulted, Mariam Veiszadeh (founder of Islamophobia Watch Australia) had provided support:

I remember one time I had to be on ... live TV ... I thought I was good to go and I kind of did a rundown with Mariam, and she kept stopping me. For example, because the people that attacked me were, in my view, British backpackers, because they had British accents and they kind of fit that stereotype. And she would stop me and [say] ... ‘How can you prove that? You have to say they were people with British accents as opposed to whatever...’ So, little things like that.583

Sometimes, while organisations recognise the need for mentoring, it is just not possible owing to lack of resources and time. For instance, at the University of Western Sydney Muslim Student Association, Farhana Mollah expressed that, while important, they had other priorities to address first:

We have first year members in our *Shura*, so we will, *Inshallah*, start to train them. We haven’t started [yet] just because we have a lot of events that we are trying to get sorted. Once we fix that, we should be able to start.584

Farhana did mention, however, that if you look at the wider-perspective, the younger members do learn how things work through observation as well.585

One of the risks or consequences associated with training and mentoring programs in the context of Australian MCOs, as raised by Zubeda Raihman, is that “sometimes the younger generations are so infiltrated by the old ideals.”586 This can be linked to the challenge of divided and insular communities, and the accusation of ‘tribalism’ made against elements of the Australian Muslim community (see 3.4 Diversity of Muslims in Australia). Subsequently, in any existing or potential

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583 Fahmi, interview.
584 Mollah, interview.
585 Ibid.
586 Raihman, interview.
training or mentoring program, it is, or will be, important to emphasise diversity and how to navigate different cultures and opinions.

Training and mentoring, while pertinent in the development of young leaders, has relevancy to other areas of leadership within Australian Muslim communities. Imams in Australia are often seen as potential beneficiaries of certain types of training.

### 3.3 Employment of Imams

Imams in Australia are important members of the overall structure of Muslim community leadership. Together, like in the Australian National Imams Council or in one of its state affiliates, imams can be influential as collective religious leadership bodies (see 2.3 Collective Religious Leadership).

Individually, given the nature of their direct relationship with those that attend their mosques, they can also be considered as influential members of Australian Muslim communities.

Imams are predominantly contracted by mosque boards and committees to offer religious services to Muslim communities (see 2.4.1 Mosque Boards and Committees). They are usually attached to one or a collection of associated mosques, but there are also ‘freelance imams,’ as Sheikh Nawas explains:

> I am a freelance imam, so I’m not attached to a mosque. I don’t work as an imam of a mosque, but I am, if you want to say, a ‘freelance imam.’ I carry out duties of an imam when and if necessary. So, I give Friday khutbah here [in Werribee] and in the city.  

In Australia, an imam is considered a ‘minister of religion.’ According to the Australia and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO), “ministers of religion perform spiritual functions associated with beliefs and practices of religious faiths, and provide motivation, guidance

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587 Sheikh Nawas, interview.
and training in religious life for the people of congregations and parishes, and the wider community."^589

An imam has numerous responsibilities, but arguably his most important role is to lead prayer, prepare and deliver the Friday sermons and provide spiritual guidance.

The role of an imam is not universally consistent, and it will often vary depending on numerous factors, such as the size and location of the mosque, and the expectations and requirements of the community. An imam’s role in Australia may differ vastly from an imam’s role in a Muslim-majority nation. For instance, the sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne said imams in Australia have a much greater say in dealing with the finances of mosque activities than in Muslim-majority countries.^590

In the initial years following increased Muslim migration to Australia, mosques and Islamic societies needed to employ imams in order to perform basic religious duties, such as conducting marriages, burial rites and the teaching of the Qur’an.^591 However, as the community has evolved, its needs have become increasingly complex and now include a demand for guidance on social issues, counselling and dealing with heightened media scrutiny.^592

Some of the various roles of an imam in Australia that were raised by participants in this study are listed below:

- Lead the daily prayers at the Mosque, give the *khutbah* (sermon) and lead prayer on *Jumu’ah* (Friday congregational prayer) and on religious holidays.
- Provide marriage and funeral services.
- Offer Islamic family and youth counselling.
- Develop and run Islamic education classes.
- Participate in community activities.
- Run activities for youth.
- Help raise funds for the mosque and community initiatives.

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^590^ Sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne, interview.

^591^ Abdullah Saeed, “Islam in Australia since the 1970s,” 452.

^592^ Ibid.
- Consult with the mosque board on religious matters, community issues and mosque activities.
- Deal with security agencies and the media.\footnote{Sheikh Nawas, interview. Shaykh Ramzan, interview. Sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne, interview. Dealing with security agencies and the media is a role for imams in Australia that has intensified after the events of September 11. It is a role that some have embraced, while others have done so reluctantly (see 2.3.1.3 Influence).}

Another important contribution that imams can make to the community is through lending their support to a variety of useful initiatives set up by grassroots community organisations. Several of the participants of this study indicated that certain imams had provided crucial support to their programs.

For instance, Wajma Padshah said:

> Generally, most of the imams are fantastic. And if there is, for example ... something we want to give [the community] some information on ... specifically on family domestic violence [or] we did a drug [campaign] ... The imams participated and helped create that education ... If there is a message that needs to go across, they will support us.\footnote{Padshah, interview.}

Likewise, Sheikh Nawas and Nail Aykan drew attention to the ICV, BOIV and ANIC's State-wide \textit{khutbah} initiative, which encouraged religious leaders to speak up about men’s violence against women in their Friday sermons to commemorate White Ribbon Day.\footnote{Sheikh Nawas, interview. Aykan, interview. White Ribbon Day is organised by White Ribbon Australia as a campaign to prevent men's violence against women.}

Fulfilling all or a selection of their expected duties is a challenging prospect – especially considering that the congregation of a mosque is often comprised of individuals and families from a diverse range of cultural, educational, professional and social backgrounds, and they bring their own expectations on the role that an imam plays in society.

The role that an imam plays in Australia, according to the sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne, is more dynamic than in most Muslim-majority countries. He said that in Muslim-majority countries an imam is pretty much only responsible for leading prayers, whereas in Australia
the expectations and responsibilities are far greater. It can be quite a time-consuming role – especially in the summer when the days are long (if the imam is required to be at the mosque for each of the daily prayers) – and you may not be able to spend as much time with family as desired.

Fulfilling the roles that their communities expect of them is not the only challenge associated with the employment of an imam. Given they are often influential within their respective communities, there are further challenges that are linked with their ability to carry out their roles. Notably, these include: a lack of Australian-born imams or imams who were raised in Australia, inadequate training of imams and the selection processes for the hiring of an imam.

### 3.3.1 Lack of Australian-born Imams

One of the common criticisms directed at the religious leadership of Muslim communities over the past few decades, both internally and externally, has been the lack of Australian born imams. Young Australian Muslims, in particular, have expressed that the practice of importing imams from overseas is outdated and inappropriate.

Partly out of necessity, given the relatively few years there has been a significant Muslim population in Australia, imams have historically been ‘imported’ from overseas to fulfil the religious needs of Muslim communities. This has, on occasion, led to problems, with some of the imams proving to be unable to contextualise the religion and relate to challenges of identity experienced by Australian Muslims.

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596 Sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne, interview.
597 Ibid.
Studies analysing the centrality of identity construction to Western and Australian Muslims have been numerous and informative. As Steph Lawler observes, identity tends to be explicitly invoked when it is seen as ‘being in trouble’. Therefore, we are accustomed to hearing of ‘identity crises’, wherein people are not certain of who they are. This can be considered relevant to Western Muslim communities, who increasingly are the focus of public attention, scrutiny and analysis (see Chapter Four). Patrice Brodeur argues that Muslim identities are “constantly being defined and redefined by Muslims” in the “midst of an increasingly complex world.” Muslim identities, Brodeur continues, “are never generated solely on the basis of ‘pure’ internal Islamic developments,” but rather, they are the “fruit of a binary self/Other interdependent process that is best understood as existing somewhere in between local and global, past and future, here and there.”

Applied to the Australian context, the external boundaries of self for both Muslim migrants and Australian-born Muslims are consistently negotiated in relation to the majority group’s own self-defininitions. That is, Australian Muslim identities are often formed and adjusted in relation to the identities of the social majority. This is especially applicable to recent Muslim migrants who experience significant identity modification as they tend to have migrated from nations where they were part of a religious majority into a society in which they are very much a minority. Jocelyne Cesari notes that in circumstances such as these, “identities that are integrated in Muslim countries are automatically deconstructed into religious, social, and ethnic components in the West.”

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601 Ibid.
603 Ibid.
605 Ibid, 103.
Therefore, as Duderija writes, “Western Muslims experience Islam only as a religion and not as a dominant social force.”

The demonization of Muslims as potential terrorists and the repeated pressure on Muslims to denounce terrorism, has caused a sense of angst and alienation. Some young Australian Muslims are disturbed by the underlying racism of Australian society and feel that the media is targeting them and their religion through negative reporting. Discrimination and marginalisation can promote a sympathetic identification between Muslims and Islam – Islam becomes a source of bona fide identity which is held and expressed with a sense of heightened pride.

Within this context, many within Australian Muslim communities seek religious guidance. Imams, as religious counsellors, are sometimes relied upon to provide such guidance; however, many of those raised in Muslim-majority nations are said to lack the necessary comprehension of the challenges presented.

The problems created by ‘imported’ imams have been less severe in mosques serving a particular ethnic or cultural group, as both the imam and congregation often share a language and subscribe to a similar religious outlook. However, as Muslim communities in Australia have grown and diversified, foreign imams have become more of an issue.

Reem Sweid elaborated on the challenge:

There is a lot of frustration that the imams in the mosques are just completely out of touch ... Whether they are still doing sermons in their own language or that they are not really able to engage in sermons that are relevant.

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607 Adis Duderija, “Identity Construction Among Western (Born) Muslims,” 104.
608 Marie Peucker, Joshua Roose and Shahram Akbarzadeh, “Muslim Active Citizenship in Australia,” 282.
610 Jan A. Ali, “The Tablighi Jama’at in Australia,” 133.
611 Saeed, Islam in Australia, 136.
612 Sweid, interview.
The idea that imams were out of touch with contemporary Australian Muslim society and its needs was shared by other participants too. For instance, Hasan Yunich said:

The imams at a Friday pulpit ... they usually seem to stick to, for whatever reasons, topics which don’t seem to be of major importance at the time, [in] my opinion ... They all seem to go back to classical opinions and classical topics ... [I’m] not saying every single mosque is like this, but from the ones that I go to; it’s very often. They kind of just talk about the same sort of things.613

The three imams that participated in this study, all of whom had been born and raised overseas, each acknowledged the need for more Australian-born imams.614 For instance, Shaykh Ramzan outlined why he believed that there was an urgent need for Australian-born imams. He said:

It is not just that the imam does not understand the local Australian community. The problem with the outsiders is that they don’t understand even their own Muslim community, because somebody lived in Asia or Africa, or [the] Middle-East, in Islamic countries, and he comes here [and] he will be comfortable and easy with me, or I will be easy with him, but his children will not be until they see somebody who’s a role model, who is someone from them – from within them.615

Likewise, an imam being unable to converse in English was a recurring challenge that was referenced through several of the interviews. Sheikh Ramzan continued:

This is a genuine concern ... and I agree with that concern – that we need to have the imam who should speak the language of the place he lives and serves ... It is very important that the religious leadership has certain criteria met with and that certain criteria is: Number 1 – the language.616

While it is not the case that all foreign-born or ‘imported’ imams fail to understand, or adapt to, the Australian context, it was evident that MCO representatives still deemed it a problem – especially in relation to the generation gap.

613 Yunich, interview.
614 Sheikh Nawas, interview. Shaykh Ramzan, interview. Sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne, interview.
615 Shaykh Ramzan, interview.
616 Ibid.
Asma Fahmi linked the lack of Australian-born imams to the issue of identity amongst the Australian Muslim youth and to the generational gap that is prevalent in parts of the community. However, she did so while acknowledging that some progress was being made in this area. She said:

I feel like now, thankfully, we have a few scholars who have gone overseas and come back ... [and] can, sort of, understand the local [environment] ... They don’t separate the Australian local culture in the way that we’ve been brought up here, and they are now, sort of, able to marry that with traditional Islamic thought. Whereas before it was just kind of like people didn’t really understand, or kind of dismissed our experiences here and they just tried to import a type of thinking that probably - for me personally - was a bit too foreign. I couldn’t reconcile being an Australian Muslim, but also adopting more traditional values ... I feel like there had to be a balance ... We needed home-grown scholars and teachers, who sort of understood the context of how we’ve been brought up and the local culture and what not.  

Reaffirming that she felt like the community was responding to the challenge and that more ‘home-grown’ imams were emerging, Fahmi continued:

I feel like we have some [home-grown imams] now, and that's good. Like my local Sheikh is pretty awesome. He attracts a younger crowd now and can really relate to some of the young men as well, and that's because he is home-grown. And that's not to dismiss people that come from overseas, not at all, because their experiences are also quite valid and important. But, I feel like having home-grown scholars who understand the local context makes a big difference. So, they are more flexible when it comes to certain things and they are not as dismissive, because ... traditionally Islam ... never really came to replace cultures ... It came to kind of build upon them ... I think that is something that people need to also keep in mind – especially people within that scholarly tradition.

While there is certainly evidence to suggest that the Muslim community is responding to the request to develop more Australian-born and raised religious leaders, there was also evidence to suggest that this change is in its infancy.

In Queensland, for example, Nora Amath expressed that Australian-born imams were still a rarity:

That issue has been around, and it has been the complaint, and I guess we'll have to wait and see what happens in 5-10 years. There is a push to ensure that the majority of mosques have home-grown imams. I don’t know if that will eventuate. We don’t have too many in Queensland, that I know of, with home-grown imams. We might have two or three.

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617 Fahmi, interview.
618 Ibid.
619 Amath, interview.
Despite there being evidence that suggests Australian Muslim leaders would like a significant increase in the number of Australian-born imams, some believe that simply having more ‘Aussie’ imams will not solve all the issues that emanate from the predominance of foreign-born religious leaders.

For instance, Nora Amath raised the issue that even if an imam is born in Australia, where they studied to become an imam is important:

> [Imams] may be homegrown, but when it’s institutionalised into religious education ... what theology, what framework, what school of thought are they coming back with? And if it’s not conducive to living here, even though they are Australian – they could be sixth generation – but that doesn’t make a difference, because they now are being inculcated with a certain Islam that is not conducive to living here. That’s very problematic.\(^{620}\)

Amath is referring to the process through which imams receive their qualifications from institutions in Muslim-majority nations.

### 3.3.2 Imam Training

Unlike other Western nations, such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America, Australia does not have institutions at which an Australian Muslim can train to become an imam. This has been a long-standing issue,\(^{621}\) and for several of the participants, it remains a notable challenge. For instance, Aziz Khan said:

> I am a great advocate that the imams ... should be trained in Australia rather than overseas. That’s so important [and] this is where we go wrong, because most of the guys that come in, they have no idea what they are talking about [in relation to Islam in the Australian context].\(^{622}\)

Likewise, Hasan Yunich expressed similar sentiments to Khan. He said:

> Surely you can look at building one [a school for imams]. We have to be able to use the imams here for the knowledge that they have; train up young guys, who are brought up here; teach them Arabic; teach them all the knowledge; and, then they’ll know the context

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\(^{620}\) Ibid.


\(^{622}\) Aziz Khan, interview.
better.\textsuperscript{623}

The idea for a school for teaching imams had some support from the imams participating in this study. For instance, regarding the establishment of an imam school in Australia, Shaykh Ramzan said:

\begin{quote}
This is urgent need of the Muslims and the Muslims need to fulfil that need. And if that need is not fulfilled then there will be huge gap between the local imams and the community.\textsuperscript{624}
\end{quote}

Despite receiving some support from community leaders, others were not convinced that an Australia school for producing imams was required or advisable. For instance, Ghaith Krayem did not think that a local school that could produce imams was a priority; rather, he thought there is a greater problem with the production of imams that needs addressing. He said:

\begin{quote}
So, historically scholars within Islam were not just religious scholars. They were people who actually went and learnt a whole range of fields of scholarship - whether it was philosophy, rhetoric, a whole range of things. That's gone. So, your imams now ... come out [from training] as someone who knows the Qur'an and the traditions but isn't equipped to talk about philosophy ... [or] social issues.\textsuperscript{625}
\end{quote}

Applied to the Australian context, Krayem continued:

\begin{quote}
So, what we actually need is [imams] who have an understanding of those fields and then teach them theology. So, when they go out ... they actually have a basis of knowledge. So, if you're talking about identity - Australian identity - you actually have a basis of knowledge where you can have a genuine discussion about it. Not just someone that says, 'Oh, we're Australians and we eat vegemite.' I mean ... 60% of your community is ten steps ahead of that.\textsuperscript{626}
\end{quote}

Furthermore, despite many proposing that there is a need for an imam school in Australia, owing to many factors, it would be difficult to set up.

\textsuperscript{623} Yunich, interview.
\textsuperscript{624} Shaykh Ramzan, interview.
\textsuperscript{625} Krayem, interview.
\textsuperscript{626} Ibid.
Firstly, for an Australian Muslim to become an imam now, he must go and train at a school overseas. Though there are schools set up in some Western nations, such as the Netherlands and France, with a relatively comparable demographic and social structure to Australia, most imams in Australia have received their training at schools in nations such as Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey or Saudi Arabia. These schools are often associated with a particular school of Islamic thought or jurisprudence. For instance, most imams schooled in Turkey are trained in the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, while imams trained in Saudi Arabia are predominantly trained in the Hanbali school.627

For a facility in Australia to be set up, there would need to be significant investment from one or more parties. Probably the one Muslim organisation in Australia with the resources to fund a project like this would be AFIC, who have flirted with the idea in the past,628 but owing to the reasons outlined previously (see 2.2.1 Case Study: The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils), this seems an unlikely priority for the organisation in the foreseeable future. Similarly, the Australian Government is unlikely to fund any such venture – for reasons both political and owing to an established precedent that governments will not directly fund religious institutions in accordance with Section 116 of the Australian Constitution.629

Therefore, if an Imam School is to be setup in the short-term, it would likely have to be done with the support of an overseas institution. In the unlikely event that an overseas institution could be convinced to dedicate their resources to building a school for imams in Australia, it would likely be

627 There are four major schools of law among Sunnis: the Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki and Shafi'i. Each school is a legal system developed out of the so-called “foundations of sacred law” (uşūl al-fiqh). The Maliki school is dominant in the Arab West and West Africa; the Hanafi school is dominant in most countries that were formerly part of the Turkish Empire and in India. The Hanbali school is predominantly observed in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, while the Shafi’i school is dominant in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines; it is also important in Egypt, where the Hanafi and Maliki school are also represented, and some part of Central Asia and the Caucasus. In addition, there are also several Shi’ite schools. The most prominent is the Ja’fari school of the Twelve-Imam Shi’ites and the school of the Zaydis. The Kharijites have their own school too. Among the Sunnis, each school (today) regards the others as orthodox, but a Muslim is expected to adhere to one school only. The mixing of precedents and applications between schools is referred to as talfiq and is frowned upon. Cyril Glassé, The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam, Third Edition (London: Stacey International, 2008).


629 Commonwealth of Australia Constitution, Section 116.
on the expectation that its teachers and training were of the particular school of thought of the mother institution. This would delegitimise the school for many who do not share the cultural background and/or approach to Islam.

Ghaith Krayem explained how the approaches to religious education can vary from country to country. He said:

I don’t think it’s so much about having an imam school as such ... A big part of the problem of the Saudi spread ... I don’t know what the percentage is, but a huge number of imams have gone through the Saudi university structure, which doesn’t teach you anything other than pure religious text or theology. [It’s] interpretive. So, you come out as someone who knows the Qur’an and the traditions but isn’t equipped to talk about philosophy [or] to talk about social issues.630

Shaykh Ramzan added that what was needed was an Islamic school that taught the religion from a ‘Western’ perspective. He said:

So here, we need, actually, modern schools which can bring the religious education as well and can prepare imams ... Everyone has his own version. So, we need to create ... the Western version.631

The establishment, or attempted establishment, of schools focused on producing imams in other Western nations provides useful insight into the challenges that would be faced in Australia should serious action be taken to set up such a school. In the Netherlands, where imams recruited from overseas are required to attend a course to learn about the Dutch state and society,632 support was split between different Muslim communities – in this case mainly Turkish and Moroccan communities – on the prospect of a state-sponsored education facility for producing imams.633 In this case, the Dutch state policies were accused of promoting controversies and competition over resources within different sectors of the Muslim communities.634 Furthermore, in France, one school

630 Krayem, interview.
631 Shaykh Ramzan, interview.
634 Ibid.
from which imams had emerged expressed that they had difficulty locating and retaining teachers, given they must be competent in Arabic and French, know subject matter, and be comfortable with the school’s general orientation.635

While forming a religious school for the creation of imams in Australia remains a desire of some sections of Muslim leadership in Australia, up-skilling existing imams is perhaps a greater priority, and one that could provide benefits that would be felt by Muslim communities in the short-term.

Training of imams in Australia has occurred in the recent past – often organised, in part, by institutions of collective religious leadership.636 However, such programs remain a rarity, because of a host of issues, such as the availability of imams due to demanding and volatile work schedules, and a lack of resources.

3.3.3 Imam Selection

Another challenge associated with MCOs in Australia, is the selection processes used to appoint imams. For the reasons stated previously – being a lack of Australian born-imams and imams that understand the complexities of practicing Islam within the Australian socio-political context – it is an important challenge to overcome.

The process for the selection of an imam varies between mosques based on a variety of factors, including the make-up of the mosque board, location and financial capabilities. However, several of the participants provided useful insight into how the mosques that they were associated with went about hiring an imam.

The appointment of an imam in Australia can be considered somewhat of a political process, in that personal politics, and the politics of an overseas country, can influence who is appointed to serve in


that role. For instance, the Sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne indicated that mosque boards requiring an imam would usually approach an embassy in Australia. He said the embassy that they will approach depends on the cultural or ethnic make-up of the mosque board or congregation. If the mosque board or community is largely Pakistani, for example, they would approach the Pakistani Embassy. The embassy then contacts the religious affairs ministry in that country on behalf of the mosque and requests an imam. The mosque board often places conditions on the appointment of an imam, such as he needs to be youthful and English-speaking.  

Similarly, Nail Aykan ran through the procedure for the appointment of imams at Turkish mosques in Victoria. He said:

I think there is about – in Victoria – about 15 Turkish mosques and about 7 of them have an imam who comes from the Diyanet, which is called the religious affairs ministry. So, what happens is Turkey affords its diaspora these provisions. No other country [does this], as far as I know, as a service to its countrymen ... So, what they do is they build their own mosque; they run their own mosque; it's their own responsibility. But then they apply to the Diyanet [for an imam], and the Diyanet says, 'Yeah, I'll send one of my blokes over.'  

The Diyanet, or the Directorate of Religious Affairs, was established in 1924 as one of the first institutions of the new Republic of Turkey, following the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate. It was established, “to administrate the affairs related to faith and worship of the religion of Islam.”  

It has developed into “a bureaucratic behemoth” that now employs all of Turkey’s imams, organises Qur’an classes for children, issues fatwas and writes sermons to be read in the nation’s 90,000 mosques.  

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637 Sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne, interview.
638 Aykan, interview.
641 “Checking up on the imams: Turkey’s religious authority surrenders to political Islam,” The Economist, 18 January 2018.
In the 1970s, starting in Germany, the Diyanet began to meet the religious needs of Turkish expatriates, such as sending imams, by establishing formal and permanent mechanisms through bilateral agreements with nations across Europe. Over time, the reach of the Diyanet expanded to Turkish communities in nations like Japan, the USA and Australia.

As Aykan outlined, not every Turkish mosque in Australia will utilise the service provided by the Diyanet, with many choosing to fund and select their own imam. He continued:

It's not an obligation [to go through the Diyanet]. About half of them choose to have their own, and they are all imported [imams]. When I say imported [I mean] they are brought from overseas; [from] Turkey. So, some are private operators. They say, 'That's okay, we've got our own organisation, our own networks, and we will prefer ... [and] we can fund our own [imam].'

While the reasons some Turkish-led mosques in Australia may not utilise what the Diyanet offers are likely to vary, one possible reason could be that the Diyanet appears to be somewhat of a contentious institution.

Support and opposition to the Diyanet are said to cut across party and religious lines, as well as the apparent political division of Turkish society between secularists and Islamists. Historically, it has been criticised for its perceived attempt, “to streamline individuals into a national identity that included, as a cultural marker and increasingly so over time, mainstream Hanafi Sunni Islam.” It has been observed that the Diyanet and its officers and spokespersons have at times tended to display hostility toward Alevi and Shiite citizens, who, together with the 12-15 million Kurds in

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643 Ibid.

644 Aykan, interview.


Turkey that follow the Shafi‘i school of Islamic jurisprudence, are said to account for between one-third to two-fifths of the Turkish population. Most recently, critics have expressed concern over what they deem as the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his party the Justice and Development Party (AKP) tightening their grip on state institutions, including the Diyanet, which they argue, while being designed as a check against political Islam, has become one of its main platforms.

Aziz Khan touched briefly on the political reality of the Turkish community in Australia. He said:

[There is a] big split within the Turks. Even to the point [where] I spoke with some Turkish people [and] they swear at the president. And I am outraged, but I don’t say that. I keep quiet, and I say well, ‘How can you be so mad at something happening way overseas? You are here, you are born here, you are more [of an] Aussie Muslim than a Turk Muslim, but you have this ethnic loyalty or allegiance to your tribe.’ Which Islam came to destroy actually – the tribalism – but it’s amazing when young people think like that ... So, you can see how much hard work is needed in that area.

The process through which the Diyanet sends imams to Australia had both support and criticism amongst the participants of this study. Aykan supported the process as, he argued, the Diyanet delivers imams with a level of quality-assurance. He said:

In Europe, there is about 3 million Turks and they must have tens of thousands of mosques, so Turkey provides a service. So, in a way ... I support [and] I endorse that provision. What it does is it offsets ignorant people from getting up in the sermons and preaching. So, the mosques actually have undisputed, reliable people, and they have to go through a five-year course, and they have to be genuinely certified imams. It’s a good thing. But not every country can afford that. Turkey can, and the Australian Turkish community have been the beneficiaries of that. But, those who choose to bring their own and fund their own, they’ve got that choice as well, and they exercise that choice.

Sheikh Nawas, on the other hand, whilst not directly critical, was less sure of the process. He said:

Even among the Sunnis, the Turkish people are different. The Turkish people ... or at least Turkish imams, are not part of the mainstream Muslims. They consider themselves separate.

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649 “Checking up on the imams: Turkey’s religious authority surrenders to political Islam,” The Economist, 18 January 2018.
650 Aziz Khan, interview.
651 Aykan, interview.
Their imams come from overseas and they are here for a particular period and go back. And they [are] preaching all in Turkish language and they are controlled by the Diyanet - the religious affairs ministry in Turkey - so they are civil servants actually. Not only here, but in other parts of the world ... Wherever the Turkish people are, the Turkish government sends the people - and then the embassy will have an attaché, who is controlling the imams in Melbourne, and in Sydney and different places.652

Not all the imams that the Diyanet send to Australia return to Turkey at the expiration of their contracts, with a few having decided to remain.653

The process by which the Diyanet sends Turkish imams to provide for the religious needs of Australian Muslim communities has been highlighted as it was raised by the participants of this study; however, Turkey is by no means the only Muslim-majority nation that has influence within the religious affairs of Muslims in Australia (see 3.4.3 Foreign Influence).

For younger sections of Australian Muslim communities, the spiritual leaders that the current imam selection processes produce are not always meeting their needs. For instance, Asma Fahmi spoke to how certain imams and mosques appeal to some individuals, but that many young Australian Muslims are seeking spiritual guidance from overseas. She said:

For me, there's only a handful of people that I would go to. I usually go to the international scholars ... I've been a class manager for an international program, with international scholars for the last 10 years ... I was just with a few of them in Malaysia a few days ago ... They said that 40% of the tickets sold were to Australians who had flown over to study with these scholars. Everywhere I looked there was just Australian after Australian. I felt like I was in Sydney.654

Those who she met in Malaysia came from across Australia, which goes to show, according to Fahmi, that there is a particular group of Muslims in Australia “yearning for something else.”655 She did qualify this, however, by saying that there were some religious leaders in Australia who teach things

652 Sheikh Nawas, interview.
653 Serkan Hüsein, Yesterday and Today: Turkish Cypriots of Australia (Taylors Lakes: S. Hüsein, 2007), 296.
654 Fahmi, interview.
655 Ibid.
beyond the “cut and dry”, like philosophy and other sciences that “are just not taught, these days, in many Islamic classrooms.”

Wajma Padshah summarised the disillusionment that some Australian Muslims have regarding the process of appointing imams. She said:

If we look at something that was shared recently – the historical qualifications of an imam. To be qualified to be the imam of a masjid, it’s compares to PhDs and a couple of language degrees; whereas now the imam is selected based on the cultural expectations of the particular group that is running a mosque.

The Australian Muslim community is evidently not immune to the religious politics that shape and divide modern Islam. The examples above touch only partly on the overall impact that religious politics has, but nevertheless they provide good insight into the actors involved in the selection of imams in Australia, as well as how it effects Muslim leadership in general.

Shaykh Ramzan, a Sufi, provided useful insight into the political situation when he responded to a question relating to the initial reservations of some of the imams from the Board of Imams Victoria about his appointment as Imam of the Geelong Mosque. He said:

[The reservation] depends on what the background of that person – the imam – is. What background he comes from. Definitely, if he comes [from] and [is] educated [in] Saudi Arabia, he will look at everyone with a certain glass; certain view; certain understanding. And, if he comes from Egypt, he will look different ... It depends on what is the background of the person.

Furthermore, the imam selection processes in Australia tend, in part, to reinforce the greater sense of division between generations of Muslims in Australia – between the older generations still gripping to the comfort of the culture of their places of origin, and the younger generations, born in an Australia that is, for many, presenting a set of challenges far removed from the societies of their parents and imams.

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656 Fahmi, interview.
657 Padshah, interview.
658 Shaykh Ramzan, interview.
3.4 Diversity of Muslims in Australia

The diversity of the Australian Muslim community has been discussed throughout this thesis – most notably in section 1.3.1 The 2016 Census, which analysed the latest census data and identified key trends in relation to Muslim community growth. This diversity is a factor in significant challenges facing the community. While there are benefits to diversity (see 2.2.2.2 Representativeness and Diversity), it can be seen as a factor in both creating and reinforcing established divisions within and between Australian Muslim communities.

With so many different communities making up the ‘Australian Muslim community’, the navigation of this diversity is a challenge. Aykan summed this when he said:

We talk about racism ... well it may surprise some that there is racism amongst some particular Muslim communities. And the Muslim community [in Australia] comes from, I believe, 55 different countries ... You’ve got the top dozen countries, but they come from incredibly diverse regions of the world. You’re gonna have some challenges of ethnic difference.659

Migrants from Muslim-majority nations in Australia have tended to bring elements of their own culture and apply it to their Australian experience. Abdelsalam spoke to this effect:

The colour of the culture that they come from [impacts the community]. So, if they come from Lebanon, or Palestine [or they are] Fiji-Indian, they come with the culture and apply it here.660

Furthermore, the generation gap between young Australian Muslims and older generations is also a factor to be considered when approaching the diversity of the community.661

Navigating the differences of opinion and practices in Islam that exist within the congregation of many mosques across Australia is certainly a challenge for imams. Shaykh Ramzan elaborated:

The first role of an imam here, is to keep the diverse community united ... Everyone has his own connotations, and thinking, and way of life, in understanding and interpretations ...
They are coming from different backgrounds ... So, the main job is to keep the community together and united.\textsuperscript{662}

The challenges associated with the diversity of the Muslim community in Australia have manifested in a variety of ways. Several of the participants discussed what they deemed as the divided and insular nature of many Australian Muslim communities, and expressed a desire for a more unified and understanding community. Contributing to this division was the influence of foreign governments and institutions of religion on the Australian Muslim population. It was also interesting to note the differences and similarities between the Muslim communities in different cities and states.

3.4.1 Divided and Insular Communities

One of the key challenges to emerge from this research was the often divided and insular nature of some Australian Muslim communities. This reality has meant that relationships between MCOs can be rare, because each organisation is driven by their own aims and projects and, as such, do not associate regularly with other MCOs on the basis that it risks raising unnecessary roadblocks. In Hasan Yunich’s words, “It’s hard to interact with [other MCOs] ... because each group is already busy with their own things and their own events in their own community.”\textsuperscript{663}

This is by no means an emerging challenge. Over the last several decades’ academics have pointed to, to quote Shahram Akbarzadeh, “an ethnic-based Islam” as being predominant in Australia.\textsuperscript{664} He wrote:

In the same fashion as ethnically mixed congregations contributed to the ideal of \textit{umma},\textsuperscript{665} the growth of ethnic congregations tends to detract from it. The concept of a unified \textit{umma}, though not openly challenged by Muslims, is now qualified with reference to ethnicity. This

\textsuperscript{662} Shaykh Ramzan, interview.
\textsuperscript{663} Yunich, interview.
\textsuperscript{665} \textit{Umma} or \textit{ummah}, refers to a people, a community; or a nation, in particular, the ‘nation’ of Islam which transcends ethnic or political definition, at least traditionally and before the days of modern, Western-style nationalism.
has led to the growing influence of ethnic and sectarian Islam among Muslims in Australia.\(^\text{666}\)

Despite nearly twenty years passing since Akbarzadeh’s observations, many Muslim communities in Australia continue to be distinguishable by ethnic and cultural factors, such as language and theology, and this impacts community relations. Aziz Khan explained why:

> Within us, the Muslim community, it is like a United Nations. You’ve got the Indonesians, who see things differently to the Turks, or [the] North-[West] Africans see things differently to the Egyptians. These are all cultural baggages.\(^\text{667}\)

Similarly, Sheikh Nawas spoke to how Muslim communities in Australia continue to be organised by these distinguishable factors. He said:

> People organise themselves according to their ethnic group, language group, and then their attachment to a particular school of thought, and things like that. There are conservative Muslims, secular Muslims, Sufi Muslims, and there are Muslims who consider themselves to be Muslims, but they are not considered Muslims by the majority [of] mainstream Muslims, like Ahmadiyyas, for example, and then Syrian Alawites.\(^\text{668}\)

On top of cultural and theological divisions, socio-economic factors can also be seen as a cause of division, according to Nafay Siddiqui:

> I think there's a massive division in the Muslim community in Australia. It's really divided in the way that it tends to exist, and I think two Muslim communities would be so disconnected that they would completely not associate with one another ... Not to the extent where they disrespect one another or anything, but they just don't associate with one another ... I don't think it's entirely cultural. I do think culture does play a part ... but ... it has a lot to do with economics as well ... in terms of the level of education ... I think that if culture was an element, then socio-economic class would also be an element.\(^\text{669}\)

These divisions affect the way that Muslim communities interact. Speaking of the theological divisions, Silma Ihram spoke to the influence of Salafi interpretations of Islam and its effect on Australian society – particularly converts. She said:

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\(^{666}\) Shahram Akbarzadeh, “Unity or Fragmentation?” 231.

\(^{667}\) Aziz Khan, interview.

\(^{668}\) Sheikh Nawas, interview.

\(^{669}\) Siddiqui, interview.
There has been a trend amongst Muslim associations to focus on the outward, not on the inner, which is not what Islam is really all about. So, it's linked to a lot of the so-called Salafi influence ... I mean, it's a reaction to the loss of an Islamic identity in many, many countries, where people decided they had to fix up their act. But instead of focusing on the most important part, which is their relationship with God and their relationship with their own soul, they have instead focused on ... which is important first step, but only a first step ... they've focused on their practice of the religion. So, whether they wear a hijab or not? Whether they have a beard of not? All those external things, which are really - a lot of them are additional extras – which are not really critical ... They've become kind of intolerant of people and constantly reminding people. So, a lot of converts really struggle with [this]. Either they get sucked into it, and unfortunately quite a few end up by being so aggressively, 'I'm going to be a strong Muslim,' that they end up by putting on the niqab and becoming hostile to Australian society. Or they find it very intrusive by people coming up and saying, 'Oh sister, sister, you need to have a longer skirt.'

Ihram’s comments were echoed by Raihman, who agreed: “Those people who do wear all those burqas and everything ... they look down upon the ones who don't.”

The theological differences can cause friction within Muslim communities and serve to create and reinforce divisions. As Ihram mentioned, converts to Islam are often negatively affected.

Given several Muslim communities have tended to organise themselves around ethnic affiliations and language, converts to Islam can find it difficult to feel like they belong. Silma Ihram, herself a convert, elaborated:

The classic situation is that Muslim converts are welcomed as an affirmation of the correctness of a Muslim’s belief ... But after a while people forget that [converts] need to be welcomed into the community ... They can end up feeling a bit like a minority within a minority.

Silma Ihram founded the Australian Muslim Women’s Association, alongside fellow convert Jamila Hussein. Sadly, Hussein passed away in 2016; however, during her career as a respected academic and community leader, she spoke of her experiences as a convert. She said:

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670 Ihram, interview.
671 Raihman, interview.
Suddenly you are not a part of mainstream Anglo society, and yet you might not feel entirely accepted by local Muslim communities either.\(^{673}\)

These divisions within and between Muslim communities represent an ongoing challenge for MCOs in Australia. However, division itself is not necessarily a problem, so long as respect is maintained.

Wajma Padshah elaborated:

\[
\text{[Division’s] been one of those things and probably that’s one of the challenges for most Muslim organisations [and] Muslim leaders, to work in such a way that’s inclusive of all. But at the same time, without that pressure, it’s okay to have a cultural group that is specifically just for that culture. We all have clubs and bits and pieces that bring people, who are like-minded, together. We don’t have to always mix … Just as long as we respect [each other].}^{674}\]

Reem Sweid welcomed ethno-specific off-shoots of her organisation Muslim Collective:

\[
\text{The idea is to not feel like we have to all fit into this one box and only have one organisation or one leader [or] one person to speak for Muslims … You have to accept that there is going to be [different views].}^{675}\]

While prophesising that MCOs would eventually overcome the challenge represented by divisions within and between Muslim communities, Asma Fahmi expressed that ethnic divisions within the community can also be a positive.

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\text{They don’t interact, but it’s just the way it is. It’s just how it’s always been. I mean, maybe in future they’ll start to interact more - especially with younger people starting to join these organisations, who are sort of more used to interacting within different groups, but traditionally, certain groups have sort of always kept to themselves … But I also understand why they try and keep together, because … for example, the Uyghur’s will fundraise for Turkestan – their homeland – for the suffering and oppression that their people are going through, which might not get as much media attention as Syria, for instance. So, it’s important for them to try and stick together and run their own community events … otherwise, I feel like they fear their voices will be lost.}^{676}\]


\(^{674}\) Padshah, interview.

\(^{675}\) Sweid, interview.

\(^{676}\) Fahmi, interview.
Although the insular focus of some communities can have positive effects, it was also said to reinforce the divisions between Muslim communities in Australia. Hasan Yunich described the insular nature of Australian Muslim communities as the key issue facing the Muslim community in Adelaide. He said: “We are severely insular. I mean, we don’t care about anyone else.”

Similarly, bemoaning the insular nature of Australian Muslim communities, Aziz Khan criticised the levels of interaction between Muslim groups. He said:

> There is not much interaction between all the ethnic groups ... People might think there is interaction, but outside there is none. You know Indonesians don’t mix with the Turks, or Turks don’t mix with the Lebanese. They are still in the old-school thinking. Maybe the new generation are more integrated.

Expanding on Khan’s suggestion that perhaps younger Muslims in Australia, who often go to schools and are involved in sporting clubs, social clubs and so forth, in which the cultural or ethnic-make up is diverse, Yunich linked the insular nature of Muslim communities to first generation Muslim Australians – a kind of legacy that had developed because of the realities faced by migrants coming to a foreign nation. However, like Fahmi and Khan, he was confident that such narrow loyalties were being bred out of existence. Speaking of the experiences of his own parents, who migrated to Adelaide from East Turkistan in China in 1984, he said:

> It will change. The communities will change ... Your first generations come here [and] they’re just concerned about themselves. I mean, when my parents came here they couldn’t speak English. They were all really worried. They have a mentality of communist China, where [it’s] like, don’t practice your religion, do it at home ... [They thought], ‘Like hang on, here in Australia you can go to a mosque ... You can put a beard on. They don’t care.’ ... And I think the next step, possibly, could be one that we now start to become more interactive with [the] wider community ... I don’t think it’s far off.

Despite the confidence that the divided and insular nature of the community would be overcome as younger generations mature and install a broader sense of unity among Australian Muslims, there

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677 Yunich, interview.
678 Aziz Khan, interview.
679 Yunich, interview.
were several examples throughout the semi-constructed interviews in which the existing insular nature of some Muslim communities in Australia was evident.

One such example, which also touched on the political divisions within Muslim communities and Saudi-influence, was related to the perceived public silence from Australia’s Muslim leaders on the war and humanitarian crisis in Yemen. Ghaith Krayem elaborated:

We are not just Muslims. We are Australian Muslims. And we want to play a role in what Australia [stands for] ... We can't convince the Australian Government to change its policy, for example, when we are silent on what abuses are being occurred by predominantly Muslim countries. You look like a hypocrite. How do we go and push the Australian Government on what's happening in Myanmar, for example, when Saudi Arabia is doing almost a similar thing in Yemen and our leadership don't speak up about it? 680

Another example of how the insular nature of some Muslim communities in Australia materialises, was in their relative silence on the Australian Government’s treatment of asylum seekers in Nauru and on Manus Island. Hasan Yunich explained:

This is where I say that when we’re insular, we kind of really stick to either just our own ethnicity – ethnic communities – or [we] stick to just Muslim communities. So, even these guys who are human beings or Muslims or Afghan or whatever, people don’t really seem to be fussed about it, which shouldn’t be the case. We should be worried about anyone and everyone we can bring benefit to. 681

Likewise, Yunich complained about the failure of religious leadership to inspire a wider sense of consciousness amongst Australian Muslims. He continued:

There's no real addressing of politics [by imams]. Like, as Muslims, we need to stand for justice. Indigenous people ... they die 30 years younger or whatever the numbers are. These are some things that should be of our concern. Alcohol kills more people on the road than anyone else – we should be concerned about this. How can we go about fixing this? No one seems to care. 682

Divisions between Australian Muslim communities is an understandable phenomenon given the reach of the religion, and the nature of Muslim migration to Australia; however, navigating these

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680 Krayem, interview.
681 Yunich, interview.
682 Ibid.
divisions and the insular nature of several communities and groups is a challenge for MCOs in Australia.

3.4.2 State by State Analysis

Australia is a large nation, but most of its population is situated in and around major cities. According to the 2016 Census, 69.45% of Australia’s population live in major urban centres (population of 100,000 or more).683 Australian Muslims are far more likely than the average Australian to live in major urban centres. Of Australia’s 604,230 self-identifying Muslims, 95.29% live in major urban centres.684 Therefore, within this study, references to states and cities are often interchangeable. For instance, when a participant (or the author, for that matter) says New South Wales in the context of this study, it can be assumed that they are referring to Sydney.

The impact of the diversity of Muslim communities varied between cities based on several factors, including the demographics of the community and its size. As such, the opinions and experiences of the representative of this study differed between cities. Each city represented in this study had issues with the diversity of the community that affected cooperation between local MCOs; however, Sydney was said to be a particularly divided community. It was in Sydney that the divide between various ethnic communities was said to be strongest. For instance, Asma Fahmi said:

I’ve actually been surprised going to some functions and dinners and … seeing large communities of a certain ethnicity and thinking, ‘Wow, where do they come from?’ Because I’m so in that Lakemba world, you know, Bankstown, Greenacre, Lakemba … which is the majority … [and] where most of the Muslims are … I’m not Lebanese myself, but sometimes you are caught up in that particular community that you forget that there are other communities, like your Indonesia community, Pakistani, Turkish, Afghan [and] Uyghur [communities]. There's so many different little communities.685

683 Australian Bureau of Statistics.
684 Ibid.
685 Fahmi, interview.
Ghaith Krayem explained that the divisions within the Sydney Muslim community are ethnic as well as theological. He said:

Sydney is still very much ethnically divided. You’ve got the Lebanese in Lakemba; the Turks in Auburn; the Bosnians down in Peakhurst/St George way; [and] a lot of the Indo/subcontinent communities have set up their own areas ... So, in addition to ethnic divisions, you’ve got theological ones, you’ve got the Salifis ... you’ve got the Sufis, people who consider themselves ... whatever. In Sydney, up until very recently, rarely do they work together.\(^{686}\)

Even within these specific communities, cooperation was not always guaranteed. Nora Amath elaborated:

There’s just too much infighting ... It’s almost like it’s out of control ... and the reality [is] ... the majority of Muslims are Lebanese in Sydney and so, therefore, you might even have, I guess tribal issues that come with that leadership too. I guess if you are able to dissipate some of those cultural ties and tribal ties you may be able to have a more united [leadership].\(^{687}\)

The situation in Sydney was regularly contrasted to that of Victoria, where the divisions within the community were, on the surface at least, not as destructive as those in New South Wales (see 2.2.2.2 Representativeness and Diversity).

Sydney has the biggest self-identifying Muslim population (253,436) of any major city in Australia – both overall and as a percentage of total population; however, Melbourne (186,652) is relatively close behind in second.\(^{688}\) The other capital cities represented in this study – Perth (47,402), Brisbane (33,830) and Adelaide (27,125) – were some way behind Australia’s two most-populous cities.\(^{689}\)

Regarding the differences between Sydney and Melbourne, Reem Sweid said:

In Sydney, it’s a different story. Sydney has been the hardest [to get a state representative body for Muslim Collective]. Sydney’s Muslim community seems to be more complex than

\(^{686}\) Krayem, interview.
\(^{687}\) Amath, interview.
\(^{688}\) Australian Bureau of Statistics.
\(^{689}\) Ibid.
Victoria ... I found Sydney so challenging to work with ... There is a lot more ... suspicion.\textsuperscript{690}

Nail Aykan elaborated on how the diversity of the Muslim community in Melbourne meant that it was less divisive than Sydney. He said:

One of the other advantages of Victoria is that no one ethnic group dominates. If you check our [ICV] board, we've got ten board members and we've got seven ethnic groups. And that is not by engineering, that is just by representative sample. In Sydney, the Lebanese are half the population and they dominate, which is just a reality. Here in Victoria, no one ethnic group dominates and that is a blessing.\textsuperscript{691}

Together, Table 3.4.2.1 and Table 3.4.2.2 somewhat serve to justify Aykan’s claims regarding the differences between the Muslim communities in Victoria and New South Wales.

**Table 3.4.2.1: Top 10 Countries of Birth of Australian Muslims in Victoria & New South Wales (2016 Census)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of birth of Victorian Muslims</th>
<th>2016 Total</th>
<th>Percentage of state’s Muslim Population</th>
<th>Country of birth of NSW Muslims</th>
<th>2016 Total</th>
<th>Percentage of state’s Muslim Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Australia</td>
<td>70,726</td>
<td>35.85%</td>
<td>1. Australia</td>
<td>111,794</td>
<td>35.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pakistan</td>
<td>18,934</td>
<td>9.60%</td>
<td>2. Lebanon</td>
<td>24,860</td>
<td>9.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Afghanistan</td>
<td>16,578</td>
<td>8.40%</td>
<td>3. Pakistan</td>
<td>21,623</td>
<td>8.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Turkey</td>
<td>10,568</td>
<td>5.36%</td>
<td>4. Bangladesh</td>
<td>19,936</td>
<td>7.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Lebanon</td>
<td>7,772</td>
<td>3.94%</td>
<td>5. Afghanistan</td>
<td>11,865</td>
<td>4.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Bangladesh</td>
<td>6,234</td>
<td>3.16%</td>
<td>6. Iraq</td>
<td>9,861</td>
<td>3.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Iran</td>
<td>5,853</td>
<td>2.97%</td>
<td>7. Turkey</td>
<td>8,139</td>
<td>3.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. India</td>
<td>5,665</td>
<td>2.87%</td>
<td>8. India</td>
<td>6,410</td>
<td>2.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Iraq</td>
<td>5,200</td>
<td>2.64%</td>
<td>9. Iran</td>
<td>6,146</td>
<td>2.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Somalia</td>
<td>3,664</td>
<td>1.86%</td>
<td>10. Indonesia</td>
<td>4,562</td>
<td>1.70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

\textsuperscript{690} Sweid, interview.  
\textsuperscript{691} Aykan, interview.
Table 3.4.2.2: Top 10 Countries of Birth of Parents of Australian-born Muslims in Victoria & New South Wales (2016 Census)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Australia</td>
<td>25,319</td>
<td>35.80%</td>
<td>1. Lebanon</td>
<td>70,209</td>
<td>62.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Lebanon</td>
<td>22,061</td>
<td>31.19%</td>
<td>2. Australia</td>
<td>48,516</td>
<td>43.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Turkey</td>
<td>19,177</td>
<td>27.11%</td>
<td>3. Pakistan</td>
<td>14,355</td>
<td>12.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Pakistan</td>
<td>9,652</td>
<td>13.65%</td>
<td>5. Turkey</td>
<td>12,769</td>
<td>11.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Somalia</td>
<td>6,435</td>
<td>9.10%</td>
<td>6. Iraq</td>
<td>9,593</td>
<td>8.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Iraq</td>
<td>5,231</td>
<td>7.40%</td>
<td>7. Afghanistan</td>
<td>8,486</td>
<td>7.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Bangladesh</td>
<td>3,760</td>
<td>5.32%</td>
<td>8. Fiji</td>
<td>4,681</td>
<td>4.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. India</td>
<td>3,742</td>
<td>5.29%</td>
<td>9. Syria</td>
<td>3,974</td>
<td>3.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>1,929</td>
<td>2.73%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,885</td>
<td>3.48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Table 3.4.2.1 and Table 3.4.2.2 indicate that Muslims with Lebanese heritage do indeed make up a significant proportion of the overall Muslim population of New South Wales. The fact that 62.80% of Australian-born Muslims in NSW have at least one parent born in Lebanon solidifies this point. In Victoria, apart from the Australian-born Muslim community, no one ethnic group stands out. When considering nations of birth and the heritage of Australian-born Muslims in Victoria, four nations have remarkably similar representations – Lebanon, Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Lebanese Muslims were the first substantial Muslim community to arrive in Sydney and set up permanent roots. However, the relative size of the Lebanese community to other national groups was not the only reasons the participants gave for the seemingly different situations of Victoria and NSW. For instance, Reem Sweid suggested that Sydney was perhaps more ghettoised and not as integrated with the wider community:
The fact that they are more concentrated in Bankstown and Lakemba ... Here [in Victoria, Muslims] are more integrated into the wider community.\textsuperscript{692}

Furthermore, Ghaith Krayem emphasised that the different theological communities of Muslims were more open to “putting aside those theological difference” and working together in Victoria than in NSW.\textsuperscript{693} He was, however, confident that this was a trend that may be beginning to turn in NSW and credited ANIC for this. He continued:

It’s changed a little bit now in Sydney and that’s mostly driven by ANIC, because of the way that the imams have got themselves together in ANIC. So, ANIC is a very Sydney-focused representative, and the people in charge of ANIC now are trying, from a theological perspective, [to] work better together, which is bringing some of those groups together.\textsuperscript{694}

Others emphasised the differences in the political climate in NSW as a factor in why MCOs are seemingly more divided in Sydney than in Melbourne. For instance, Reem Sweid said:

I think that the political climate in NSW is also different ... So, it might not necessarily be something that’s prominent in the Muslim community that is causing the difference. And [while] I think maybe there are probably factors within the community, but it might also be the fact that the political environment and the stresses that they are under.\textsuperscript{695}

Finally, the strength of the ICV, and the lack of a comparable peak body in Sydney, was another reason given for the competing situations in Melbourne and Sydney.\textsuperscript{696}

The Lebanese Muslim Association (LMA), launched in 1962, has arguably been the main MCO in Sydney since its formation. Sheikh Nawas indicated that the LMA had played “some kind of de facto leadership role,” because of the historically large Lebanese Muslim population.\textsuperscript{697}

However, according to Ghaith Krayem, the growth and diversification of the community in Sydney, among other factors, has challenged the LMA’s influence. He said:

\textsuperscript{692} Sweid, interview.  
\textsuperscript{693} Krayem, interview.  
\textsuperscript{694} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{695} Sweid, interview.  
\textsuperscript{696} Ihram, interview.  
\textsuperscript{697} Sheikh Nawas, interview.
For so long it was the main organisation. In reality, it was probably only 20 years ago that you started to get other organisations popping up. So, for the first, sort of, 30, 40, 50 years of the community in Sydney, it was the only one. So, it became [and] it has this position within the mythology of the community up there, you know, 'Lakemba is the heart of the community.' When, in terms of numbers, other than on the eids, when everybody goes there, it actually isn’t. The community, in terms of its numbers, are much, much more diverse now, but Lakemba still holds this position.698

Given the recent failings of AFIC, Krayem was asked whether the LMA could be thought of as a representative body for NSW Muslims. He responded, emphatically:

No, not at all. Part of the problem with getting a genuinely representative body back up in NSW is in fact the LMA. The LMA sees itself as the leading organisation, not just locally, but on national issues. They struggle to play well with others. So, unless they are leading the agenda, they struggle. And very few other organisations, any longer, would work under the LMA. And that’s the biggest problem ... If the LMA isn’t leading it, [other MCOs] are not gonna be involved. And if the LMA does lead it, most other organisations are gonna say, 'This is just a facade.' That’s one of the problems up in NSW.699

Though Muslims in New South Wales and Victoria currently account for over three-quarters of the overall Muslim population of Australia, over the past five years Muslim communities in all other states have grown as a percentage of themselves quicker in all other states and territories (see Table 3.4.2.3).

Table 3.4.2.3: Growing Muslim Population in Australia’s States and Territories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Individuals identifying as Muslim</th>
<th>Change since 2011 Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>267,659</td>
<td>+22.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>197,300</td>
<td>+29.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>50,649</td>
<td>+29.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>44,885</td>
<td>+31.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>28,547</td>
<td>+46.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>9,883</td>
<td>+33.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>2,498</td>
<td>+46.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>2,335</td>
<td>+46.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>604,240</td>
<td>+26.86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

698 Krayem, interview.
699 Ibid.
Therefore, how MCOs are arranged in cities such as Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth are an area of increasing importance. As such, the participants of this study shared their experiences and opinions regarding the diversity and division within the Muslim communities of these cities.

The arrangement of MCOs in Adelaide was quite different to that of in Melbourne and Sydney. Unlike Melbourne, where the ICV serves as a relatively effective and representative peak body for the state’s Muslim population, Adelaide had three organisations – the Islamic Society of South Australia, the Islamic Information Centre of South Australia and the Muslim Women’s Association of South Australia – that could realistically claim to play a similar, though scaled-down, role to the ICV. Hasan Yunich elaborates:

The Melbourne situation is different, because it’s a more established community. But they are also a lot bigger. You’ve also got a lot more opinions, and you’ve also got a lot more people who are better qualified for leadership [and] that do kind of step up to that plate. In Adelaide, we don’t have like a governing body. We don’t have a central organisation. Sort of just a lot of different central organisations.

The situation in Adelaide differed to that of Sydney in that the major organisations seemingly worked quite well together. In Adelaide, the three organisations that participated in this study all emphasised their diversity and their determination to not be dominated by a particular ethnicity. They also met regularly, with Dora Abbas of the Muslim Women’s Association of South Australia emphasising that her organisation retained a strong relationship and had an ongoing dialogue with both ISSA and IICSA, and that they often got together to discuss issues and make sure their work did not overlap unnecessarily.

Likewise, Ahmed Zreika added that ISSA had even developed a policy to govern its relationship with other local Muslim organisations. He said:

Our policy is something called ‘Zero Problem with the Muslim Organisations’ … We don’t want [people] to have any problems with the Society … If they propose any logical proposal, we have to accept it, regardless of who’s going to run it. So, we have got [good] relations

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700 Yunich, interview.
701 Abbas, interview.
with the Muslim Women's Association, with the Information Centre [and] with the Khalil Mosque.\textsuperscript{702}

Hasan Yunich shared a similar viewpoint to Zreika, saying, “Us as an organisation, we do try and work with everyone. We try [but] you can’t always work with everyone. We try to deal with everyone locally [and] interstate as well.”\textsuperscript{703}

Zreika did, however, mention that one mosque in Adelaide did not want to have any relationship with any of the organisations, but that he respected that decision and was open to engaging with them if their policy was to change.\textsuperscript{704}

In Perth and Brisbane, representatives emphasised how diversity, and a lack of one specific national group dominating, was beneficial to local MCOs.

Wajma Padshah spoke to the situation in Perth. She said:

\begin{quote}
I think there's pockets within all [Muslim communities] ... You will have a specific Pakistani group that will stick together or the Afghan groups or ... Turkish groups, and the mosques are generally orientated that way ... But generally, it's mostly very diverse and mixed. I suppose, as well, because maybe Perth is very small you don’t really have that luxury ... to stick to that one group. [Diversity], it’s a good thing ... [And] the Muslim Women Support Centre, our Committee, is very diverse as well, [with] four or five different countries represented across the board.\textsuperscript{705}
\end{quote}

In Brisbane, Nora Amath discussed how the diversity and spread of the community, while still being a challenge that had to be navigated, was beneficial as it meant that no particular cultural or theological group could dominate. She said:

\begin{quote}
Because we are so multicultural here in Brisbane – particularly in Logan ... We have mainly South Africans, Pakistani, and Indonesians and stuff, but because there is not one block of a cultural group of Muslims, I think that makes it easier for us ... It’s breaking those tribal ties that Sydney has, that Queensland doesn't have, and even the ICV [has] to a certain extent.\textsuperscript{706}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{702} Zreika, interview.
\textsuperscript{703} Yunich, interview.
\textsuperscript{704} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{705} Padshah, interview.
\textsuperscript{706} Amath, interview.
Based on the semi-constructed interviews with twenty-four representatives of community organisations, it is fair to say that relationships between MCOs in Australia can be categorised as a mixed bag. There was evidence to suggest that MCOs can work relatively well together, as was the case in Melbourne and Adelaide, and to a lesser, but still meaningful degree, in Perth and Brisbane; however, Sydney was presented as a more volatile environment, wherein cultural, theological and tribal differences, were said to contribute to the relatively poor relations between MCOs.

Despite a desire from many to break the tribal and national ties amongst Muslim communities that play a role in the divisions between groups around Australia, the reality is that foreign politics still influences sections of these communities and MCOs.

3.4.3 Foreign Influence

Having already looked at how some nations retain a level of influence within certain communities through the appointment of imams (see 3.3.3 Imam Selection), it is suitable to now look at the other ways in which foreign governments and institutions can contribute to the divisions within Australian Muslims communities.

A recurring theme throughout the interviews within this study was the influence that Saudi Arabia has within Australian Muslim communities. The Saudis, positioning themselves as the ‘defenders’ of Islam since the 1960s, have actively used Islam as an instrument of foreign policy. This is especially true since the 1979 Iranian Revolution with the Saudis trying to counter predominantly-Shi’a Iran as an influential religious force.

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Through financial support for building mosques, operating schools and distributing religious literature, Saudi representatives have long been involved in marketing the Salafi school of jurisprudence internationally.\textsuperscript{710} Reem Sweid elaborates:

> In a global context, the Saudis have been, for the last 40-50 years, sort of engaging in a cultural imperialism where they go into Indonesia, Malaysia or Sri Lanka and they fund, through these boards of imams or whatever, to build mosques ... and they send scholarships and bring imams to Medina to study there and [learn their] Wahhabi type [interpretation] and they send them back to preach it. And through that, all these different cultures have been losing that [diversity of Islam].\textsuperscript{711}

Australian Muslim communities, it can be argued, have long been the beneficiaries of economic assistance from Saudi Arabia, as was discussed in the AFIC case study, and they are still considered by some as a ‘go to’ for funding. Ghaith Krayem elaborated:

> The Saudis are still seen, by certain sections of the community, as a go to source when they need money. And so, I think it’s fair to say that there’s people who are not politically objective when it comes to the Saudis. We made a real issue last year of the Saudi War in Yemen.\textsuperscript{712} It’s an atrocity. And behind the scenes, we were trying to get [to] leadership. So, we went to both ANIC, AFIC, to all of them and said, ‘We want to put out a statement,’ and we couldn’t get them to do it. So, we still have this issue where people in leadership tiptoe around political issues with Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{713}

The reluctance of some leaders to speak out against the actions of Saudi Arabia, according to Krayem, can be linked, in part, to the Shi’a/Sunni divide. While the reasons behind the failure to speak out may resonate with some of the older community leaders, many younger Muslims, argued Krayem, are disillusioned by the stance. He said:

> There are a couple of things at play [in why certain leaders don’t speak out]. For some people, there is still the perception that there is a Shia/Sunni element to this. So, ‘We can’t go against the Saudis, because that’s seen as supporting the Shia Iranians,’ and my view is,
it's not Iran who's bombing Yemen. But, there's an element of that. But, the other part is, they don't want to make enemies. They may need some patronage of some sort. And I think that's a real issue within the community around speaking truth to power. There is an expectation amongst young Australian Muslims, who don't have these affiliations, who say, 'We don't care who it is, if somebody is doing the wrong thing, we expect our leadership to speak up against it.' And that's actually a fundamental part of our religion. There are verses in the Qur'an that say justice for everybody even when it's against yourself.14

Like Krayem, Sweid believed that the Saudi-Iranian political battle had ramifications for some MCOs in Australia. She said:

That's the problem – I think it's the Saudi money ... If the Saudis find out you have Iranians on your board, they're gonna stop sending you money or there's a risk they'll stop sending you money. And you are not willing to take that risk. How much of it is foreign power?15

Nafay Siddiqui added that he could not relate to some community leaders relying on Saudi representatives for resources:

Why do they have to approach someone who has come out of Saudi Arabia? Like, someone who has come out of this really different interpretation of Islam,16

Krayem’s belief that young Australian Muslims don’t care about the political baggage carried by some of the older generations was evident in Siddiqui’s comment above and in a response Hasan Yunich gave. He said:

Islam is about evidence. So, if there’s evidence from the Qur’an or the Hadith, like 1,2,3, show it to them [young Muslims]. So, there is clear evidence that says we have to be standing up for justice. So, when you see an injustice, what can we do to effectively change it? ... I mean, not everyone is going to accept it, but these are principles that we try to slowly change in people’s heads.17

Saudi Arabia is not alone in its attempts to establish and retain an influence within Australian Muslim communities. Similar accusations could be directed towards a variety of other nations; however, the Saudis were certainly highlighted by the participants of this study.

14 Ibid.
15 Sweid, interview.
16 Siddiqui, interview.
17 Yunich, interview.
Although many have issues with seeking or accepting assistance from foreign governments or institutions, the reality is that Australian MCOs need resources to function. Whether it be a mosque committee attempting to hire an imam or AFIC trying to buy land for a school, resources are central to many of these organisations. The reliance of some Australian MCOs on foreign institutions and governments must be considered within the context of the greater challenge of satisfying their resource requirements. To gain a greater understanding of the resource requirements of Australian MCOs, it is worthwhile to look at how they operate.

3.5 Staff, Funding & Governance

Despite the range of MCOs that exist in Australia, the challenges that they face when it comes to staff, funding and governance, are somewhat consistent throughout. MCOs have limited resources. Funding can come from a variety of sources, including individuals, not-for-profits or philanthropic organisations, and governments; however, as is the case with most MCOs in Australia, funding is rarely permanent or ongoing. As such, ensuring that an organisation retains capable staff in adequate numbers remains a consistent challenge. Meanwhile, MCOs in Australia remain overly reliant on volunteers to develop and deliver their services, and this too remains a challenge.

Underpinning staff and funding issues are issues of governance. Often proper governance measures can be overlooked as short-term thinking and demands take priority. The need for the development and installation of effective principles of governance in MCOs was at the forefront of several of the participants’ criticisms of the state of MCOs in Australia, and this was often reflected in their conscious efforts to improve the governance of the organisations that they represented.

3.5.1 Staff

Staffing is an issue for any organisation. Maintaining a safe, friendly working environment and the relationship between leaders and staff, and between paid staff and volunteers, is crucial to the
success of any organisation,\(^7^{18}\) and MCOs are no different. Australian MCOs rely predominantly on volunteers. While some organisations, such as the ICV and IWAA, have professionalised and now employ several full-time staff members, the reality is that MCOs across Australia are predominantly run by volunteers or, at the very least, are dependent on volunteers to deliver services.

Working for an MCO, like any community organisation, has various challenges, but the reality is that most who dedicate their time to MCOs do so on a volunteer basis. Some organisations, such as the Islamic Society of South Australia, rely solely on volunteers. Ahmed Zreika elaborates:

> The only paid position is the imams, and we [have] got almost 100 volunteers all together. And it's all based on volunteers. All the committee, the president, secretary, all [work] on a volunteer basis.\(^7^{19}\)

As such, the participation of those who volunteer is qualified by family, work and other commitments. There are both strengths and weaknesses in this reality, as Wajma Padshah discussed:

> The strengths are there: that the people that come on-board are committed and their reasons are generally for the betterment of the community or the society. But then, unfortunately, most of them are volunteers, probably hold jobs, are mums and dads, doing other things, so they are very, very stretched. And the expectation [on leaders] is quite a bit as well.\(^7^{20}\)

Ghaith Krayem added:

> You've got commitments in terms of your professional life and how that interacts, and the time all of that takes. People forget – it’s all voluntary. So, there's this demanding of time, which is often driven by external events. So, managing all of that becomes really hard.\(^7^{21}\)

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\(^{7^{19}}\) Zreika, interview.

\(^{7^{20}}\) Padshah, interview.

\(^{7^{21}}\) Krayem, interview.
Owing to the stress, time demands and commitment that running an MCO in a volatile socio-political environment encompasses, volunteer organisations can often leave a heavy burden on individuals.

Nora Amath elaborates:

The reality is that Muslim community leaders are just exhausted ... and every time we drop one organisation, we are pulled into another, and we are pulled into another, and ... there seems to be very little respite. You've spoken to enough community leaders to know this is all a voluntary basis – the majority of things we do.\(^{722}\)

According to Amath, the commitment that accompanies community activism can negatively impact the personal lives of those volunteering. She said:

So, you have quite a number of community activism leaders, who have had breakdowns in marriages and families because they just can't ever be home. And if they are home, their phone is on ... They are constantly responding to a marital problem or a crisis with youth ... They are asked to do so many things that they are not equipped to do.\(^{723}\)

Using the example of the Islamic Council of Queensland, Galila Abdelsalam prophesised as to how an over-reliance on individuals is unsustainable. She said:

They rely on [people] who they have their own main business and their own work. And they still volunteer their time ... Those people can't wind down ... They can give away 1 year, 2 years and then they leave because they cannot continue giving from their own time.\(^{724}\)

According to Hasan Yunich, running a successful MCO is about balancing expectations and ensuring staff are not consistently overextending themselves. He said:

Everyone has got a full-time job pretty much, and they’ve got families, and then they’ve got other responsibilities, and then there’s this place. So, whatever we can pull out of people, we pull.\(^{725}\)

Several of the participants of this study could be classified as professional staff of their community organisation in that they received an income for some of their work; however, most, if not all, had

\(^{722}\) Amath, interview.  
\(^{723}\) Ibid.  
\(^{724}\) Abdelsalam, interview.  
\(^{725}\) Yunich, interview.
served as volunteers of MCOs before transitioning into professional positions or were currently volunteering at other organisations. For instance, Nora Amath was employed by IWAA, but was running or heavily-involved in at least four other organisations on a volunteer basis, as well as volunteering her time to speak at such things as interfaith events.\footnote{Amath, interview.}

In several cases, volunteer work had led to employment in some capacity. For instance, Ayman Islam had been involved in the ICV’s No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) before being approached to take on a professional role.\footnote{Islam, interview.}

However, there was also an example of an individual transitioning from a professional role back to a volunteer role. Wajma Padshah had started at the Muslim Women’s Support Centre Western Australia as a volunteer but started working part time as a paid worker when the Centre received a government grant to offer settlement services. When this grant ended, she transitioned back into a volunteer role and now serves as the organisation’s vice president.\footnote{Padshah, interview.}

Islam and Padshah’s competing experiences emphasise the volatile nature of MCO budgets and how that impacts staff.

Noting an over-reliance on volunteers, several of the participants advocated for the professionalisation of MCOs. For instance, Ghaith Krayem proposed:

\begin{quote}
We need to start to shift away from volunteer-run organisations. We can’t afford to have our major organisations run by volunteers any longer. Just like with the ICV, we’ve gotta move all our organisations to be professional, because if you pay people, then you’re gonna get people who can do this as their living.\footnote{Krayem, interview.}
\end{quote}

Ahmed Zreika offered his own reasoning as to why professional staff are needed. Referencing the situation at the Islamic Society of South Australia, he said:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}
In the Society, we have a lot of work. I put it last time that we have 67 positions, and every position has tasks. You cannot be in the [Society] if you do not accept the tasks ... If you cannot do it, don't push me to ask you why you do not do it, just resign from this. And that's why you cannot find anyone to be on the committee ... We need paid positions.\textsuperscript{730}

However, the professionalisation of an organisation does not guarantee its success, as Sheikh Nawas alluded to:

Some groups are very professional, but they are limited to a very small number of people who are influential in the society; whereas some groups are less professional, but they are [influencing] ... wider communities.\textsuperscript{731}

Regardless of whether an organisation has professional staff or not, securing funding is essential to the effectiveness of most MCOs in Australia. There are a variety of avenues that organisations pursue to fund their administration, programs and services.

3.5.2 Grants and Funding

Central to most MCOs, if not all, is money. All the varieties of MCOs – peak bodies, collective religious leadership and community groups – require funds to provide services to the communities they reach and serve. For the most part, funding for Australian MCOs comes in one of two forms: community donations and grants from governments, education providers, not-for-profit organisations (NGOs) and/or overseas institutions. While funding can also come from business ventures set up by the MCO, such as AFIC with its halal certification and property portfolio, this remains a rarity amongst MCOs in Australia.

Some groups – often with a strong core of dedicated volunteers – do not require significant resources to provide services. For instance, Zubeda Raihman of the Muslim Women’s National Network Australia said:

No, we don't even get donations. We don't ask for donations or anything. So, in terms of people [or] man-power, we don't have an office, I run [it] from my house, and if we need to

\textsuperscript{730} Zreika, interview.
\textsuperscript{731} Sheikh Nawas, interview.
However, this was rare within the organisations represented in this research. Almost all the MCOs were funded in some way – often leaning to either a reliance on the community, as is the case with most mosques, or a reliance on grants.

3.5.2.1 Grants

Grants to MCOs in Australia take several forms. They are usually provided to assist with the administration of a particular service over a period of time. The income provided by a grant will often go to covering staff wages – be it administrative, teaching or other – as well as travel costs, catering, facility hiring, interpretation or translation costs, and so on.

Some examples of the grants received by MCOs to emerge from this study were settlement grants to assist new migrants, domestic violence awareness and prevention grants, social cohesion grants (e.g. mosque open days and interfaith events), education grants to run courses such as English language development, and community capacity increasing grants (e.g. leadership training).

Grants are offered by a variety of government and non-government institutions, including local, state and federal government bodies, NGOs, philanthropic organisations or donors, and education providers.

Several organisations rely on grants from different levels of government. For instance, at the ICV, “Everything is grant-based. Community donations are for the operations of the mosque.”

Similarly, another participant shared their organisation’s reliance on government funding. They said, “Our funding comes from the federal government; some comes from the state government; [and], some comes from philanthropics.”

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732 Raihman, interview.
733 Islam, interview.
734 Anonymous, interview.
Receiving funding from institutions of government, as previously discussed, can be complicated by Section 116 of the Australian Constitution, which was designed to maintain a separation between religion and the state. Although in practice Section 116 has been interpreted as theorising a separation of church and state this is neutral rather than strictly demarcated (e.g. governments can and do fund religiously-affiliated organisation, such as private schools);\(^7\) it can still be difficult for members of MCOs to approach governments for money. As Aziz Khan said, Section 116 has “created a dilemma.”\(^6\) Likewise, Ahmed Zreika elaborated on his attempts to seek government funding for ISSA:

> It is unacceptable at the moment ... because the volume of the work, the acts of [a] Muslim organisation ... is huge ... I kept nagging for the Government [to help]. We need help. And they say, ‘Because you are a religion, it is very hard to help.’ So, I said to them, ‘Well okay, but we are not a religion anymore, because the pressure that you are putting on us is not because just religion. It is social, religion, politics – it’s everything.’\(^7\)

The source of the grant can, on occasion, be controversial within the community, and MCOs will often carefully consider who they seek and receive financing from. Owing to a variety of factors, some MCOs are reluctant to work with various government institutions (see 5.3 MCOs and Governments). They will not seek, nor will they accept, government grants. This is particularly true when it comes to Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) money that has been made available, under various names and initiatives (see 5.3.1 Countering Violent Extremism); however, it is not restricted to CVE, with a dissatisfaction with Australian foreign policy one of the other reasons provided for why some MCOs don’t take government money.\(^8\)


\(^6\) Aziz Khan, interview.

\(^7\) Zreika, interview.

\(^8\) Ihram, interview.
Furthermore, as grants are predominantly given to fund programs over a period of time, an organisation’s dependence on grants can lead to uncertainty within the organisation. One participant said:

We don't have ongoing [grants] per se … [One grant] is usually given to us for a sort of 3-year period, and then we have to re-apply. So, the longest funding we get is for a 3-year period. All of our other funding is usually annually. So, we have to be constantly applying for funding.\(^{739}\)

That organisation had been able to retain funding through grants with relative consistency, meaning that they had remained stable and their vision, aims and services offered had not altered substantially over time. However, this is not always the case.

The Muslim Women’s Support Centre WA had to adjust its focus when its settlement grant from the Department of Immigration ended in 2012. Wajma Padshah elaborates:

I think [MWSC] probably re-shifted. So, our settlement services to the newly arrived migrants completely disappeared, but then it made us think about maybe the governance model and also our sustainability in terms of funding to look at more fundraising and different models … Since 2012 that’s been the case and we’ve received smaller grants and projects to do different things, and for a little while we focused on mental health and a few other things. But, other than that, mostly [we’ve relied on] general community donations.\(^{740}\)

A reliance on income from grants has led to a need for experienced and capable grant writers and they are a sought-after commodity amongst some MCOs. Galila Abdelsalam elaborates:

We used to spend hours of our time to write applications and it exhausted [us] and then we find that sometimes one of five [was successful]. So, we find that paying someone who could help us was [useful] … She knows us inside out, so we have her when a small grant comes or a big grant comes. She will do it and one of two, or sometimes two of three, is successful.\(^{741}\)

Having a capable grant writer was broadly acknowledged as a means of improving access to funds.

Hasan Yunich added:

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\(^{739}\) Anonymous, interview.

\(^{740}\) Padshah, interview.

\(^{741}\) Abdelsalam, interview.
There is [government grants available, but] they won’t give us anything – I think it’s our grant writers – they’re really poor. I’m looking at trying to hire a grant writer, so we can improve it up and get it in. There is money ... to be had there.\(^{742}\)

However, in addition to accomplished and effective grant writing, there are other factors limiting access to grants. For instance, IICS\’s lack of charitable foundation status was said to disqualify them from certain grants.\(^{743}\)

Finally, the competitive process through which grants are distributed, combined with a reliance on grants to meet resourcing requirements, can cause friction between MCOs – impacting their desire to work with other MCOs. Silma Ihram explained:

>The difficulty is that we are not very effective networkers in the Muslim community and there does tend to be a bit of, “Oh that’s a good idea; I’m gonna take it.”\(^{744}\)

Expanding on her reluctance to work with other MCOs, Ihram continued by stressing:

>When you’re trying to establish credibility in the community and see the initiatives through, you want to work with people, not have people take your ideas and leave you standing in a pile where you’re coming up with the ideas and giving them to other people.\(^{745}\)

Commenting on the relatively poor relations between some MCOs, Asma Fahmi said:

>I mean they’re competing for grants at the end of the day [so they may not work well together] ... I mean, that’s my experience ... Some of them have been very warm and approachable, and I think ... those people are the ones that are ... more spiritual, I suppose ... But others, I feel like – especially the organisations that ... [are] very bureaucratic. Those ones are harder to engage with because they are very protective, and they’ll share a certain level of information, but not too much, because they might see you as a rival for grants.\(^{746}\)

An inability to receive grants and funding from institutions of government and NGOs often leaves MCOs reliant on the financial support of Muslim communities.

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\(^{742}\) Yunich, interview.

\(^{743}\) Ibid.

\(^{744}\) Ihram, interview.

\(^{745}\) Ibid.

\(^{746}\) Fahmi, interview.
3.5.2.2 Community Donations

As several of the participants of this study suggested, the Australian Muslim community is incredibly generous when it comes to donating to MCOs.\textsuperscript{747}

Community donations are considered separate to zakat.\textsuperscript{748} Money received from zakat is not used to fund local infrastructure projects, such as the construction of mosques. Furthermore, while some MCOs in Australia, such as the National Zakat Foundation Australia, collect and distribute zakat domestically,\textsuperscript{749} money collected from zakat in Australia is predominantly directed to those in need overseas.

As previously discussed (see 2.4.1 Mosque Boards and Committees), the expensive mosque-building process in Australia is predominantly funded by members of the local community. However, community donors do not solely fund mosques and religious institutions. They also contribute to MCOs that are countering challenges affecting the community more broadly. For instance, Nora Amath discussed how, alongside some friends and colleagues, she was able to fund AMARAH to help victims of domestic violence. She said:

My girlfriends and I were hoping that somebody else would take this issue ... [but] we just thought enough is enough, we need to do something about it ... And really it was out of a crisis [involving] a young girl ... not physically, but emotionally and psychologically abused, by her family ... She was going to be made homeless and one of our board members took her in and she had to basically go from house to house within the community ... and we thought, 'Well this is not a proper response. We're all social workers. We are mental health practitioners. Community development is my area. We can do this.' And ... with not a penny to our name, we got a rental house on credit, until we could actually cover [the cost] ... Myself and another board member went knocking on peoples' doors for money ... That was three years ago, and we now have a part-time domestic violence social worker three days a week. So, we've been able to get enough money. We are completely self-funded. No

\textsuperscript{747} Aykan, interview. Yunich, interview. Padshah, interview.
\textsuperscript{748} Zakat is one of the Five Pillars of Islam and is in effect a tax on one’s possessions. It may be paid directly to the poor as alms, or to travellers, or to the state. Cyril Glassé, The Consise Encyclopaedia of Islam, 565-66.
\textsuperscript{749} Since 2013, the National Zakat Foundation has distributed over $4 million to victims of domestic violence and homelessness, as well as to provide financial and debt assistance, medical assistance, and refugee support. National Zakat Foundation Australia, accessed 21 March 2018, http://nzf.org.au/.
Likewise, Wajma Padshah spoke to how the Muslim Women’s Support Centre WA receives the majority of its funding. She said:

We have ... not anything massive as yet, but people who have done a regular pledge. So, they’ll pay a regular monthly fee to support us. [We have] membership fees, which is minimal. Originally when we lost the grant, we had a whole lot of community support ... to make sure that the Centre didn’t close.

While, in reference to the Islamic Information Centre of South Australia, Hasan Yunich added: “I mean we rely heavily upon the community and to date the community hasn’t failed us ... Donations [and] sponsorships.”

Muslim communities in Australia can be incredibly generous – especially when contributing to social causes they deem beneficial. For instance, Asma Fahmi said:

I know with Mission of Hope, they’ve been around for a long time and they’ve hired, with the Hayat House, they’ve hired psychologists and people within the community, who sort of understand the local culture – especially what’s happening with drug problems locally. And they don’t rely on any government funding. And I feel like ... a lot of organisations don’t rely on government [funding].

The Islamic Society of South Australia relies on the community to fund all its events and programs. Ahmed Zreika said:

All our activities ... our events or anything, is based on donations. Okay, so we have the two imams, [so we] ask the people during the Friday prayer [for donations]. We have this project for maybe $10,000 [or] $20,000 ... [and ask] who’s going to donate? And we get the money from them.

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750 Amath, interview.
751 Padshah, interview.
752 Yunich, interview.
753 Fahmi, interview.
754 Zreika, interview.
Relying on the community for funding can create friction between the MCO and the community.

Hasan Yunich elaborates:

Our events don’t primarily make money. We currently have them set up to just cover expenses ... I’ve had a chat to guys and they have some weird assumption about how much money is actually made.\textsuperscript{755}

Having similar concerns to Hasan Yunich and IICSA, and to try and limit an over-reliance on community donations, ISSA attempted to start a local business to help fund their projects. Ahmed Zreika added:

We thought to have some business to look after our events, but it didn’t work ... We had a butcher [to] do halal meat and maybe the Muslim community will support it [but] it didn’t work at all. We lost $40,000.\textsuperscript{756}

Furthermore, while some organisations, like Minhaj ul-Quran, are international organisations with domestic branches in a variety of countries, local contributors can still carry the burden. For instance, Shaykh Ramzan said:

Minhaj ul-Quran Victoria and Minhaj ul-Quran Australia are both the registered organisations ... [and they are funded through] community donations ... Wherever the organisation operates, the funds are released from there. We do not transfer from one country to another, that is not the practice.\textsuperscript{757}

Finally, having such a generous community, however, can also be a negative when applying for funding outside the community, as Nora Amath alluded to when discussing AMARAH’s work on domestic violence. She said:

I guess they [the Queensland Government] recognise that the Muslim community is quite generous, and so, therefore it’s good and bad in the sense that ... we are self-funded [and] we are not answering to the Government ... [which] allows us to then have a program that is primarily based in the community. So, it’s not a Government program; It’s a community taking ownership of it ... So, that has strengthened us and allowed us to have a conversation about [for instance] domestic violence that we couldn’t have [had] five years ago, because we are self-funded; because we go knocking on businessmen’s doors and say, ‘This is an

\textsuperscript{755} Yunich, interview.
\textsuperscript{756} Zreika, interview.
\textsuperscript{757} Shaykh Ramzan, interview.
issue’, [and they say], 'I didn’t know it was an issue; here's a cheque.'

One of the downsides of relying on community donations instead of government grants is that – although both government and communities have similar expectations – governments are perhaps better positioned to demand competency and good governance. Failures of governance are a significant challenge confronting many Australian MCOs.

3.5.3 Governance and Elections

Effective governance is crucial to any organisation; however, after both the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the Royal Commission into Family Violence highlighted and recommended the need for faith-based organisations to improve their output via improved governance and decision-making practices, the governance of religious organisations in Australia has become an area of increasing focus and scrutiny. Furthermore, the allegations of corruption and mismanagement that have recently plagued AFIC and AFIC-affiliated schools across Australia, have further highlighted governance as an issue for Australian MCOs.

Challenges pertaining to governance of MCOs were consistently raised by the participants of this study. Issues relating to the healthy and effective transition of leaders and finding the right leader – which can be spoken of as issues of governance – have already been discussed in this chapter (see 3.2.2 Transitions of Leadership and 3.2.3 Finding the “Right” Leader); however, two further areas of governance that require discussion are management structures and election processes, and, corruption and mismanagement.

3.5.3.1 Management Structures and Election Processes

The management structure of an MCO varies depending on the age, size and purpose of the organisations, as well as due to a variety of other factors, such as its cultural make-up or affiliations; however, most are managed by an executive. The executive is predominantly made up of all, or a
selection of, the familiar roles of an executive – president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, executive member and so on.

Some of the larger organisations will also have project managers who are assigned to look after specific programs and services offered by the organisation. For instance, on top of the usual executive roles, the University of Melbourne Islamic Society also has a publications officer, a sports officer, *Musalla* officer and ‘informal’ mentors.\textsuperscript{758}

Beyond this, many organisations also have a range of general volunteers whose contribution will vary depending on availability and enthusiasm (see 3.5.1 *Staff*). For example, Hasan Yunich explained the structure of the IICSA. He said:

\begin{quote}
The core committee is nine and they’re spread over all of our projects. There’s one guy in charge of each major project, sometimes two, [and] sometimes they interact [with others]. From that you have the youth and the outer circle/inner circle, if you put it that way, of which there are about twenty to twenty-five. Then you have like a further circle out to about seventy-odd guys, who we call regularly for different help and support, and then the wider-community.\textsuperscript{759}
\end{quote}

Similarly, regarding the Muslim Women Support Centre WA, Wajma Padshah added:

\begin{quote}
We have nine committee members, and then volunteers are about five or six, but it fluctuates. So, registered we might have up to twenty, but it fluctuates as to who comes in, which days, and how many hours.\textsuperscript{760}
\end{quote}

For many of the more-established organisations, which have sought and received incorporated status from their relevant state or federal jurisdictions, election processes are embedded within their constitutions. Leaders will often be elected to serve in a certain role with the constitution stipulating both the length of service and the process by which that official is elected. Officials will often be appointed either through some form of vote by the organisation’s members or through appointment by another elected official, such as the president.

\textsuperscript{758} Siddiqui, interview.  
\textsuperscript{759} Yunich, interview.  
\textsuperscript{760} Padshah, interview.
Reem Sweid provided an example of how the election process of Muslim Collective operated. She said:

We have an executive committee that is voted in by the members and in our constitution, our president can only run for one consecutive term – that’s one year. And then another year. So, 2 years ... [This] encourage people to join ... and also [to] not create a situation where it becomes about one person. I’ve seen that happen a lot. And the ego that comes with it.\(^{763}\)

As the leadership issues faced by AFIC suggests (see 2.2.1.3 Leadership and Power Battles), constitutional processes can sometimes be manipulated or exploited by individuals or factions for their own benefit. Furthermore, they can sometimes be amended or completely changed for a similar effect.

Zubeda Raihman reflected on an organisation that she was familiar with. She said: “Their first constitution said that women should be represented. They changed their constitution and now they don’t even have elections.”\(^{762}\)

Changes to the constitution of an organisation are not always negative and can improve the functionality of an organisation. Often, it is a matter of perception. For instance, in response to growing frustration at the speed in which the management committee of IWAA was unable to provide swift approval of grant applications, Galila Abdelsalam sought to amend the constitution and change her role. She explained:

I used to be away from the [management committee] position ... Now, I am part of the [management committee] position according to the Constitution. [So], what I can do [now] is just email them my request; waiting for the majority. And, if I couldn't get the majority, I could be the balance. So, my vote can be the balance, [which] can speed [up the process].\(^{763}\)

Furthermore, the situation of an employee also having a role on the organisation’s management committee, as is the case with Abdelsalam, is not unique. Sometimes employees will have an

\(^{761}\) Sweid, interview.

\(^{762}\) Raihman, interview.

\(^{763}\) Abdelsalam, interview.
executive role of some sort. This is occasionally true when it comes to imams and mosque boards, as some imams have a role within the executive of the mosque (see 2.4.1 Mosque Boards and Committees).

One of the effects of having a culturally diverse population is that members of MCOs have different, and sometimes competing, expectations of how organisations should elect their leaders, and this was reflected in the views of the participants of this study.

Several of the participants believed that no person should nominate themselves for positions of leadership; rather, they should be nominated by their peers.

For instance, Wajma Padshah said:

You don’t put your hand up to be selected. A lot of us will find that very, very uncomfortable to say, ‘I want to be president of this,’ to nominate yourself. It’s supposed to be the people from the grassroots that nominate you and say, ‘Well this person has these qualities, we would like them to be a leader.’

Similarly, Hasan Yunich spoke of the situation at IICSA that led to his appointment as president. He said:

They made me president of this organisation. In this organisation, we all have the same type of thinking, that we need to work. There’re too many people that hold onto positions. So, when it came to choose a new leader, because you can’t be like a leaderless ship, so we do un-nominated elections, if that makes sense. So, I don’t nominate myself, people nominate me. So, it ended up being out of it that they chose me.

Zubeda Raihman also expressed this was the method used by the Muslim Women’s National Network Australia (MWNNA) – indicating that this phenomenon was not exclusive to organisations with relatively youthful leaders.

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764 Padshah, interview.
765 Yunich, interview.
766 Raihman, interview.
One of the consequences of not nominating for positions of leadership in certain MCOs, is that it can lead to certain individuals, who have the appropriate skills and qualifications to lead, failing to be nominated.

Wajma Padshah added:

Those that do have the qualifications and can contribute are probably a bit shy to put their hand up for those positions and generally don’t... Probably the challenges are that there is a lack of time [and] qualifications don’t match the positions that people are applying for generally. But the strengths are that most people come from the heart.\(^{767}\)

Another participant elaborated on this point:

I guess being humble is something that you... embody as a Muslim... That’s one view [as to why one would not nominate themselves for a role]. Not recognising your own strengths, [however], perhaps is not the best way forward. So, it’s important to recognise your own strengths, but at the same time, it’s important to recognise areas that you’re not good at.\(^{768}\)

Whether an individual nominates themselves or is nominated by their peers, what is of most importance is that there is a regulated process, in the form of elections, in which their performance can be considered by the members of the organisation. These procedures can help limit the potential for corruption and mismanagement to occur.

3.5.3.2 Corruption and Mismanagement

MCOs are not immune from allegations of corruption and mismanagement. As discussed in Chapter Two, AFIC has recently been the recipient of such allegations. This was reflected in the comments made by several of the participants of this study, who spoke predominantly of corruption and mismanagement through the context of AFIC.

\(^{767}\) Padshah, interview.

\(^{768}\) Anonymous, interview.
Some of the participants expressed that AFIC’s issues with corruption started several years ago and materialised because of the appointment of unqualified leaders (see 3.2.3 Finding the Right Leaders). For instance, Aziz Khan said:

So, going back to the 60s and 70s, the leadership has rested on associations, and the quality of the candidates we bring through in from the grassroots. [The leaders of] those associations, from my personal observation and what I’ve read ... were mainly lay people. Some were professionals, and some were lay – meaning they had no training in leadership. They just were elected [and] appointed ... Nothing wrong with that, but they had no experience in leading ... That's where all the problems started.769

The Sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne was more philosophical when it came to criticising AFIC. He expressed that his criticism of AFIC was based on its inability to deal with money.

When money is involved in an organisation, he said, this causes problems.770

Silma Ihram believed issues of corruption and mismanagement in some Australian MCOs was due to the self-interest of individuals. She said:

It’s all about leadership and having people who genuinely care about the community, not their own self-interest. This is the problem. A lot of the migrants that came out here, this was the land of milk and honey, and they wanted to feather their nests and they set about doing it in multiple ways, including for their own little community and their own little pile of prestige. They’re the wrong kind of people to have in power.771

Several of the participants recognised the danger that comes with power and access to resources.

For instance, Hasan Yunich was conscious of his own position of power and the possible effects that it might have on his personality and actions. He said:

Every single community has issues [and] internal divisions. There are people who go in for their own personal benefit. Some of them won’t, [but] some of them do ... Power corrupts, and it changes people’s perspectives, and things that used to be sincere or true for them ... So, I’m fearful of myself all the time with this organisation.772

769 Aziz Khan, interview.
770 Sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne, interview.
771 Ihram, interview.
772 Yunich, interview.
To limit the potential for corruption to take place, many MCOs rely on strong governance; however, this is easier said than done when dealing with a diverse community with various experiences and expectations of leadership. Ahmed Zreika elaborates:

We don’t have the governance of all our organisations here to elect or select the right person to be leader in politics, religion and even socially. Why? There are many factors behind this. The main factor is still [the diversity within the community] ... [How] they want to run this society or this organisation, depends on how the mentality is set in our countries ... Because we are different, we have different governance and that's why we cannot work together.\(^{773}\)

Furthermore, given the sometimes-chaotic nature of community work – where funding opportunities fluctuate, and staff turnover can be high – governance practices can be amended. Some MCOs provide training to members of staff to assist with the functionality of the organisation and ensure it is managed in an effective manner.\(^{774}\)

Ghaith Krayem, who runs his own consultancy business, often does governance reviews for MCOs. He said:

I've got one NGO I'm doing a complete governance review for, because they've got some issues with the charities commission ... So, they're under probation. So, we're doing a complete governance review ... And another one I'm just starting ... Both of them are Muslim organisations.\(^{775}\)

Finally, Zubeda Raihman said that the internal issues of MCOs, such as corruption and mismanagement, outweigh the external challenges they face. She reasoned that one possible solution was in highlighting the principles of Islam. Raihman said:

Let's project on the leadership quality that was shown by the Prophet. And these people, they pray five times a day and they say they are following the Prophet, and yet they are doing something very different.\(^{776}\)

\(^{773}\) Zreika, interview.  
\(^{774}\) Abdelsalam, interview.  
\(^{775}\) Krayem, interview.  
\(^{776}\) Raihman, interview.
Challenges such as corruption and mismanagement, and the failure of the structures in place to prevent it, were often put at the feet of individuals. Individuals who had, for whatever reason, risen to positions of power and influence within MCOs, and who had proven themselves unworthy of the task and responsibility.

3.6 Conclusion

Internally, Australian MCOs face numerous challenges that impact their sustainability and effectiveness in achieving their aims and visions. As this chapter has indicated, these challenges can take many forms and vary in terms of importance and impact; however, they can all be discussed loosely under the parameters of the generation gap, employment of imams, diversity of the Muslim community, and staff, funding and governance.

This chapter addressed the generation gap which exists within Australian Muslim communities and discussed some of the ways in which this impacts MCOs. Notably, it looked at how the patriarchal structure of Muslim community leadership in Australia can be said to be related to the generation gap. The phenomenon of male domination, most visible in terms of MCOs in the category of mosque committees and boards, is seemingly less prevalent in organisations run by younger members of the community – notably youth groups and MSAs. Though there was evidence that suggested some historically patriarchal MCOs were embracing greater gender balance in their leadership structures, the patriarchal structure of MCOs as a challenge relating to the generation gap was reinforced by the reluctance of older leaders to transition out of their roles to be replaced by younger members of the community. Likewise, inadequate methods of training and mentoring younger generations (though some MCOs have taken measures to respond to this challenge) was also serving to limit the potential for generational change and a refreshing of ideas that may conceivably serve to undermine existing patriarchal structures. The patriarchal structure of Muslim community leadership in Australia, the reluctance for leaders to hand over responsibility to new generations, inadequate training and mentoring methods, and an inability to find leaders appropriately qualified to lead, all
contributed to a sense of distance between younger generations of Australian Muslims and their elders.

After establishing some of the various roles and responsibilities that an imam in Australia has in serving Muslim communities, this chapter discussed several challenges associated with the employment of imams. A lack of Australian-born or Australian-raised imams was one such challenge that, despite being a concern that has been acknowledged over several decades, was re-affirmed as an ongoing challenge for Muslim community leaders. The concept of an Australian school for prospective imams to receive their qualifications was also discussed, as well as some of the existing means by which imams currently receive forms of training. However, the idea of an imam school was revealed to be a complicated venture that would be exceptionally difficult to set up. Furthermore, this chapter discussed the various ways in which imams are selected and employed within the Australian context, and some of the emerging challenges involved in that process. With the Australian Muslim community’s increasing diversity, existing practices by which imams are employed by an often ethno-exclusive mosque board and committee risks disillusionment from some within the community and the creation or furtherment of divisions.

The diversity of the Muslim population within Australia was established as a factor in several of the challenges facing MCOs. Muslim communities in Australia continue to be distinguishable by ethnic and cultural factors, such as language, theology and, in some cases, political and economic aspects. These differences can and have led to divisions between communities, which has ramifications for MCOs trying to work with and for these groups. Likewise, several participants were critical of the insular nature of some sections within the Muslim community and expressed frustration at what they perceived as their reluctance or lack of desire in achieving a sense of unity. The challenge of divided and insular communities was linked back to the generation gap by some who theorised that these phenomena were less visible in the young members of the community, who were growing up
in a multicultural and diverse context and did not harbour the same cultural attachments of their elders.

This chapter also analysed some of the differences in the make-up of the community on a state-by-state basis, but with a major focus on the two states that combined are home to over three-quarters of Australia’s self-identifying Muslim population – New South Wales and Victoria. Focusing mainly on cultural heritage, it discussed the differences in the cultural make-up of the community over two generations and addressed the effect that these differences have had on the functionality of MCOs in those states. It then looked at the experiences of the other states in this study where the participants lived before looking briefly at the historical role that foreign institutions and governments from Muslim-majority nations have played and how they impact Australian MCOs today.

Finally, this chapter discussed the challenges associated with staffing MCOs in Australia. After addressing the various challenges posed by an over-reliance on volunteers, it revealed the increasing desire from many with organisations to professionalise. However, this was qualified by the reality posed by access to funds. Through a discussion of two of the major incomes streams for MCOs – grants and community donations – it evaluated the challenges of funding organisations to achieve their aims and deliver services to the community. It discussed how grants are often the preferred method of receiving income, but that accessing grants can be challenging, as too can be the negative impacts on an organisation after a grant expires and income is lost. It also looked at the challenges associated with relying on community donations. Notably, satisfying the expectations of the community and justifying expenses, as well as not wanting to be seen as exploiting a typically generous community. Finally, this chapter ended by looking at the management and election processes of some of the MCOs included in this study, as well as addressing some issues of governance.
The internal challenges discussed in this chapter belong to the Muslim communities represented in this study. They test the capabilities of their organisations and threaten their services and ambitions. However, Australian MCOs are also challenged by the realities of the society in which they live. Contemporary Australia presents numerous challenges that MCOs must navigate. As such, external challenges are equally as important in the context of Australian Muslim community leadership and running a successful MCO.
4 Islamophobia: The External Challenge

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter 3, in the context of this thesis, external challenges will relate to issues and factors facing MCOs that occur within the broader socio-political context of Australia and the West. Specifically, this chapter will address Islamophobia in Australia and the anti-Muslim discourse through that which emerged from the semi-structured interviews. Islamophobia, and the intersectionality between Islamophobia and multiple factors of exclusion, were determining factors in whether Australian MCOs were effective and capable of achieving their respective aims and visions.

Over the past few decades, the term ‘Islamophobia’ has become an integral part of political and public discourse, and this can be largely traced to the frequently cited study conducted by the Runnymede Trust in 1997.\textsuperscript{777} The study positioned:

\begin{quote}
The term Islamophobia refers to unfounded hostility towards Islam. It refers also to the practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, and to the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs.\textsuperscript{778}
\end{quote}

The term has practical limitations and its definition continues to be debated, in part, because ‘Islamophobia’ is used so freely as an all-encompassing term. It has been used by a variety of people and in remarkably different ways, which has led to controversy over what it actually means, or even whether it is useful.\textsuperscript{779}

Marcel Maussen reflects that the major shortcomings of Islamophobia as a term and concept is that it groups together all kinds of different forms of discourse, speech and acts, by suggesting that they

\textsuperscript{777} Runnymede Trust, \textit{Islamophobia: a challenge for us all} (London: Runnymede Trust, 1997).
\textsuperscript{778} Ibid, 4.
all emanate from an identical ideological core, which is “fear” or “phobia” of Islam. As such, the term is contested because it is often imprecisely applied to very diverse phenomena, ranging from xenophobia to anti-terrorism policies.

Australia, it can be said, is still dominated by an Anglo-Celtic cultural influence and attitudes to Muslim Australians must also be viewed in this light. Australia’s attitude to its Muslim population cannot be adequately defined through a fear or phobia of Islam and Muslims, but rather, it must include an in-depth look at consciously formulated public policy that can be said to systematically place limitations on the social standing of Muslim communities. It must also be understood through a simultaneous exploration of, for instance, historical protectionist attitudes towards migration in Australia and attitudes towards minority groups (see Chapter One), as well as concepts such as sexism, nationalism, and so forth. Likewise, race, religion and ethnicity are not the only factors in explaining and generating the patterns of social inequality and exclusion that has led, for instance, to certain minority groups in Australia suffering from extreme forms of persecution at work and in public places. Social and economic status, geography, level of education, migration and residency status, age and gender all intersect with race, religion and ethnicity.

It is important to recognise that underlying the challenge that Islamophobia presents to Australian MCOs is a range of factors. It is the intersectionality between Islamophobia and these factors or

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782 Fethi Mansouri, “Muslim Migration to Australia and the Question of Identity and Belonging,” 28-29.

783 Ghassan Hage, White Nation.


phenomena that must be considered when defining Australia’s attitudes and approaches to its Muslim communities.

Approaching Islamophobia, Salman Sayyid, who argues that the term should be seen through the range of its deployments, rather than through its purported essence or its constituent elements,\(^\text{785}\) writes that the politics of Islamophobia are constituted by a struggle between opponents of the concept and its advocates, and that this division spans conventional differences between left and right.\(^\text{786}\) He continues:

> Of the many strange permutations that the so-called ‘war on terror’ has thrown up perhaps none is stranger than the process by which distinctions between left and right that oriented western metropolitan politics since the time of the French Revolution have seemingly collapsed in relation to the ‘Muslim question’.\(^\text{787}\)

When discussing Islamophobia, it is important to recognise that the phenomenon has not and does not rise exclusively from the right. Khaled A. Beydoun elaborates:

> Contrary to popular caricatures and flat media portrayals, Islamophobes are not always conservatives, far-right zealots, “lone wolf” killers, presidential hopefuls – or presidents – using hateful rhetoric, evangelical ideologues, or Trump voters. Moving beyond a narrow conception of Islamophobia requires dismissing these common caricatures. Islamophobes are also Democrats and liberals, libertarians and progressives, city dwellers and Ivy League graduates.\(^\text{788}\)

A diverse and eclectic litany of prominent Islamophobes occupies the left – weaponising atheism as an ideology that not only discredits the spiritual dimensions of Islam, but also demonises it using established orientalist terminology. For these individuals, Islam is illegitimate because it is a religion,

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\(^{786}\) Ibid.


but unlike other religions, it is distinctly threatening because is it seen as inherently at odds with liberal values.\textsuperscript{789}

Beydoun uses the example of the American liberal comedian and talk show host Bill Maher, of HBO’s \textit{Real Time with Bill Maher},\textsuperscript{790} to help illustrate his point. He continues:

Maher callously conflates the whole of Islam with the deviant interpretations of the faith subscribed to by terror groups such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) ... With little knowledge of Islam, Maher pawns off expertise about the faith and its people on an audience that knows just as little, or even less, about Islam. Bill Maher, an Islamophobe by any measure, illustrates that a figure championed by the left can be wed to the trite stereotypes and monolithic view of Islam that drive Islamophobia. His large following indicates that he is hardly alone.\textsuperscript{791}

The narrow framing of many existing definitions of Islamophobia as a ‘dislike of or prejudice against Muslims,’” overlooks the state’s role in authorising and emboldening individual acts of violence against Muslims and the mutually reinforcing relationship between the state and media institutions.\textsuperscript{792}

For this thesis, Islamophobia will be framed according to a definition provided by Beydoun, who offers a contemporary framework for the concept. He writes:

This historical context, coupled with its modern complexity, inspired my new definition and framing of Islamophobia. Above all, Islamophobia is founded upon the presumption that Islam is inherently violent, alien, and unassimilable - driven by the belief that expressions of Muslim identity correlate with a propensity for terrorism. In addition to this foundational definition are three attendant dimensions: 1- private Islamophobia; 2- structural Islamophobia, and; 3- dialectical Islamophobia.\textsuperscript{793}


\textsuperscript{790} Real Time with Bill Maher, “Ben Affleck, Sam Harris and Bill Maher Debate Radical Islam” (video), Published 6 October 2014, accessed 12 April 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlN9D81eO60.

\textsuperscript{791} Khaled A. Beydoun, \textit{American Islamophobia}, 30.

\textsuperscript{792} Ibid, 28.

According to Beydoun, private Islamophobia “is the fear, suspicion, and violent targeting of Muslims by private actors.” 794 Within the experiences shared by the participants of this study, such actions as the tossing of a pig’s head into the women’s bathroom at the University of Western Australia, 795 the firebombing of a car and accompanying anti-Islam graffiti outside a mosque and school in Thornlie; 796 and, the physical assault of a participant and her sister in Sydney 797 are all examples of private Islamophobia.

The second dimension of Beydoun’s framework, structural Islamophobia, “is the fear and suspicion of Muslims on the part of government institutions. This fear and suspicion are manifested and enforced through the enactment of and advancements of laws, policy, programming, or formal pronouncements by state agents.” 798 Public policy, such as the Australian Government’s Countering Violence Extremism (CVE) initiative ‘Living Safe Together,’ 799 can be said to be an example of structural Islamophobia in the Australian context.

In an important and significant distinction from prevailing views of Islamophobia as an irrational fear, structural Islamophobic policy and positions are as equally driven by rational motives as they are irrational, “strategically deployed to carry forward specific domestic and international state objectives.” 800

794 Ibid.
795 Abdulelhadi, interview.
797 Fahmi, interview.
798 Khaled A. Beydoun, “Rethinking Islamophobia.”
800 Khaled A. Beydoun, “Rethinking Islamophobia.”
Finally, the third dimension, is the very thread that binds the private and structural forms together. “Dialectical Islamophobia is the process by which structural Islamophobia shapes, reshapes and endorses views or attitudes about Islam and Muslim subjects.” Beydoun explains:

State action legitimises prevailing misconceptions and misrepresentations of Islam and communicates these damaging ideas through state-sponsored policy, programming or rhetoric. Law is not merely policy, but also a set of messages and directives disseminated to broader society, instructing them to partake in the project of policing, punishing and extra-judicially prosecuting Muslims. We see this process functioning most vividly during times of crisis, such as the direct aftermath of a terror attack, when hate incidents and violence towards Muslims and perceived Muslims are pervasive.

With his three-tiered definition of Islamophobia, Beydoun is attempting to both highlight and collapse “the wall between private and structural Islamophobia that perpetuates the latter as a legitimate form of Islamophobia.” Islamophobia is not simply the actions of the individual who rips off a woman’s hijab on the train or protests the construction of a mosque; it is also the social realities and structures that lead to and legitimise the act.

This chapter will address some of the ways in which the challenge of Islamophobia presents itself to Muslims and MCOs in Australia. It will discuss four of the major challenges regarding the phenomenon of Islamophobia to emerge from the semi-structured interviews – the ‘good’ Muslim narrative, the public relations problem, institutional Islamophobia and direct threats – and address some of the ways in which they effect Muslims and MCOs. It will conclude with a brief exploration of some of the ways the participating MCOs respond to Islamophobia. Notably, through encouraging the reporting of Islamophobia and through promoting Islam and Muslims.

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801 Khaled A. Beydoun, American Islamophobia, 40.
802 Khaled A. Beydoun, “Rethinking Islamophobia.”
803 Ibid.
804 Khaled A. Beydoun, American Islamophobia, 29.
4.2 The “Good Muslim” Narrative

A key component of the way Islamophobia has manifested in Australia, and a key challenge facing MCOs in Australia, is the prevalence of the ‘good Muslim’ narrative. The predominance of terrorism or violence in the discourse surrounding Muslims has served, in part, to feed the perception in wider society that followers of Islam are locked in an ideological battle between the proverbial good – positioned as conforming to ‘Western ethics and morals’ or as having ‘assimilated’, and evil – embracing anti-Western rhetoric and advocating for or planning and performing violence.

In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks on the United States, President George W. Bush made some comments that can be seen as having given rise to this phenomenon in its contemporary state. Mahmood Mamdani explained:

President Bush moved to distinguish between “good Muslims” and “bad Muslims.” From this point of view, “bad Muslims” were clearly responsible for terrorism. At the same time, the president seemed to assure Americans that “good Muslims” were anxious to clear their names and consciences of this horrible crime and would undoubtedly support “us” in a war against “them.” But this could not hide the central message of such discourse: unless proven to be “good,” every Muslim was presumed to be “bad.” All Muslims were now under obligation to prove their credentials by joining in a war against “bad Muslims.”

This distinction between the radical or “bad” Islam and the law-abiding or “good” Islam has become a common political framing in the twenty-first century. The fact that Muslims must be proven to be good means that there is an underlying assumption that Islam is a potential menace to society.

As a result of the ‘good Muslim’ narrative, Muslims have been consistently sought to speak out against acts of violence committed by individuals and groups who seek to highlight or emphasise

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805 Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 15.

their alleged piety and loyalty to Islam. These comments then serve to feed and reinforce the public perception that Islam is inherently violent.

Some Australian Muslim leaders are growing increasingly frustrated at this situation – either they condemn or are themselves condemned, however, others reluctantly accepted these circumstances. For instance, the sheikh from the Western suburbs of Melbourne stated that while he did not think it was the role of imams to condemn every act of violence committed by individuals or groups claiming to act for Islam, he did acknowledge that this was a demand that wider Australia had placed on imams and that they had to live in the circumstances of the time.

Another trend which can be said to reinforce the ‘good Muslim’ narrative is the use of certain Muslim spokespeople to criticise Islam and Muslims. Often presented as experts on Islam or Muslims, through their ‘connection’ to or ‘understanding’ of Islam, these spokespeople can voice criticisms that could be deemed as being unduly harsh were they presented by individuals with no ‘affiliation’ to Muslim communities. Within the global context, people like the Somalian-born Ayaan Hirsi Ali can be seen as a representative of this role, while in Australia Mohammad Tawhidi was raised by participants of this research as someone acting likewise.


808 Krayem, interview.

809 Sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne, interview.


811 In her 2006 memoir Infidel, Ali detailed her experiences of female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage in Somalia. Ali now works as a public intellectual speaking against FGM and forced marriage and has made many controversial claims about her former faith, including that women are “slaves” and that Islam is a “destructive nihilistic cult of death [which] legitimises murder.” (Jacqueline Maley, “Why did Ayaan Hirsi Ali really cancel her Australian speaking tour?” Sydney Morning Herald, 7 April 2017. https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/why-did-ayaan-hirsi-ali-really-cancel-her-australian-speaking-tour-20170406-gvf31i.html.)

812 Yunich, interview. Krayem, interview. In the space of approximately one year, Mohammed Tawhidi become one of the most prominent Muslim voices in the Australian media. He has warned that Australia is being “infested by extremist Muslims,” while suggesting that Muslim schools be shut down and that Muslims from the Middle East be banned from coming to Australia. Although referring to himself as an imam, he is said to have no mosque in Australia and very few supporters within Australia’s Muslim communities. (Bronwyn Adcock, “Imam Mohammad Tawhidi: The problem with the media’s favourite Muslim,” ABC, 23 June 2017.)
Individuals such as Ali and Tawhidi achieve success partly because their ideas appeal to large sections of wider society (see 5.2 MCOS and the Media). Beydoun refers to these type of individuals as a “growing roster of native informants, who capitalise on their religious and racial identity as a form of expertise … pushing Islamophobia from the left.”813 For some, they are the ‘good Muslims’ (or ‘enlightened’ Muslims) that have acknowledged the faults inherent in Islam, and either outright rejected its supposed teachings or set out to reform it, and this appeals to those that understand Islam as a dangerous religion.

However, they are not the only individuals to fit into the category of what some would consider ‘good Muslims.’ This category also consists of individuals who, to the public, appear to have assimilated and embraced local, ‘Western’ values. In the Australian context, people like academic and television personality Waleed Aly and Australian Rules footballer Bachar Houli can be seen as ‘good’ within the ‘good Muslim’ narrative. Aly, although disliked by some on the far-right of the political spectrum,814 can be categorised as such because, as Silma Ihram expressed, through his activism, media work, and music, he can be said to ‘fit in’, as he is not defined by his religion;815 Houli, as a successful sportsperson in a nation that values sporting success,816 likewise, can be seen as an individual who has ‘assimilated’ and embraced ‘local values’.

Yassmin Abdel-Magied was another who seemed to epitomise a ‘good’ and acceptable Muslim, until she did not. The example of Abdel-Magied’s transition from ‘good’ to ‘bad’ is a revealing chapter in the history of the ‘good Muslim’ narrative within the Australian context. Her story exposes how ‘White Australia’ still sees itself as occupying the role of masters of national space.817 Much like how

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813 Khaled. A. Beydoun, “US liberal Islamophobia is rising.”
815 Ihram, interview.
817 Ghassan Hage, White Nation.
Hage conceptualised ‘ethnics’ as being people White Australians could make decisions about; Muslims, within the context of the ‘good Muslim’ narrative, are objects to be governed.

Abdel-Magied was born in Sudan and raised in Australia. She is the Founder and Chair of Youth Without Borders and Mumtaza, and in 2015 received the award for Queensland Young Australian of the Year. A mechanical engineer by trade, she is described as a social advocate, writer and broadcaster. Her accomplishments at such a young age had her appear to many as a success story within ‘multicultural’ Australia.

Abdel-Magied’s journey to becoming, in her words, “Australia’s most publicly hated Muslim,” can be traced to three events. Firstly, in September 2016, she walked out of, and subsequently criticised, a speech by American author Lionel Shriver responding to accusations that her depiction of non-white characters in her book The Mandibles was racist. Abdel-Magied was critical of Shriver’s defence of her work, writing: “The stench of privilege hung heavy in the air, and I was reminded of my 'place' in the world.” Secondly, on an episode of ABC’s Q&A, a television discussion program that focuses mostly on politics and “big issues,” Abdel-Magied sparked controversy again when in a fiery exchange with Tasmanian senator Jacqui Lambie, she said, “Islam, to me, is the most feminist religion.” This led to a petition calling on the ABC to “publicly condemn and fire” Abdel-Magied.

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818 Ibid, 16-17.
824 Ibid.
which gathered tens of thousands of signatures. Finally, in April 2017, Abdel-Magied received wide-spread criticism and calls for her dismissal from several of her government-funded roles for a post on the social media platform Facebook. The post, “Lest. We. Forget. (Manus, Nauru, Syria, Palestine ...),” was alleged to have disrespected soldiers of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps who fought in the First World War on the day commemorating the 1915 invasion of Gallipoli, Turkey. Abdel-Magied removed the bracketed part and apologised “unreservedly,” acknowledging that some had found it disrespectful. She received death threats, videos of beheadings and rapes clogged her email and social media accounts, senior politicians called for her to be deported, and she was forced to move house and change her phone number.

In July 2016, Abdel-Magied announced she was moving to the UK. In a subsequent interview with the ABC, she expressed that she felt betrayed by her home country, saying that people in Australia are happy to accept you “as long as you toe the line.”

This idea that in Australia, Muslims, migrants or people of colour are only accepted by wider society so long as they remain ‘in their place,’ as kind of lesser or limited citizens, who ‘know their place,’ received support from several of the participants of this research.

Ayman Islam said:

[It is condescending], that’s how I would describe it. If you’re not the compliant, or the ‘good Muslim’, playing within the boundaries [you are criticised] ... We're sort of starting to see that, to an extent, in the coverage of Yassmin Abdel-Magied, who made some remarks that I don’t think are all that controversial, and I would wonder if that was someone else, whether

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827 Melissa Fyfe, “Yassmin Abdel-Magied on becoming 'Australia's most publicly hated Muslim'.”
829 Ibid. “Lest we forget,” is a common phrase used in English-speaking countries, including Australia, when remembering victims of war. Manus and Nauru refer to an island of Papua New Guinea and a small island nation in the Pacific Ocean respectively, where Australia have run offshore Australian immigration detention centres (the facility on Manus closed in October 2017), while Syria and Palestine are two Muslim-majority nations synonymous for displaced citizens and refugees.
830 Ibid.
831 Ibid. 
832 Melissa Fyfe, “Yassmin Abdel-Magied on becoming 'Australia's most publicly hated Muslim'.”
that would’ve been taken the same way. We’ve had Waleed Aly [receive criticism, as well] ... The Muslim community looks at it and sees prominent Muslims, prominent people in their field, speaking out about things ... and somehow, they’re being hounded ... to such an extent that you’re wondering ... ‘Are you allowed to have a Muslim voice in current, contemporary Australian society?’

Silma Ihram agreed with Islam’s sentiment, emphasising the intersection of the Islamophobic and racist elements at play in the circumstances of Abdel-Magied’s infamy. She said:

Yassmin Abdel-Magied coped it shockingly after Q&A. Number one, because she was young, and she was standing up to someone who was a bit of an icon of the right. But secondly, because she is not [white], she is African. So, it’s the racist [element] as well as the Islamophobia element that you cop.

Speaking to the circumstances of Abdel-Magied’s transition from ‘good Muslim’ to ‘bad Muslim’, Ghaith Krayem said:

Yassmin says nothing that is contentious. There’s not a single thing she has said or done, that is contentious ... She is a role model for what the general public want Muslims to be. She has, and she [still] plays, a very important role. But she actually has very little training theologically or politically. She’s 25, 26, [with] huge life experience, and talks from that perspective. And there’s a role for that. But she’s not the person who’s going to set the narrative for the community, nor should she be. But she is held up as that, not by us [Muslims], but by other players. The moment she says anything that doesn’t fit within the frame set up by those other players, she’s now the ‘bad Muslim.’ Even though she is the paradigm of what they would want a Muslim to be, as long as she stays in her box ... But it demonstrates the difficulty anybody has being a spokesperson.

Finally, Nora Amath, who knew Abdel-Magied and her family on a personal level, spoke admiringly of her accomplishments and resilience in the face of extreme public pressure. She said:

Now, here is somebody who is articulate and young and constantly ... being sort of propelled to the spotlight and doing a remarkable job for such a young person. And she is one of the most moderate voices ... I know Yassmin really well and here is somebody that for all Australians to say, ‘Look, we should be celebrating her and supporting her,’ and she just gets ... smashed ... And literally after the Q&A [episode], the hostility towards her, whether it was on social media or through ... talk-back radio or newspaper articles, she was just slammed. And I thought, you want Muslims to integrate ... [and] you keep saying, ‘Where are the moderate Muslims?’ Well there is a moderate Muslim. And yet, she speaks her mind and she’ll just [get abused] ... So, [other young Muslim leaders] are not gonna do that. It takes

833 Islam, interview.
834 Ihram, interview.
835 Krayem, interview.
somebody with a lot of confidence to be able to do that.\(^{836}\)

The transition of Abdel-Magied from ‘good’ Muslim – celebrated as the embodiment of how ‘Multicultural Australia’ imagines itself successful – to ‘bad’ Muslim – ‘outspoken’ and challenging of public perceptions of Islam – is a revealing example of how this phenomenon transpires in the Australian context. She was positioned as conforming to ‘Western ethics and morals,’ and as having ‘assimilated’ to be representative of Australia values, until it appeared that she did not, with this alleged betrayal of trust leading to significant threats and abuse from public figures and on social media platforms, which culminated in her departure from Australia.

The ‘good Muslim’ narrative is one of the ways in which Islamophobia in Australia challenges Muslims and MCOs. While individuals, like Abdel-Magied, can be directly threatened, MCOs are impacted by having limitations, real and perceived, placed on their participation in the public sphere. This was most evident in the comments of Krayem and the sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne regarding the ‘condemnation paradox’, and in Islam’s remark, “Are you allowed to have a Muslim voice in current, contemporary Australian society?”

Much like how ‘White multiculturalism’ in Hage’s ‘White nation fantasy’ serves to mystify and keep out of public discourse “other multicultural realities in which White people are not the overwhelming occupiers of the centre or national space,”\(^{837}\) the ‘good Muslim’ narrative can be seen to do the same for Australian Muslim communities.

### 4.3 The Public Relations Problem

As several of the participants of this study alluded to, the Australian Muslim community is experiencing a public relations (PR) disaster. Limiting media and political framing of terrorism as a

\(^{836}\) Amath, interview.  
largely Islamic issue (structural Islamophobia) has served to both instigate and subsequently to reinforce negative views of Muslims (dialectical Islamophobia).

Another element of the ‘PR problem’ is that Islam is often framed as monolithic. According to Said, this phenomenon is impacted by orientalist assumptions:

> The West is modern, greater than the sum of its parts, full of enriching contradictions and yet always ‘Western’ in its cultural identity; the world of Islam, on the other hand, is no more than ‘Islam’, reducible to a small number of unchanging characteristics despite the appearance of contradictions and experiences of variety that seem on the surface to be as plentiful as those of the West.

Similarly, Peucker and Akbarzadeh argue this framing of Islam is often shaped as in opposition to values of individual freedom and equality, “which are idealised as fully realised and implemented norms in Western societies.” Therefore, when widespread violence in Muslim-majority nations or individual acts of terrorism are committed by a Muslim or small group of Muslims seeking to emphasise their alleged piety are depicted in the media, Islam can be seen as prominent in the cause of the violence. Commencing in earnest in its contemporary form in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks, this phenomenon has continued over the subsequent two decades and has served to create a PR problem for Muslims, and subsequently, for MCOs.

The socio-political climate within Australia also serves to reinforce the perception that Islam is dangerous and in opposition to Australian values, thus reinforcing the PR problem. Established practices within Islam, such as face and body covering, continue to be attacked and fiercely debated in the public arena, often by individuals with little knowledge or understanding of Islam. Indeed,

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838 Ibid.
839 Mario Peucker and Shahram Akbarzadeh, *Muslim Active Citizenship in the West*, 86.
media framing was identified as a major factor in the ongoing PR problem (see 5.2 MCOs and the Media). 841

Likewise, politicians directly contribute to the PR problem through pointed criticisms or coordinated campaigns that attempt to capitalise on people’s ignorance and fear with regards to Islam and Muslims. For instance, Australian Senator Pauline Hanson’s One Nation party states as one of its official policies: “No more building of mosques and Islamic schools until an inquiry is held into Islam, to determine whether it is a religion or totalitarian political ideology, undermining our democracy and way of life.” 842

To a degree, Muslim peak bodies can be accused of reinforcing the view that Islam is monolithic – much in the same way that Muslim spokespeople can be seen to represent the opinions and beliefs of a greater number of people than they actually may. An organisation like the ICV, for instance, can be perceived to play into wider society’s monolithic understanding of Muslims. Reim Sweid elaborates:

The wider community sees the Muslim community as this monolithic [group] … and then the Muslim community itself, starts to see itself that way. That's what I mean in the sense that the ICV will only see … like if someone else wanted to create another peak body for Muslims, or something, they would be like, 'Oh no ... we're this one community, we have to speak with one voice...' So, we're all kind of feeding into this perception that we all have one [voice]; we all think the same; do the same; and, believe the same. 843

Likewise, the ad hoc nature of MCOs and individuals’ approach to addressing the PR challenge was also deemed a concern. Nora Amath elaborates:

I know there are some individuals who are doing it, but we are not doing it collectively … I think what we need in the Muslim community is a great PR campaign … [and] money [to pay for it]. Let's just pay a PR [professional] … and let them do it, because at the moment it is

841 Fahmi, interview.
843 Sweid, interview.
just ad hoc. We’re not equipped to do this.\textsuperscript{844}

While the media and the contemporary socio-political climate can be seen as two of the main instigators in the ongoing PR problem facing the Muslim community, the insular nature of some Australian Muslim communities (see 3.4.1 \textit{Divided and Insular Communities}) was also seen as a factor. Hasan Yunich elaborates:

For me - I see it as a major issue, because when you talk about Muslim biases and media misrepresentations, well, where are the Muslims helping out with meals on wheels? Doing red cross stuff? You don’t see ‘em. So, we have to somehow address that and get people into there and teach them that Islam is not just about caring for yourself, you have to care for other people. You have organised structures; ways you can help them. Go set foot into police volunteer service and help there [for instance]. That’s my push basically – trying to make the community not so insular.\textsuperscript{845}

However, while the kind of social participation that Yunich proposes can be said to boost perceptions of Muslim Australians as generous and charitable, given dialectical Islamophobia in Australian society, such actions are still at risk of being viewed through that vortex – in turn, reinforcing the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Muslim paradigm.

\section*{4.4 Institutional Islamophobia}

Appreciating the impact that institutional Islamophobia has on Muslim communities within the Australian context is crucial to understanding the effectiveness of MCOs. Institutional Islamophobia refers to certain practices, built into social institutions and structures, that disadvantage Muslims in the West, while no attempt is made to remove them so long as the balance of power lies in the hands of non-Muslims.\textsuperscript{846} It is a concept that is said to have been adapted from the more familiar

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Amath, interview.
\item Yunich, interview.
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concept of ‘institutional racism’ that was defined in the UK’s landmark Macpherson report in
1999. The report stated:

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service
to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in
processes, attitudes or behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting
prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping, which disadvantage minority
ethnic people. It persists because of the failure of the organisation openly and adequately to
recognise and address its existence and causes by policy, example and leadership. Without
recognition and action to eliminate such racism it can prevail as part of the ethos or culture
of the organisation. It is a corrosive disease.

Critics of the concept argue that as, according to their definitions, ‘Islamophobia’ denotes a phobia
or irrational fear of Islam, it cannot be decoupled from an actor’s intentions or perceptions. Given
that institutional Islamophobia, if adapting the term from institutional racism, denotes an objective
fact, independent of an actor’s intentions or perceptions and built into the anonymous workings of
institutions, the term is somewhat contradictory.

While debates over the effectiveness of the term are ongoing, the phenomenon to which it attempts
to refer is still present, much to the detriment of Australia’s Muslim communities and MCOs.

Much in the same way as institutional racism effects specific communities, institutional
Islamophobia acts as a form of symbolic violence by restricting access to social capital for Muslims to
varying degrees depending on their religion, ethnicity, race, and so forth. For instance, within the
Australian socio-political context, a first-generation Muslim migrant from Sudan will theoretically
have less social capital than a fifth-generation convert to Islam with predominantly British heritage.

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847 Malcolm Brown, “Institutional Islamophobia in the Cases of Ahmed Zaoui and Mohamed Haneef,” in
*Cultures in Refuge: Seeking Sanctuary in Modern Australia*, eds. Anna Hayes and Robert Mason (Farnham:
848 William Macpherson, *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Report of an Inquiry by Sir William Macpherson of
850 Ibid.
Such power imbalances can also be seen internally within Australian Muslim communities, wherein there were allegations from the participants of this research of an Arab-bias. Ayman Islam elaborates:

Unfortunately, Arab issues tend to be more dominant ... than other issues. We need to change that, just as much as we need to change the perception in the wider community, that the Muslim community is homogenous ... We also have issues of importance that we need to talk about and discuss as well ... ‘What I think about Palestine,’ is a classic case [that] often gets a lot of airplay, but we also have the issue in Burma as well, in Western China, all those things ... the drought in Somalia, which is really an issue. And I think the challenge of a peak body is to try and ensure that these issues that we have get airplay and that it’s not dominated by the Arab-centric sort of conflict. Unfortunately, that’s a cultural kind of thing ... They [Arabs] still sort of see themselves as the voice of the Muslim world. We try to balance that in Australia [and] make sure that those issues have a bit of balance to them ... But it’s a challenge, because it is still an issue.851

While institutional Islamophobia, partnered with institutional racism, serves to maintain an environment in which Australian Muslims are limited in their capacity to exert influence and power, private, structural and dialectical Islamophobia serve simultaneously to reinforce this environment in less subtle ways. This can affect job prospects and access to education and health for Muslims,852 but it also affects MCOs, as was made evident throughout this study.

For instance, Wajma Padshah shared a story of how the Muslim Women Support Centre WA had some issues with a local camp facility while trying to arrange a retreat for a leadership program they were running:

We had booked a venue and it was all set to go ... and then we rang back ... and said, “Is there a hall or something that we can be using for prayers? Is that possible?” As soon as that happened, we received a call to say, ‘The water system is not working [and] unfortunately we are going to have to cancel this [as] there’s been some issues with the water tanks.’ A little bit of digging in and looking at what actually happened ... [and] the women said, [and] maybe it was accidental, ‘Oh, well our prayer area is there, but it’s meant to be for a specific group [that they were from], and I’m not sure that we feel very comfortable with you guys praying.’ So, that was a no. And then we followed up with the council because the facilitator

851 Islam, interview.
was quite passionate about it ... Nothing was reported [about the water tank].

This experience was very upsetting, Padshah continued:

It was a horrible experience to go through and look [for an alternative venue] at the last minute, but at the same time you choose to vote with your feet. So, we won’t use that venue again, but we could have pursued that more [and] we could’ve asked for damages ... but nobody had the energy. And a lot of the time we let go of these things. What we are asking women to do is call us and at least make a verbal report, so that we can collate it and we have some numbers. Because without saying, ‘Oh we have this,’ regardless of the studies done so far, it’s like you’re imagining it.

While the definition of institutional Islamophobia remains contested, there remains little doubt that there are certain practices, built into Australia’s social institutions and structures, that disadvantage Australian Muslim communities. Given that most of Australia’s Muslims either come from or can trace their immediate ancestry to parts of Asia, the Middle East and Africa, the intersectionality of institutional Islamophobia with institutional racism can be said to further reinforce these disadvantages.

Meanwhile, the experience that Padshah addresses above is not unique and is one example of the various ways in which Islamophobia, in its various forms, can impact Australian MCOs.

4.5 Direct Threats and Violence

While institutional Islamophobia acts as a form of symbolic violence restricting access to social capital for Muslims, Australian Muslims are also often targets of direct threats and violence from individuals and groups. Several of the participants shared examples of how they had been directly impacted by what Beydoun terms ‘private Islamophobia’.

For instance, Marum Abdulelhabi shared how the University of Western Australia had recently had trouble with a right-wing student on campus, who had thrown a pig’s head into a women’s

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853 Padshah, interview.
854 Ibid.
855 Khaled A. Beydoun, “Rethinking Islamophobia.”
bathroom near the on-campus prayer facilities. Abdulelhadi said that it was especially confronting when an incident such as this happened at a university.\textsuperscript{856}

Likewise, Asma Fahmi spoke of multiple occasions she and members of her family had experienced incidents, noting that men often targeted Muslim women.\textsuperscript{857} Hasan Yunich concurred that women are more often targeted than men. He said, "You do get the hate comments and the Muslim women are the ones that usually cop it, because they are visible and they're the softer targets."\textsuperscript{858}

Social theorists have acknowledged that gender is often a determining factor in the criminal-victim relationship given the tendency of men to “have the greater physical strength in crimes against women.”\textsuperscript{859} Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) found that of the reports of anti-Muslim incidents in the UK received in 2016, 56% of the targets were women, while 69% of the perpetrators were men;\textsuperscript{860} however, given Muslim women tend not to report discriminatory treatment,\textsuperscript{861} it is possible that these figures may be misrepresentative of the reality, with women targeted to a greater proportion than the quantitative study found.

While Muslim women are more likely to be targets of private Islamophobia than men, they can also be considered worse off in terms of the other ways Islamophobia is deployed. The \textit{Europe Islamophobia Report 2017} recommended Muslim women’s access to employment should be systematically improved, finding them the most discriminated group among Muslims.\textsuperscript{862} Such

\textsuperscript{856} Abdulelhadi, interview.
\textsuperscript{857} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{858} Yunich, interview.
\textsuperscript{859} Stephen Schafer, \textit{The Victim and His Criminal} (New York: Random House, 1968), 44-45.
evidence can be said to suggest an intersection between Islamophobia and sexism within the Western context.

As easily identifiable representatives of Islam, MCOs are often targets of direct threats from individuals and groups. Asma Fahmi shared some of her experiences working for the Lebanese Muslim Association in Sydney. She said:

When I was working at the LMA we would get bomb threats all the time, like all the time. And it’s just like, you answer the phone, ‘We’re gonna kill you’; ‘Yeah, okay. Bye.’ Like it just became second nature to just respond to these threats all the time.863

Likewise, Aziz Khan from the Islamic Council of Western Australia referenced Islamophobic hate mail that the organisation had received,864 while the ICV is well-rehearsed in receiving and reporting direct threats made to its members.865

Hasan Yunich was relatively nonchalant about the Islamic Information Centre of South Australia’s experiences with Islamophobia. He said:

I’ve seen stickers on the school once – ban Islam stickers – but there was only like three of them. (I) took a photo, laughed, and ripped them off, and just kept going.866

With the rising phenomenon of social media, the ability for individuals to make direct threats has increased dramatically.867 Today’s social media have opened new avenues for individuals to express themselves in alternative public spaces.868 According to the European Islamophobia Report 2017,
Islamophobic groups are especially active on the Internet.\(^\text{869}\) Often, the report noted, “The Internet is where right-wing groups emerge before materialising in ‘real life’.”\(^\text{870}\)

Asma Fahmi elaborated on the phenomenon of social media. She said:

> Anonymity kind of helps people .... You kind of find out what people are really thinking ... Even the ones that use their Facebook profiles; they don't care now. They are just happy to say whatever they are thinking.\(^\text{871}\)

Any new technology widely embraced by society can challenge the norms of that society and create new ways of perpetrating crime and avoiding detection, as Andre Oboler writes in *Islamophobia in Cyberspace: Hate Crimes Go Viral*:

> Online vilification, bullying and incitement against individuals and groups through social media are key challenges society faces in this new social media driven world ... Online Islamophobia is likely to incite religious hatred and xenophobia leading to real world crimes and a rise in political extremism both on the far-right and from the radicalisation of Muslim youth in response to messages of exclusion.\(^\text{872}\)

This sentiment is present in the comments made by Ahmed Zreika, president of the Islamic Society of South Australia, who suggested a change in the way private Islamophobia is manifesting. He said:

> The Islamophobia now [that] we are dealing with started especially in the last three or four years, because it is growing. So, before it was ... behind the scenes ... but now, you can see it ... The people who are against the Muslims, now they tell you, ‘We are against you.’\(^\text{873}\)

As to why Muslim individuals and organisations received these kinds of direct threats, several of the participants shared their thoughts. Referencing right-wing groups and a political party known as the Australian Liberty Alliance, Aziz Khan suggested that members of these groups were simply looking for someone to blame for their own misfortune. He said:


\(^{870}\) Ibid.

\(^{871}\) Fahmi, interview.


\(^{873}\) Zreika, interview.
I wouldn’t say they are on the margins [of society]; they can pull people ... who look at the Muslims [and think], ‘It’s their fault we are like this.’

As Khan’s comments allude, socio-economic factors have long been suggested as prevalent in determining support for right-wing groups; however, there is no single socio-economic base for right-wing activism, and such arguments are considered by some as outdated and no longer supported by empirical evidence. There are a variety of reasons why people align themselves with right-wing groups and the linkages between socio-economic interests and extreme right voting is far from clear.

While an alignment with the ideas of right-wing political parties may impact an individual’s likelihood to take direct action against a Muslim or MCO, divisive and hateful rhetoric from some politicians, or dialectic Islamophobia, can also be seen to legitimise and justify such actions – particularly when in response to an occurrence of violence committed by a self-identifying Muslim either domestically or internationally.

Wajma Padshah expressed that these incidents and events seemed to increase when politicians attacked Muslims. She said:

We’ve had women who’ve come through the Centre and a lot of it (is) unfortunately increasing with the negative political rhetoric ... When something is said, we do see that there is a shift and a change in the community. And it actually does put women’s safety at risk as well. Things like the bus ... not stopping to pick up a woman with a pram, to screaming cars going past, to things being thrown. The biggest and the scariest one we’ve had in Perth was the firebombing that happened (at Thornlie Mosque) ... Kids go to school there, because that’s attached to a school. As well as it was Ramadan, so families were there and that was horrible.

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874 Aziz Khan, interview.
879 Ibid.
Right-wing politicians such as Pauline Hanson and Jacqui Lambie, through their aggressive and hateful rhetoric, can serve to legitimise the actions that individuals take in threatening Muslims and Muslim groups. This is an extreme example of what Beydoun refers to when he writes:

> My definition of Islamophobia frames the state as a potent collaborator that influences and (periodically) drives the acts of individual hatemongers, or Islamophobes, making it complicit in the range of hate crimes and hate incidents targeting Muslim individuals and institutions.  

Similarly, sections of the Australian media can also be viewed as a factor in both the promotion and legitimisation of the dangerous views that can lead to these threats (see 5.2 MCOs and the Media).

While direct threats and Islamophobia-inspired attacks impact individual Muslims, their families and friends, and MCOs in an overwhelmingly negative way, Wajma Padshah noted that occasionally some good can emerge in the aftermath. In reference to the Thornlie Mosque firebombing, she said:

> But obviously there's a positive ... So, the next day one of the gentlemen coming in and bringing his two little girls with a bunch of flowers to say, 'This is not us.' We try to also focus on those things without ignoring the reality, that there is racism – if I can call it racism – there's a lot of that around.

Similarly, Ayman Islam said that while the ICV receives abusive calls and letters every week, they also receive lots of calls of support and positive messages.

Private Islamophobia in the form of direct threats and violence against Muslims is certainly a challenge facing MCOs in Australia. As previous studies have indicated, and as was reinforced by several of the participants of this research, Muslim women are disproportionately targeted in such incidents, while men are more often the perpetrators. MCOs are also targets of private Islamophobia as, much like a woman wearing a hijab, they can be easily identified as Muslim. Furthermore, the rise of social media, and the subsequent relative simplicity by which members of the public are now
able to express their opinions and make direct threats, can be said to have increased the dangers posed by private Islamophobia. Finally, while direct threats and violence are often the acts of individuals, it can be argued that the state is, in part, complicit in these actions. Structural and dialectical Islamophobia can be seen as legitimising the acts of private Islamophobes. If direct threats and violence are to be addressed and limited within this context, MCOs are likely to need to challenge structural and dialectical Islamophobia, as well as private.

Overcoming the challenge that Islamophobia represents is by no means a straightforward task, however, some of the participants shared their ideas for beginning to overcome these challenges.

### 4.6 Responses of Muslim Community Organisations to Islamophobia

Working within the existing socio-political conditions to decrease the prevalence of ignorant and misconceived ideas about Islam and Muslims can be a very challenging prospect. The responses of MCOs to the challenges of Islamophobia varies depending on the organisation and the aims and vision of that organisation. However, the feedback from participants suggests that the organisations represented in this research can have their responses to Islamophobia predominantly categorised into two bodies of action: encouraging individuals affected by Islamophobia to report the incident to police or other organisations and promoting Islam and Muslims.

#### 4.6.1 Encouraging Reporting of Islamophobia

Encouraging victims of Islamophobia to advise law enforcement agencies of an incident was a common trend among the represented MCOs. This was advocated as it was deemed an appropriate response so as to highlight the number of occurrences and ensure that violent perpetrators had a greater chance of being punished, but also because most MCOs are limited in their capabilities to act.
For instance, Ahmed Zreika outlined that several of the members of the Islamic Society of South Australia have approached the organisation seeking guidance on how to deal with Islamophobic attacks; however, the organisation has felt limited in how they can assist. Zreika said:

As an organisation ... 99% of our answer is, ‘Go to the police.’ And they go there, because we cannot do anything. The options available for us as an organisation, [are] very, very, very limited. Like, to answer our Muslim community or reply to the Islamophobes. If we raise it on our social network or in the media, then ... the backlash from other people is growing ... So, it will be action and reaction. 883

Some of the MCOs recommended victims of Islamophobia report the incident to organisations set up to monitor and record such occurrences. As Secretary of the Islamic Council of Western Australia, Aziz Khan had, on occasion, worked with Mariam Veiszadeh of the Islamophobia Register Australia to publicise Islamophobic incidents in and around Perth:

The Islamic Council [of WA] does [and] I do work with her. If an incident is happening, I link up with her and say, ‘look.’ She publicises things. We keep it low profile [though]. 884

The Islamophobia Register Australia encourages individuals to report incidents of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiment so that they may be recorded and analysed. 885 Islamophobia Watch Australia provides a similar service, while also offering “a case management service to ensure victims of Islamophobia receive access to appropriate legal, counselling and/or other appropriate forms of support;” 886 however, both organisations are in their infancy and are yet to publish any reports on their respective websites. 887

883 Zreika, interview.
884 Aziz Khan, interview.
887 True as of 10 April 2018.
In Victoria, Ayman Islam said that the ICV receives a visit from a community liaison officer from Victoria Police once a month, with whom they can discuss any issues surrounding individuals making direct threats against the organisations or their members.888

Encouraging victims of assault to report and record incidents so that they receive appropriate support is an important aspect of the role that some MCOs play. Asma Fahmi outlined her reasons for getting involved with the Islamophobia Register Australia. She suggested that part of her motivation to join was to ensure that Islamophobic attacks, like those which occurred against members of her family as well as herself, do not go unreported. She said:

The reason why I got involved in the first place was because I was physically assaulted twice. And so, they needed somebody to speak to the media, because a lot of people don’t speak to the media. I have a relative who was stabbed, just because somebody has seen something about Muslims on the news and then, she was just shopping ... and then she saw her and she stabbed her. And then when Four Corners wanted to do a report on it, she didn’t want to say anything, and she also felt sorry for her, because she though that she had mental health issues and she didn’t want to exploit that. So, no charges were laid or anything like that. But then I thought about it and it’s like, these stories are buried, but you know there are real dangers out there. So, that was one of the reasons why initially I didn’t to go to the media, but after the second attack, that’s when I started getting involved.889

Wajma Padshah, while acknowledging that she was not overly familiar with Islamophobia Register Australia, spoke positively about its potential. In reference to the aforementioned experience of a camp facilitator cancelling on the Muslim Women Support Centre at the last minute, she said:

The emotional effects of it. [It] doesn’t matter how empowered somebody is, hearing that, in that voice, and that tone, it shakes your sense of belonging, regardless of whether you’re born here, [whether] you’ve lived here for a while, or whatever’s happened. So, the emotional effect of it is the other thing we’re dealing with. The mental health and obviously the effects of discrimination go hand in hand.890

888 Islam, interview.
889 Fahmi, interview.
890 Padshah, interview.
Padshah’s response importantly touches on the psychological impacts of Islamophobia, which hopefully organisations such as the Islamophobia Register Australia and Islamophobia Watch Australia can, in time, help to better understand and address.

### 4.6.2 Promoting Islam and Muslims

Beyond encouraging individuals to report incidents of Islamophobia to law enforcement agencies, some MCOs attempt to counter the prevalence of Islamophobia within Australian society through instigating events with a focus on introducing non-Muslim members of the public to Islam and Muslims in a way in which they can retain some control or ownership of the narrative. Events such as mosque open days can be viewed in this way, as too can the participation of MCO representatives in interfaith dialogue.

Such events can be seen as an attempt to overcome or limit Islamophobia. Nora Amath summarised it well when she said, “there is a whole generation of people born after 9/11 and all they know about Islam in the public space, is one of hate or fear or antagonism.”

One of the broader effects that Islamophobia has on MCOs in Australia, is that it can contribute to a sense of helplessness in which the organisation feels restricted in what it can say and achieve. For Zreika, this sense of helplessness can lead to frustration. He said:

> We are now in a position, since September 11, of how to control the damages. We are not in a position to send the messages of our religion or our mission or why we are here as a Muslim community. And I don’t know when we can stop controlling the damage.

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891 Amath, interview.
892 Zreika, interview.
Some MCOs, put off by this situation, retreat from the public space. For instance, Aziz Khan outlined that the Islamic Council of Western Australia (ICWA) preferred to keep a low profile, in part, to avoid private Islamophobic attacks. However, he recognised that this is not always an effective tool.

As a result of Islamophobia and the discourse surrounding Muslims in Australia, Zreika elaborated, MCOs attempt to gain some control of the public narrative by showing “the reality of our Islam” in a number of ways. He said:

So, mosque open day [is] one of them. We are [also] doing something called Salam festival, [which means] peace festival. So, because many ... non-Muslims, they feel ... [un]comfortable to come to the mosque, we do [a] festival in the park ... We started this two years [ago] here in South Australia ... and the people really love it. So, even the Government [and] the Police, they all want to support it.

Like Zreika, Shaykh Ramzan agreed that greater interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim communities was useful. He said:

At the moment, the Muslims as well should open the doors of the mosques. They should open the doors of their homes. They should invite their neighbours and their community leaders in [to] the mosques as well ... They should meet each other without any fear. That is what the approach [should be] and, yes, Australia as a country, a society, needs to head in that direction.

Beyond mosque open days and community events aimed at displaying Islam in a more positive light, participating in interfaith dialogue is another way in which MCOs attempt to respond to Islamophobia. The purpose of interfaith dialogue, according to the Religion Communicators Council, is to increase understanding of and respect for other religious systems and institutions. It can take place between individuals and communities, and on many levels.

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893 Aziz Khan, interview.
894 Ibid.
895 Zreika, interview.
896 Ibid.
897 Shaykh Ramzan, interview.
Many of the participants had participated frequently in interfaith dialogue events; however, there was no consensus among participants in terms of their effectiveness as a tool to counter negative perceptions of Islam.

Zubeda Raihman was relatively positive of her experiences with interfaith dialogue. She spoke of an occasion in which she had spoken to a group of forty Catholic women. She said:

So, I spoke generally and then said, ‘ask me questions.’ So, they all asked me questions or whatever. At the end of it, one of the ladies specifically came to me, she said, 'You know what, I always thought that this is a religion that I will never ever want to know about ... but you have really opened my eyes.'

However, some of the participants saw little value in interfaith dialogue. This was particularly true amongst some of the younger participants. For instance, Asma Fahmi said:

I never understood the point of interfaith dialogue. It's completely pointless. I don't know anyone under the age of 50 who ever attends one of these sessions. At one point, [the Government] had given $10,000 to a Jewish organisation to run some interfaith thing at the Grand Synagogue of Sydney, and I attended. I brought a friend and we were literally the only two Muslims who were there. And it was meant to sort of promote "social cohesion" and harmony between ... different faiths, but to me, this is just an example of how that money is kind of just ... [wasted]. That's why I feel like it's a PR exercise for the Government, because I just don’t see [the value]. If their target group is specific and then none of the projects actually attract the target group, it just kind of made me wonder, well what's the point of all this.

Furthermore, some participants had experienced open hostility from members of the public while attempting to participate in interfaith events. Nora Amath’s attempts to reach out to particular sections of the community at Ipswich and then again at Buderim were disrupted by individuals she described as being from right-wing groups. She explained:

They came into the church and disrupted our conversation. [They] were there to really hijack [the discussion], you know, and whatever I said was deemed lies and I was [said to be] engaging in lies and propaganda, and that they knew Islam more than me ... So, it doesn’t always work. Even in Ipswich ... a group of 12 of them ... made the journey to just come and

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900 Raihman, interview.
901 Fahmi, interview.
protest my talk ... So, they were just there to disturb and disrupt, and they did that. So, there are organisations that we try to reach out to and we just can’t get through.  

Despite this, Amath has continued to try and reach out to right-wing organisations, to engage and open an avenue of dialogue with them. She continued:

> We have wanted, for example, to reach out to One Nation ... And I know some other Muslim community members have tried to reach out to One Nation saying, ‘You are having conversations about us ... can we actually join the conversation? You’re speaking about Islam on behalf of Muslims and yet, you haven’t even [spoken to us].’

Amath, however, did acknowledge that such attempts at engagement were rarely successful.

These experiences may go some way to explaining why some Muslim community groups choose not to engage with right-wing groups. For instance, Hasan Yunich, who was completing his Honours thesis on the use of emotions by right-wing groups in Australia at the time of our meeting, shared a story of a particular interaction with an individual whose social media work Yunich was familiar with:

> I follow his page, because he’s trying to show how bad Muslims are. I listen to his arguments, and then he posts interactions with different groups. And he’s trying to, like, show how good he is. He sent an email to our organisation and I’m looking at an email that I’ve got on my phone, then looking at his posts going, ‘Beautiful. Now what do we do with this?’ So, after a bit of a discussion with the Committee, [they determined] we have to give a non-committal answer and keep it very vague and show, like, ‘You know what, we’re not going to interact with you. What you’re doing is actually harmful to society. Thank you very much, and away you go.’

Despite their failure to reach right-wing organisations, MCOs and Muslim community leaders have used initiatives such as interfaith dialogue and mosque open days to promote and improve perceptions of Islam and Australian Muslims.
4.7 Conclusion

Reflecting over some of the limitations and the validity of existing definitions of Islamophobia, before settling on Khaled A. Beydoun’s three-dimension definition encompassing private Islamophobia, structural Islamophobia and dialectical Islamophobia as best-serving within the context of this thesis, this chapter has indicated that the sustainability and effectiveness of Australian MCOs in achieving their aims and visions is threatened significantly by this phenomenon. Islamophobia and, as this chapter has indicated, the intersection between Islamophobia and overlapping phenomena, such as racism and protectionist attitudes towards migration, which also serve to limit access to social capital for minority groups in Australia, affects Muslims and MCOs in a variety of ways. Through the course of the semi-structured interviews with representatives of Australian MCOs, four major themes emerged: the ‘good’ Muslim narrative, the public relations problem, institutional Islamophobia and direct threats.

The prevalence of the ‘good’ Muslim narrative was shown as a key manifestation of Islamophobia in the Australian and Western context. Through an analysis of how public perceptions of Islam as an inherently violent religion have led to a situation wherein Muslims and MCOs are encouraged to prove their innocence, this chapter addressed how MCOs have had limitations, real and perceived, placed on their participation in the public space, and, subsequently, their ability to achieve their aims and visions. Furthermore, this chapter explored the circumstances of Yassmin Abdel-Magied’s very public transition from ‘good’ to ‘bad’ Muslim, as a means of indicating how the ‘good’ Muslim narrative can be seen within the context of Hage’s ‘White multiculturalism,’ whereby it serves to mystify, and keep out of the public discourse, alternative multicultural realities.

This chapter also addressed how the participants of this research believed the Australian Muslim community was in the midst of a public relations disaster. Limiting media and political framing of terrorism as a predominantly ‘Islamic’ issue, coupled with wider society’s tendency to view the
Islamic faith as monolithic, were expressed to be the major factors in this situation’s development. The PR disaster was also placed within the context of how the West has historically viewed itself as having surpassed Christianity as a primary descriptor of its society; whereas, the ‘Muslim world,’ with its diverse and competing histories, was still viewed predominantly through the scope of Islam.

Institutional Islamophobia, as a means by which self-identifying Muslims are systematically discriminated against, was also explored as a challenge facing MCOs in Australia. After discussing the sources and the validity of definitions of institutional Islamophobia – notably, whether it is a contradictory term – this chapter then proceeded to address how the phenomenon can intersect with other forms of systematic discrimination, such as institutional racism, to further impact Australian Muslims and MCOs.

The final manifestation of Islamophobia explored in this chapter was direct threats and violence as experienced by the participants of this research. Private Islamophobia, which was said to be legitimised, in part, by structural and dialectical Islamophobia, was shown to more often than not target Muslim women, with the perpetrators more likely to be men. This section also explored how the rise of social media has enabled individuals and groups in their ability to target Muslims with threats.

Finally, this chapter concluded with a brief exploration of the nature of the response of participating MCOs to Islamophobia in Australia. This response was categorised as encouraging the reporting of Islamophobia, and the promotion of Islam and Muslims. Encouraging victims of Islamophobia to advise law enforcement agencies, as well as organisations, such as Islamophobia Watch and the Islamophobia Register, which serve to map and record incidents, and, where possible, provide support and appropriate resources to victims, was a relatively consistent trend among the participating MCOs. Likewise, regular participation in events such as mosque open days and interfaith dialogue was shown to be another way MCOs and community leaders have attempted to promote Islam and counter negative perceptions of the religion and its followers.
As this chapter has indicated, the brand of Islamophobia that is present in Australia represents a significant challenge to MCOs, limiting the parameters of their public engagement and straining their often-stretched resources. As such, Islamophobia is a major factor in the nature of the relationships that MCOs have with other organisations and institutions.

On the surface, the MCOs represented in this study appear to tend to address incidents of private Islamophobia more so than structural or dialectical Islamophobia. As such, it is important to understand the nature of the relationships between MCOs and the media and government – two institutions that can be said to contribute significantly to Islamophobia in Australia (see 5.2 MCOs and the Media and 5.3 MCOs and Governments).
5 Relationships

5.1 Introduction

As the previous chapter indicated, Islamophobia and the intersectionality between this phenomenon and accompanying phenomena, such as racism, protectionism and xenophobia, impact and challenge Australians MCOs in a variety of ways. One such example worthy of further exploration is how these phenomena shape and impact the relationships that Australian MCOs have. Through an analysis of the responses of the participants of this research, this chapter will identify and reflect on several of the key social and political relationships that these organisations experience. Furthermore, this chapter will build on the analysis in previous chapters by factoring in how external challenges can feed internal divisions between Australian Muslim communities and MCOs.

Given that, as Chapter Four indicated, much of the public discourse regarding Islam and Muslims is shaped, reinforced, and occasionally exploited, by media and government, this chapter will commence by exploring the dynamics of the relationship between Australian MCOs and media and government. With a focus on news media, it will look at what motivates the industry, as well as who and what the news targets and excludes. This will be followed by an exploration of how the often-complicated relationship that MCOs have with government institutions is overwhelmingly skewed in favour of government. Using the policy of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) as a means through which these relationships between government and Australia MCOs can be explored, this chapter will also address how these relationships can cause further divisions between different MCOs.

This chapter will conclude with a brief examination of the relationship that MCOs have with religious and non-religious organisations, and explore some of the difficulties within these relationships, as well as the issues that must be navigated in the ongoing journey to cooperation.
5.2 MCOs and the Media

MCOs have a frustrating relationship with the media. Overwhelmingly, MCOs are reactive within the media space wherein they respond to events and enquiries but are rarely able to initiate conversations or seize and control narratives. One of the representatives of an MCO in Melbourne said:

[Our interaction] is primarily just responding to media. You know, something happens either in Australia or overseas, or somebody speaks about something in Australia, and the media is only looking for reaction really.\(^{906}\)

Likewise, Nail Aykan encapsulated the frustration felt by many involved with MCOs when he said:

We need to always be prepared to respond. And this is where the community is a reactive space. And it wastes a lot of our time [that] we should really be dedicating ... to being proactive [and] facilitating productive programs and services. However, most of what we do is trying to address issues and concerns.\(^{907}\)

Since the events of September 11, 2001, MCOs have often been called upon to condemn acts of violence and destruction committed by individuals and groups in the name of Islam. Wajma Padshah explained: “There [are] expectations ... that a criminal does some horrible act somewhere and, all of a sudden, we all have to justify [ourselves].”\(^{908}\) Likewise, representatives of MCOs are often asked to explain or defend Islam in questions relating to Sharia or religious attire and practice. All of this combines to deliver an image or presentation of Islam and Muslims that fails to capture the diversity and intricacies of the religion and its followers.

However, this is by no means a new phenomenon (see 1.3.3 The “Us and Them” Dynamic). The representation of Islam and Muslims in Western media cannot be explained solely through an exploration of how contemporary events involving Muslims are covered. According to Benjamin

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906 Anonymous, interview.
907 Aykan, interview.
908 Padshah, interview.
Isakhan, the construction of the Islamic ‘other’ in the media can be seen to have a lineage tracing back as far as the modern media industry itself.909

Studies have indicated that many Australians get their information about Islam and Muslims through that which is depicted in the media.910 As such, many within the audience can be said to be provided with relatively narrow and misleading representations of Islam and Muslims.

Speaking to this phenomenon, Nafay Siddiqui provided an amusing, yet useful analogy. He said:

> It’s like you only see aeroplanes crashing in the news. If you only knew about aeroplanes by watching what’s on TV, you would think that every aeroplane crashes. But most aeroplanes actually fly really well.911

The media inform the public, provide a communicative bridge between political and social actors, influence perceptions of contemporary issues, depict topics and people in particular ways and may shape individuals’ political views and participation.912 When it comes to representations of Muslims and Islam, large sections of the Australian media often pray on the insecurities and fears of their audiences, and reinforce perceptions of Muslims as the dangerous ‘other’. As such, Muslims have become an attracting subject or ‘cash cow’ for media outlets competing for audience attention and revenue.


911 Siddiqui, interview.

5.2.1 Muslims as the Media ‘Cash Cow’

For the purpose of this study, the term ‘media’ will refer predominantly to news suppliers – be they involved in radio, television, online or in print. This is not to devalue the importance of other avenues of media, like television series or films, in contributing to a social setting that serves to stereotype Islam as violent, but rather, to most accurately reflect the nature of the term as it was presented and referenced in the semi-structured interviews.

News is a product that has a tradable value in the market place. The media commonly sell products to audiences and sell audiences to advertisers. Public broadcasters, such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), are the notable exception to this rule; however, they too deal in the same market, and can find themselves caught up in its incentives.

In order to attract the largest audience, the media has both shaped and reinforced the collective consciousness needed to attract large numbers of people in a heterogeneous society. As a result, people who are not perceived to melt easily into society are often not targeted as audiences by the mass media. Minority groups, such as many of Australia’s Muslim communities, are an obvious example of this within the Australian context. As Georgina Cole wrote, “Muslim Australians are often spoken for and about, but they are rarely spoken to directly.”

A common metaphor for television, which can also be applied to the broader concept of media, is that it is a mirror, reflecting contemporary society; however, as Jason Mittell states, through narrative structures, news gathering strategies, editing techniques, and selective presentations,

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918 Ibid, 44.
instead television acts as a “funhouse mirror that alters and distorts images: some elements are
enlarged and highlighted, while others shrink or disappear altogether.” Complicated situations are
often reduced to their most-easily identifiable factors and narratives.

The media has come to rely on symbols and stereotypes as shorthand ways of communication.
Newspapers have historically used terms such as ‘right wing’, ‘left wing’ and ‘moderate’ as symbols
that characterised people or groups along different points of the political spectrum, and these
symbols have been utilised by news media today to portray complex personalities and issues with a
shortened character or term. The terms became symbols – making complex matters easier to
handle by triggering recall of what Walter Lippmann, in his 1922 book Public Opinions, described as
the “pictures in our heads.” Lippmann suggested that most of what we think we know of the outside
world – the images and thoughts which make up the pictures in our heads – are put there by the
news media.

The terms ‘Muslim’ or ‘Islam’ can be said to be such symbols – often evoking fear through memories
and images of violence. This has made Muslims marketable. In the post-9/11 world, in particular, the
simple message seems to be, as Asma Fahmi explains, that Muslims sell:

We’re cash cows ... That’s why we’re always on the front cover of newspapers, because
that’s gonna sell papers. You know, they want the advertising revenue.

It is not simply the typical ‘right-wing’ or ‘conservative’ outlets turning out stories centring on
Muslims or Islam to their audiences, traditionally ‘liberal’ broadcasters, like SBS and ABC, are
doing likewise. Asma Fahmi explained:

920 Jason Mittell, Television and American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 270.
921 Clint Wilson et al, Sexism and the Media, 44-45.
Media, 44-45.
923 Fahmi, interview.
924 The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) was launch by the Fraser Government in 1978, in part, to provide a
permanent ethnic presence on television and help new migrants in Australia to acquaint themselves with life
in Australia. However, it has evolved over the subsequent decades to, it has been said, promote understanding
They [SBS] are trying to create a show ... where they bring a whole bunch of Muslims together in a house and then discuss Muslim issues ... They actually asked me to be one of the people in the house ... They are doing another thing on the ABC right now about Muslims ... and they asked me to be part of that. So, it is interesting how all of these are in development now.925

Although the intent or nature of the stories can be remarkably different, with shows such as SBS’s Muslims Like Us attempting to elaborate on what it means to be a Muslim in modern Australia,926 they are still promoted and produced in the same socio-political environment as anything in the ‘conservative’ media. Such a point is highlighted by the fact that the show had its participants visit the site of the Lindt café siege at Sydney’s Martin Place.927 This gives substance to John Street’s claim that even public broadcasters can find themselves caught up in the same market, given they are still competing for audiences.928

Much in the same way as the ‘good Muslim’ narrative, explored in the previous chapter, serves to mystify and keep Australian Muslim realities out of the public discourse, the mainstream Australian media, through their representations of Islam and Muslims as symbols, can be said to do likewise through their consistent “othering” of the Muslim subject.

Regulation of media, as well as the provision of public service media, are designed to counter anti-democratic logic of unregulated, commercialised media.929 As deregulation of media-ownership limits has expanded, allowing the likes of Rupert Murdoch (see 5.2.2 The Murdoch Press in Australia)

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925 Fahmi, interview.
927 Ruby Hamad, “Muslims Like Us was enlightening, but where were the Muslim minorities?” Guardian, 23 February 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/commentisfree/2018/feb/23/muslims-like-us-was-enlightening-but-where-were-the-muslim-minorities.
928 John Street, Mass Media, Politics and Democracy, 161.
929 Ibid, 165.
to extend their reach and influence, news and entertainment media are considered to increasingly produce and promote stereotypical depictions of minorities.930

Wilson, Gutiérrez and Chao note two objectives of media gatekeepers when producing stereotypical reporting: reassuring the audience that minorities are still “in their place,” and reassuring the audience that those who escape their designated place and overcome the “deficits” of their racial and cultural backgrounds are not a threat to society because they hold the same values and ambitions as the dominant culture.931 This theory goes some way in helping to understand the sense of betrayal portrayed in the media during the Yassmin Abdel-Magied saga in 2016-17 (see 4.2 The ‘Good Muslim’ Narrative), while it also provides insight into why many of the participants of this research were frustrated with the media. For instance, Nail Aykan said:

For every one negative story [about Muslims], I could give you 100 positive stories, but you wouldn't hear about it in the press. You only hear the negative ones.932

Systematic Islamophobia, active within the makeup of contemporary Australia, is strengthened, but not necessarily shaped, by media representations of Muslims. According to Wilson et al, media is most-effective “when they reinforce and channel existing attitudes and opinions consistent with the psychological makeup of individuals and the social structure of the groups with which they identify, not when they are trying to change opinions.”933 This theory goes some way to explaining why Zubeda Raihman was overlooked for a photo because she does not wear the hijab and, as such, did not fit the media framing of what a Muslim woman is or should be. She explained:

We had a launch at Parliament House … [and] I was representing the Muslim Women’s National Network. I was at the dais speaking about it, and then … they wanted a photograph about the women that were a part of the launch … When the time came to [do] the photo,
The Australian journalist came in and asked our group ... to come [over] ... We were all walking towards him and then he told me, “No, not you.” And then he picked another lady with the hijab on.934

Similarly, the Sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne told an interesting story about an interaction he had with a journalist. He spoke to the reporter for 35 minutes about jihad, but as he did not say anything that the journalist could perceive as being controversial, none of what he said was used in the article. He thought this interaction was indicative of how Muslim leaders are dealt with by the Australian media and encouraged other sheikhs not to speak with them.935

These incidents play into Wilson, Gutiérrez and Chao’s theory that when minorities appear in the media, they are often stereotyped based on the preconceptions outsiders have of the groups represented, rather than the realities of the groups themselves.936

Many Australians get their information about Islam and Muslims through that which is depicted in the media; however, these presentations must be viewed within the broader context of historic, as well as contemporary, attitudes towards migration and minorities in Australia, such as those explored previously (see Chapter One). Even though some Australians, it can be argued, do not have an existing set of attitudes and opinions regarding Islam and Muslims of which media can ‘reinforce’, existing or prevailing attitudes toward (non-European) migrants and minorities can serve as the foundation or framework for this interaction.

Sheikh Nawas, speaking of the use of media by politicians, made an observation regarding the fears of the unknown or ‘other’ that exist within Australia that serves to reinforce this point. He said:

The media is a powerful tool [that] politicians can use to their advantage. The politics of fear is always there – it is either Chinese [or] Asians, [and] now they turn on us.937

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934 Raihman, interview.
935 Sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne, interview.
936 Clint Wilson et al, Sexism and the Media, 44.
937 Sheikh Nawas, interview.
Although Islam and Muslims are regularly portrayed negatively throughout most Australian media outlets, the Murdoch press is an obvious standout. Like the Murdoch-owned Fox News in the United States, the Murdoch Press in Australia can be said to tout Islamophobia.

### 5.2.2 The Murdoch Press in Australia

Rupert Murdoch, who has been described as the “most powerful media person on the planet,” has built a media empire with substantial reach worldwide, with Sky, Fox News, News Corp and The Sun, among a host of news and media outlets he can be said to influence or control. Writing of how Murdoch’s personal views are often reflected in his media outlets, Roy Greenslade surmised, “You have got to admit that Rupert Murdoch is one canny press tycoon because he has an unerring ability to choose editors across the world who think just like him.”

Andrew Neil, one of Murdoch’s ex-editors, supported this claim:

> When you work for Rupert Murdoch you do not work for a company chairman or chief executive: you work for a Sun King. You are not a director or manager or an editor: you are a courtier at the court of the Sun King.

Nail Aykan, who tongue-in-cheek refers to the media as “the second oldest profession,” held a particular dislike for the Murdoch press in Australia. He said:

> The media, by and large, aren’t bad. It’s a particular segment of the media ... which in this country is known as Murdoch. They’re very nasty and although they may be targeting the Muslims – we’re a soft target. I believe that the Muslims aren’t the real objective here. It’s a pretext to achieve a broader agenda, which is the right-wing agenda. Before Muslims it was the Asians ... They aren’t helping the Muslim integration [or] Muslims’ sense of belonging, and ... if you were to ask me which is more of a pain, ISIS or Murdoch? I would say Murdoch. They’re a bigger challenge.

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942 Aykan, interview.
He went on to explain a recent story published in the *News Corp*-owned *Herald Sun* in Melbourne that served as an example of how the Murdoch press can manipulate facts in isolation to serve an established narrative. He said:

> Just recently ... the ICV ran the first ever Victoria-wide mosque open day. Fourteen mosques opened their doors. A great initiative, purely ... a social cohesion project ... [for] community engagement ... And the Victorian Government for years has had community grants, which sponsor social-cohesion/community engagement events. So, this is one where we received a very modest grant. So, the *Herald Sun*, two weeks ago, plastered “State taxpayers fund mosque ...” So, it was a terrible story. And we had people calling [the ICV], ‘Why on earth are my tax dollars going to ...?’ As if it’s building mosques ... So, I went back to the *Herald Sun* and we said, ‘Why don’t you cover the story on the day in a more objective light?’ We’re not saying, do a propaganda piece. Guess what? We arranged a couple of young Hijabis ... But they ditched the story. So, either it’s bad news or no news.\(^\text{943}\)

In another swipe at Murdoch and *News Corp*, Aykan alleged that several of their journalists and editors often failed to meet basic ethical principles of journalism. He said:

> I’ll give you another example – child marriages ... Four years ago, in 2013, legislation was passed that it’s illegal to marry anybody under the age of 18. Great. That’s the law. Everybody accepts, and it’s the right thing to do ... There are 29 cases in Victoria ... and just last week they charged the very first fellow. And that very first fellow happens to be a Muslim ... Now, the *Herald Sun* ... runs this sensationalist piece, as if the 29 cases in Victoria are all Muslim, and that it’s a Muslim problem ... [Asking] what are the Muslim community doing to solve it? So, there’s no data. There’re no facts. There’s no further information about the charge specifically or about the other 28 cases.\(^\text{944}\)

In 2018, OnePath Network published the results of a study tracking how five of Australia’s biggest newspapers – all owned by Rupert Murdoch’s *News Corps* – reported on Islam.\(^\text{945}\) They found almost 3,000 articles that referenced Islam or Muslims alongside words like violence, extremism, terrorism or radical.\(^\text{946}\) The report emphasised:

> In every statistic we found, from negative articles to front-page features to audience write-ins, we came to the same conclusion: the way media talks about Islam in Australia is

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\(^{943}\) Ibid.

\(^{944}\) Ibid.


\(^{946}\) Ibid.
disproportionate, divisive and dangerous.\(^\text{947}\)

Regarding the media, Akyan was keen to emphasise that his disdain was reserved only for the “nasty journos” out there and not the majority of outlets, which he deemed credible. He said:

There are a lot of decent media outlets, who actually have strong ethical principles, and who want to do the right thing. And, if there is an issue to investigate, by all means, let's investigate, let's understand [and] let's get to the details.\(^\text{948}\)

Several of the other participants were less than complimentary of various other media outlets as they shared their opinions on engagement with the media.

### 5.2.3 Engagement between MCOs and the Media

Working with the media is often deemed a necessity by some MCO representatives – even if it is something that they would rather avoid. However, certain organisations indicated that they preferred to avoid interacting with the media.

Hasan Yunich outlined the approach of the Islamic Information Centre of South Australia. He said:

Our organisation has taken ... a political non-media stance... [so] our work doesn't get damaged. Because I'm very opinionated and, if they put me in front of a camera, I might say some things, which I believe to be true and I can use evidence for it, but it might not sit well with the wider community.\(^\text{949}\)

Yunich justified this stance saying that by engaging with the media you lose control of the narrative. He continued:

The media bias is still there, and I don’t know if we can ever change it ... Who’s that German guy? He’s got this philosophy that the media is like a prism ... There's a distortion that will always occur. So, every organisation complains, even the UPF (United Patriots Front) complain about the media ... The Federal Police ... they said the same thing. We have no control over the media. It is what it is.\(^\text{950}\)

\(^{947}\) Ibid.

\(^{948}\) Aykan, interview.

\(^{949}\) Yunich, interview.

\(^{950}\) Ibid.
The Islamic Information Centre of South Australia is not alone in employing this tactic. The Muslim Women’s Support Centre WA had a similar approach to media engagement. Wajma Padshah explained: “Being involved in the media and doing the public commentary .... that’s one area that we’ve sort of ... shied away from, saying, ‘We don’t want to be distracted.’”

Padshah continued by stating that the organisation certainly felt under pressure to comment on events – and in certain circumstances they even had a desire to do so – but that the president of the Centre had been fantastic in bringing them back and ensuring they instead focus on their projects and what they can control.

For some of the participants, the relationship between community leaders and the media has reached the point of breakdown. For instance, Ghaith Krayem was one who fit this category. He said:

Media - don't start me on the media. There are individuals within media, who try and do the best they can. But the reality is, it's driven by a whole series of agendas. And I wouldn't trust anybody in the media. So, every engagement with media is a political one. It doesn't matter what they tell you, it's a political one. And you have to approach it that way.

Disillusioned with the overwhelmingly negative media narrative, some organisations have attempted to create alternative media. For instance, the Sydney-based OnePath Network emerged in 2014, identifying “great opportunities in using media to showcase the beauty and harmony of Islam,” in its attempts to “enable all people to develop in all aspects of their spiritual, educational and social lives.” OnePath predominantly produces video content, which it shares freely through its website and application. They have over 40,000 subscribers to their YouTube channel, with some of their more popular videos having received upwards of 100,000 views. OnePath is certainly growing in terms of exposure. In June 2017 (encompassing a large part of Ramadan) fans of their Facebook

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951 Padshah, interview.
952 Ibid.
953 Krayem, interview.
As of May 2018 just under 1.3 million people followed their Facebook page.  

Asma Fahmi said that OnePath were trying to do some interesting things, but that they were representative of only some sections of the Australian Muslim community:

> I feel like they cater to a particular part of the community, and that’s working for them. And all power to them, but it doesn’t necessarily appeal to all sections of the community. But I think they’re trying and you’ve gotta start somewhere.

While OnePath certainly stands out, in terms of size and reach, some MCOs have initiated small-scale television shows on community television and online. For instance, the Islamic Information Centre of South Australia has Masjid TV on Channel 44 in Adelaide. As Hasan Yunich puts it, “It’s average, but it’s fulfilling one of our goals, which is to try and interact with the wider community.”

Likewise, in July 2016, Ghaith Krayem and Almir Colan set up The Call Out – a video blog wherein the two men converse and navigate issues concerning Australian Muslim communities – “to call out those instances of misinformation, inaccuracies and outright lies and deceptions about our community.”

In an attempt to share and promote positive news stories about Victoria’s Muslim communities, the ICV launched the #25MuslimWomen ‘Positive Muslim Stories’ social media campaign in 2017, which was followed by the #25MuslimYouth, #25ICVveterans, #25MemberSocietyLeaders and #25CommunityLeaders campaigns. Ayman Islam elaborates on the reasons for the campaign:

> We have all these positive stories that happen in the community, but no one knows about them. We’re not getting any traction in terms of getting that exposure to the general public. I mean, all we’re hearing is these negative incidents and that’s the stuff that tends to stick ...  

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958 Fahmi, interview.
959 Yunich, interview.
but [the campaign] was also to promote to the Muslim community in general.  

Finally, the Forum for Australian Islamic Relations (FAIR) was set up to act as an advocacy group in the early 2000s. Nora Amath spoke regarding the motives for FAIR. She said:

> It’s a few things, but it was meant to be a source - like a media source – a public relations lobby group [or] an advocacy for Australian Muslims.

However, as an organisation they have pivoted to “more high-level engagement” and work with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to build Australia’s relationship with the Muslim world. This includes facilitating young Australians travelling to Indonesia and Malaysia and vice-versa.

Finally, in an example of how MCOs can manipulate conditions to respond to a limiting media environment, Ahmed Zreika shared how he construed a way of getting positive media stories into the press:

> One person, he was very honest with me ... He said to me ... ‘Ahmed ... at the end of the day, the media is a business, and they want to broadcast the things that attract the audience, and the only stories that attract the audience at the moment is the negative issue of [Islam] ... My director wants some story to sell and your positive story is not going to sell. Simple as that.’ I really thanked [him] for being honest with me, and now I have to deal with [him] exactly how he wants. Do you know how I got the media to come and broadcast the mosque open day? I told them, ‘Look, we have the mosque open day on the 29th of October, can you come and do some story about it?’ [And he says no]. I say, ‘Okay, I forgot to tell you there is a protest against the mosque open day.’ He says, yeah sure, we [are] coming.

These are the circumstances in which Australian MCOs operate. The responses of Australian MCOs to the dominant media narratives regarding Muslims and Islam indicate an awareness of and a frustration at this reality. However, of equal frustration, is the way politicians and governments use and reinforce these narratives to serve their own political purposes.

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962 Islam, interview.
964 Amath, interview.
965 Ibid.
966 Zreika, interview.
5.3 MCOs and Governments

Much in the same way that media can be accused of preying on the insecurities and fears of their audiences by reinforcing perceptions of Muslims as the dangerous ‘other’, politicians and political parties can be said to do likewise. While news networks use ‘othering’ to battle for audiences and revenue, politicians and political parties often seek to garner popularity through comments and policy proposals aimed to appeal to sections of the population and appease or invoke their fears and anxieties. Parties on the far right of the political spectrum, such as One Nation, are the most obvious example of a party invoking fear; however, the mainstream parties can also be said to practise such tactics. Comments, such as those made by Minister for Immigration and Border Protection Peter Dutton insinuating that descendants of Lebanese Muslims in Australia were over-represented in terrorism crime-related statistics and that it was a mistake for Australia to have accepted some Lebanese refugees in the 1970s, can be seen as an example of representatives of the major parties echoing the sentiments of One Nation.\(^{967}\)

Nevertheless, the support of MCOs is often required to legitimise government initiatives (see 5.3.1 Countering Violent Extremism) both in the eyes of Australian Muslims – when Muslim communities are the direct or indirect subject of such initiatives – as well as sections of the broader Australian public, who seek reassurances that the ‘good Muslims’ are on their side. Peak bodies, such as the ICV, or collective religious leadership organisations, such as ANIC, are seemingly preferred for engagement, given the perception that they are representative and/or influential organisations.

The reality is, as Asma Fahmi explained, that governments in Australia need MCOs.

‘Well I … worked in Government … with the Community Relations Commission. I was a project coordinator with them. Depending on what … their particular agenda is … I feel like Government needs Muslim organisations.’\(^{968}\)


\(^{968}\) Fahmi, interview.
In looking at the relationship between governments and MCOs in Australia, it is important to acknowledge that some MCOs separate government from the array of people and institutions that make up the public service.

For instance, speaking of a public spat between the ICV and the Andrews Government in Victoria (see 2.2.2.6 The ICV and the Victorian Government), Ayman Islam said:

I would say, even now, the relationship with the Department [of Premier and Cabinet] itself, is still very strong. The issue is obviously [with] the members [of the Andrews Government that criticised the ICV publicly].

Separating the political system from the more visible and divisive politicians and political actors that often occupy and manipulate the political space, it can be argued, is somewhat out of necessity. For MCOs to retain the support of sections of the community, they need to be seen as representing their values. So, in associating their organisations with politicians – some of whom have openly and consistently criticised elements of the Muslim community – the organisations can be subject to criticism from their members or communities. As was often the case with the ICV.

On top of providing a degree of credibility to their relevant initiatives, Government needs MCOs because, as grassroots organisations, they can be at the forefront of social development. For instance, one representative explained:

For example, with family violence – [which] is always a key sort of area for our work ... it’s only recently that the ... Government has set out [and] put out its strategy and its action plan. But we have been working in that space for a long, long time. And we have also been involved in doing a lot of lobbying in that area to the Government to put money into the preventative side of things, rather than the crisis side of things, which has traditionally been the case.

So, while it relatively clear that governments have a need for MCOs, is the flipside true? Do MCOs need Government?

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969 Islam, interview.
970 Ibid.
971 Anonymous, interview.
The noticeable example for an answer in the affirmative is the reliance many MCOs have on governments for funding (see 3.5.2.1 Grants). However, even with funding demands, many MCOs, for a variety of reasons, seek to avoid working closely with governments. For instance, Silma Ihram explained that Australia’s behaviour and lack of accountability in military conflicts overseas meant she was reluctant to work with the Australian Government.\textsuperscript{972}

So, while working with governments can help an MCO satisfy its funding requirements and grow as an organisation, other factors are often considered prior to seeking or committing to a direct relationship.

Those MCOs that do find themselves working closely with Government, can become frustrated at the nature of the relationship. Ayman Islam inferred the relationship between Government and the ICV is not equal in nature.\textsuperscript{973}

Aziz Khan added that, although ICWA’s relationship with Government was good, he felt that some politicians wanted MCOs to remain powerless:

\begin{quote}
Our relationship with the public authorities - the State and the Federal [Government] - from my observation, is good … but more can be done in that area. But I think that politicians play a role in it, to manipulate it [and] to ensure that we remain in that weak state. Its all about bargaining as well. And come election time, they are very nice. They come to you … [and] they want votes. But when it's time to deliver, there's nothing to it. There's no deliver[y]. You don’t see them; they don't return calls.\textsuperscript{974}
\end{quote}

Asma Fahmi, who as an MCO representative who had experience working in Government was in a unique position among the participants to analyse the relationship between MCOs and Government, argued that Government and MCOs often disagreed over how to approach different issues. Like Islam, she expressed a degree of frustration over the unequal nature of the relationship. Regarding her experience, she said:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{972} Ihram, interview.  
\textsuperscript{973} Islam, interview.  
\textsuperscript{974} Aziz Khan, interview.
\end{flushright}
It was very challenging working in Government, because they were focusing on the Muslim community and the people that were leading it were not from the community, and I just had a very different approach to things ... I really struggled ... and it wasn't just me. The few people that were hired from the Muslim community, we all really struggled with it. We just could not relate to any decisions that were being made and the projects that we felt were positive and could have an impact were always rejected. So, we just never really understood.975

Fahmi’s criticism of Government was partly directed at its bureaucratic nature. She continued:

I mean, we could kind of push for something, but there was a lot of red tape ... We used to joke about the movie Office Space ... it was just all about the memo.976 You had to write a memo anytime you wanted to do anything ... You could kind of push for an idea, but at the end of the day, it was the commissioners who would have to vote for it.977

However, Fahmi was also critical of some of the individuals who assumed leadership roles within the Public Service – providing anecdotal evidence of Islamophobia and racism. She said:

I remember after, what they called, ‘The Sydney Riots’,978 one of the ladies, who had a senior position in Government [and] in Multi-Cultural Affairs, was sitting in a board room ... She said, “Oh, those men with their big beards are so scary.” And we just sort of looked at each other and said, “Did you just say that? You are in Multi-Cultural Affairs and you just said that? What is wrong with you?” So, we had to deal with [that] ... Or like, I have a friend, who is of African descent. She was always fetishised in that department and ... a particular colleague would always talk about how exotic she looked. I felt like the people who were working in that department were not the right people to be working in that department, because we always dealt with ... just those sorts of minor aggressions that really kind of annoyed all of us. And that kind of flowed-on to decision making, as well. When you don’t have faith in all the people around you, you are not going to really have faith in them taking on board your opinions.

Not all the participants were critical of the relationship between Government and MCOs. For instance, Galila Abdelsalam spoke positively of her experience. She said:

[The Government are] very supportive ... We have a very good relationship with the federal member of parliament of our local area, who was very supportive. She gives us support by printing our newsletter; helping us when we applied for small funds to give us material and

975 Fahmi, interview.
977 Fahmi, interview.
978 In Sydney, on 15 September 2012, a group of approximately 300 protested the film Innocence of Muslims in the streets of Sydney. The protest, dubbed ‘The Sydney Riots’, resulted in damage to property, and six police and 19 protesters were injured. Although the number of protesters were relatively small, sections of the media portrayed the incident as “Muslims stormed the city” (Channel Ten News, 2012). Halim Rane and Nora Amath, “Islamophobia and Australia’s Asylum Debate,” in Instances of Islamophobia: Demonizing the Muslim “Other”, eds. Seyyed-Abdolhamid Mirhosseini and Hossein Rouzbeh (Lanham: Lexington, 2015), 70.
other stuff. So that was in the beginning [and] was great, as well as she supports us to get access to resources with other organisations. I think this is the key issue: building [a] bridge between us and all levels of government, as well as other community organisations. I was lucky to work with mainstream organisations as well as multicultural community organisations, which [has] helped me to be aware of what is around and how to outreach this.\footnote{Abdelsalam, interview.}

Nevertheless, navigating relationships with government institutions was an ongoing challenge for many MCOs given the difficulty in striking a balance between their values, the values of their organisation and communities, and working with government. It is also a challenge that fluctuates depending on the political events of the day, as Ayman Islam elaborated regarding the relationship between the ICV and Victorian Government. He said:

I think it's been very robust. It's been very strong. The incident that occurred several months ago seemed very out of character. I would characterise that as out of character, because the relationship has been very, very strong up until that point.\footnote{Islam, interview. Islam was referring to a public spat involving the Andrews Government, Victoria Police and the ICV, over “safe spaces” (see 2.2.2.6 The ICV and the Victorian Government).}

Of the political events that dominate the relationship between MCOs and Government, perhaps none is more divisive than national security policy and CVE.

5.3.1 Countering Violent Extremism

Over the past two decades, counter terrorism has emerged as a major political issue. On average, a new anti-terror statute was passed every 6.7 weeks during the post-9/11 lifespan of the Liberal-National Coalition Government (2001-2007) – many of which journeyed through Parliament with the support of the Labor opposition.\footnote{George Williams, “A Decade of Australian Anti-Terror Laws,” Melbourne University Law Review 38 (2011).} Since then, the focus has broadened, with a greater emphasis placed on domestic prevention. In 2011, the Australian Government introduced the Countering Violent Extremism Strategy and aimed to decrease the potential for terrorist attacks to occur, “by
Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs are not exclusive to the Australian context. Indeed, the British model is one of the most widely recognised approaches in CVE and is used as a role model and inspiration for CVE initiatives in Australia, Canada and the United States. Designed after the London bombings in July 2005, the British ‘Counter Terrorism Strategy’ includes four key areas: Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare. The Prevent strategy has three key aims:

1. Counter terrorist ideology.
2. Support vulnerable individuals.
3. Work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation.

All three of these key aims, it can be argued, are central to Australia’s CVE programs. In Australia, the Building Community Resilience (BCR) Grants Program, which succeeded the National Action Plan, and subsequent programs, such as The Strong and Resilient Communities – Community Resilience Grants, has sought to support and fund community projects across the nation that build resilience to violent extremism.
Since their inception, MCOs have debated over whether to accept CVE grants, given what some say they represent. These debates have increased in recent years as the socio-political environment has continued to be increasingly hostile to Australian Muslim communities.

Asma Fahmi elaborates:

So, there was a lot of debate and a lot of talk about CVE money, and basically it was labelled [by some] as government intervention into the Muslim community. And people who took CVE money were generally seen as taking ‘dirty money,’ whereas other people argued that it’s important to engage ... because if you don’t take this money, then it’s going to go to another organisation, whereas we can actually do something positive with it. Whereas other people were like, “No, we will not even associate with this organisation, because they have taken ‘dirty money’."

Some consider CVE grants as “dirty money,” because they see it as subscribing to an Islamophobic narrative positioning Australian Muslim communities as troublesome. For instance, Wajma Padshah explained why the Muslim Women’s Support Centre WA had refused to accept CVE money. She said:

We have made a decision to stay away from and not apply for [CVE money]. And that’s been, I suppose, more about not wanting to feed into the rhetoric. So, if we want to be able to run a breakfast program at school for children and/or to run a women’s leadership program, it shouldn’t have extremist terminology attached to it ... A lot of money has gone into it [CVE], but it’s not the best way to go about doing social welfare.

Evidently, many members of Australia’s Muslim communities share similar sentiments. Young Muslims, often the targets of CVE programs, have also expressed their opposition. Fahmi elaborated:

People just don’t want to be political pawns. And so, for me, when this whole CVE drama started to build up, I was quite surprised by how many young people in universities ... were totally against it. And I was also quite happy about that. People were sort of aware of these things ... There’s a lot of CVE money that goes to Muslim organisations. And this has been a problem not only in Australia, but in the United States and England as well, where ... young people are aware of this, and they know that money has been filtered through to different organisations under CVE ... Young people are quite astute when it comes to figuring out where Government money comes from – young Muslims, in particular. Like I said, they’ve been politicised from a young age and they are on to these things.

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989 Fahmi, interview.
990 Padshah, interview.
991 Fahmi, interview.
Those that supported MCOs taking CVE money argued that while the circumstances through which the money was made available were unideal, it was still providing organisations with resources that could fund meaningful programs.

Reem Sweid explained the thought process behind her reluctant support for community organisations taking CVE money. She said:

Take the money and run is my argument. Who cares? Just take it and do whatever you want ... Do something good with it ... You have a shit sandwich, and this is the icing. Everything is shit for you, except for the fact that because you are Muslim you have access to more grants and stuff. Just take them. It’s the only positive thing to come out of [it].

Those organisations that applied for and received CVE money used it to fund a wide variety of projects – ranging from an audio and film production program for Muslim youth to athletic and sporting development opportunities. A scan through the approved projects reveals that, while several do seemingly focus on addressing or countering extremist messages and ideologies directly, with a bit of creative grant writing, CVE resources could be used to cover a wider variety of services. This is supported by the conclusion that Harris-Hogan, Barrelle and Zammit reached in their 2015 study. They wrote:

Of the 64 Australian CVE projects that were categorised as primary programs, 33 had little or no direct relationship to addressing radicalisation.

Another of the arguments made against accepting CVE money was that for the programs that target the Government’s ideal profiles, the participants are usually not “at-risk” members of the community – making the whole initiative somewhat pointless. Asma Fahmi argues:

So, the Government gives that money, because they want a particular group to be targeted, and its usually young males between ... the ages of 18 and 30 or whatever ... But, a lot of the time, from my experience, the people who are attracted to these projects and programs, are

the same old crowd, who are sort of ... more academically inclined. Muslims who sort of attend the other projects as well. Whereas the group that they are trying to target usually are more attracted to certain mosques and certain preachers and certain types of thinking.\footnote{Fahmi, interview.}

Fahmi doubted the intentions of the political initiators behind CVE. She continued:

> I feel like, [in] my personal experience, a lot of this money is just going to waste and maybe it’s just a PR exercise ... Just to say, “Hey look; We’re not just spying and doing these raids, we’re also trying to work with the community and this is the proof.”\footnote{Ibid.}

Fahmi’s contention that CVE programs are essentially futile and a waste of public resources is supported by existing literature, which posits that there is no single trajectory to terrorism and that vulnerability is a weak indicator of radicalisation to violent extremism.\footnote{Anne Aly, “Countering violent extremism,” 77.} Anne Aly, now the Federal Labor member for Cowen, argued that through “flawed assumptions about radicalisation and vulnerability … counter terrorism became conflated with narratives of conflicting values and identities.” She continued:

> The policy response to the threat of home-grown terrorism in Australia is largely based on assumptions that terrorism is primarily religiously motivated and more likely to be a tool for marginalised individuals or groups who are more vulnerable to radicalising forces.\footnote{Ibid, 78.}

Governments’ repeated focus on CVE has had a major impact on Australian MCOs. CVE has strained relationships and caused division between MCOs and Muslim communities in Australia. Nail Aykan explained:

> The Muslim community have been consumed by CVE; call it countering terrorism; call it anti-radicalisation; call it what you want. This has unfortunately drained a lot of vital energy and attention, which could have been better utilised elsewhere.\footnote{Aykan, interview.}

The existence of CVE money has further strained relations between some MCOs. Fahmi said:

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\begin{flushleft}
\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Fahmi, interview.}
\item \footnote{Ibid.}
\item \footnote{Anne Aly, “Countering violent extremism,” 77.}
\item \footnote{Ibid, 78.}
\item \footnote{Aykan, interview.}
\end{itemize}
\end{flushleft}
A lot of people mistrust the whole idea of CVE and that creates friction between people and organisations, but also between organisations and organisations, [because] some organisations say, “We don’t take that money, but they do. So be wary.” And so on and so forth … It does [cause division]. So, when there’s a particular project that comes out, people say, “I’m not associating with that because of CVE money.”

According to Fahmi, while the presence of CVE funding has led to divisions between those that have taken the money and those that have not, it has also led to divisions between those that accepted it:

They had different Government departments funding different organisations. So, you had the Attorney Generals’ [Department] who would fund the LMA, but then … Multicultural NSW were funding other groups. So, they were kind of like in competing CVE programs. So … they would look [and] they’d be able to see what the other ones were doing; what they were planning; but they didn’t necessarily agree. I know with Multicultural NSW, who were very strict on not using religion … [said] it had to be interfaith. Whereas the program that the LMA ran was, I felt, maybe a smarter program, where they kind of addressed misconceptions within Islam, and it was taught to young people and it attracted young people … And so, they were seen as rival [projects], basically.

Some MCOs were committed to ensuring the debate surrounding CVE would not derail their relationships. For instance, although the Muslim Women’s Support Centre WA have a policy in which they do not accept CVE money, they do not let that impact their relationship with other local organisations. Wajma Padshah explained:

Other agencies who have applied and have wanted to cooperate and do some workshops and things like that. We have worked with them.

Explaining the reluctant role that the ICV, who have used CVE money to run limited programs, play in the community CVE debate, and with government institutions. He said:

You can’t attend to certain issues without that key representative body. So … [terrorism] is not a Muslim problem per se; it’s a society problem. But you can’t say, “Okay society, solve it.” And they can’t say, “Look mate, it’s your problem. Solve it.” This is where everybody is needed to come together … We have mechanisms in Victoria, established years ago, that

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999 Fahmi, interview.
1000 Ibid.
1001 Padshah, interview.
help. So, we are not reinventing the wheel when there is a problem.\footnote{1003}

CVE is a policy that encapsulates structural Islamophobia – the fear and suspicion of Muslims on the part of government institutions – within the Australian context. As Aykan suggested, it has drained a lot of vital energy from MCOs and hindered their ability to satisfy the aims and visions that they have as organisations. Despite the attempts of some MCOs to not let it impact existing relationships, there is little doubt that CVE is a divisive issue that has strained relations between communities and groups.

### 5.4 MCOs and Religious Organisations

For the most part, relationships between participating MCOs and other religious organisations can be categorised as positive. Many of the participants shared stories of their organisations working closely with other organisations across religious lines of division.

For example, Ahmed Zreika said that they were lucky in that the South Australian multi-faith community have good avenues of communication, which assists organisations such as the Islamic Society of South Australia in their efforts to “inform people and correct their misconceptions” of Islam.\footnote{1004}

Likewise, Dr Kazi spoke of his appreciation for the dynamics of society in Australia. He said:

> One thing I don’t like to see is the completely segregated societies, because I have enjoyed the dynamics of a multi-cultural, multi-faith society. And to think that I could live and grow in a mono-culture; I think it would be very suffocating.\footnote{1005}

While many of the participants were involved in interfaith events (see 4.6.2 Promoting Islam and Muslims), several were also current or previous members of multi-faith organisations.\footnote{1006}

\footnote{1003} Aykan, interview. \footnote{1004} Zreika, interview. \footnote{1005} Kazi, interview. \footnote{1006} Ihram, interview. Krayem, interview. Raihman, interview.
working across faith groups can be challenging, Sweid argued that it could often be easier working with non-Muslim religious organisations than with members of other MCOs and navigating the religious differences between Muslim communities:

The interfaith is great. I can go to a Christian or a Jew and they are not challenging me, but sitting with a Sufi, who is going to tell me they understand the verse in this way ... Then you’re going to find it challenging.¹⁰⁰⁷

As a previous vice-president of the Jewish Christian Muslim Association, Ghaith Krayem was relatively positive regarding his overall experience with interfaith work. He was particularly encouraged by the relationship that the ICV has with the Uniting Church in Melbourne, saying:

The Uniting Church has been extremely supportive ... and they come from a really genuine place; never political. And it has a big part to do with the leadership. They often struggle with some of their local churches about what they do with our community. We get that feedback. I think from an interfaith perspective, it’s a really strong relationship there.¹⁰⁰⁸

Meanwhile, Zubeda Raihman spoke of her involvement in Together for Humanity. She said:

Together for Humanity is ... [an] Abrahamic faiths group – Jewish, Muslims and Christians. What we have ... [is] dedicated educationists who go to schools and they talk about how to live together [and] how to accept other people's cultures. So, they talk about Jews, they talk about Christians and now Muslims, you know.¹⁰⁰⁹

However, some participants spoke of issues they had working with other religious organisations. For instance, Silma Ihram said that she had difficulty working with some Jewish groups. In reference to Together for Humanity, she said:

They've done a fantastic [job] ... I was on the board initially, and I used to try and support it, but I found it very, very difficult after some of the things that happened in Palestine to work with the Jewish community ... Unless they openly condemned it; I just found it very uncomfortable ... So, where I can, I do. I love to show respect. [But] working with the Jewish community [is difficult for me], unless they disavow what’s happening with Israel, as I am happy to disavow DAESH and the problems we have in our community, I find ... I am just

¹⁰⁰⁷ Sweid, interview.
¹⁰⁰⁸ Krayem, interview.
¹⁰⁰⁹ Raihman, interview.
uncomfortable.\textsuperscript{1010}

As she suggests, Ihram’s expectation that Australian Jewish groups disavow Israeli military actions against Palestine as an entry point to potential collaboration is like the demand placed on MCOs regarding ‘Islamic extremist’ groups. While the similarities between the situation with Israel and Palestine and that of groups like ISIS is an area of much debate and disagreement, Ihram’s comments indicate that members of Australia’s Muslim communities feel that they are relatable. Therefore, this is certainly a factor in relationships between MCOs and Jewish organisations.

In Victoria, the two peak bodies representing the Muslim and Jewish communities – the ICV and the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV) – have a relatively long history of engagement and cooperation,\textsuperscript{1011} however, there was a flare-up of tensions in early 2018 over the JCCV’s involvement in a series of talks delivered in Australia by Daniel Pipes. Pipes is the founder and president of the Middle East Forum (MEF), a think tank which describes its mission as promoting American interests in the Middle East, but which critics regard as one of the most frequently accessed sources of Islamophobic misinformation on the internet.\textsuperscript{1012} AFIC, as the parent organisation of the ICV, released an open letter urging Jewish representative groups to reconsider their decision to host Pipes.\textsuperscript{1013} The statement was supported by just under 100 member societies and councils, including the ICV.\textsuperscript{1014} In response, the executive director of the Australia Israel and Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC) labelled criticism of Pipes as “cheap, false propaganda.”\textsuperscript{1015} The incident soured relations between MCOs and the JCCV, with Michael Brull hypothesising:

\textsuperscript{1010} Ihram, interview.
\textsuperscript{1011} Nail Aykan and David Marlowe, “Peeking into Peak Bodies,” Conference Presentation, Faith-Based Governance & Dispute Resolution Conference, Sir Zelman Cowen Centre – Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia, 6 December 2017.
\textsuperscript{1014} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1015} Colin Rubenstein as quoted in Simon Fox Koob, “Jewish lobby group slams Muslim body over opposition to Harvard scholar Daniel Pipes,” \textit{The Australian}, 27 February 2017,
In the past, Muslim organisations have often overlooked similar behaviour from other pro-Israel Jewish organisations. The Pipes tour may occasion a more critical relationship between peak Muslim organisations and their Jewish counterparts.1016

Nevertheless, despite contentious issues such as this occasionally arising and increasing tensions, for the most part, relationships between Australian MCOs and other religious organisations are typically okay.

5.5 MCOs and Non-Religious Organisations

On top of institutions of government and other religious organisations, Australian MCOs also have relationships with a wide variety of organisations. Funding can often be sought and received from charities and philanthropic organisations – leading to meaningful and ongoing relationships. Likewise, MCOs are often required to work with other groups to assist in the delivery of programs – be it through providing facilities or sharing information and clients.

For instance, IWAA had an ongoing partnership with Access and the Multicultural Development Association (MDA) in settlement assistance, which Nora Amath described as follows:

I am the managing supervisor of the settlements grants program [at IWAA]. So, that deals specifically with refugees. So, those who have been here for [between] 6 months to 5 years. Before 6 months they are catered for and taken care of by … Access … We are literally 10 minutes from them [and] we work very closely with them … After 6 months, [if] they feel they still haven’t been able to settle successfully, which is 100% of our clients, they then come to us … It’s an excellent relationship. So, Access on the southside [of Brisbane], within the Logan area … and then MDA … do Brisbane, Ipswich and Toowoomba, so we work with them [too].1017

Similarly, the sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne said that he worked with a number of representative bodies and charities – saying he was happy to assist when he could by raising money

1017 Amath, interview.
or spreading awareness.\textsuperscript{1018} Hasan Yunich also spoke positively of IICS’s relationship with Human Appeal.\textsuperscript{1019}

Given the socio-political context and regular scrutiny of Australian Muslims, the relationship between Muslim Student Associations (MSAs) and their university administrators is an interesting dynamic.

Farhana Mollah reflected on the University of Western Sydney (Parramatta) MSA’s experience by stressing that on some occasions the University was quite supportive. For instance, she mentioned that the University had switched to \textit{halal}-only barbeques without any major prompting.\textsuperscript{1020}

However, one issue that has gained media attention in recent years, and that affected UWS, is the practice of segregated seating at on-campus events hosted by MSAs.\textsuperscript{1021} Farhana Mollah explained:

\begin{quote}
There was once a university reference group and they were having a talk [to the MSA] about how once we had this issue of segregation, like in a lecture. Obviously, being Muslims, we wouldn’t just sit anywhere. There would be a brother side and a sister side, yeah? And, apparently there was a news person coming from some channel ... Obviously they put it a different way, and that’s why the Uni was like, “You need to give them freedom to sit wherever they want to sit.”\textsuperscript{1022}
\end{quote}

The MSA suggested a compromise incorporating a male, female and mixed section, but the University found this unsatisfactory. Mollah continued:

\begin{quote}
They kind of kept on repeating their agenda which was, “Nah, just don’t have segregation” ... But this is the thing I don’t understand – especially for the Uni; They are saying that people should have their freedom – and for us, being Muslims, we do want to be seated separately – then why is it that they think that that is not freedom? If you put me to sit in a place that is mixed; then I wouldn’t sit. And if it’s a Muslim event, and you tell me to sit there, I would not
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{1018} Sheikh from the western suburbs of Melbourne, interview.
\textsuperscript{1019} Yunich, interview.
\textsuperscript{1020} Mollah, interview.
\textsuperscript{1022} Mollah, interview.
While debates among Muslims regarding the need for gender segregation remain ongoing, many Australian Muslims believe as such and this alleged clash of ‘secular’ ideas and Islam can cause friction between, for instance, MSAs and University administrators – in effect, weakening this relationship.

5.6 MCOs and Indigenous Australians

As discussed in Chapter One, Muslims have a history of engagement with local Indigenous communities dating back to before the arrival of Europeans, and also through the early years of the European industrialisation of Australia’s inland when, as non-European settlers, the ‘Afghan’ cameleer communities would often live alongside Indigenous communities in separate settlements bordering European settlements.

Contemporarily, several of the representatives of MCOs in Australia spoke either of ongoing relationships with Indigenous communities or of a desire to develop relationships moving forward. For instance, Hasan Yunich expressed his willingness to interact to a greater degree with Indigenous communities:

> We need to be interacting with other communities and one of the first communities that I’d be looking at ... [is] Indigenous communities. One of the core principles of Islam is that we have to stand for justice, and I see everywhere ... complete injustice against Indigenous people. And surely there's ways we can change it or start to bring it to attention.\(^\text{1025}\)

Likewise, Nora Amath spoke of the nature of AMARAH’s relationship with Indigenous communities:

> We work very closely with Indigenous communities here, in terms of our civil rights portfolio ... There are approaches to work with our Indigenous [communities], not for, and definitely not on behalf of. So, we’ll actually go to them and say, 'Well do you need another voice to add to yours?' [or], 'Can we add numbers, strength, resources to able you to be the driver in

\(^{1023}\) Mollah, interview.


\(^{1025}\) Yunich, interview.
There were similarities, according to Aziz Khan, in the way governments in Australia treated and were treating Muslim and Indigenous communities. He said:

State and Federal [Governments] throwing money at us doesn’t solve nothing. They’ve done that to the Indigenous communities; doesn’t solve nothing.\textsuperscript{1027}

As well as a sympathy for or solidarity with the experiences of an historically persecuted Indigenous population in Australia serving as a reason for engagement between MCOs and Indigenous communities, there was also the argument that Muslim communities could benefit from this relationship in other ways. For instance, Amath spoke of the benefit to the MCOs she was associated with that came from working with Indigenous communities:

We had great networking relationships with our Indigenous elders, and we thought, 'Why don’t we collectively actually go to them [and] host them for a dinner?’ ... We didn’t ask them to come to us, we went to Logan and we had a conversation and said how can we learn from you .... And that probably would have been around 2010 ... and since then ... that has evolved into other things and it could be us, honestly, just learning from them. Whether it is just like the yarning circle - they use that as a framework for how they heal - about reconciliation and the trauma. So, they now are able to help some of our refugees, for example, or even women who are fleeing domestic violence and how to heal ... We’re learning things like music and art therapy, but from an Indigenous perspective – like the weaving that they do and the conversations and the healing that comes as a result of that.\textsuperscript{1028}

The importance of existing and developing relationships between MCOs and Indigenous communities were emphasised by several of the participants. Unlike relationships between MCOs and the media, governments, other religious and non-religious organisations in Australia, these relationships appeared driven, not by a discourse positioning Muslims as violent and aggressive, but rather shared experiences of discrimination and a genuine desire to learn and benefit from an underutilised resource.

\textsuperscript{1026} Amath, interview.
\textsuperscript{1027} Aziz Khan, interview.
\textsuperscript{1028} Amath, interview.
5.7 Conclusion

In order to better understand the dynamics of the environment in which Australian MCOs operate, this chapter has identified and reflected on several of the key social and political relationships that the organisations represented in this research have.

The relationship between Muslims and the media was highlighted as a key area of frustration for Australian MCOs. Through an analysis of what motivates Australian media, this chapter argued that the Australian media, in order to attract the most subscribers, often prays on the insecurities and fears of its audience by promoting and reinforcing perceptions of Muslims and Islam as the violent and dangerous ‘other’. Australian Muslim communities were shown to be treated like media cash cows – often spoken for and about, but rarely to – with news media stereotyping the Muslim ‘other’ based on the preconceptions of non-Muslims, rather than the realities of Muslims themselves. Australian MCOs were shown to be directly affected by this reality in their attempts to challenge misconceptions and promote their work. The Murdoch Press was presented and explored as an example of this phenomenon, before a discussion on some of the ways in which several Australian MCOs have responded to these limitations.

Institutions of government in Australia were shown to have a complex relationship with MCOs. The support of MCOs is often required to legitimise government initiatives; however, the structure of this relationship, as it is very much one-sided in favour of Government, and the circumstances in which the support is often demanded, can cause issues between MCOs and lead to further divisions within Muslim communities. The policy of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), pursued by numerous Australian Governments over the last decade or so, was explored as an example of the relationship imbalance, as well as an example of how structural Islamophobia plays out in the Australian context.
The relationship between MCOs and other religious organisations was considered briefly. While several of the participants were members of multi-faith organisations, and the overall nature of relations between MCOs and other faith groups was perceived as being largely positive, there were some instances of increased tensions between them – specifically between Jewish and Muslim groups on the Palestinian/Israeli conflict and the Daniel Pipes affair.

Through looking at how MCOs will often work with non-religious organisations to help deliver programs before using the example of segregated seating to analyse the relationship between Muslim student associations and university administrators, this chapter briefly explored the dynamics of the relationship between Australian MCOs and other organisations.

Finally, this chapter concluded with a fleeting exploration of the relationship between MCOs and Indigenous Australian communities. It argued that these were important relationships that appeared driven by shared experiences and a desire to learn from an underutilised resource in contrast to several of the other relationships experienced by MCOs, which could be said to primarily placed within the prevailing discourse linking Islam and Muslims to violence.
6 Conclusion

Over the last several decades, an industry has developed in which a range of organisations have sought to work with Australian MCOs to address perceived “problems” within Australian Muslim communities and to bolster inter-community relations and improve social cohesion. This industry has developed to such an extent that a Muslim peak body like the Islamic Council of Victoria, which has around sixty member societies, also has around seventy non-Muslim stakeholders.\(^{1029}\)

Despite this phenomenon, there has been an absence of a comprehensive study that serves to provide an in-depth appreciation, from a non-Muslim perspective, of the overall framework of MCOs currently active in Australia and the nature of some of the challenges they face.

Shaped by semi-structured in-depth interviews with twenty-four representatives of MCOs from across Australia’s five cities with the largest self-identifying Muslim populations, this qualitative research has provided a thorough and valuable insight into issues that are both contemporarily important and significant to Australia’s future.

The purpose of this thesis was to build on the valuable contributions made by academics, like Abdullah Saeed and Nora Amath, and provide a multi-faceted appraisal of the history, the institutions and the diversity among Muslims in Australia. In doing so, it has enhanced understanding of the circumstances in which a diverse range of Australian MCOs form, exist and operate.

This thesis may also serve as a valuable resource for organisations seeking to engage and work with Australian MCOs in the contemporary socio-political environment.

\(^{1029}\) Aykan, interview.
6.1 Summary of Key Findings

This thesis approached the history of Muslim communities in Australia through two distinct periods – separated by the official dismantling of the White Australia Policy in the 1960s and 1970s. Emphasising the similarities between the exclusion experienced by early Muslim communities in Australia, such as the ‘Afghan’ cameleers, with contemporary forms of exclusion experienced by Australia’s diverse Muslim communities today, it identified that the ways in which Australian Muslim communities are approached and treated in the twenty-first century can be linked to historical trends throughout Australia’s post-European settlement past. The enduring legacy of the White Australia Policy, which has shaped Australian multiculturalism as a ‘White multiculturalism’, has served, in part, to limit access to social capital for minority groups – including Muslims communities. Reinforced by orientalist ideas emphasising the otherness of Muslims, or using Muslim as adverb, and recent events framing Islam as violent, a perception that Islam and Muslims are incompatible with Australian society has been dominant.

Having analysed the socio-political context for the existence of Muslim communities in Australia and an introduction to their growth and diversification, this thesis provided an overall structure of MCOs in Australia. By offering a contemporary re-interpretation of Abdullah Saeed’s three-category explanation of Australian Muslim leadership in Islam in Australia, and separating MCOs into peak bodies, collective religious leadership and community groups, it established an approachable leadership framework.

By contrasting two prominent Muslim peak bodies – the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils and its Victorian affiliate, the Islamic Council of Victoria – it showcased how, despite its long history, AFIC is, owing to allegations of mismanagement, facing various challenges to remain relevant in the contemporary leadership framework of MCOs in Australia. The ICV, on the other hand, was shown to

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1030 Ghassan Hage, White Nation, 19.
remain a key and influential organisation that was, unlike AFIC, effective in the three key areas in which a peak body provides a strong voice for its members – lobbying government, community education, and information sharing. Despite AFIC’s self-inflicted short-comings, it was still seen as relevant within the overall structure of Australian MCOs, given its accumulated assets, history and name. Its recent attempts at reform, which has seen a new board and new CEO attempt to take meaningful steps to address issues with AFIC-affiliated schools, finances and transparency, although in their early stages, provide hope for the organisation’s future.

The Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) was approached under the category of collective religious leadership. Since its formation in 2005, ANIC was shown to have transitioned into an increasingly significant organisation. Although its religious and social influence within Australian Muslim communities varies, it is an organisation that governments and government institutions have been keen to promote. ANIC, it was argued, has become a relatively active institution that, given the recent failings of AFIC and the desire of governments and government institutions to find a Muslim voice with a marketable perception of legitimacy, has taken on an increasingly greater role in advocating for Australian Muslim communities. As such, ANIC has assumed a political role that, as several of the participants of this study indicated, does not suit such an organisation.

Given the increased politicisation of Australian Muslim communities, and a perception that it is difficult to penetrate and influence existing organisations, MCOs have emerged in significant numbers in recent years. While acknowledging the difficulties in categorising some MCOs given that the nature of their services, vision and reach can be relatively broad, this chapter separated community groups into four subcategories: mosque boards and committees, women’s leadership organisations, community centres and associations, and youth groups and Muslim student associations.

Mosque boards and committees, it was determined, remain influential organisations in the overall structure of Muslim leadership in Australia. However, despite the desire of several of the
participating MCO representatives to diversify, mosque boards remain largely dominated by men of specific ethnic or cultural groups. In part, in opposition to their frequent exclusion from leadership roles within key organisations, women’s leadership organisations have grown exponentially in recent years. The extent and reach of the services offered by these organisations to Muslim and other communities was shown as substantial. The subcategory of community centres and associations was described as particularly broad and inclusive. Distinguished from mosques on the basis of a wider societal focus that was reflected in their services offered, they were best described by Ayman Islam as encompassing the directive: “Moving away from building mosques to building lives.”

The final subcategory of community groups – youth groups and Muslim student associations – were grouped together owing to their collective emphasis on of providing opportunities and running activities for young Muslims in Australia. In an MCO environment wherein older generations were said to dominate, these organisations allowed for younger members of communities to develop and articulate their ideas, values, aims and leadership potential.

Internal challenges – defined as internal because they relate to the issues and factors that may be said to exist predominantly within MCOs, as either prevalent trends or reflections of the nature of Australian Muslim communities – were identified and discussed in this thesis. The variety of challenges to emerge predominantly from the twenty-four semi-constructed, in-depth interviews, were approached under the parameters of four volatile, yet overriding themes – the generation gap, employment of imams, diversity of the Muslim community, and staff, funding and governance.

A recurring theme from this research was the perceived differences between generations of Australian Muslims – addressed in this thesis through an exploration of four related subthemes: patriarchal structure, transition of leaders, finding the ‘right’ leaders, and training and mentoring.

The tendency for women to be excluded – by design or otherwise – from leadership positions in MCOs, which was shown to be a phenomenon that was predominantly relevant to organisations that

1031 Islam, interview.
were run by older generations of Australian Muslims rather than in organisations run by younger Muslims, was presented as a significant internal challenge. Although there was some evidence to suggest this phenomenon was beginning to decline, it was said to be reinforced by the reluctance of existing leaders to transition out of their roles and for new leaders to be properly trained and mentored. Likewise, an inability to find leaders with the appropriate skills and willingness to contribute and lead all contributed to a sense of distance between generations of Australian Muslims.

This thesis reaffirmed a lack of Australian-born or raised imams as a long-standing challenge for Australian MCOs. Existing imam training and selection processes were shown as contributing to a sense that many imams within Australia, according to some representatives of MCOs, have an inadequate level of comprehension of the challenges facing Muslims in Western societies and an inability to contextualise their understanding of Islam to provide relevant religious guidance.

As is the case with Muslims across the world, Muslim communities in Australia continue to be distinguishable by theological, ethnic, tribal and cultural factors, as well as by politics and economics. While this diversity – the result of the abundance of nations and regions from which Muslim communities in Australia have migrated from – was not, in itself, viewed and presented as a challenge, navigating related divisions between Muslim communities was shown to have ramifications for Australian MCOs. Several of the participants were critical of the insular nature of some communities and expressed frustration at the lack of a desire for working towards achieving a greater sense of unity between Australian Muslim communities and MCOs. The challenge of divided and insular communities was linked to the generation gap by some participants, who theorised that such divisions were less visible amongst younger members of Muslim communities, who did not harbour the same attachments as many of their ancestors.

The last of the internal challenges to be discussed in this thesis were issues pertaining to staff, funding and governance. After addressing the various challenges posed by an over-reliance on
volunteers, it revealed the increasing desire for MCOs to professionalise. This desire, however, was qualified by the reality posed by access to funds. Through a discussion of two of the major income streams for MCOs – grants and community donations – this thesis evaluated the challenges of funding organisations. It discussed how a reliance on grants, which are often the preferred method of receiving income, has various associated challenges, and looked at the challenges linked to the major alternative – relying on community donations. This chapter also looked briefly at the nature and accompanying challenges involved in governing Australian MCOs.

Utilising Khaled A. Beydoun’s three-dimension definition encompassing private, structural and dialectical Islamophobia, given it brought together many of the stories and frustrations discussed by the twenty-four MCO representatives that participated in this study, this thesis addressed Islamophobia as the external challenge for Australian MCOs. Building on the discussion earlier in the thesis that linked contemporary Islamophobia to the orientalist and exclusionary discourses prominent within the Australian context, Islamophobia and the intersection between Islamophobia and overlapping phenomena, such as racism, protectionism and sexism, was explored as a means of understanding prevalent contemporary social attitudes to Islam and Muslim communities in Australia, and how that impacts Australian MCOs. The four major themes that emerged from the semi-structured in-depth interviews with participants – the ‘good Muslim narrative, the public relations problem, institutional Islamophobia and direct threats – were discussed, before identifying the trends in how MCOs have responded to Islamophobia and accompanying means of social exclusion.

The prevalence of the ‘good’ Muslim narrative was shown as a key manifestation of Islamophobia in the Australian and Western context. Through an analysis of how public perceptions of Islam as monolithic and inherently violent have led to a situation wherein Muslims and MCOs are, in what can be said to constitute a social demand, often required to prove their innocence, this chapter
addressed how MCOs have had limitations, real and perceived, placed on their participation in the public space, and, subsequently, their ability to achieve their aims and visions.

This thesis also addressed how many of the participants of this research believed that limited media and political framing of terrorism as a predominantly ‘Islamic’ issue, coupled with wider society’s tendency to view the Islamic faith as monolithic, meant that Muslim communities were in the midst of a public relations disaster. The socio-political impacts of this phenomenon, explored in detail through institutional Islamophobia as a means of systematic discrimination and evidence of private Islamophobic incidents – which were shown to be legitimised, in part, by structural and dialectical Islamophobia – were also considered.

After exploring Islamophobia, this thesis then provided an exploration of the nature of participating MCOs responses to Islamophobia and exclusion in the Australian context. These responses were shown as twofold: encouraging the reporting and documentation of Islamophobia and the promotion of Islam and Muslims.

Relying on the frameworks and ideas presented in the preceding chapters, this thesis identified and reflected on the key social and political relationships experienced by participating Australian MCOs. It first highlighted the relationship between MCOs and the media. Contextualising existing analysis on the motivations of media industries to the situation of Australian Muslim communities and MCOs, it argued that elements of the Australian media often prey on the insecurities and fears of their audience by promoting and reinforcing perceptions of Muslims and Islam as the dangerous ‘other’. Reflecting on the relative data to emerge from discussions with the participants of this research, Australian Muslim communities were said to feel like ‘cash cows’ – exploited, but at the same time excluded, and spoken for and about, but rarely to.

The policy of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) was the central point for the discussion regarding the relationship between Australian MCOs and Government. The complex ways in which this
relationship has manifested and exists, was shown to be a further element of division between individual MCOs and other MCOs, and between MCOs and Muslim communities.

The nature of relationships between MCOs and other religious and non-religious organisations were also discussed. This thesis highlighted some of the issues that emerge from this dynamic, before concluding with a brief, yet important exploration of the relationship between some MCOs and Indigenous Australian communities, as understood and presented by the participants of this research.

6.2 Directions for Future Research

There are multiple opportunities for future research in which the analysis and understanding that has emerged from this research can be reflected on, challenged and enhanced; however, this thesis identifies three main research directions.

Firstly, a comparative study analysing MCOs in nations with a similar socio-economic and political reality to that of Australia would prove beneficial. For instance, if emerging generations of Australian Muslims follow the established trend by which young Australian Muslims have less of sense of attachment to the national, ethnic or tribal loyalties of their ancestors, existing Islamic infrastructure in Australia (see Chapter Two), in its current state, may prove inadequate. While there was a general consensus that the often ethno-exclusive and male-dominated nature present in segments of the established leadership structures of Australian MCOs would eventually subside, this shift could be enhanced by research identifying and analysing if and how this has occurred in other nations, and how that could relate to the Australian context.

While studies on Islamophobia are numerous and informative, research analysing and comparing the nature and variety of the responses of Australian MCOs to Islamophobia and related exclusionary phenomena to, for instance, the responses of Australian Indigenous groups to racism and discrimination, could prove insightful and beneficial.
Finally, by design, this research has approached the dynamics of relationships between Australian MCOs and an array of other organisations through the lived experiences of representatives of these MCOs. Where possible, it has utilised existing literature in understanding, for example, the motivations of media and governments in their presentations of and engagement with Australian Muslim communities; however, qualitative research that engages with relevant individuals (editors, government ministers etc.) and approaches these relationships from their perspectives would be beneficial.
## Appendix A: List of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age bracket</th>
<th>Place of birth</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
<th>Location of interview</th>
<th>Affiliated organisations</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Recorded</th>
<th>Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Anonymous)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>Indian subcontinent</td>
<td>8 March 2017</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Board of Imams Victoria (BOIV), Australian National Imams Council (ANIC)</td>
<td>Imam</td>
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<td>73:02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Sheikh from western suburbs of Melbourne)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>27 August 2016</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Muslim Women’s Association of South Australia</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbas, Dora</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>24 October 2016</td>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>Islamic Women’s Association of Australia (IWAA)</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abdelsalam, Galila</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>23 March 2017</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>University of Western Australia Islamic Student Association</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>6 November 2016</td>
<td>Perth</td>
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<td>35-45</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>23 March 2017</td>
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<td>Islamic Council of Victoria, Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC)</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aykan, Nail</td>
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<td>40-50</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
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<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>University of Western Sydney Muslim Student Association</td>
<td>Vice-President</td>
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<td>20-30</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>21 March 2017</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Various</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Melbourne</td>
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<td>80-90</td>
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<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Various</td>
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<td>30-40</td>
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<td>Silma Iram</td>
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<td>25-35</td>
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<td>30-40</td>
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<td>Islamic Society of South Australia</td>
<td>President</td>
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## Appendix B: List of Participants Affiliated Organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Established</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Thesis Categorisation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Federation of Islamic Councils</td>
<td>AFIC</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<td>AMARAH</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Queensland &amp; Australia</td>
<td>Community Centre and Association</td>
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<td>Australian Muslim Women’s Association</td>
<td>AMWA</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>New South Wales &amp; Australia</td>
<td>Women’s Leadership Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian National Imams Council</td>
<td>ANIC</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Collective Religious Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Imams Victoria</td>
<td>BOIV</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Collective Religious Leadership</td>
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<td>Forum on Australia’s Islamic Relations</td>
<td>FAIR</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Community Centre and Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Islamic Council of Victoria</td>
<td>ICV</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Peak Body</td>
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<td>Islamic Council of Western Australia</td>
<td>ICWA</td>
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<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>Peak Body</td>
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<td>Islamic Information Centre of South Australia</td>
<td>IICSA</td>
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<td>South Australia</td>
<td>Community Centre and Association</td>
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<td>Islamic Relief Australia</td>
<td>IRAUS</td>
<td>2010 (1984 – in the UK)</td>
<td>Australia/International</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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<td>Islamic Society of Geelong</td>
<td>ISG</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Mosque</td>
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<td>Islamic Society of South Australia</td>
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<td>South Australia</td>
<td>Community Centre and Association/Peak Body</td>
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<td>Islamic Women’s Association of Australia</td>
<td>IWAA</td>
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<td>Queensland &amp; Australia</td>
<td>Women’s Organisation</td>
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<td>Markaz Imam Ahmad</td>
<td>MIA</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>Municipality</td>
<td>Community Centre and Association</td>
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<td>Minhaj-ul-Quran International (Victoria)</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Community Centre and Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim Collective (previously Muslims for Progressive Values)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Community Centre and Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim Women’s Support Centre Western Australia</td>
<td>MWSC</td>
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<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>Women’s Leadership Organisation</td>
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<td>South Australia</td>
<td>Women’s Leadership Organisation</td>
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<td>Muslim Women’s National Network Australia</td>
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<td>Muslim Youth Western Australia</td>
<td>MYWA</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>Municipality</td>
<td>Youth Group and Muslim Student Association</td>
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</table>

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1032 The views expressed by participants were their own and are not necessarily reflective of the views of the organisations to which they are affiliated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Category</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Navigate Islam</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>United Muslim Migrant Association</td>
<td>UMMA</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Mosque Board and Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Melbourne Islamic Society</td>
<td>UMIS</td>
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<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Youth Group and Muslim Student Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Western Australia Muslim Student Association</td>
<td>UWAMSA</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>Youth Group and Muslim Student Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Western Sydney Muslim Student Association Paramatta</td>
<td>UWSMSA</td>
<td></td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>Youth Group and Muslim Student Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Werribee Islamic Centre</td>
<td>WIC</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Mosque Board and Committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Example of Discussion Topics

**Discussion Topics**

- **Personal History**
  - Education/background
  - Community involvement
  - What led to you taking this role?

- **Muslim community organisation**
  - Your role
  - Biggest Challenges
  - Professional Staff/ Volunteers
    - Experiences of both?
  - Upcoming Programs

- **Relationships**
  - Key relationships
  - Other Muslim community organisations
    - Eg. Interstate
    - Networking
  - Non-Muslim organisations
  - Governments (local/state/federal) etc.

- **Muslim leadership in Australia**
  - What are the major challenges?
  - Local/State/Australia

- **Media**
  - Managing those relationships

- **Concluding Exchange**
  - What is the key issue facing Muslim community leadership in Australia?
  - Anything else that you would like to mention?

- **Other things to discuss**
  - Transition of leaders
  - The right leaders
  - Mentoring
  - Resources
  - Politicised youth
  - Youth organisations
Appendix D: Plain Language Statement

Plain Language Statement

Asia Institute

**Project:** Muslim Community Leadership in Australia

Principal Researcher: Mr. Ryan Edwards BA (Hons) (University of Melbourne)
Tel: [Redacted] Email: [Redacted]

Primary Supervisor: Dr Muhammad Kamal
Tel: [Redacted] Email: [Redacted]

Secondary Supervisor: Dr Christina Mayer
Tel: [Redacted] Email: [Redacted]

---

**Introduction**

You are invited to participate in the above project, which is being conducted by Ryan Edwards (Principal Researcher) with the supervision of Dr Muhammad Kamal (Primary Supervisor) and Dr Christina Mayer (Secondary Supervisor) at The University of Melbourne. You have been identified by the Principal Researcher as an individual who may be able to make a valuable contribution to this study.

**Purpose of the research**

Researchers are primarily interested in leaders’ perspectives as a means of understanding the relationship between Australia’s diverse Muslim community and their organisational leadership.

Through an exploration of the structure of important organisations, key issues affecting the community and the actions organisations are taking to address these issues, this study aims to analyse Muslim community leadership in Australia.

The study focuses on relationships between organisations (Muslim and non-Muslim), specific challenges facing community organisations, and the structure/governance of community organisations.

This research has been approved by the Faculty of Arts Human Ethics Advisory Group (HEAG) and the Human Ethics Sub-Committee (HESC).

**What will I be asked to do?**

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to contribute in the following way.

Individuals participating in interviews will be asked to discuss a range of issues regarding Muslim community leadership in Australia. These issues will include, but are
not limited to, your personal experience of leadership in the Muslim community, the key issues confronting Muslim community leadership as you see them and how you view the role of leaders. With the permission of participants, these interviews will be recorded.

The interview may enter potentially sensitive areas and as such, should the situation arise that you require emotional support, please note that Beyond Blue (1300 224 636), Mind Spot Clinic (1800 614 434) and Relationships Australia (1300 364 277) are some of the readily available services that can provide guidance.

**How long is my participation expected to take?**
We estimate that the time required to complete an interview will be 60 minutes. The total time required of you is unlikely to exceed 90 minutes.

**How will my confidentiality be protected?**
Participants will be identified by name and organisation unless otherwise requested. This study has an approximate sample size of 30-40 interview participants. We intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent, subject to any legal requirements. Your name and contact details will be kept in a password-protected computer file, separate from any data that you supply.

**Do I have to take part?**
Participation is completely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any unprocessed data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice.

**What happens after the project is finished?**
The results of the study will be published in a final thesis submitted to the University of Melbourne. This thesis will become available for public access via the University of Melbourne library. Preliminary findings may also be published in academic journals prior to the submission of the thesis.

Furthermore, the data you provide may be re-used in future studies – likely as a means of comparison in further studies analysing Muslim community leadership in other nations with a similar socio-political make-up to Australia or in order to track the development of Muslim community leadership in Australia over time.

**Where can I get further information?**
If you would like more information about the project, please contact the researcher:
Ryan Edwards  
Mob: [Redacted]  
Email: [Redacted]
What if I have any concerns about the project?

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Office for Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Fax: +61 3 9347 6739 or Email: HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au. All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.

How do I agree to participate?

If you would like to participate in this project, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by completing the accompanying consent form and returning a scanned copy via email.
Appendix E: Consent Form

Consent Form

Asia Institute

Project: Muslim Community Leadership in Australia

Principal Researcher: Mr. Ryan Edwards BA (Hons) (University of Melbourne)
Tel: [Redacted] Email: [Redacted]

Primary Supervisor: Dr Muhammad Kamal
Tel: [Redacted] Email: [Redacted]

Secondary Supervisor: Dr Christina Mayer
Tel: [Redacted] Email: [Redacted]

Name of Participant: ____________________________

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.

2. I understand that the purpose of this research is to investigate Muslim community leadership in Australia.

3. I understand that my participation in this project is for research purposes only.

4. I acknowledge that the possible effects of participating in this research project have been explained to my satisfaction.

5. In this project I will be required to discuss a range of issues regarding Muslim community leadership in Australia. These issues will include, but are not limited to, my personal experience of leadership in the Muslim community, the key issues confronting Muslim community leadership as I see them and how I view the role of leaders.

6. I understand that my interview(s) may be audio taped and later transcribed.

7. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from this project anytime without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data that I have provided.

8. I understand that the data from this research will be stored at the University of Melbourne and may be used in further studies and in future studies as outlined in the plain language statement provided to me.

9. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements; my data will be password protected and accessible only by the named researchers.

10. I understand that given the small number of participants involved in the study, it may not be possible to guarantee my anonymity.

11. I understand that after I sign and return this consent form, it will be retained by the researcher.

Participant Signature: ____________________________ Date: __________________
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