

# Speaking Across the Sectarian Divide

Project Evaluation Report

Executive Summary



THE AUSTRALIAN MUSLIM WOMEN'S CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

## Report prepared by



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THE AUSTRALIAN MUSLIM WOMEN'S CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

ISBN 978-0-9872963-7-5

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We are guided by the following principles:

- Diversity brings strength to Muslims
- Respect for all people irrespective of the schools and branches of Islam to which they belong
- Recognition of the importance of intra-Muslim dialogue and harmony based on openness and equality
- Support for people from different schools and branches of Islam to live according to their traditions and customs
- Importance of creating conditions of confidence and mutual trust
- Openness to the views of others and a willingness to learn from others

# Acknowledgements

The support and involvement of many individuals and organisations in this project are gratefully acknowledged.

We thank the project's Advisory Group for their invaluable advice, support and direction, and for their participation in a number of project events that were crucial to the project's successful completion.

- **Shahram Akbarzadeh**, Professor of Middle East & Central Asian Politics, and Deputy Director of the Alfred Deakin Research Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University.
- **Nail Aykan**, General Manager of the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV)
- **Milad Bardan**, Chairperson of the Victorian Lebanese Community Council, Executive Committee member of the Australian Arabic Council
- **Linda Briskman**, Professor of Human Rights at the Swinburne Institute for Social Research
- **Professor Joseph Anthony Camilleri**, OAM, Emeritus Professor, La Trobe University, Former Founding Director of the Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University
- **Tasneem Chopra**, Chairperson of the Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights (AMWCHR)
- **Albert Fatileh**, Leading Senior Constable, Multicultural Liaison Officer North West Metro Region Division 5, Victoria Police
- **Amal El-Khoury**, Coordinator Arabic Welfare Inc.
- **Sherene Hassan**, Director of the Islamic Museum of Australia
- **Sheikh Issa Ibrahim**, Imam of Keon Park Mosque and a Minister of Religion under the 'Australian Islamic Federation'
- **Iman Riman**, Broadcast Journalist, SBS Arabic Program
- **Paul Waite** Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship

Thank you also to **Hidayet Ceylan** who co-wrote the material on the Alevi community for the Guide to Muslim Diversity.

We would like to especially acknowledge the support and input of AMWCHR staff, in particular **Nuzhat Lotia** and **Ambreen Mirza** for their work on this project and untiring efforts to collect data and participate in extensive reflection activities throughout the project and for ensuring the processes associated with the evaluation research went smoothly.

Importantly, we wish to thank the individuals who agreed to be interviewed about their experiences for the project. We have been inspired by their passion and their determination for inter-sectarian harmony.

Finally, thank you to Joumanah El Matrah for her skilful leadership and tireless commitment to the project.

# Introduction

The outbreak of civil conflict in Syria in 2012 broadly along inter-sectarian and religious lines led to a significant heightening of inter-sectarian tensions within the Muslim community in Victoria. At the time of planning this project, there were many acts of violence committed by Muslims against Muslims in Victoria. This underscored the urgency and relevance of a project to support Muslim youth to speak across the sectarian divide in a way that respects difference and diversity.

This project provided a range of activities and forums to promote Muslim sectarian diversity and dialogue between the Alawi, Alevis, and the Sunni communities. In 2014, Islamic State's increasing incursion into Iraq rendered new communities in Australia vulnerable to sectarian related tensions. To respond to this, the AMWCHR included Kurdish and Shia communities in a number of the project's key activities.

The *Speaking across the Sectarian Divide* project was pioneering within the Australian context, as there are no previous attempts at leadership capacity development informed by Muslim diversity. The project represents a unique opportunity for community leaders and other stakeholders to assist young men and women to take leadership on sectarian tensions and articulate a vision of Muslim sectarian co-existence that is respectful and appropriate to the Australian context. This report is a summary of the project and its evaluation.

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## Project Background

Following the eruption of civil conflict in Syria, there were five arson attacks on properties and a number of unspecified personal attacks in Victoria, all targeting the Lebanese/Syrian Alawi Muslim community and the Alevi Turkish community. The Alawis and Alevis were targeted because they were perceived to be aligned with the Syrian government, and also because they were perceived to have an unorthodox practice and interpretation of Islam. The Alawi and Alevi sects of Islam, having a long history of persecution by the Sunni majority, feel they must be ready to defend themselves from attack, both here and overseas.

The Syrian conflict not only brought forth old grievances and previous historical injustices committed by the two main groups involved (Sunni and Alawi) against each other, but also brought to the fore a great deal of hostility among Sunni youth who felt that the Alawis had subjugated the Sunni majority since 1970 (when Hafez Al Asad took over the Baath Party). These long held grievances and deeply rooted issues make it extremely difficult to generate discussion and working alliances among leaders from these sects.

Community leaders feared that the tensions around Syria created fertile ground both for

radicalisation and, ultimately, the potential for violence, the victims of which were likely to be minority Muslims. There was already considerable evidence of violence, including widely publicised media coverage of young men who had travelled to and died in Syria for 'jihad'.

In 2012, the AMWCHR hosted a range of meetings between the Alawi and Alevi communities and Victoria Police, the then Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and other service providers. It was apparent from those meetings that members of the Alawi community were the main targets of violence and that their leaders were struggling to deal with this new reality. As a result they required assistance to utilise the support and protections available to them, and to maintain dialogue with the Sunni Muslim community, as well as undertake a representative role for their community within the context of violence. The AMWCHR believed that the Alawi and Alevi communities required additional assistance because they were not recipients of the significant investment that the state and federal governments made in the Muslim community via capacity building and leadership development in the post 9/11 period. Hence, the Alawi community

simply did not have the support and capacity to contend with the challenges it faced.

Within the Sunni majority, the main actors in mosques and community organisations in Australia, there had been relative silence on the inter-sectarian tension in the Syrian conflict. This left Sunni youth uninformed and unguided when reading radicalised material on Syria, which encourages jihad and violence against Alawis, depicting them as both supporters of the Syrian

regime and as heretical Muslims. Thus, there was an evident need to support Sunni youth to find a meaningful response to the sectarian divide among Australian Muslims made visible by the Syrian conflict.

This situation required specific interventions aimed at building the capacity of Muslim youth to respond to the challenges of inter-sectarian conflict and differences in a respectful way.

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## Project Objectives

The key objectives of the *Speaking across the Sectarian Divide* project were to:

- develop the leadership capacity of the Muslim Alawi, Alevi and Sunni youth to contend with and take ownership of inter-sectarian relations in Australia as well as the discourse on the relationship between Syria and sectarian relations in Australia.
- increase the capacity of the Muslim Alawi, Alevi and Sunni community to deal with their safety concerns and to increase their capacity to deal with inter-sectarian tensions.
- increase understanding and capacity to respond to inter-sectarian tensions among community service providers, government departments and other stakeholders.
- develop resource materials on Muslim diversity in Australia.

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## Project Activities

- **Leadership development:** leadership training of Muslim youth from the Alawi, Sunni and Alevi communities to contend and take leadership of inter-sectarian relations in Australia and to promote positive relations between the communities.
- **Resource development:** material to increase awareness of Muslim sectarian diversity in Australia for Muslims, community sector and government.
- **Professional training:** for community sector professionals working with youth who might be affected by inter-sectarian tensions.
- **Community Leaders Forum:** Muslim community leaders were invited to participate in a discussion on inter-sectarian issues and to work towards collectively developing community-based strategies for eliminating intolerance and building inter-sectarian/inter-religious harmony.
- **Dialogue event:** Community Forum for young people from different sects to present their vision of community harmony and inter-sectarian relations to other Muslim youth and to their Muslim elders.

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## Funding

The project was funded by the Australian Attorney-General's Department under the Building Community Resilience (BCR) grants program.





The Hon David Feeney MP, the Hon Mark Dreyfus MP Attorney-General in 2013, Deakin University Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh, ICV General Manager Nail Aykan and Sheikh Isa Ibrahim at the launch of the Speaking Across the Sectarian Divide project, 2013.



AMWCHR Chairperson, Tasneem Chopra launching the Speaking Across the Sectarian Divide project, 2013.



Final Advisory Group meeting and presentation of evaluation report findings. Clockwise from left to right: Joumanah El Matrah, Georgia Prattis, Tasneem Chopra, Linda Briskman, Sharham Akbarzadeh, Imman Riman, Albert Fatileh, Paul Waite, Maria Dimopoulous, Professor Joseph Camilleri, and the Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP, 2015.

# Project Evaluation

Evaluation is a core component of best practice and supports the development of an evidence base that documents sustainable outcomes that result from investment in community capacity building. Community capacity building projects targeting culturally and linguistically diverse communities are a small component of the community resilience building work being undertaken across Australia. Evaluating these programs offers a significant contribution to continuously improving the critical work undertaken by the multicultural not-for-profit sector in supporting and strengthening inclusion and contributions made by our diverse communities.

The AMWCHR is to be commended for its commitment to ensuring a rigorous and independent evaluation of the *Speaking across the Sectarian Divide* project.

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## Evaluation Objectives

The objectives of the independent evaluation were to:

- assess the relevance of the approach and establish how far the project managed to achieve planned outcomes.
- review evidence of the direct and indirect impact of the project on strengthening the leadership capacity of the Muslim Alawi, Alevi and Sunni youth to contend with and take ownership of inter-sectarian relations in Australia.
- assess the extent to which the project strategies proved effective and whether they are likely to have a sustainable impact.
- enable project staff to engage in critical reflection and information sharing as part of capacity building and external stakeholder advisory work.

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## Analytical Framework for the Evaluation

The following key questions formed the analytical framework for the evaluation process:

- **Relevance** – To what extent have the project results been useful in meeting the needs of the target groups involved in the project?
- **Validity of Design** – Were the project objectives and outcomes relevant and realistic to the situation on the ground? Was the intervention coherent and realistic?
- **Program Effectiveness** – To what extent have the project's immediate objectives been achieved for the key target groups involved?
- **Effectiveness of management arrangements** – Did the project governance process facilitate good results and effective delivery?
- **Impact Orientation and Sustainability** – Can observed change be causally linked to the project interventions? Are the project results, achievements and benefits sustainable and, if so, in what way?



## Data Collection Methods

The project evaluation timeframes were October 2013 to October 2014. The evaluation was commissioned from the outset of the project to ensure that a comprehensive evaluation framework could be developed to capture data at planning, delivery and post activity stages.

A range of data collection methods were used to conduct the evaluation to ensure that a rich selection of feedback was accessed. These are set out below.

- **Project Documentation** – steering committee minutes, project notes, training materials, trainer reports, samples of participant work in training settings, completed evaluation forms, informal written feedback volunteered by participants across project activities.
- **Participant Observations** – five different leadership sessions (topic based session/final sessions), Community Leaders Forum.
- **Interviews** – Open-ended informal interviews with project manager, project facilitators, participants in the leadership program, Community Leaders Forum and dialogue event.
- **Focus Groups** – sample of participants involved in the leadership program. This involved guided discussions undertaken immediately post topic based training sessions and at the conclusion of final program sessions.

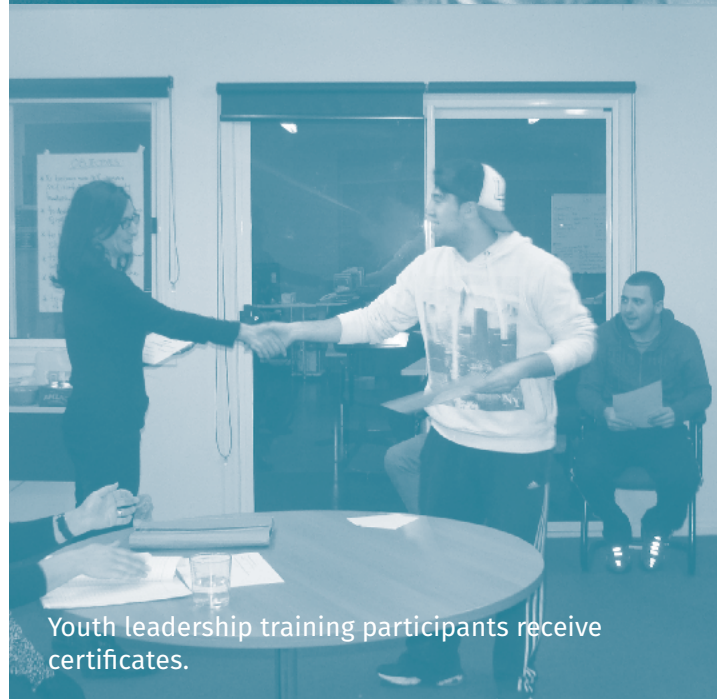
Project activities covered in the review included the Leadership Development Program, resources developed as part of the project, the Dialogue Event, Professional Training and the Community Leaders Forum.



Youth leadership training participants.



Community Leaders' Forum.



Youth leadership training participants receive certificates.





Sheikh Isa Ibrahim speaks at Information Night organised by young Alawite leaders, 2014.



Final Advisory Group meeting and presentation of evaluation report findings, 2015.



Dialogue Night event, 2014. Front left: Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, front right: AMWCHR Chairperson Tasneem Chopra.

# Key Evaluation Findings

*'To be able to articulate the issues and bring sects together under the current environment, especially younger people, is amazing given what is going on! To sit together and try to address the issue is something I would never have believed was possible.'*

Stakeholder at Community Dialogue event

Overall, the evaluation found that the key project outcome was the contribution it made to building community capacity and fostering change. In particular, it established an evidence base around the following:

- young people demonstrated potential to build bridges across diverse Muslim communities.

*'The training has helped me see that we need to be aware of other communities and get involved across communities.'*

Youth participant

- young people demonstrated an ability to work together to manage conflict and promote harmony.

*'The young people were stunning. Not only did they demonstrate capacity to show leadership on matters of the 'sectarian divide' but through their thoughtfulness on issues of social justice and peace for all, they could demonstrate how the divide could be transcended.'*

Stakeholder at Community Dialogue event

- young people proved vital stakeholders in peace-building and as influential agents of change.
- the project showcased the critical role that young women play both as community members and leaders.

*'Messages around respect and appreciating differences encouraged parents to be more open minded. They were so proud they were taking photos of their children presenting and posting them to relatives overseas.'*

Stakeholder at Community Dialogue event

- the outcomes have clearly demonstrated the undeniable ability of young women to play an influential role in preventing violent extremism and enhancing inter-sectarian harmony in the Australian context.

- the leadership qualities and public speaking skills of female youth leadership program participants were outstanding and have resulted in sustainable community outcomes.
- the project provided experiential opportunities for young people to create change

*'The program made us stop and think about how we react. It gave us hope for our community – how we can grow an idea.'*

Youth participant

*'It helped me see where I am now and where I want to go.'*

Youth participant

- the project engaged a breadth of stakeholders to enhance awareness and collaborate in achieving community unity
- the project established a critical mass of leaders to continue efforts around inter-community harmony

*'Overall this program has lifted my confidence and motivated me to become a good leader in the future.'*

Youth participant



- the project re-directed vulnerable youth from isolation to inclusion through opportunities for dialogue, interaction and team based efforts to apply learnings in community building settings.

*'We were not confident to talk about being Alawi before course. We felt we were given permission to express our identity. It made us feel like we belong somewhere.'*

Youth participant

*'We were sceptical but now hopeful. I didn't believe there would be outcomes initially.'*

Youth participant

*'This course being funded is a big thing in our community – it's the first time we are being heard.'*

Youth participant

*'They have done an excellent job to articulate messages to youth. They were born and brought up here. It's the conflict that forces them to revert to 'other' identity. They needed to feel Australian and AMWCHR did this. They feel they belong.'*

Stakeholder at Community Dialogue event



Young Alawite leaders together with prominent Alawite imams.

## Project Relevance

### Usefulness of the project in meeting the needs of target groups

| Youth  | Community Leaders  |
|--|--|
| <p>The project delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a unique opportunity to express their identity in a safe environment.</li> <li>• a platform for voicing community issues impacting their wellbeing.</li> <li>• a pathway for pursuing leadership roles for the benefit of society as a whole.</li> <li>• skill sets and courage to make a powerful impact on community tensions.</li> <li>• affirmation of their acceptance and belonging in Australian society.</li> </ul> | <p>The project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• achieved a significant milestone in inter-sectarian relations bringing together a breadth of community leaders across different sects for the first time.</li> <li>• established a critical mass committed to achieving inter-community harmony and collaboration and who are continuing to pursue this work beyond the life of the project.</li> </ul> |
| Muslim Community   | External stakeholders  |
| <p>The project delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• growing community momentum for further such initiatives.</li> <li>• resounding support from the community for its positive impact on youth.</li> </ul>  | <p>Involvement in the project has undoubtedly left participants in the professional development training better equipped around informed responsiveness to communities.</p>  |

### Emerging new and relevant issues and opportunities

A number of unexpected and relevant issues and opportunities emerged during the implementation of the Leadership Development component of the project, many of which informed revised approaches whilst continuing to achieve project objectives.

- Issues intersecting with social class emerged in the roll out of the Leadership Program in schools. Participating youth from schools located in disadvantaged areas were more challenging to engage. Community role models were brought in to address this issue.
- There emerged some resistance to participation by youth who did not want to participate in anything related to being 'Muslim'. One community organisation could not be re-engaged, but, as word about the achievements of the project started reaching communities, interest levels grew rapidly.
- The calibre of Alawi youth involved in the roll out of the first Leadership Program was identified as a valuable opportunity to engage them more broadly and mobilise them as project ambassadors. Their flexibility and responsiveness resulted in an advanced leadership program component being delivered to this group. These individuals went on to host a program information night, co-facilitate some sessions, deliver presentations at public forums to advocate on the objectives and benefits of the project to their peers and communities and utilise social media for this purpose.
- International events of relevance to the project were occurring during the implementation phase. The AMWCHR reached out to run groups with young Alevi Kurds through the Kurdish Association whose vulnerability was impacted by these developments. Community leaders from the Iraqi Shia community were also engaged in the project as IS increased its presence in Iraq.



## Validity of Design

### Relevance of project objectives and outcomes

#### Leadership Program

The Leadership Program:

- was unique in relation to mainstream leadership programs . It focused on developing leadership skills within the context of diversity, power and human rights.
- made significant progress in building leadership capacity and establishing pathways for inter-sectarian dialogue.
- contributed to improved intra and inter-sectarian youth connections.

#### Community Leaders Forum

The Community Leaders Forum:

- brought together leaders from different sects to discuss inter-sectarian tensions as well as issues around peak Muslim organisations' failure to include minority Muslim sects.
- resulted in peak Muslim organisations agreeing to further discussions around the inclusion of Muslim minorities.
- resulted in a commitment from inter-sectarian community leaders to come together in the form of a working group to pursue collaborative future work.

#### Dialogue Event

The Dialogue Event:

- broadened project impact and progress made around building community capacity to deal with safety concerns and to deal with inter-sectarian conflict.
- built awareness of sectarian diversity.
- provided opportunity for minority youth to speak about their sect and experiences as well as their emerging leadership and interest for inclusion in the broader Muslim community.
- strengthened connections between young and older community leaders and encouraged established leaders to recognise and support emerging youth leadership.
- created an unprecedented opportunity for networking between Alawi, Alevi and Sunni youth.
- provided the opportunity for inter-sectarian connections to be made both among young and established leaders.

### Extent to which project interventions were coherent and realistic

Project interventions responded directly to community needs and developed coherently as the project was rolled out so that each stage built on the work of the previous stage and ensured that learnings filtered into the community - thereby strengthened potential for sustainability.

Implementation demonstrated a highly successful model of intervention, adopting an action learning approach. The project team responded flexibly and respectfully to community needs whilst remaining committed to achieving the initial objectives of the project.

## Project Effectiveness

### Project outputs achieved

| Indicators of success   | Quantitative outcomes  |
|---|--|
| <p>Development of a Youth Leadership Program</p> <p>Delivery of Youth Leadership Program to at least five groups including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 Alawi youth</li> <li>• 15 Sunni youth</li> <li>• 10 Alevi youth</li> </ul> <p>At least 80% of Youth Leadership Program participants reporting that training was useful.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ A program covering 8 core leadership topics was developed and delivered to 6 groups</li> <li>✓ An additional Advanced Leadership Program covering 6 topics was developed and delivered to an emerging leadership group</li> <li>✓ 33 Alawi youth completed the core program</li> <li>✓ 10 Alawi youth completed the Advanced program</li> <li>✓ 49 Sunni youth completed the core program</li> <li>✓ 8 Alevi youth completed the core program</li> </ul> <p>Evaluation feedback indicated that all participants found the program useful with majority indicating it was very useful.</p> |
| <p>One public dialogue event involving youth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 70 participants at dialogue event</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The Community Dialogue event was attended by 80 participants including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth representatives from the leadership program</li> <li>• Representatives from 11 agencies, external stakeholders and government.</li> <li>• A diverse range of Muslim community leaders and members</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
| <p>One professional development program delivered for external stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 20 external stakeholders trained</li> <li>• At least 80% of external stakeholders reporting training as useful</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Two professional development sessions delivered to a total of 32 participants including 11 members of Victoria Police and 21 representatives from service providers</li> <li>✓ 100% feedback that the training was very useful</li> </ul> <p>AMWCHR has continued to receive requests to deliver further sessions. A further session for senior police had been booked at the time of writing this report.</p>  |
| <p>One forum with Muslim community leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 15 participants</li> <li>• At least 80% of participants reporting forum as useful</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ A community leaders' forum was successfully delivered with over 25 participants including leaders from diverse Muslim sects represented in Victoria's community.</li> <li>✓ The forum was highly successful with community leaders agreeing to ongoing collaboration through a working group.</li> </ul>  |
| <p>One radio program aired in relation to the project</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three community leaders attending the Leaders' Forum were interviewed by a journalist from the SBS Arabic Program. The interviews were played over a number of time slots to promote the achievements of the project.</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Development of written resources to support project objectives</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Guide to Muslim Diversity was developed and published. The Guide is available online via a dedicated webpage and in hard copy from the AMWCHR. See: <a href="http://www.guidetomuslimdiversity.com.au">www.guidetomuslimdiversity.com.au</a></li> </ul>   |

The project was pioneering within the Australian context with a focus on leadership capacity development informed by Muslim diversity. The momentum it created has led to requests to run more youth leadership programs. The young people who participated continue to build on the momentum established and are actively working towards community based pathways to improve youth inter-sectarian relations.

Additional achievements included:

- youth and leaders from different sects signed a joint statement of acceptance and equality.
- the creation of safe and respectful environments for youth to voice thoughts, fears and ideas.
- the opportunity to expose youth to alternative views, clarify misconceptions and enable them to take part in meaningful and creative leadership activities and to lead community events.
- the creation of inter-sectarian dialogue among young leaders as well as older community leaders.

The Community Leaders' Forum resulted in widespread commitment that such dialogue and collaboration continue to be maintained and serve to further strengthen inter-sectarian relations.

### **Extent to which project participants are using the outputs of the project**

Sustainable outcomes that were identified following the completion of the project included Alawi youth establishing a group called the Muslim Alawi Community Leaders (MACL). The MACL has already managed to bring together nine different Alawi community groups and established an advisory committee including two representatives from each group. The youth led MACL are also actively pursuing funding opportunities to deliver more youth development initiatives.

### **Main achievements and demonstrated success**

Whilst it is difficult to capture and document the extent and reach of the project, it did deliver a strong evidence base of some significant achievements. These included:

- the involvement of graduates from the first round of training in co-facilitating further sessions with AMWCHR facilitators.
- successfully bringing together Alawi, Alevi and Sunni youth to collaborate in joint future initiatives and activities promoting inter-sectarian harmony.
- opportunities for youth to present publicly on their cultural identity.
- bringing together community leaders from the Shia, Alawi, Alevi, Sunni and Ahmadi sects for the first time and gaining a commitment to work together to address inter-sectarian tensions.
- printed and web-based resource materials on Muslim sectarian diversity designed for service providers and government, and Muslim and non-Muslim Australians.
- a signed declaration of acceptance and openness to diversity within the Muslim community in Australia.

## Effectiveness of Management Arrangements

| Advisory Committee  | Project governance and key roles:   |
|---|---|
| <p>Provided ongoing guidance and support by attending face-to-face and teleconference meetings as well as attending key project events.</p> <p>Individual members were contacted throughout the project to contribute advice on specific aspects in relation to the project's implementation.</p> <p>Committee members, who were also community leaders, were untiring in their advocacy and continuously sought community support for the project.</p> | <p>The Project Team embraced all opportunities that emerged even when these required resources beyond the scope of the project.</p> <p>Maximum and efficient resource utilisation was complemented by highly competent staff bringing relevant expertise and depth of knowledge to the project.</p> <p>The ability to demonstrate the flexibility needed to meet needs of participants and to produce results that have delivered sustainable community outcomes.</p> |

### Contributions of partners/collaborators

| Partner/collaborator                     | Contributions   |
|--|---|
| Advisory Committee                       | Providing ongoing support, advice and direction throughout the project.   |
| Alawi, Alevi and Sunni community leaders | <p>Endorsing the project and advocating for the involvement of young people from their communities.</p> <p>Co-authorship of the Muslim Diversity Guide.</p>   |
| Leadership Program Youth                 | <p>Adopting a partnership approach to achieving the exceptional outcomes that have resulted from the project.</p> <p>The enthusiasm, commitment and energy of Alawi youth in particular have been outstanding.</p>  |
| Darebin City Council                     | Co-hosting the Community Leaders Forum.   |
| Muslim Community Leaders                 | <p>Participating in the Community Leaders Forum and committing to ongoing collaboration to address inter-sectarian issues.</p> <p>Attending the Community Dialogue event to show their support for youth leadership and commitment to dialogue within a diverse Muslim context.</p> |
| External Stakeholders                    | <p>Participating in professional development and demonstrating their commitment to responsive service delivery.</p> <p>Victoria Police, in particular, should be commended for their contribution across a number of project activities.</p>  |

## Impact and Sustainability

Observed changes causally linked to project interventions included:

- improved understanding of and responsiveness to diversity within Muslim communities by service providers.
- the establishment of pathways for ongoing dialogue and collaboration between leaders from diverse Muslim communities.
- a critical mass of youth actively working towards inter-sectarian harmony on an ongoing basis.
- the establishment of youth leadership networks and organisations.
- significant ongoing contributions to community capacity building resulting from leadership capabilities now being utilised by youth in the community.

The following is a selection of quotes documenting stakeholder feedback from the Professional Training:

*'Through your eloquent presentation style you delivered an unbiased account of the history of Islam, Islamic sectarianism, a background to the hostilities in Syria and Iraq and Islam diversity in Australia. You then were able to put this all together through your summary of what the community is doing to reduce extremism and maintain social harmony.'*

*'This training provided has increased police knowledge and understanding how the events in Syria and Iraq have impacted on policing in such a diverse Islamic community within Victoria. It was obvious to me that your research was very thorough, analysis in depth and yet the message easily understood in a simplified style.'*

Project contribution towards longer-term peace-building and sustainability of results included:

- the establishment of the Muslim Diversity website which is live and is being accessed regularly.
- a significant number of youth involved in the program have been active and are continuing to contribute in varying capacities. Examples of their ongoing activities include writing an article on the impact of the project for the Attorney-General's Department website [www.livingsafetogether.gov.au](http://www.livingsafetogether.gov.au), public speaking and representing at various events, developing and maintaining intra-sectarian communication through social media and establishing youth organisations.

The project has effectively trialled a highly successful youth leadership model on Muslim diversity with great potential for replication with other diverse community groups.



# Recommendations

Given the success of the *Speaking across the Sectarian Divide* project, there now exists an Australian evidence-based model that builds inter-sectarian harmony and addresses the risk of extremism. The following recommendations offer an opportunity to build on that success.

1. That the *Speaking across the Sectarian Divide* project model is shared widely with stakeholders nationally to encourage its replication in other locations.
2. That the AMWCHR seek further funding opportunities that enable the organisation to continue delivering youth leadership development work. The demand for further programs suggests an ongoing need for this work in building community resilience.
3. That the AMWCHR consider adding the Professional Development Training on Muslim Diversity to their ongoing training register as a fee-for-service program.
4. That the AMWCHR receive funding support to continue providing secretariat services to the newly established inter-sectarian working group that has emerged through the project. This working group has the potential to significantly contribute to the Australian Government's work around building community resilience and its development should be encouraged.
5. That, where possible, the AMWCHR continues to facilitate opportunities for:
  - Youth involvement in forums/events that enable them to apply leadership skills.
  - Community forums/events that provide a space for inter-sectarian dialogue and relationship strengthening.



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