Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

July 2006
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

Erebus International

July 2006
Acknowledgements

Erebus International is appreciative of the efforts of staff of the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training in assisting us to complete this project. In particular, we wish to thank Dr Rapin Quinn and Dr Declan O’Connell for their assistance throughout the project.

We also wish to thank the members of the project Reference Group, whose members are shown in Appendix 1, for their active contributions to project findings. We also wish to acknowledge the principals and staff from the schools that participated in the case studies conducted as part of this project. We are grateful for the way they were able to accommodate our inquiries, often at very short notice. We are very conscious of the demands made on all schools, and acknowledge the imposition we often make on their time. On each occasion they made us most welcome and willingly shared their experiences with us. We are most appreciative of the time afforded us, and the insights they were willing to share. We also wish to thank the stakeholders from education jurisdictions and other institutions that provided us with materials or who participated in interviews with us. The names of the stakeholders consulted during the project are listed in Appendix 2.

We also thank the participants at the National Showcase Seminar held at Parliament House, Canberra, 25-26 May 2006, whose ideas and input have also been used to shape this report.

While the information presented in this report draws on the contributions of a range of stakeholders, responsibility for the accuracy of the findings and the conclusions drawn are, however, the responsibility of the project team.

Dr Robert Carbines
Dr Tim Wyatt
Ms Leone Robb
Erebus International
Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS....................................................................................................................................................IV

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ....................................................................................................................................................VI
INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................................................................. VI
METHODOLOGY ............................................................................................................................................................... VI
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ..................................................................................................................................................... VII
1. The interrelations between Islamic, government and non-government schools in promoting interfaith and intercultural understanding and mutual respect.............................................................................................................. vii
2. The nature and extent of current interschool cooperation, including the factors that influence or hinder such interschool cooperation........................................................................................................................................ viii
3. Current arrangements for ensuring quality in the teaching of Australian values................................................................................................................................. x
4. The current availability of professional learning opportunities for teachers nationally to promote understanding of Islamic values within the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools, including any gaps........................................................................................................................................ xi
5. The availability of resources to help students to understand how Islamic values are aligned with Australian values, including any gaps in such curriculum resources........................................................................................................................................................................................... xii
6. Current strategies for working with community leaders to support Islamic schools and other schools, with a high proportion of Muslim students, in values education activities.............................................................................................................................................................................. xii
CONCLUSION ....................................................................................................................................................................... XIII
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS .................................................................................................................................... XIV

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY .......................................................................................................................... 1

Terms of Reference .............................................................................................................................................................. 2
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ............................................................................................................................................... 3
Key research questions .......................................................................................................................................................... 3
DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY ................................................................................................................................ 3
STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT ........................................................................................................................................... 5

OVERVIEW ........................................................................................................................................................................ 6

THE MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT OF AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY .................................................................................. 6
AUSTRALIANS’ AWARENESS OF ISLAM ............................................................................................................................ 9
MUSLIM VALUES AND AUSTRALIAN VALUES? .................................................................................................................. 10
ISLAMIC SCHOOLS IN AUSTRALIA .................................................................................................................................... 16
Early beginnings .................................................................................................................................................................... 16
Scripture classes in Public Schools .................................................................................................................................... 17
Islamic Schools .................................................................................................................................................................... 18
Challenges confronting Islamic schools .................................................................................................................................. 20

SCHOOL CASE STUDIES .................................................................................................................................................. 23

CASE STUDY 1: PROMOTING INTERSCHOOL COOPERATION — MINARET COLLEGE, MELBOURNE, VICTORIA .............. 24
CASE STUDY 2: RAISING AWARENESS OF AUSTRALIAN VALUES — AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY (FORMERLY KING KHALID COLLEGE), MELBOURNE, VICTORIA .................................................................................. 32
CASE STUDY 3: INITIATIVES TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF AUSTRALIAN VALUES AND REDUCE POTENTIAL ISOLATION AND ALIENATION — NOOR AL HOODA ISLAMIC COLLEGE, SYDNEY, NSW ............................................. 42
Executive Summary

Introduction

This project originates from work being done to contribute to a National Action Plan to address threats to Australia’s social cohesion, harmony and security, being developed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) following its special meeting held in September 2005.

The development of the National Action Plan is guided by the Statement of Principles agreed at the Prime Minister’s Summit with Muslim community leaders in Canberra on 23 August 2005. One of the agreed Principles states that:

“the Australian Government will ensure that its programmes and policies enhance mutual understanding between the Islamic community and the broader Australian community and promote the Australian values of harmony, justice and democracy.”

Australians commonly perceive our nation as a successful multicultural society. This is reflected in the strong multicultural policy statements developed by Federal, State and Territory governments, including those concerning multicultural education.

The purpose of this project is to examine issues affecting young Muslims at risk of potential isolation in schools, and investigate what schools, systems and sectors are currently doing to encourage the message to Islamic youth that Islam is compatible with, and can live alongside other faiths and Australian values. It is designed to help contribute to the development of the National Action Plan.

Methodology

Data to inform the project was collected from three key sources: an analysis of documentation including curriculum statements, research literature and resources materials; interviews with key stakeholders representing various organisations; and six case studies conducted in government and non-government schools in Victoria, NSW and Queensland.

The six schools include Islamic, Catholic and government schools from Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales. While the school case studies reflect good practice, it is recognized that they are not the only schools undertaking good work in this area. Case study schools were selected for their good practice rather than to be representative of all school types. The case studies demonstrate good practices in three key areas:

a) interschool cooperation aimed at reducing the potential isolation and alienation of Islamic youth;

b) Islamic schools assisting Muslim students and their parents to understand that Islamic culture can harmoniously co-exist with Australian civic values and cultures; and

c) schools that promote the understanding of Islam among Australian students and demonstrate how it can be compatible with other Australian values and cultures.
Summary of Findings

The findings discussed below are organised according to the key themes identified in the project’s Terms of Reference.

1. The interrelations between Islamic, government and non-government schools in promoting interfaith and intercultural understanding and mutual respect.

The 2001 Australian Census estimates that the majority of Muslim students attend government schools. In 2001, there were 62,272 Muslim students in Australian schools (0.81% of the total) from a diverse range of source countries. 50,148 of these students attended government schools, 2,045 attended Catholic schools and 10,079 attended independent schools.

Current State and Territory syllabus and curriculum frameworks provide a structure that supports schools to undertake work to further develop intercultural and interfaith understanding. This mandate is a necessary and crucial starting point for work in this area, since teachers generally use such frameworks to ensure that the topic under consideration has legitimacy and value for students. This curriculum linkage is also important in ensuring that work in this area is not an additional impost on schools or teachers and is in fact a fundamental part of the core business of teaching and learning. This in turn provides a platform for sustained and serious efforts to promote harmony, social cohesion, and mutual respect among all members of Australian society.

From a national perspective every State/Territory education jurisdiction recognises the importance of this area, not only through its inclusion in curriculum and syllabus documents, but also through a variety of policy instruments, e.g. multicultural education policies and student welfare policies such as the Rights and Responsibilities programme in NSW.

While there is a clear mandate for schools to actively promote intercultural and interfaith understanding, the extent to which individual schools take up this challenge has not previously been systematically evaluated. Anecdotal evidence suggests that while good work has been done in some places, there is scope for further effort in others. Despite the curriculum mandate, many stakeholders consulted during this project observed that a catalyst is usually required for schools to initiate serious work in relation to interfaith and intercultural understanding to be initiated. This catalyst has, to date, most frequently been provided by the evident need of some schools to more effectively meet the needs of their culturally diverse student populations; especially when there are large numbers of Muslim students. A challenge for the future arises in cases where schools and their communities do not perceive that this work is necessary or desirable, as may occur when the demographic profile of the school community is essentially mono-cultural.

While understanding the linkages between Judaic and Christian scripture and beliefs is considered to be part of a complete Islamic education, it has also been suggested that the necessity for Islamic schools to be actively engaged in developing interfaith and intercultural understanding among their students may be given sharper focus because of their greater need to develop strategies to live harmoniously in the wider Australian society and to respond to perceived discrimination and marginalisation felt by many Muslims. The initiative taken by some Islamic schools to engage in interfaith dialogue may also derive from a commitment from leaders in these schools, in line with Islamic teachings, to inform others about the Islamic faith. In such contexts, the development of intercultural understanding among students receives high priority.

Further impetus for work in the area of interfaith and intercultural understanding occurs when the school perceives that it aligns well with their overall mission and purpose. For example, ethos of many Catholic systemic and congregational schools (among others) is pervaded by a strong sense of social justice. In these circumstances, the rights of all religious groups, including Muslims, are accorded
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

respect. In these schools, explicit consideration is given to ensuring that the particular needs of diverse students are accommodated as the basis of modelling the mutual respect that is expected of students inside and outside the school.

Observations made during this project suggest that schools are currently adopting a range of approaches to promote interfaith and intercultural understanding. The potential for successful school based programmes appears to be greatest when intercultural understanding pervades the curriculum, rather than when it takes the form of disconnected activities. In the former situation, the area is reinforced through a variety of Key Learning Areas in a systematic way, ensuring sustainability of student learning outcomes. Similarly, where the purpose and the expected outcomes of the interfaith and intercultural activities conducted are made systematically explicit, both within the school and for the community, potential for student learning is significantly enhanced.

In many areas relating to student learning, partnerships with parents will generally enhance the quality of student learning. Strong programmes were observed where there is a reciprocal understanding between the school and the parent community about these matters and the parents are interested and willing to work with the school to reinforce these concepts.

While the curriculum and the role of parents are pivotal to success, other factors within the school also would appear to have a significant relationship with the development of interfaith and intercultural understanding. A number of schools demonstrate the application of a multi-pronged systematic approach to teaching, that is planned, uses learning experiences from inside and outside the school in a coherent manner and pervades everything that the school does. Similarly, the demonstration by students of respect and acceptance of teachers of different faiths within the schools is a key factor for success. Despite these operational factors, many schools have cited the importance of extensive staff discussion before the programme even begins. The purpose of this discussion is to develop consensus about the nature of interfaith and intercultural understanding at the outset.

From a teaching methodology perspective, teachers commonly provide opportunities for students to engage in reflection and discussion about their own and others belief systems. This is seen as a very valuable tool for building conceptual learning for students. Similarly, the provision of planned opportunities for students to have sustained engagement in community service activities is seen by the schools as one very important element of building intercultural understanding.

2. The nature and extent of current interschool cooperation, including the factors that influence or hinder such interschool cooperation.

A significant insight gained during the data collection phase of this project was the frequency of school visitation occurring across school sites and sectors. The purpose of the school visits was equally diverse with school engaged in cooperation around academic, sporting, spiritual and cultural exchanges. The more common reasons for school visits include sporting visits, school debating, joint celebration of Harmony Day, school networking around a common theme, discussion groups and cultural visits. While the vast majority of these visits are conducted face to face, others are virtual, using Information Technology tools such as Skype and Google Earth to provide a direct videoconference link to schools in other countries during which students could exchange views about different aspects of their culture and lifestyles.

Many advantages accrue for students from these examples of interschool cooperation. Predominant among these, however, are breaking down religious and cultural barriers and building greater knowledge about religious and cultural practices in authentic contexts. The visits also enable students to engage in discussions in small groups. In these situations, students report that they are able to break down misconceptions, prejudices and stereotypes about particular religious groups, simultaneously
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

establishing friendships that have sometimes lasted beyond school. Finally the students report that the interschool experience enables them to test and better understand their own cultural identity.

Islamic schools have, in many cases, initiated these contacts. The motivation for doing so would appear to arise from a desire to:

1. establish credibility in the community as an independent school providing quality education;
2. demonstrate transparency in operation to others;
3. initiate interfaith dialogue and establish good relations with other schools and the community; and
4. desire to inform others about the key principles of Islam.

A range of good practices can be identified in relation to interschool cooperation. Each is listed below as an action that facilitates successful interschool cooperation:

- The interschool visit fits within the broader curriculum of the schools focus of intercultural and interfaith understanding;
- Students are prepared in advance for the visit, so that the visit has a clear purpose;
- Strong administrative support exists to facilitate organisation of visits;
- Teacher preparation time is available to maximise student visits;
- An ongoing contact person within the school has been established in relation to the schools being visited;
- Both teacher and students are aware of the distinctive characteristics of the religious groups for example, dietary and dress requirements;
- Transport links are available; and
- Teachers are well prepared personally through professional development about both pedagogy for building intercultural understanding and also personal knowledge.

While each of the above factors appears to relate to successful interschool cooperation, the review also highlighted several factors that inhibited the overall success of the visits. In the first instance where there was only a low strategic priority for such initiatives at systemic level, the potential for success was diminished. This is partly explained by the fact that higher priority in secondary schools is given to areas that contribute directly to the Year 12 credential.

At a more practical level, some schools complained about the complexity and challenges involved in organising such events especially when only limited time is available during the school day to perform such tasks. In a minority of cases, school visits were not seen as a high priority in the community. This appeared to have been because of divided opinion in the community about how to resolve social tensions relating to the two schools. In other cases, there were financial exigencies that made it difficult for students to participate. Even where these situations were not the case, some teachers suggested that there were very few resources to help teachers in this area. Other teachers would however disagree with such assertions, suggesting that teachers may not know how to locate the resources.

Even where the resources were available, a minority of schools used the school visit on an ad hoc basis, rarely linked to a strategic priority within the school, not denying the purposeful nature of the visits. However in these situations, the school visit was not preceded or followed by any activity that ensured the maximum benefit was gained by students.
3. **Current arrangements for ensuring quality in the teaching of Australian values**

The provisions for ensuring quality in the teaching of Australian values appear to have been a vexed question for schools. Nationally, there appears to be a lack of clarity about appropriate “standards” in teaching values and the outcomes that are expected from school actions. In the absence of any such standards, it is perhaps not surprising that there do not appear to be any systematic approaches for measuring the impact of the teaching of values. The vision set out in the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* may provide a useful benchmark for analysing school initiatives.

The *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* suggests that all Australian schools should:

- articulate, in consultation with their school community, the school’s mission/ethos;
- develop student responsibility in local, national and global contexts and build student resilience and social skills;
- ensure values are incorporated into school policies and teaching programmes across the key learning areas; and
- review the outcomes of their values education practices.

Further research is needed into what kinds of systematic approaches for measuring the impact of teaching values in schools will produce the best evidence as to what works, how and why.

However, other schools interpreted a “quality” approach in terms of the comprehensive and systematic way that Australian values were being taught within the school.

Whilst this approach may not be common, in those schools where it was happening the results justified the approach being adopted. Where a systematic approach was being adopted, a variety of good practices were evident. For example, a whole school approach was adopted, that encompasses whole school planning, staff commitment and opportunities were provided for ongoing staff internal learning. Moreover, teaching teams in their discussions commonly started with the expected outcomes in mind. That is, the school staffs engaged in a discussion around exit profiling, where teachers agreed on the key values that should be developed by the end of a schooling stage, whether this is at the end of primary or end of secondary schooling.

Once the expectations have been established and communicated, the next task would appear to be the establishment of an assessment and reporting system based on the profiles or expectations. The development of such measures must recognise that the judgement of performance in this area is largely subjective. Fundamental in this measurement process is that this includes ongoing recognition of students towards the achievement of goals in this area. An example is the reporting of student performance in Community Service projects, including opportunities for students to reflect and self-assess their demonstration of values. While many aspects of the measurement are considered to be subjective, an emerging profile can be detected of each student’s development in this important area through measurement of a range of related values development activities.

On a daily level in those schools espousing “quality” approaches, values are continuously reinforced through all areas of the curriculum, both explicitly and implicitly, e.g. by display of posters promoting values, celebration of Australian cultural events, such as Australia Day, ANZAC Day, and even singing the National Anthem.

Moreover the school leadership team ensures that common messages are given to all grade levels, e.g. through school assemblies, prayers, themes special events such as Harmony Day and so on. In faith based schools, the common themes are strongly underpinned by the basic values derived from the religious beliefs of the school. There is strong recognition of the importance of modelling, e.g. by older...
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

students to the junior students and by staff to students. The common principle frequently emphasised by principals was that teacher recruitment placed high priority on the teachers’ character. In addition, reward systems were in place to recognise students whose behaviour demonstrated the values espoused by the school. Importantly opportunities were provided both inside and outside school for students to demonstrate the application of values in action in a variety of different contexts including student leadership opportunities.

4. The current availability of professional learning opportunities for teachers nationally to promote understanding of Islamic values within the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools, including any gaps

Very little opportunity is available at present at systemic level for teachers to formally engage in professional learning activities specifically around promoting understanding of Islamic values. However, individual schools and school networks are attempting to collaborate in the development of such learning opportunities for their teachers. Nevertheless, such opportunities are relatively rare and not generally available to teachers across systems.

However, there are more general opportunities to engage in professional development in relation to the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools. As noted in the body of the report, there are few differences between most Islamic values and the values represented in the above Framework, at least at a superficial level. Estimation of how well these opportunities have been accessed by teachers nationally is beyond the scope of this project. Anecdotally, some schools either had limited awareness of the National Framework and its applicability or limited engagement with the Framework to date. However the Values for Australian Schooling kit being distributed by Curriculum Corporation to all schools in June 2006 will help to address this situation.

Teacher also have opportunities for engaging in more general professional development in relation to intercultural education, especially in the context of cultural components of language other than English learning, and Studies of Asia. A variety of support materials have been developed and are available on-line (described in the body of this report), for which there have been train the trainer sessions conducted in each State/Territory. In relation to interfaith understanding, specific professional development programmes have been developed to support the Big Beliefs book, a resource funded by the Australian Government to promote educational materials on interfaith and intercultural understanding.

Despite these opportunities, there is scope for increased professional development nationally, that may well draw on curriculum resources such as those mentioned above. Future professional development programmes in the area of intercultural and interfaith dialogue need to be linked to existing curriculum and policy frameworks to ensure maximum uptake.

5. The availability of resources to help students to understand how Islamic values are aligned with Australian values, including any gaps in such curriculum resources

The body of this report details the existence of an extensive range of resources available to help schools in the areas of interfaith and intercultural understanding. However there are some gaps, such as limited resources that portray Islam in an interacting contemporary Australian context. There are efforts within the Muslim community and Islamic schools to develop resources, but these will take some time to become commercially available. In the absence of resources, schools have often developed their own to considerable effect.
These resources include those with a broader focus on multiculturalism and anti-racism, as well as those with more specific intercultural and interfaith perspective. Some examples of recent resources include *Does My Head Look Big in This?* and the *Big Beliefs Book* by the Asia Education Foundation.

Whether teachers know about these resources, and how well prepared they may be to use them requires further investigation. During the present project, it was noted that teachers often considered that people in the community are the best resource, but they often do not know how to access them or how to use this expertise most effectively. The capacity for schools to engage community members depends on the strength of networks established with the community, which can take considerable time to establish. The Australian Multicultural Foundation has, for example, produced a kit to help communities develop interfaith dialogue networks.

6. **Current strategies for working with community leaders to support Islamic schools and other schools, with a high proportion of Muslim students, in values education activities**

This project found that there are currently few programmes operating that are specifically designed to support the development of community leaders working with Muslim students. However, a tertiary accredited course has recently been developed by Minaret College in Melbourne, which will commence in 2007. Brisbane Islamic College is also engaged in the development of community leaders.

Schools from all sectors saw considerable advantages in accessing input from community leaders as part of their approach to developing interfaith and intercultural understanding. The “leaders” include those from both within the Muslim community, and the Australian community more broadly.

It is also noteworthy that several Islamic schools view part of their mission as explicitly to develop leadership skills of their students, so that in future they may take a more prominent role both within their own communities and in broader Australian society. Our observation in the Islamic schools visited in all States confirm that these schools are encouraging students to be confident, articulate and proud Australians, who look forward to providing positive role models for their peers.

The challenge nationally is for schools to recognise the potential of all students, Muslim and non-Muslim to make positive contributions to mainstream society, and acknowledge the strengths that they possess.

**Reducing alienation of Muslim youth**

There is ample evidence that many young Muslims feel a sense of alienation in Australian society. The causes of this sense of alienation are complex, deriving in part from differences between the traditions of the cultural groups from which they originate, intergenerational conflict, socio-economic hardship, and a sense of suspicion if not outright rejection from sections of the mainstream of Australian society. This alienation, in turn, is posited as one of the reasons why some turn to extremism.

It is undeniable that the actions of these extremists have led to anxiety within many communities around the world, including the Australian community, and indeed among many Australian Muslims. This anxiety is understandable, given the proliferation of global terrorism, and is further heightened by the knowledge that increasingly, these acts of terrorism have been planned and or executed by a small number of followers who are born and bred in the country where atrocities were committed.

This is a particular challenge for the 120,000 young Muslims who were largely born in Australia, or were very young when they arrived. They are Australian by right and feel as Australian as anybody else. Yet, many of those young Australian Muslims have become in some ways confronted with their identity. For the impressionable among this group, for those challenged by the question of “who am I”, a credible counter view to the extremist view must be clearly put.
The work of the schools involved in this project have amply demonstrated that the values that underpin the true Islam faith are peace loving and consistent with Australian values, and true Islam can exist perfectly well within a secular society such as Australia. It has done, and it will continue to do so.

The challenge for the Australian community is to ensure that extremists are prevented from manipulating and recruiting vulnerable, impressionable young Muslims within Australia and, to create an environment which all young Muslims can become productive members of Australian society through education and satisfying employment.

These issues are similar to those experienced by earlier migrants to Australia, who also struggled with the frustration, the isolation, the confusion and sometimes the anger as they tried to reconcile the culture of their parents inside the home, with the cultures they were confronting outside the home - within the broader Australian culture. The lesson from this experience is that over time, change is possible, and to a large extent these things have been worked out.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Andrew Robb, reflecting on his childhood experience recounts:

“There were lots of frustrations, lots of anger, there were things said that should never have never been said - there was discrimination, all of these things, because people felt edgy about the arrival of all these people from Italy and Greece, but as a community we worked through it ...  

As we worked together, studied together, played sport together, socialised together you start to see mutual respect grow; you’d started to see recognition of the strengths and new perspectives they brought. And the process of recognition was mutual. The respect was mutual. And we succeeded...

....The fact is overwhelmingly, people of Muslim faith came to Australia like everybody else, for the sake of their children; for education and opportunity; for a better life ... We require a way to manage a situation so that Muslims in Australia can get on with their lives - be normal, be accepted for who they are, like everybody else.”(Robb, 2006)

Helping Australian Muslim’s become integrated and connected to the mainstream community is essential for ensuring extremism is rejected in Australia, and to help Australian Muslims just get on with their lives.

The examples of interschool cooperation and projects that aim to increase social tolerance and cohesion described in this report are a sound starting point. How widespread such programmes are at present is unknown. For the longer term, special emphasis may need to be placed on supporting young Muslims within mainstream programmes which are designed to educate and train young people, get young people into good and lasting jobs, or which are designed to involve young people in community activities such as mainstream sports, arts or civic organisations. The ultimate measure of success in removing the sense of alienation felt by young Muslims will come when there is real progress in building a sense of worth and identity leading to full integration of young Muslims into the mainstream community.

**Conclusion**

There is no doubt that all schools have an important role to play in creating a cohesive and harmonious Australian society, through developing greater inter-cultural understanding. As Iemma, 2006, notes in his speech launching the NSW schools *Rights and Responsibilities* programme:
“...schools are the place – above everywhere else – where our future is rehearsed. Schools are the engine room of multiculturalism and integration. They are the places where we learn the grammar of cooperation and respect, where we gain the social tools to understand and accept one another. Above all, it is the place where we learn what it means to be Australian – the common language, history, traditions and culture we share as a nation and as people.”

The foundations for increased work to promote greater intercultural understanding within schools are already established. There are a range of resources and professional development opportunities available to assist teachers and schools, should they choose to do so. Yet there is also clearly scope for further work in this area. The case study schools provide illustrations of some of the principles of good practice in each of the areas reflected by the Terms of Reference. The challenge for the future is to ensure that all schools achieve these good practices.

In doing so, a number of issues will need to be resolved. First among these is the need to elevate schools’ work in developing interfaith and intercultural understanding as a priority nationally and locally. As noted above, teachers already feel that the curriculum is overloaded, and for this area to be given greater priority will mean that action must be perceived to be imperative.

Second, schools require support in a number of practical ways. An issue raised by the case study schools was that it takes considerable planning time to establish appropriate programmes, even before they attempt to implement them. For this reason, strong support from school leaders is required to provide funding for teachers to be released from class to do this planning, and for this work to be seen important. At the same time, the outcomes from activities must be seen to have intrinsic merit and to be worthwhile for students and others, if there is to be any chance of continued widespread acceptance. Demonstration of the achievement of worthwhile outcomes requires that thought be given to early identification of what behaviours and attitudes are expected to be exhibited and what may need to change. Student learning outcomes need to be recorded and communicated to the school community.

At the same time, there is a need to ensure that schools’ work in this area equips students with a deep understanding about the beliefs and cultures of others. There has been a tendency for efforts in the past to encourage superficial activities that may have high visibility, but do not lead to real attitudinal change or real knowledge beyond stereotypic images. This deep understanding comes when the promotion of social harmony, acceptance of cultural diversity and mutual respect are deeply ingrained in the culture of the school. This is reinforced through explicit teaching, and is reflected in the rituals and symbols used to express the school’s culture. It comes when there is genuine sharing of knowledge and acceptance of the school’s ideals by all teachers and is supported by parents and community leaders, who model the values in public and privately.

This project has provided some initial insights into how schools and school systems may promote interfaith and intercultural understanding, yet many challenges remain. The following recommendations are made in order to help address these challenges.

**Summary of Recommendations**

It is recommended:

1. That all Australian Governments (through the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs) commit to increasing interfaith and intercultural understanding as a national priority for schooling.
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

2. That a comprehensive project be commissioned to examine the broader issue of the role of schools nationally in promoting social cohesion through interfaith and intercultural understanding in the contemporary Australian context. This study should:

- Have a broad focus on the faiths and cultures most commonly represented in the Australian school population;
- Examine the role that all schools, including government schools and faith-based schools, can play in initiating interfaith and intercultural understanding;
- Comprehensively document and evaluate the effectiveness of ways in which Australian schools from all sectors approach the teaching of values with a particular emphasis on developing interfaith and intercultural understanding;
- Identify principles of good practice in relation to the planning, implementation and ongoing evaluation of school/community activities and programmes leading to social cohesion within the broader community;
- Identify good practice strategies in government and non-government schools that assist the development of Australian values, consistent with the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools; and
- Identify ways in which appropriate examples, such as case studies of good practice can be effectively disseminated to schools and school systems, for example through DEST/DIMA linked websites, national forums, publications and award schemes.

Interschool cooperation

2. That schools be assisted to develop more systematic strategies to increase interschool cooperation, reflecting whole school community approaches linked to identified learning outcomes for students. This may include a pilot project that establishes “Harmony clusters of schools” similar to those described in this report, that focus on joint activities around the building of interfaith and intercultural understanding. The establishment of these clusters would be preceded by appropriate professional development for participants, appointment of cluster leaders to coordinate the activities. The clusters could be supported and monitored by external project managers, as in other recent national demonstration projects such as the Values Education Good Practice Project.

Curriculum Resources

3. That funding be provided for the development of student-focussed multi-media resources that portray the positive experiences of different religious and cultural groups in contemporary Australian contexts.

4. That funding be provided for the development of teacher-focussed resources for utilising current materials relating to interfaith and intercultural understanding in local school contexts.

5. That funding be provided to revise and trial current professional development resources such as the Asia Education Foundation’s “Developing Intercultural Understanding: An Introduction for Teachers” as the basis for a national professional development programme. The revised resource should ensure that there is sufficient focus on the interfaith dimension of intercultural understanding.

Quality assurance and professional learning

6. That funding be made available for the development of professional learning programmes for teachers to:
• increase teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the principles and beliefs of various religious groups, including understanding Indigenous spirituality;
• build strategies for developing empathetic attitudes towards diverse cultural groups and sensitivity in dealing with intercultural issues (see point 5 above);
• develop skills in using resources to effectively promote social cohesion;
• map and document the links between the professional development resources and State/Territory curriculum frameworks to enhance their practical application and integration with existing teaching practices; and
• support research efforts aimed at providing Islamic school some strategies for integrating Islamic teachings in secular education systems. An example of such activities includes a project at Minaret College on ‘Exploring the cultural interface between Islamic education and the Victorian Essential Learning standard’. These projects are practical examples of efforts to bridge the gap between different existing cultures at the local level.

7. That a project be initiated to develop a framework and process that will enable systematic monitoring of the quality of school practices and student learning outcomes in relation to intercultural and interfaith understanding.

8. That professional learning opportunities be provided to assist school communities to implement this framework through the development of strategies aimed at:
   • developing a whole school approach, that encompasses whole school planning
   • starting with the expected outcomes in mind, or exit profiling of end of primary end of secondary students, agreed by all stakeholders including parents, communicating clear expectations (parent and community partnerships)
   • establishing an assessment and reporting system based on the profiles (expectations)
   • continuously reinforcing values through all areas of the curriculum, both explicitly and implicitly
   • ensuring that common messages are given to all grade levels, e.g. through school assemblies, prayers, themes special events such as Harmony Day etc.
   • recognising the importance of modelling, e.g. by older students to the junior students and by staff to students.

School and Community Relations

9. That grants be provided for enhancing the capacity of community organisations to contribute to schools’ work in the area of interfaith and intercultural understanding.

10. That initiatives such as national forums and award programmes be established to showcase and share ways in which schools are successfully demonstrating student capacity for community leadership.

11. That avenues be explored for enhancing the capacity of pre-service teacher education courses to include a focus on interfaith and intercultural understanding.
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

Introduction and Methodology

This project originates from work being done to contribute to the development of a National Action Plan to address threats to Australia’s social cohesion, harmony and security, initiated by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in its special meeting held in September 2005.

The National Action Plan has been developed to articulate a coordinated strategic response from Australian governments, reinforcing social cohesion and opposing intolerance and extremism. It builds on the Statement of Principles agreed at the Prime Minister’s meeting with Muslim Community leaders on 23rd of August 2005 and subsequent meetings between State and Territory leaders and religious and community leaders.

The development of the National Action Plan, in turn, arises from the recognition that extremist violence is an increasing threat in many countries. Bombings in New York, Madrid, London, Bali and other places point to the critical importance of social cohesion for the security of the whole society.

Australian society is not immune from these pressures. While most Australians would pride themselves as being tolerant, fair and just, a series of incidents, including the Cronulla riot in December 2005 and its aftermath suggest harmonious relationships between cultural groups can be particularly fragile.

Australians commonly perceive our nation as a successful multicultural society. This is reflected in the strong multicultural policy statements developed by Federal, State and Territory governments, including those concerning multicultural education, which are discussed later in this report. However, in the current environment, public opinions about multiculturalism in general, and specific religious and cultural groups in particular, have polarised according to a recent research by SBS Television (2006).

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission’s Ismae - Listen project (2005) has revealed that almost 80 per cent of survey respondents (1,423 people in total) reported that they had increasingly been the target of racism, discrimination, unfair suspicion, threats and actual violence. They were experiencing a general increase in fear, and a growing sense of alienation from the broader community and a distrust of authority. Similar views were expressed in study undertaken since 2003 involving Arab-Australian students by Deakin University (see Cook 2006) which revealed that many Arab-Australian students were very concerned about how they were perceived and treated in the Australian community.

All Australians share the responsibility of addressing these threats to our social cohesion, harmony and security. The Statement of Principles arising from the Prime Minister’s meeting of 23rd of August 2005 records (amongst other things) the commitment that:
“Those present will continue to take a lead working with their communities and with other Islamic organisations to promote harmony, mutual understanding and Australian Values within their communities and to challenge violence and extremism; and

The Australian Government will ensure that its programmes and policies enhance mutual understanding between the Islamic community and the broader Australian community and promote the Australian values of harmony, justice and democracy.”

Following the meeting in August 2005, a Muslim Community Reference Group has been established. The Group is supported by seven sub-groups focusing on youth, women, schooling, training of clerics and lay teachers and leaders, employment, crisis management and families and communities.

The Schools Outcomes Group of the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) is working closely with the Schooling sub-group (of the Muslim Community reference Group), and has commissioned this project to examine ways in which schools, systems and sectors have encouraged tolerance and social cohesion through school education. This project, which is managed by DEST and funded by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA), focuses on ways in which interfaith and intercultural understanding can be promoted through education and training.

The primary purpose of this project then, as specified in the Terms of Reference below, is to examine issues affecting Muslims at risk of potential isolation in schools, and investigate what schools, systems and sectors are currently doing to encourage the message to Islamic youth that Islam is compatible with, and can live alongside other faiths and Australian values. These issues are examined from the broad perspective of the development of interfaith and intercultural understanding as one of the foundations of social cohesion.

**Terms of Reference**

The Terms of Reference for this project are to examine:

- The interrelations between Islamic, government and non-government schools in promoting interfaith and intercultural understanding and mutual respect.

- The nature and extent of current interschool cooperation, including the factors that influence such interschool cooperation.

- Current arrangements for ensuring quality in the teaching of Australian values in schools nationally, to promote understanding of Islamic values within the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools, including any gaps.

- The availability of resources currently to help students to understand how Islamic values are aligned with Australian values, including any gaps.

- Current strategies for working with community leaders to support Islamic schools and other schools with a high proportion of Muslim students, in values education activities.

---

1 The full Statement of Principles is shown at Appendix 4.
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

Research methodology

Key research questions

The methodology for this research project has drawn on a range of data sources to provide an informed view and suggested ways forward in relation to the key objectives for this project outlined above. Key questions addressed through this data gathering include:

- What are the issues affecting young Muslims identified as at risk of potential isolation in schools?
- What opportunities are there, and what is being done in government and non-government and Islamic schools, systems and sectors to promote interfaith and intercultural understanding and mutual respect?
- To what extent is there interschool cooperation between Islamic schools, other faith-based schools and secular schools?
- What factors hinder and facilitate interschool cooperation?
- What arrangements are in place for quality assurance on the teaching of Australian values?
- What professional learning opportunities are available for teachers nationally to promote understanding of Islamic values within the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools, and what gaps are evident?
- What curriculum resources are currently available to assist students to understand how Islamic values are aligned with Australian values and a better understanding of the contribution of Islam to Australian society?
- What gaps exist in the provision of resources?
- What strategies might be needed to support Islamic and other schools in values education activities?

Data collection methodology

The methodology for collecting information to address these key research questions is summarised below.

1. Review of programme documentation

The context for the review was provided by an analysis of documentation to provide an overview of the general background to Islamic schools in Australia, their interaction with other government and non-government schools. These documents included media articles, websites, State/Territory multicultural education policy statements, the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools, Values Education Good Practice Schools Project, State/Territory curriculum and syllabus document (especially in the Society and Environment and Religious Education learning areas). Documents relating to broader issues in relation to multicultural education and interfaith and intercultural understanding were also examined. A bibliography of sources consulted is included as an Appendix to this report.
2. Consultations with key stakeholders

Information from representatives of key stakeholder organisations was an important part of the data gathering activities for this project. Stakeholders approached include:

- Australian Government Departments (e.g. DEST and DIMA)
- State/Territory education jurisdictions and Boards of Studies
- Curriculum Corporation (as managers of the Values Education Good Practice Schools project)
- Asia Education Foundation (as producers of curriculum materials)
- Principals’ Associations, including Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council (APAPDC)
- Parent organisations, including Australian Council of State Schools Organisations (ACSSO) and Australian Parents Council (APC)
- Community organisations, including members of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC)
- Organisations representing Islamic schools (Australian Council of Islamic Education in Schools).

The focus of these consultations was on identifying (1) resources available to support the teaching of Australian values and understanding of Islam, and gaps in these resources; (2) the contribution of these organisations in promoting mutual understanding, tolerance and respect; (3) factors that facilitate or hinder the development of positive outcomes (4) potential strategies for supporting community leaders, schools and school systems in promoting stronger understanding, interschool cooperation and reducing isolation and alienation of Islamic youth.

3. School Case studies

The six good practice case studies were an essential part of the methodology for this project. The case studies involved interviews with school principals, teachers, parent organisation members and a sample of students in each of the schools involved. In addition to each of the six case study schools described in this school, a number of partner schools were also visited. The case studies also examined school documents and records, such as brochures for prospective parents, websites, policy documents, curriculum records, classroom artefacts such as posters and lesson plans, and student work samples. Each case study involved an intensive one-day visit to each school by the Erebus International team. Questions used as the basis of the case study, together with requirements for the day were provided to schools in advance so they could prepare for the visit.

Three case study sites were located in Melbourne (one Catholic College and two Islamic schools); three schools in Sydney (two government school and one Islamic school), and one Islamic school in Brisbane.

The purpose of the case studies was used to illustrate:

(a) how Islamic schools can assist Muslim students and their parents to understand how Islamic culture can co-exist with Australian civic values and raise awareness of Australian values and history;
(b) how interschool cooperation can reduce potential isolation and alienation of Islamic youth; and

(c) How mainstream schools can promote understanding of Islam and demonstrate its compatibility with other Australian values and cultures.

The instruments used to gather data during the case studies can be found in Appendix 3.

**Structure of this Report**

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 presents a brief overview of the general background to Islamic schools in Australia to provide the context for the project. The Chapter then discusses the interrelationships between Islamic, government and non-government schools in promoting interfaith and intercultural understanding and mutual respect, as the foundation for enhancing tolerance and social cohesion.

Chapter 3 summarises the school case studies conducted for this project. The following chapters present a synthesis of information collected during these case studies organised around the key themes represented in the project’s Terms of Reference. Chapter 4 summarises issues observed in relation to Interschool Cooperation. Chapter 5 focuses on issues relating to the quality assurance of the teaching of values in Australian schools. Chapter 6 examines issues relating to teacher professional learning to support this area of schooling. Chapter 7 discusses our observations about school and community relations and how these might be enhanced to support student learning. Chapter 8 presents a brief summary of the key points that arise from the research and discusses some areas for further research. The report concludes with a summary of recommendations that will advance work in this area.
Overview

This Chapter provides a brief overview of the context for the work of Australian schools and school systems in promoting tolerance and social cohesion. It begins with a general consideration of issues concerning the broad nature of Australia’s multicultural society. It is within this broader multicultural and multi-faith context that efforts to ensure social harmony amongst all Australians must be achieved. While this study has a focus on the relationship between the Muslim community and the wider Australian society, they reflect broader issues that have equal applicability to other faiths and cultural groups. Muslims are only one part of Australian society, indeed, are themselves diverse ethnically, culturally, and who practice their faith in different ways.

One of the key themes that run through this report is that increasing interfaith and intercultural understanding is a two-way process, in which there is a need not only for certain groups to understand and respect “Australian values” but also for the wider society to reciprocally have greater understanding of the groups that make up our society. A brief consideration of the implications of some recent research on Australians’ knowledge of Islam is presented to provide an indication of the journey that remains to be travelled in relation to this specific religious community.

The Chapter then shifts focus to examine the operation of Islamic schools in Australia in particular. This overview responds to the remit from the schooling sub-group of the Muslim Community Reference Group and begins the discussion on what schools, systems and sectors are doing to encourage the message that Islam is compatible with and can live alongside other faiths and Australian values, and to highlight good practice in this area.

The Multicultural context of Australian society

Australia’s cultural diversity is a key part of our national identity. According to the 2001 Census, 23 per cent of Australians were born overseas. An additional 20 per cent had at least one parent born overseas. Between us, we speak about 200 languages and practise a wide variety of religions.

The key statement of the Australian Government’s multicultural policy is Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity (May 2003). It updates the 1999 New Agenda for Multicultural Australia, reaffirms its fundamental principles and sets strategic directions for multicultural policy for 2003-2006 with a specific emphasis on community harmony.

Australia’s multicultural policy promotes acceptance of and respect for our cultural diversity. It embraces our Australian-grown customs and the heritage of Indigenous
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

Australians, early settlers, and the diverse range of migrants now coming to this country. It supports the right of each Australian to maintain and celebrate, within the law, their culture, language or religion.

The freedom of all Australians to express and share their cultural values is dependent on our abiding by mutual civic obligations. All Australians are expected to have an overriding loyalty to Australia and its people, and to respect the basic structures and principles underwriting our democratic society. These are the Constitution, parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language, the rule of law, acceptance and equality.

Yet research conducted as part of the SBS Television reports “Living Diversity” in 2002 and “Connecting Diversity” in 2006 reveals some paradoxes about Australian multiculturalism today (Ang et al., 2006).

The research found that younger, culturally and linguistically diverse Australians are often the subject of media fanned controversy about disaffection, ethnic gangs and cultural isolation. However, the Connecting Diversity report the disjunctions that appear to exist between many individual’s experience and their thoughts about Australia’s national identity. Multiculturalism is valued for broadening the appreciation of difference, yet this support can co-exist with concerns about perceived segregation, usually elsewhere in Australia.

The report also found that younger people tend to be more comfortable with cultural difference than previous generations and cite their own diverse network of friends as one of the reasons for this. Even so, some describe experiences of racism that engender a feeling of exclusion from mainstream society. In their everyday lives, young peoples’ social relationships are navigated through regular and familiar connections on the one hand, while expressing feelings of disconnection on the other. Racism and tolerance may be experienced or expressed almost simultaneously. These disconnections are often managed through “practical tolerance”, allowing them to negotiate these apparent contradictions. The connections can be based simultaneously on such things as work, family, religion, friendships or location. The result is a multi-layered sense of personal belonging and community connection. Younger Australians of culturally diverse backgrounds may have “multiple belongings”. These connections allow for different ways of participating in Australian life. But it may also be a cause confusion or division. There are concerns that competing forms of attachment could be disorienting, both for those with a migrant background and for mainstream society. This sense of multiple identity was expressed by students interviewed as part of the present study, as a means of coping with the differing demands of home life, school rules, and interaction with the broader community.

The study also found that multiculturalism is valued by Australians because it allows people to learn from each other. There is overwhelming appreciation of Australia’s cultural diversity because it broadens horizons and enhances mutual understanding. However, many have expressed concerns about the need for groups to integrate. Some participants expressed a lack of sympathy for groups that “stick together” and believe that differences should be balanced with interaction and participation in the “Australian way of life”.

Many younger Australians of culturally diverse backgrounds still feel incomplete acceptance by mainstream society. Many of these Australians have experienced first-hand or observed instances of prejudice, discrimination and intolerance.

Education systems throughout Australia have strongly supported the concept of multiculturalism for some time. Policy statements in all jurisdictions recognize the
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

important role that schools can play in shaping attitudes and developing values that will promote social harmony. For example, in December 2004 the Queensland Government endorsed the “Multicultural Queensland – Making a World of Difference” policy and required all government departments to develop an annual multicultural action plan.

Schools in particular play a critical role in upholding our universal ideals of human rights and the formation of values and attitudes that will shape our future society. This action plan is focused on developing values of inclusion and respect for cultural difference across the department, its schools and arts organisations. This means that different cultures will be supported in their freedom to express, share and value one another's cultural heritage.

In South Australia, the Department of Education and Children's Services Multiculturalism Policy (1996) recognized that multiculturalism is vital for all Australians because it sets social goals for the cohesion of our society and promotes the development of new talents, ideas and economic wealth for building international relationships and a rich future. It embraces fundamental concepts such as achieving unity in diversity and the existence of shared democratic values for all Australians. These shared values form an overarching framework in which diversity can flourish, leading to greater creativity and resilience of society as a whole. In response, the Department of Education and Children's Services made a commitment to providing curriculum and programmes which support and enable students to:

• develop the knowledge, skills and conceptual understanding they need in order to value and participate effectively in our culturally diverse society
• develop attitudes and behaviours that are free from racist, cultural or religious prejudice, discrimination and harassment.

Similarly, in NSW, the Department of Education and Training's (2006) Cultural Diversity and Community Relations Policy: Multicultural education in schools outlines the responsibilities of schools to provide teaching and learning programmes that enable students from all cultures and communities to identify as Australians within a democratic multicultural society and to develop the knowledge, skills and values for participation as active citizens. The policy statement is summarised in the following exhibit.

Schools ensure inclusive teaching practices which recognise and value the backgrounds and cultures of all students and promote an open and tolerant attitude towards different cultures, religions and world views.

The NSW Government’s Principles of Multiculturalism, for example, provides the framework within which multicultural education is implemented in NSW government schools. The Principles recognise and value the different linguistic, religious and ethnic backgrounds of the people of New South Wales. They promote the equal rights and responsibilities of all the people of the State within a cohesive and harmonious multicultural society in which diversity is regarded as strength and an asset; individuals share a commitment to Australia; and English is the common language.
Exhibit 1

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS POLICY:
MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 Community harmony is promoted through school policies and practices which counter racism and intolerance and develop understanding of cultural, linguistic and religious differences.

1.2 Schools will provide teaching and learning programmes that enable students from all cultures and communities to identify as Australians within a democratic multicultural society and to develop the knowledge, skills and values for participation as active citizens.

1.3 Schools will ensure inclusive teaching practices which recognise and value the backgrounds and cultures of all students and promote an open and tolerant attitude towards different cultures, religions and world views.

1.4 Students who are learning English as a second language are provided with appropriate support to develop their English language and literacy skills so that they are able to fully participate in schooling and achieve equitable educational outcomes.

1.5 Schools will provide specific teaching and learning programmes to support the particular learning needs of targeted students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

1.6 Schools will promote positive community relations through effective communication with parents and community members from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and by encouraging their participation in the life of the school.

Source NSW Department of Education and Training

Australians’ awareness of Islam

The distance still to be travelled in achieving mutual levels of understanding between Muslims and mainstream Australia is starkly demonstrated in recent research published in the Journal of Islamic Studies by UNSW academic, Dr Kevin Dunn (2005).

Dunn found that only one in six Australians has a good understanding of Islam and its followers, while one-third claim complete ignorance about the religion, according to a new study.

Women, the over-25’s and people with no tertiary training most often claimed no knowledge of the religion, according to the study, which was based on a survey of 1,300 Australians.

Whether people feel threatened by Islam or not depends on their knowledge of the religion, yet not in a straightforward way, the survey reveals. Feelings of threat were reported by 56 percent of those with no knowledge of Islam. Even more of those with a little knowledge (61 percent) felt threatened. Yet a surprising 46 percent of those with a reasonable or better knowledge felt threatened by it as well.
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

The most common negative stereotypes of Islam were that it is a fundamentalist (27 percent) and intolerant (24 percent) religion. The next most common Islamic stereotypes were that it is fanatical (11 percent) and hostile to women (11 percent).

Less than one per cent of those surveyed were Muslim, and more than half (55 percent) reported having no contact with Muslims. These were most likely to be women, people with no tertiary training and the over-50s. People with no contact with Islam were twice as likely (45 percent) to be ignorant of it, compared to those who had some contact with Islam (21 per cent).

Many judged that Islamic practices in the Middle East were stricter, and more fundamentalist, than those practised in Indonesia. Respondents also offered explanations as to why the faith differed in the two places. They cited reasons such as: stricter, more fundamentalist Islamic practices in the Middle East, different cultures and geographic distance.

The most common and accurate beliefs held about Islam were that people pray five times a day and face towards Mecca, and that Islam prohibits consumption of pig products and alcohol. Dunn sums up the research as follows:

“Australians' views of Islam and its followers are worrying but hopeful. The linkages between ignorance, contact, feelings of threat and negative stereotyping of Islam is saddening. But it's not all bad news. I think we could build more tolerant, informed views if we promote greater contact and education, and encourage greater visibility and celebration by Muslims of their faith.”

Muslim Values and Australian Values?

One of the Terms of Reference for this project concerns ways in which schools can demonstrate the alignment between Muslim values and Australian values. Such a statement calls into question whether there are in fact values that can be uniquely described as “Muslim” or “Australian”. Some might also say that to seek “alignment” implicitly implies that they are different.

So how can these values be delineated? It may be impossible to find an authoritative source that sets down undisputedly what these values are. Given the wide variation in cultural practices associated with Islam, it may be impossible to do so, without reference to specific contexts. Likewise, there is likely to be continuing debate within Australian society about the definitive list of characteristics that define “a good Australian”. Many authors note that these things also change over time, and that the way we think about concepts and the labels attached to these concepts also varies over time. For example, the term “mateship” is much loved by politicians to describe a common Australian value, but for some this term implies exclusion rather than a sense of brotherhood. Compounding this, while we may use common words to define certain values, they may mean very different things to different people. Nowhere is this more apparent when considering the term “equality”, in regard to the status of women in society. Some Muslims would say that Islam considers men and women to be equal but to have different roles and responsibilities — certainly different rules apply to women’s dress and how they may participate in religious worship. Another view, and that which underpins current Australian law, is that separate is inherently unequal.
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

It is not the place of this report to debate such matters. What this report has attempted to do is to identify the practical and tangible representations of values as they can be found in Islamic and other Australian schools.

An important starting point, and one that represents the collective view of Islamic schools, is represented in the “Declaration of Faith-Based Schools”, to which many Islamic schools subscribe.

Exhibit 2

DECLARATION OF FAITH-BASED SCHOOLS

Thirty representatives from Islamic, Christian, and Jewish faith-based schools and organizations met at Minaret College in Springvale Victoria, on Friday the 26th of August 2005, and approved a declaration which affirmed the following:

1. We are a proud part of the Australian educational system and committed to teaching according to the guidelines of government curriculum standards and shared Australian values.
2. We teach the children in our schools to be proud Australians, model citizens and to participate positively in building a prosperous, harmonious and safe society in Australia.
3. We teach the children in our schools to respect the rights of others and to understand the different backgrounds and religions of Australia’s multicultural society.
4. We teach our children about the rights of their neighbours and the respect, care and protection of people and property.
5. We are committed to perpetuate the integrity of our traditions in teaching the value of life and the dignity of all people.
6. We are committed to teach the pursuit of peace and promotion of understanding.
7. We stand against those who preach violence and hatred.
8. We are committed to participate fully in our democratic system.
9. We believe in mutual respect, co-operation, tolerance and dialogue.
10. We respect diversity and promote multiculturalism.
11. We welcome cooperation with the wider community.

The full text of the declaration is posted on the ACIES website: www.acies-org.au.

Of equal importance in terms of providing a common direction for Islamic schools and representing the official policy stance for members of the Australian Council for Islamic Education in Schools (ACIES), is the Muslim Schools Charter shown in Exhibit 3 below. The overlap between the values inherent in this Charter, the Declaration of Faith Based Schools and the Values for Australian Schooling (Exhibit 4) are obvious. These charters express strong commitment to teaching common Australian values, reflecting the view of the
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

Islamic schools that they are first and foremost Australian schools, to provide an Islamic perspective in their teaching. Islamic schools, like other faith based schools, teach the curriculum of the jurisdiction they are located in. As such, they are bound to deliver the curriculum outcomes expected from the various State/Territory curriculum frameworks and syllabus documents, including the attitudes and values implicit in these documents.

Exhibit 3

MUSLIM SCHOOLS CHARTER

Based on the Holy Qu’ran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the Islamic Schools/Colleges and their staff members listed at the end of this document declare and affirm the following:

- We promote peace and understanding through interfaith and intercultural interactions.
- We teach the children in our schools to be proud Australians and be model citizens, to participate positively in building a prosperous, harmonious and safe society in Australia.
- We teach the children in our schools to respect the rights of others and to understand the different backgrounds and religions of Australia’s multicultural society.
- We teach our children about the rights of their neighbours and their entitlement to respect, to care and to protect their property and persons.
- We are committed to follow [sic] the example of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in approaching one another in love and understanding, humility and self criticism, rationality and reasonability, with open hearts and open minds in the pursuit of peace.
- We stand against those who preach violence and hatred in the name of any religion, including Islam.
- We stand against those who preach violence and hatred against Muslims and the religion of Islam.
- We do not condone the taking of innocent life or the threat of such in order to promote a cause.
- We reject and condemn all violent acts that target civilians, children, and old people in order to promote a cause because it is against Islamic principles.
- We believe that the interest of the Muslim community in Australia can be met through the existing democratic systems of governance.

This Charter was endorsed on September 2001 and re-endorsed on the 26th of August 2005.
In addition to the *Values for Australian Schooling* in the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools*, endorsed by all Education Ministers, many State and territory governments have issued their own statements in relation to values and values education in schools. These statements have considerable impact on the way that values are taught, particularly in government schools. These statements are important, given the high proportion of Muslim students in government schools (and the multicultural nature of the populations that many government schools serve), in that the explicit and implicit values education provided to the majority of students will be legitimated by these statements.
Exhibit 4: The Values for Australian Schooling

VALUES FOR AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLING

- Care and Compassion
  Care for self and others

- Doing Your Best
  Seek to accomplish something worthy and admirable, try hard, pursue excellence

- Fair Go
  Pursue and protect the common good where all people are treated fairly for a just society

- Freedom
  Enjoy all the rights and privileges of Australian citizenship free from unnecessary interference or control, and stand up for the rights of others

- Honesty and Trustworthiness
  Be honest, sincere and seek the truth

- Integrity
  Act in accordance with principles of moral and ethical conduct, ensure consistency between words and deeds

- Respect
  Treat others with consideration and regard, respect another person’s point of view

- Responsibility
  Be accountable for one’s own actions, resolve differences in constructive, non-violent and peaceful ways, contribute to society and to civic life, take care of the environment

- Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion
  Be aware of others and their cultures, accept diversity within a democratic society, being included and including others

CHARACTER IS DESTINY
— George Eliot
The State and Territory Values Statements also have a high degree of complementarity with the National Statement. The NSW government’s “Statement Values in NSW Public Schools”, for example, list the following core values, the demonstration of which is both the aim and a measure of success for public schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibit 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW CORE VALUES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTEGRITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXCELLENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESPECT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESPONSIBILITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COOPERATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAIRNESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEMOCRACY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As the NSW policy statement recognises, Australian schools have always taught the values that are the basis of law, customs and care for others in our society. Schools share with families and the community the responsibility for teaching values. Values are taught explicitly in classrooms and through the activities and relationships of the school and the community. In schools, core values influence how people communicate, work together and make decisions. Values guide approaches taken to student welfare and discipline, how the school communicates with parents, and the opportunities for staff, students and parents to participate in decision making. They also guide the learning experiences that are provided for students and how they are provided. The case studies presented later in this report provide sound examples of how these factors are implemented in practice in a range of different schooling circumstances.
This brief consideration of the policy documents in relation to teaching of values demonstrates that, while there may be difference of interpretation and understanding, there is a great deal of commonality between the positions of all school systems in Australia, including Islamic schools. How these values are implemented at an individual school and classroom level is another matter. As with any educational policy area, the extent to which any individual school or teacher observes both the letter and spirit of state and national policy will be influenced by a range of factors that are outside the control, or even the knowledge, of school and systemic authorities.

What is beyond doubt, however, is that all schools, including faith based schools, have a clear mandate for teaching and reinforcing the common values that underpin harmonious community relations.

**Islamic schools in Australia**

The research literature on Islamic schooling in Australia is not extensive. However, Hassan, (1978), Saeed, (2003), Buckley (1997) and Donohue-Clyne (1997) all discuss various aspects of the general background to, and history of, Islamic schooling in Australia. The following section briefly summarises this literature.

**Early beginnings**

The history of Islamic schooling in Australia begins with the arrival of Muslims themselves into this country — around 1860 — when the first Afghans came to Australia as camel drivers for the Burke and Wills expedition. These men, and others who followed them, played a significant, if largely unrecognised, role in the development of Australia’s Outback, the most well-known are the construction of ‘The Ghan’ — the railway line from Port Pirie in South Australia to Alice Springs — and the Overland Telegraph line from Adelaide to Port Darwin.

A number of mosques (both large and small) were established by these Muslims, of which several still function to this day in capitals like Perth and Adelaide and some for other purposes, such as the local historical Museum in Broken Hill.

According to Buckley (1997) attempts were made to educate their children in typical “Madrassahs” connected with, at least, some of those mosques. Over time a combination of isolation, harsh immigration policies and mechanisation dealt a severe, if not fatal, blow to those Muslims leading to an almost complete disappearance of the separate identity of Afghan Muslims and early Islam. Reminders occasionally bubble up to the surface of the present in the form of “Afghan anecdotes” — like that of an Australian Christian family whose surname is Mohammed or an advertisement in a national magazine for South Australian wine whose grower still bears a Muslim name.

European Muslims from Albania and others from the Balkan States who migrated here earlier this century after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire were similarly assimilated into the host society.

However, in the 1950s, Muslim parents and volunteers began to establish Islamic weekend schools in Melbourne and Sydney. These Sunday schools provided primarily religious

---

2 It is recognized that there may have been prior contact between Australia’s northern Indigenous population and Malaccan fishermen, many of whom would have been Muslim.
education classes in local mosques or prayer centres. These early efforts were hampered by the lack of resources and people knowledgeable enough to thoroughly instruct the children on Islam.

Saeed (2003) notes that these weekend schools continue to operate today. Children here are taught the Qu’ran (in Arabic) and gain a basic knowledge of the religion and what they are expected to do as Muslims. In many cases, the language of the parents (such as Turkish, Farsi, Urdu and others) may also be taught. Teachers in these schools are often volunteers, who may not have a formal teaching qualification. Each local community organises its weekend school, and there is no umbrella organisation for these schools or a common curriculum.

The style of teaching in these Sunday schools perhaps is the closest equivalent to the traditional form of Islamic schooling, the Madrassah style of education — learning the Qu’ran (in Arabic) by heart, sitting in study circles, listening to the Friday sermons and talks by visiting Muslims. This level of schooling puts a special emphasis on “religious” knowledge aimed at enabling the students to know some rights and duties as well as articles of faith relating to purpose in life and destiny.

These weekend schools are separate and distinct from the Ethnic Schools (now referred to as Community Language Schools), which have also operated on weekends, mostly Saturdays (in NSW these were once referred to as Saturday Schools of Community Languages).

These schools exist predominantly to teach the language of the ethnic group, and are not meant to have a primarily religious focus. Generally these schools operate for a few hours per week, usually in a public school classroom after hours or on weekends. Because Islam is an inextricable part of the ethnic culture and ethos of the various Muslim communities, there is, in varying degrees, some form of Islamic schooling taking place. Naturally, it is predominant in Arabic language groups but also occurs in all other Muslim community languages. Outcomes for the children may range from increased Islamic awareness and native language acquisition, to an appreciation of aspects of their parents’ culture.

Buckley (1997) argues that the biggest impact of Muslims in Australia has followed the civil war in Lebanon in the mid 1970s, when thousands of Arabic-speaking, quasi-refugees poured into urban centres such as Sydney and Melbourne within several years. At the same time, there have also been thousands of Turkish, Yugoslav, Indian, Pakistani, Indonesian, Malay and South African migrants who settled here around the same time.

**Scripture classes in Public Schools**

Responding in part to this influx of Muslim students, since the 1990s the traditional “Scripture” classes conducted in the public school system have been utilised to provide another avenue for Islamic studies. In NSW, for example, there is in operation what is called “Special Religious Instruction” in public schools. Any religious group is entitled to conduct weekly lessons by accredited “teachers” of up to an hour’s duration for children of their own denomination during regular school hours.

The Islamic Council of New South Wales runs such an “Islamic Scripture Teaching Programme” and attempts to cater to the needs of thousands of Muslim students in approximately 200 public schools in the greater Sydney Metropolitan area (see AFIC, 2005). Some of these schools are predominantly Muslim — their student enrolment may be 70 per cent Muslim or more. Public schools in Victoria and Western Australia have similar provisions.
The “teachers” in the Special Religious Classes are all volunteers — concerned parents and individuals — of whom only a handful have undertaken formal teacher training. The Council attempts to assist them by offering in-service courses and incentives such as travel expenses, and has even gone so far as to provide an “Islamic Syllabus” (in Arabic and English) to provide instruction and materials for them to use in the classroom.

It is recognized that this kind of religious education has severe limitations — whether for Islamic or any other religious group. Most frequently, the short time duration prevents any sustained and coherent programme of study to be undertaken. In addition, the majority of the “teachers” are not suitably qualified and experienced, and student behaviour management issues often dominate over learning. In the case of Islam, Buckley argues that pupils themselves are frequently embarrassed, reluctant or unwilling to participate in the classes, due to low self-esteem and perceived lack of pride in Islam. This is caused by factors such as extreme peer group pressure to conform to the dominant secular focus of contemporary Australian society, and the desire to be accepted or integrated uniformly into that society.

**Islamic Schools**

Islamic schools as such are a relatively newcomer on the Australian education scene. The first such school, King Khalid Islamic College (now the Australian International Academy) was established in the northern suburbs of Melbourne in 1983 with local and overseas funding (further details of this school can be found in the case study that follows). Islamic schools are part of the non-government school sector in Australia, that includes other faith-based schools including Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Greek Orthodox, Jewish and Christian schools. Most, if not all, Islamic schools are active members of the Association of Independent Schools in their respective jurisdictions. They also receive support from the Australian Government for capital works and recurrent funding.

At present there are 29 Islamic schools in Australia enrolling over 14,000 students. There are now Islamic schools in all States and Territories except the Northern Territory. Parents choose Islamic schools for a variety of reasons, including their desire for children to learn more about the Islamic religion and to practise Islamic values, while others seek the promise of high academic achievement at relatively low cost.

However, Islamic schools enrol only a small percentage of all Muslim children (around 10-15 per cent). The majority of Muslim children in Australia attend government schools, but a small number of Muslim parents send their children to Catholic schools or private schools, which often offer single-sex environments and are perceived to place higher emphasis on moral behaviour.

While the Islamic schools vary in their internal policies and practices, they are similar in their stated aims, which Saeed (2003) summarises as follows:

- to achieve the highest possible standard of moral behaviour and ethical attitudes.
- to provide the children with an Islamic environment free from undesirable social values.
- to develop and foster a complete Muslim identity and personality within the child.
• to equip the Muslim children with the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours to enable them to contribute meaningfully to the general harmony, prosperity and good of their community and the overall society.

• to develop Muslim Australian citizens who will be able to cope with the increasing demand and pressures of the global society and act as “Ambassadors of Islam” to the world.

These aims are reflected, for example, in the following statement of education philosophy of the Australian Islamic College, Perth:

“Success for us is not defined purely by high academic achievement or material gain. While these features are a contributing factor, we believe that Spiritual Development, Human Relations, High Morals/Values and a genuine Sense of Belonging and Concern for each other contributes to the Success of the individual.”

One of the key objectives for Islamic schools, indeed one of the essential challenges which is discussed further in this report, is to provide education for children to allow them to function effectively in Australian society while still remaining true to their Muslim faith. The aims and aspirations of Islamic schools are reflected in the extract below from the Australian International Academy (formerly King Khalid Islamic College). A considerable number of children in Islamic schools were born in Australia, as were many of their parents. All Islamic schools offer the curriculum of the jurisdiction in which they are located, and are subject to the same monitoring and accountability arrangements as other independent schools.

Exhibit 6

AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY

The College recognises that Australia is a nation of immigrants and cherishes the multi-racial, multicultural and multi-faith nature and aspirations of our society and encourages all its students to cultivate a world wide outlook on life and to constantly seek to broaden their horizons with regard to tolerance, compassion and cooperation with each other.

(Source: Saeed, 2003, p. 152).

In terms of performance, the schools also vary greatly, reflecting their different stages of development. The more established schools regularly produce students who are among the top achievers in their final year of schooling in the state. Many of the Islamic schools have an explicit focus on high performance, and students who do not make the required effort are asked to leave. The Australian International Academy is among only a few select schools that offer the International Baccalaureate as well as the Victorian Certificate of Education. However, many newly established Islamic schools are still attempting to establish themselves. Many are in low socio-economic or disadvantaged areas, and as such, receive additional specific purpose funding from state and federal education authorities.

Islamic schools employ teachers from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Many teachers are non-Muslims. Schools vary in the extent to which non-Muslim students are required to observe Islamic practices such as female teachers wearing headscarves (hijab),
but all insist on teachers exhibiting high standards of personal behaviour. In all other areas, the teaching staff and curriculum are much like any other public school.

Among the main differences between Islamic schools and public schools are the three or four hours per week devoted to Islamic religious education, as well as the observance of certain Islamic norms such as the holding of midday prayers (Zuhr), celebration of some Islamic occasions, provision of halal food in the school canteen, and enforcement of an Islamic dress code. This most often requires girls to wear long skirts or pants covering the legs, long-sleeved shirts or blouses and to wear hijab. Boys wear shirts and long pants. Classes and playground areas may be separated on a gender basis, depending on the age of the students.

The significance of Islamic schools, according to Buckley (1997) is much greater than suggested by the size of their current enrolments. Islamic schools have been important in terms of fostering community pride, its sense of development, its finding a niche or being accepted into Australian society, in being seen to be part of the social, cultural and educational landscape, in short, in becoming part of the status quo.

**Challenges confronting Islamic schools**

Saeed (2003) notes that Islamic schools have become the target of criticism in the media. He observes that some commentators see Islamic schools as divisive, preventing full participation of their female students in education and Australian society. Others, he says, see the values underpinning Islamic schools as in conflict with traditional Australian values. In response to such accusations, Islamic schools argue that such criticisms are unfair and unwarranted. As Dunn’s (2005) research demonstrates, such views are often based on ignorance of the reality of Islamic schooling, a view that is reflected in the attitudes expressed by students who have taken part in interschool visits with Islamic schools.

While students in Islamic schools have achieved considerable success in the secular mainstream curriculum, an area that presents difficulties for both weekend and regular Islamic schools is the lack of Islamic religious education teaching materials that are appropriate to an Australian context. Many schools use materials developed in the United States or Middle Eastern countries that have little Australian content in the materials, and, according to Saeed (2003, p. 154) suffer from a lack colour and design, unsuitable grading, are out of reach of the psychological world of children, have a lack of activities and effective exercises. These problems are compounded by a lack of appropriately qualified teachers.

An examination of some of the materials (albeit a minority) used in Islamic schools also reveals what can only be described as an anti-Western bias. Taken out of context and insensitively handled, such material has the potential for sowing the seeds of divisiveness and inverse racism that can lead to a perception of persecution, which in turn underpins extremism. While, for example, one resource booklet used in an Australian school, under the theme of Cooperation, states the concept as:

"We live in societies with other human beings. We are all connected with each other as relatives, friends, neighbours, classmates or just humans. As human beings we need each other. We must work together doing those things that are good for everyone and stopping what harms everyone." (Australian Islamic College, Theme of the Week, 2005, p.43)
The majority of the material in this booklet could be said to promote values which are consistent with those of wider Australian society. However, under the theme of Courage, the same resource states:

“Courage is a unique and special quality that not many people possess in this world. Courage is the ability to struggle for the cause of Allah, without being swayed easily by the attractions of the world, or fear of death, or fear of what people might say. Unfortunately, much of the Muslim youth today are too busy enjoying themselves while the Muslim Ummah is suffering under corrupt regimes and the cultural tyranny of the West. Many adults tell us that we are too young to change the world, and that we should enjoy ourselves while we can. But Allah tells us something different. In fact, Ali (may be pleased with him) was but a boy, when he stood up for the cause of Allah and was called Asadullah, the Lion of Allah. Courage is a quality that the Muslim Youth must have, so that we can rise for Islam, and make this Deen victorious over all other systems.” (Australian Islamic College, Theme of the Week, 2005, p. 35).

The positive contributions made through the values curriculum in Islamic schools, and the wider public acceptance of the legitimacy of Islamic schooling in Australia can easily be undone by if such material were to have wider currency. Both the content and the style of writing of such material may not help to promote positive relationships between Muslims and broader Australian society.

More importantly, the sentiments expressed in these materials again highlight the central challenge faced by Islamic schools: how to prepare young Muslims for participation in Australian society. Donohoue-Clynne (2001), notes that Australian Muslim parents generally recognise the need for a high level of secular education to secure a future in a non-Muslim society. Nevertheless, their diverse backgrounds — culture, previous education and strength of religious beliefs — significantly shape their expectations of education.

The SBS research on multicultural identities in Australia confirms that the experience of Muslims is similar to that of many people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds; that young people tend to adopt different identities at different times—“Australian” when mixing with mainstream society, and their own ethnic/cultural practices at other times. However, Bouma, Daw and Munawwar (2001) found that children and youth can feel “caught in the middle” and as a result feel a sense of isolation and rejection as they struggle to find middle ground between maintaining their Muslim identity and fitting into Australian society, whilst facing criticism in the media. As a consequence, some seek isolation, fearing that integration will damage their Muslim identity. Ahmad (1994) notes that at that time, religious education programmes have not been developed to present a practical and encompassing Islamic way of life in Australia.

Islamic religious education is offered to Muslim children in the hope that they will not lose their Islamic identity in Australia. However, Donohoue-Clynne’s research also reveals that many Australian Muslims believe that conflict free acceptance in the Australian society is important for the survival of Muslims in Australia. She found that most send their children to mainstream government schools, and those that could afford the fees send their children to private schools while believing that children’s Islamic identity and education should be fostered in the home. They expressed concerns at what they consider to be generally low standards of education in many Islamic schools, arguing that to be a good Muslim in a secular society, a balance of excellent secular education at home and an effective Islamic religious education at home is needed. These parents view Islamic schools as inadequate in preparing their children psychologically to face the world. They argue that whilst a tertiary
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

institution, for example, has an open environment, an Islamic school tends to be rather closed.

Individually, as developing schools, and collectively as a developing school system, Islamic schools receive criticism on a regular basis. These criticisms, often about standards, are also often levelled at individual government and non-government schools. These criticisms should not be dismissed lightly. There is a need for systematic and sustained monitoring of the management and pedagogy of Islamic schools, just as this need exists for all Australian schools. Other criticisms, such as the tendency for Islamic schools to foster a “ghetto mentality”, have been argued as a case against other faith based schools in the past. They too, are not questions that can be dismissed lightly. They will continue to be hotly debated, in an environment that will be coloured as much by world events as the day-to-day issues of schools.

Yet as the following case studies demonstrate, there is cause for hope and cause for celebration of the possibility of the co-existence of Islam and secular education. The schools represented were not selected as being “best practice” schools. Each, however, exemplifies practices that are worthy of emulation elsewhere.

The English philosopher Aldous Huxley is quoted as saying, in the context of fears of nuclear proliferation at the time of the Suez crisis . . . “Remember your Humanity. Nothing else matters.”

This is a refrain that we have heard echoed by young people in schools of many kinds across Australia. They implore us to look for those things we have in common, but at the same time respecting and celebrating our diversity. These views give optimism that the goal of social cohesion is attainable, and within reach.
School Case Studies

The following section of the report describes the experiences of six schools that illustrate practices in relation to the development of interfaith and intercultural understanding. The six schools include Islamic, catholic and government schools from Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales. While the school case studies reflect good practice, it is recognized that they are not the only schools undertaking good work in this area. Case study schools were selected for their good practice rather than to be representative of all school types.

The case studies were designed to illustrate:

1) how Islamic schools can assist Muslim students and their parents to understand how Islamic culture can co-exist with Australian civic values and raise awareness of Australian values and history;
2) how interschool cooperation can reduce potential isolation and alienation of Islamic youth; and
3) How mainstream schools can promote understanding of Islam and demonstrate its compatibility with other Australian values and cultures.

An analysis of each of the six case studies readily reveals each schools attempt to address one or more of the above objectives. It is acknowledged that there is some overlap among schools’ achievements in relation to the three case study objectives. Each case study has therefore been written in relation to the general theme of developing interfaith and intercultural understanding. Each provides some general context for the school, then highlights some of the key activities of the school in relation to the overall terms of reference for this project.

The case studies focus on the work of one particular school, although this work has often been undertaken in partnership with a number of different schools. The case studies have been chosen to illustrate how schools of various kinds and in various geographic and socio-economic circumstances can implement a variety of complementary approaches to support intercultural and interfaith understanding.
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

Case Study 1: Promoting Interschool Cooperation — Minaret College, Melbourne, Victoria

This case study describes the efforts of one Islamic school (Minaret College) in promoting interschool cooperation. Minaret College has partnered with a number of schools in the recent past, including Mt Scopus College (a Jewish school), Toorak College, Marist Sion College, Padua College and Springvale Secondary College, among others. While interschool visits are an important element of the school’s efforts to promote interfaith and intercultural understanding, it is also significant that these efforts sit within a broader curriculum based approach that reinforces the teaching and learning of values, as well as other forms of community service that expose students to people from other faiths and other cultures. The strong emphasis given to the development of values is reflected in the school’s vision and mission statements.

1. SCHOOL CONTEXT

Minaret College is a co-educational Muslim College situated in the City of Greater Dandenong, South East of Melbourne, which is one of the most culturally diverse cities in Australia. Hence it is the most suitable location for students with Islamic background. The school was established in 1992 and has an enrolment of well over 700 students catering to the educational needs of young people from Prep to Year 12. The South East Region of Melbourne accommodates five Islamic centres and mosques which serve the Muslim Community of more than 30,000.

School Vision

The vision of Minaret College is to produce continuously Muslim graduates, who are independent, self-motivated, and possess the knowledge and skills to compete for admission to universities of their choice. The purpose is for students to become successful and productive citizens later in life.

School Mission

To provide an excellent integration of Islamic and secular education for students, the college endeavours to develop the students’ talents and capacities to full potential and is to be relevant to the social, cultural and economic needs of the Muslim community and the nation as a whole.

In order to deliver an effective education the College has developed an approach which responds to student needs, prepares them to be active citizens in later life and ensures ongoing cooperation and satisfaction from the growing parent body. The key elements of this approach are listed below:

- A holistic approach that delivers a relevant and meaningful curriculum to students
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

- Islamic studies integrated with the Australian education system, Arabic Language and Qur’an
- Salaat including Friday prayer (Juma’a) offered on campus
- Small class sizes in Prep-Year 12
- VCE subjects for Year 10 students
- Caring and highly qualified teachers from both Muslim and non Muslim backgrounds
- Pastoral care approach from teachers that underpins relationships with students
- Transition programme into secondary
- Overseas student enrolments
- Outstanding teaching and learning facilities
- English as a Second Language classes
- A co-curriculum programme to challenge and enhance students’ learning
- Student leadership via SRC
- Usrah system promoting co-operation, competition and excellence in sports
- Camps and excursions
- Frequent assessment and reporting of student’s progress to parents
- Parent involvement in a range of aspects of the school’s operation.

Philosophy and Values

The College’s philosophy is to help students improve their learning and increase their knowledge on a daily basis to the best of their ability. A key strategy for undertaking this task is to be explicit about the values that underpin teaching and learning in the classrooms and pervade a range of curriculum areas. The College therefore abides by the Islamic values that are derived from Qur’an and the teachings of the prophet Mohammed.

Goals

The College has ensured a strong alignment between its vision, its mission, its philosophy and values and its teaching programmes. Each of these is developed to achieve the ultimate goals of the school which are outlined below:

- Produce Muslim graduates who feel proud to be Australian Muslims;
- Enable all students to achieve high standards of learning;
- Help students develop self-confidence, optimism, high self-esteem, and respect for others, as well as achieve personal excellence;
- Promote equal educational opportunities that integrate children with special learning needs;
- Respond to the current and emerging economic and social needs of the nation, by providing the adequate skills, which will allow students a maximum flexibility and adaptability in their future employment and other aspects of life;
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

- Provide a foundation for further education and training, in terms of knowledge and skills, respect for learning and positive attitudes for life-long education;

- Provide students with an understanding of and respect for Islamic cultural heritage, the cultural background of Aboriginal and ethnic groups, as well as other cultures. In other words, the understanding of other cultures within Australia, and tolerance of other people’s religion and beliefs; and

- Provide for the physical development, personal health and fitness of students, and for the creative use of leisure time.

In relation to the achievement of these goals, there has been almost 100% success rate in the VCE since year 2000. Minaret College students have consistently achieved high VCE ENTER score and its graduates are currently studying in leading Victorian universities. The college has witnessed at least one graduate of the school now attending The University of Melbourne Medical School.

2. VALUES IN THE CURRICULUM

The Islamic religious foundation of the College provides the focal point and key principles of learning for all students at Minaret. For this reason, Islamic Studies is considered to be a very important subject within the school, taken by every student. Indeed Minaret provides an excellent integrated Islamic and secular education that helps students develop their talents and capacities to full potential taking into account their social, cultural, religious and economic needs. Indeed, it is from this base that the key values within the overall school curriculum are driven. Consequently the College promotes a comprehensive Islamic vision of life and inspires students to derive their learning from the teachings of Allah.

Goals of Islamic Studies

1. To produce dynamic Islamic leaders who will lead our community.

2. To develop an Islamic personality through the inculcation of Islamic values and nurturing of Islamic behaviour.

3. To help our young children grow to be the finest examples of Islamic behaviour in practice and to become valuable members of the Australian community.
Strategies

Teaching Values at Minaret College

The source of the College’s Islamic educational programmes is based on the Qur’an and Sunnah (sayings and practices of Prophet Mohamed). These provide both the religious and values foundations of the College and the starting points for curriculum planning from Prep to Year 12. For this reason special attention is paid to helping children develop Islamic values.

The Curriculum Coordinators and Administration teachers have strong accountabilities to ensure that teachers are making ongoing efforts to integrate Islamic knowledge and behaviour in the daily activities of each classroom.

In order to assist this process, professional development is being offered to teachers on a regular basis. In addition, the College regularly purchases text books and related materials that may help young people in this important aspect of school life.

The College also is committed to the belief that values are taught most effectively when there are strong teacher/parent partnerships. In this way important values, taught in the school context are then reinforced at home. For this reason, parenting and Educational Programmes are provided for parents. Teachers serve as role models because in an Islamic setting, a teacher from an Islamic perspective is not only one who disseminates knowledge to his/her students, but is also one who is a model human being.

Parents also play a very important role in the formal education and training of their children. There is a strong belief within the College that the school and the home are two primary institutions responsible for the nurturing and education of our children. They work closely together to provide a secure, nurturing and motivating environment in which children grow and prosper.
3. COMMUNITY and CURRICULUM RESOURCES

The Minaret College Library Resource Centre, which serves primary and secondary levels, is a key place for both staff and students. It supports the curricular and recreational interest of the school community and provides a number of valuable services for its users.

The College Library is well resourced with diverse hard and soft copy resources, including an enclosed area for senior students within the College. There is also ample space for discussion groups within the general Library facility and the resources appear to be both current and well used by both teachers and staff. The comment was often made however about the dearth of material that focussed on Islamic youth in contemporary Australian society as this appears to be a significant concern among a number of the schools in the case study project.

The school’s academic Intranet is the major provider of information resources for the school staff and students. It can be accessed by all the staff and students and is updated regularly to service current information requirements.

However the greatest resource that exists within the school is its people. This principle is clearly recognised by senior executive in the school. Therefore, the members of staff receive ongoing development opportunities to ensure that they always give their best performance. In addition, students are also given whatever support is necessary to help them realise their potential. Most recently the College has been planning for the imminent implementation of a leadership programme to assist those who are interested in becoming more effective and influential leaders within the Muslim community. (This Diploma level course is discussed in more detail in the section on School and Community relations).

4. INTERSCHOOL COOPERATION

A key plank of the College’s programme is the interschool cooperation and visitation initiative. The College works with a diverse range of schools, both government and non government, to ensure that its students have the widest possible perspectives in relation to
both interfaith and intercultural understanding. Students particularly cite their relationship with Mt Scopus College, a Jewish school, as extremely rewarding because of the friendships established and the opportunity for students from both school having the opportunity to have ongoing dialogue about issues of common interest around culture and religion.

Other schools that have regularly welcomed Minaret on site to engage in interfaith dialogue include:

- Toorak College, Mount Eliza
- St Leonard’s College
- Marist Sion College
- Padua College
- Springvale Secondary College

This initiative began after September 11, 2001 and its purpose was to ensure that the school was proactive in promoting harmony not only within the local community but across society generally.

Similarly a range of other initiatives have been occurring simultaneously. These include:

- Building Bridges programme, (with two Muslim schools, two Christian schools and two Jewish schools, whose secondary students meet up to seven times per year)
- Goodness and Kindness programme - similar programme to the above programme but with a Primary school focus.

These programmes not only dispel the myths created by the media but provide the opportunity for students to regularly reflect upon the key principles of their own religions.

5. TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The College is very active in the field of professional development but tends to conduct its own professional learning experiences for staff to ensure that these meet the direct
learning needs of the staff. From time to time leaders in the faith and broader community are invited to speak to staff about issues of common concern and the staff find these opportunities very valuable. Teachers also gain great professional benefit from their participation in interschool visits through networking and the general sharing and exchange of ideas.

The college regularly takes the initiative to conduct seminars and Symposia where educators from outside the school are also invited to attend. One recent title for discussion was “Towards Understanding Islam”.

ACIES and Faith Schools Meeting - 26th August 2005

6. QUALITY PROGRAMMES

The College regularly reviews its own processes and acts on feedback provided by staff, students and parents. The overall direction of the college is regularly discussed to ensure ongoing commitment to the philosophy and goals and teachers’ planning and programming. Teaching would appear to reflect that documentation and overall direction.

Minaret College Curriculum
Results in external tests both at primary and secondary levels are regularly employed by the senior executive as benchmarks for comparison and the results are used as the basis for a cycle of constant improvement in which all teachers engage.

7. FUTURE PLANS

The school is currently consolidating a range of curriculum initiatives to ensure high quality delivery but is simultaneously looking to build the capacity of key people in the community through the provision of such programmes as the Community Leadership Studies Diploma. The school is aware of the good work currently being undertaken and is taking steps to ensure that none of those gains are lost while continuing to move forward in being a leader in Islamic schooling in a number of important school areas.
Case Study 2: Raising Awareness of Australian Values — Australian International Academy (formerly King Khalid College), Melbourne, Victoria

1. SCHOOL CONTEXT

School Location

Australian International Academy is an independent registered educational institution managed by a professional College Board.

The Primary Campus of the College is situated in the suburb of Coburg, about 10 km North of Melbourne. The College, which was established in 1983, is Australia’s first full-time day Islamic school. The first Primary School buildings were purchased in 1982 through a donation from the late King Khalid of Saudi Arabia, and subsequently the primary school campus and then the whole College and its campuses have been named after him.

The secondary component of the College started in 1991 with Years 7 & 8 classes. This has progressed to reach Yr.12 Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and International Baccalaureate (IB) classes in 1995. The Secondary Campus of the College is situated in the suburb of Merlynston about 12 km north of Melbourne. This Campus opened in 1995.

The College population has a wide range of students from different ethnic backgrounds including Arabs, Turks, Anglo Saxons, Indians, Pakistanis, Somalis, Ethiopians, Eritreans, Malaysians, South Africans, other Europeans, and others. The College also accepts Overseas Students, the number of which continues to grow.

Brief History of the School

The Australian International Academy was formerly known as King Khalid Islamic College of Victoria and was opened in 1983 as a Primary school with an enrolment of 62 students in a 1920s school building in Coburg 10 km to the North of Melbourne. The Primary school grew steadily until its planned maximum enrolments of 600 students were reached in 1998.

In 1991 the first Secondary classes commenced and the College's first students to study for the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) graduated in 1995. The first International Baccalaureate (IB) students graduated in 1996. The Secondary School and the College Administration moved to the newly acquired second campus at Merlynston, North Coburg in 1995. Since 1983, all the existing old buildings have been refurbished and many new buildings have been completed to provide excellent facilities for the College’s rapidly expanding population of approximately 1200 students.

The College adopted the International Baccalaureate Diploma IB Programme in 1996 and over the succeeding years the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP) and the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) were also adopted supplementing the Victorian Curriculum Standard Framework and VCE Programmes.

A Mosque on each of the two Campuses provides the spiritual focus for the evolving Islamic identity of the College. As a result of extensive discussion within the educational and
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

parent community, the school officially changed its name in 2006 to the Australian International Academy (AIA.)

The Academy Philosophy

The College Curriculum is well balanced between secular and Islamic education. Children are being taught to be proud of their Islamic identity and being Australian Muslims. Apart from the Holy *Qu’ran* and LOTE subjects, all other subjects are taught in English. Arabic Language and Religious studies are taught at all levels. The number of lessons per week varies slightly from Prep classes to Secondary levels. Other modern languages including French and Indonesian are offered as electives in the Secondary school, as well as Turkish, which is offered from Grade 3 onwards.

By attending the Australian International Academy, all pupils benefit in their academic and spiritual progress and in the development of their self-esteem, in a caring educational and Islamic environment. Though, the College welcomes and admits students from other non-Islamic denominations there are minimum requirements that students and staff must observe for being part of the Islamic College.

The Australian International Academy, recognizing that we are a nation of immigrants, cherishes the multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-faith nature and aspirations of our society and enjoins all its students to cultivate a universal outlook on life and to constantly seek to broaden their horizons in tolerance, compassion and co-operation with one another. The Academy seeks to prevent discrimination on the grounds of race and religion in the classroom, in the playground, in cultural activities and in school social life.

General Aims of the College

The following educational, cultural, moral and spiritual aims constitute the key priorities of the school:

1. To provide children with an Islamic Education that will inculcate in them Islamic values while providing a quality secular education that will outfit them for life in Australia. The College aims at the development of the whole person, intellectually, spiritually, socially and physically and the development of individual talents and abilities.

2. To provide a good grounding in Islam with an understanding and respect for other religions and different cultures.

3. To develop in all children the acquisition of social skills which will enable them to function effectively and harmoniously in Australia’s multi-cultural and multi-faith society, and adaptability to live effectively in other environments.

4. To develop individual students to their maximum potential and to encourage intellectual curiosity.

5. To develop a realisation that different cultures make up our society and to be tolerant of others, whilst encouraging the development of pride in being Australian Muslims.

6. Whilst retaining pride in the child’s own Islamic culture, to develop pride in being Australian and an ability to adapt and fit within any cultural context.

College Vision Statement

The College vision is to have graduates who are well prepared and self motivated to advance Australia and to participate effectively as World citizens with Muslim values.
Having such a vision in mind, the College is offering a broader and a well-balanced curriculum with global perspectives to students in primary, secondary and post compulsory levels. In a Muslim environment, Islamic Education and extra curricular components complement the general education programme and produce a comprehensive contemporary curriculum that satisfies students' needs and realises the vision.

Objectives

To realise this vision, the College is working to achieve the following nine objectives:

1. To develop the curriculum to cater for the growing needs of all students;
2. To widen the focus and the scope of all programmes to go beyond the local or the regional aims to global perspectives;
3. To develop extra curricular programmes that complement the general curriculum and encourage creativity, innovation, involvement in services for the community, participation in sports, and concern for the environment;
4. To develop and maintain a school environment where every student has the opportunity to learn to his/ her fullest potential and to enjoy his/ her school days without discrimination or undue pressures;
5. To develop appropriate teaching practices and promote contemporary approaches to learning that encourage students to build self confidence and develop their talents and inner personal skills;
6. To build in students the Muslim character that exemplifies Islamic manners and shows respect and tolerance to other opinions and appreciation to differing cultures;
7. To develop and optimise educational opportunities, resources, and facilities to cope with all challenges brought about by the technology age;
8. To improve and optimise working conditions for College employees and develop effective recruitment and selection procedures to attract and appoint good quality candidates; and
9. To develop and improve its administrative and financial systems to deliver services efficiently and effectively and to achieve optimum results.

Current Enrolment and other Demographic Characteristics

The school has a total of approximately 1,200 students from prep to Year 12 (P-12) on two campuses and is divided into three schools, junior, middle, and senior schools. The Junior School includes Prep to Years 5 and enrolls 610 students. The junior school is situated at the Coburg Campus. The Middle School includes Years 6-9 and the Senior School Years 10 to 12. Both Middle and Senior Schools are situated at the Merlynston Campus. The College offers the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme at Year Prep to 5 and the IB Middle Years Programme at Years 6 to 10. The IB Diploma and Victorian Certificate of Education are offered at Years 11 and 12.

Recent Achievements and Future Challenges

The College has recently been involved in the establishment of an Australian School in Abu Dhabi, UAE. The Academy in Melbourne will provide all expertise services to the school in Abu Dhabi, including curriculum, technical training and professional development to staff.
This project will help promote the College’s Australian curriculum and the College’s new approach to teaching and learning.

This development will provide a significant opportunity not only for students but also for teachers in terms of exchange teacher study and teaching opportunities and professional development. The development will also reinforce the international emphasis of the Australian International Academy.

From a student perspective, significant academic achievements have been made in the past 12 months by Year 12 students.

2. VALUES IN THE CURRICULUM

As indicated previously, the College is driven by a curriculum framework that is determined by its commitment to the International Baccalaureate (IB) from prep to Year 12. This framework ensures that in all years of schooling there is an enduring focus on the total growth of the developing student by offering a balance between the search and acquisition of essential skills and knowledge and preparing the students for tomorrow’s world. It focuses on the heart as well as the mind and therefore addresses social, physical, emotional and cultural needs as well as academic priorities.

In the Primary years particularly, the philosophy of the programme is expressed in a series of desired attributes and traits which shape the curriculum and are instilled in students:

“inquiring, thinkers, communicators, risk takers, knowledgeable, principled, caring, open minded, well balanced and reflective.”

In addition to the school’s commitment to the IB, at a strategic level the school is driven by two other key statements: Muslim Schools’ Charter and the Declaration of Faith Based Schools. Both statements provide a sound faith based philosophy that guides schools in terms of key principles and values to focus upon in the development of their students. In the case of the Declaration of Faith Based Schools, this document has been endorsed by Muslim, Christian and Jewish schools and provides a strong Australian flavour for the teaching of values in schools.

In contrast, the Muslim Schools’ Charter is founded on the Holy Qu’ran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and has, as expected, a complimentary but stronger Islamic flavour.

At a more operational level, the school conducted a Values Audit in 2004, thereby identifying 36 separate values that were considered important for students. After considerable discussion, these were reduced to fourteen key values that are listed below:

- God consciousness
- Respect
- Care and compassion
- Responsibility
- Doing your best
- Understanding
- Fair go
- Tolerance
- Freedom
- Acceptance
- Honesty/integrity
- Cooperation
Each teacher in the school is expected to adhere to these values and indeed model these whenever possible. Teachers are provided with ongoing professional learning opportunities to assist them in their teaching of these values and are also provided with resource materials and booklets to provide teaching ideas. In using these teacher resources, much of the planning undertaken by teachers for classroom work is undertaken in teams to enhance overall quality and engaging dialogue, resulting in greater whole school commitment also.

In the development of these values and as part of the College’s audit, close consideration was also given to the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* and the resulting list above bears a number of similarities to the key values espoused within the *National Framework*.

Within the classroom, teachers have agreed upon a system that rewards and recognises student behaviour that approximates the values outlined above. Equally, sanctions have also been identified by the various teacher teams to be applied in those situations where students are not demonstrating appropriate value based behaviour. It is broadly acknowledged that the first step in this process will be dialogue and discussion, leading to problem solving designed to address the causes of such difficulties.

The diagram outlined below clearly demonstrates the range of integrated student initiatives that the College is undertaking in relation to its Values Education journey.

![Diagram of Values in Action Programmes]

**3. COMMUNITY and CURRICULUM RESOURCES**

The school makes extensive use of teacher developed resources that are shared on a team basis both within and across grade levels. In addition teachers make use of extensive hard copy resources available in the library. Younger students are able to use Information Technology (e.g. Skype, Google Earth) in linking with other schools internationally and from other diverse cultures. At the Secondary level, the students make extensive use of community service initiatives, which has now been developed as an integral aspect of the students’ ongoing school curriculum. There is a strong belief espoused within the College...
that the direct experience of students should always be the priority. In this way, commercial resources are seen as a secondary source of assistance for teachers, preferring the more direct experience wherever possible. For this reason, engagement with both the local and broader educational community is considered to be a primary form of learning for all students, and is in direct alignment with the school’s overall philosophy.

The Clean Up Australia Day initiative, a picture of which appears below is yet another example of the way the school leverages off community events to ensure that students are given as much “real life” experience as possible.

Clean Up Australia Day

Students are active citizens in the community. The Cub Scouts, Guides and SRC students participate in the annual event.

This experience also enables students to activate their membership of a diverse range of community based youth groups, whilst also representing the school as students of AIA working in the community.

In a similar way, Harmony Day is well integrated into the intercultural and interfaith activities of the school. This is not seen as one discrete event that is celebrated annually, but rather one initiative that adds to the total learning experience of students in building a greater interfaith and intercultural understanding. The picture below illustrates students’ engagement in such activities.

A range of other activities have also been initiated by the school to leverage the opportunity for students to benefit from community based initiatives. An example of these is included below:

- Anti Cancer Council events (National Sun for Sunnies Day, Daffodil Day)
- Royal Children’s Hospital Good Friday Appeal
- Cultural Diversity Activities
- Young Leaders Annual Conference
- Grandparents and Neighbours Day
- Footprints Environmental Conference
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

- Interfaith Youth Forum
- Victorian Police Interfaith Launch
- Cub Scouts
- Girl Guides

Harmony Week Activities

The initiatives highlighted above demonstrate the range of networks and community links that have been established by the College as part of its overall school programme. The school’s ongoing engagement with these initiatives has arisen because of particular links established with community leaders who are not necessarily Muslim but who are willing to work with key stakeholders on the school staff to assist the development of its students.

4. INTERSCHOOL COOPERATION

While the values outlined above reflect the underpinning bases of student behaviour, teachers organise other activities outside the classroom to assist students’ development of their value systems. Importantly, however these values are only the starting point in assisting students to develop intercultural understanding. Interschool visits are a major tool for assisting students in this area. Importantly however, the interschool visits are planned and organised in such a way that they are part of a larger programme of building interfaith and intercultural understanding. Initially there is significant planning beforehand to ensure that the purpose of the visits is clear and the major outcomes to be achieved are agreed upon. There is significant opportunity for feedback and discussion in the classroom following on from the school visits to ensure that new students’ learning is carefully integrated into existing initiatives to maximise the benefit for students.

The College focus has been to encourage students to participate in the broader society. Students have attended extra curricular activities with other schools such as sport, debating, drama, interfaith dialogue, Clean Up Australia Day, shared Theory of Knowledge
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

classes, Centenary of Federation etc.  After the unfortunate events of September the 11th instead of feeling part of Australia, many of the students felt not valued, isolated, rejected and even shunned. This has further emphasised the importance of the College’s commitment to engaging in the broader educational community with other schools and their communities. In this way they are able to demonstrate the commitment to Australian values like many other schools. One example is the reciprocal relationship that has been established between AIA and Xavier College in Melbourne. Both sites value the relationship and consider that the relationship will continue to grow in future years to the mutual benefit of students and their communities. The College has also established valuable relationships through interschool visits with Wesley College, Korowa Anglican Girls’ College, Billanook College, Sacred Heart College at Kyneton. Being one of the IB schools in Australia, AIA regularly has contact with other IB schools throughout Australia both from student and teacher perspectives.

The College adopts a very systematic approach to interschool visits at the Secondary level. All experiences undertaken by students relate to one of four separate yet related strands, in such a way that they are each identified with a specific purpose that is followed up by teachers with students to ensure application to their own lives, in building intercultural understanding.

The four key strands within the College are referred to as:

1. The Galway schools initiative involving visits with 7 other schools
2. The interfaith programme
3. The Harmony programme
4. The Student Leadership programme

While each of these interschool experiences has been seen to have significant benefits for students in terms of interfaith understanding and developing shared Australian values, teachers and parents have also commented positively on the benefits of the experiences in terms of developing students’ greater understanding of other global belief systems. Teachers have also found the experience useful from a professional networking perspective and parents have been impressed with the increasing level of students’ knowledge of other religions beside Islam.

Despite these advantages, a number of factors have been identified as factors that may inhibit the future success of the initiative. These include:

- the lack of administrative support to facilitate organization of visits
- the lack of teacher preparation time necessary to maximise student visits
- the absence of a relevant contact person in other schools, unlike the Australian International Academy (AIA) where a Values Coordinator has been established
- differing diets representing different religions can make student catering quite challenging
- lack of understanding about dress requirement required to undertake visits to mosques, synagogues etc
- the challenges of ongoing communication among schools through electronic media
- transport can sometimes prove to be a challenge especially where funding is involved.
While there are other factors that militate against interschool visits, these seem to be the most commonly occurring.

5. TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the other distinctive features of the College as a Muslim school, AIA is an IB school. This characteristic demands that teachers engage in extensive professional development across a broad range of methodologies and disciplines. Such professional learning includes the opportunity for teachers to regularly engage in dialogue with other IB schools from across the world. Consequently there is an ongoing need for teachers in the College to remain at the cutting edge internationally in terms of the discipline area for which they hold responsibility. Professional networking is therefore seen to be a significant aspect of professional learning within the College.

In addition to these experiences, teachers regularly attend professional conferences organised by a variety of organizations, e.g. Independent Association of Registered Teachers in Victoria (IARTV), Hawker Brownlow (a commercial book publishing organization), World Vision and Islamic Studies.

Within the context of the College, teachers and parents spend a large amount of time, auditing values being taught and sharing strategies being employed for working with students. Teachers are regularly assisted with experiences to ensure consistent modelling of values is a regular aspect of the teacher’s repertoire. To ensure consistency of approach, a values framework has been established to ensure a consistent approach is adopted by all teachers towards the teaching of values and the development of intercultural understanding.

6. QUALITY PROGRAMMES

The College is highly committed to assuring the quality of its Values Development programme. In order to achieve this outcome, a number of good practices are undertaken. These include:

- Establishing agreement at the outset among teachers, parents and key members of the local community about the key values underpinning the school and to be developed with its students
- A consideration of the National Framework for Values Education to establish alignment where possible
- Ensuring a Muslim religious base to the values being taught and articulated throughout the school
- Ensuring that through whole school and team based planning, that values teaching is integrated in an across the curriculum approach, rather than in a discrete lesson once or twice a week
- Emphasising the importance of teacher modelling to ensure that teacher actions are always consistent with the values being taught
- Keeping parents informed about the Values Development programme through requesting that the reinforce in the home context the values being taught in the school
• Plan out of school activities (e.g. school visits and community service) that enable students to reflect upon the values being developed

• Undertaking regular values audits with staff to ensure that all staff are aligned with the values being addressed

• Providing teachers with a Values Booklet that explains each of the key values and demonstrates examples good examples of each of the values in practice

• Establishing a reward and sanctioning system that praises students for approximating the appropriate behaviours and challenges those students whose behaviour is considered inappropriate

• Regularly publicising examples of students demonstrating desired values

• Decorating the playground areas with posters about key values so that students are constantly reminded of their responsibility

• Establishing in Prep and maintaining until Year 12 the practice of all students taking responsibility for their own learning

• Providing the opportunity for all students (Prep to Year 12) to discuss their achievements and future learning challenges in parent/teacher conferences (accompanied by student portfolios developed by the students).

The fundamental success of the approach at this school is not just the diverse and extensive list of initiatives undertaken. More importantly, success is founded on the joint ownership of these initiatives by all key stakeholders in the school, i.e. students, teachers and parents. This ownership has been established because all key stakeholders have participated in its development and the ownership is sustained through teachers and parents ensuring that the highest possible standards are maintained.

8. FUTURE PLANS

Currently the school has no plans to specifically change any particular aspect of its programme. The range of initiatives is regularly monitored, evaluated and refined.
Case Study 3: Initiatives to increase awareness of Australian Values and reduce potential isolation and alienation — Noor al Hooda Islamic College, Sydney, NSW

1. SCHOOL CONTEXT

Noor Al Hooda Islamic College is a fully independent private school catering for the needs of the Muslim community throughout Sydney. The school was founded in 1995 on the edge of Bankstown Airport. The school grew from a girls’ high school to include a 3 stream primary school, boys’ high school and child care centre within 3 years.

The site has three buildings - Leigh Hall comprising nearly 50 rooms which currently caters for all classes and administration, an 1880’s mansion called Brundah which has been revitalised to house the primary classes and the former chapel which is currently serving as a Hindu temple. The property has ample space for playground, landscaped gardens and is close to many sporting amenities.

The school currently has one Science laboratory, and two small computer laboratories. Design and Technology and Visual Arts facilities house the creative side of the school. The former library adequately houses the school's collection of more than 15,000 volumes. Plans are being lodged with Council for improved playground facilities to cater for the needs of both the primary and high school.

The College now has a new Board of Directors, is registered until 2009 and has begun a comprehensive building programme to provide up to date facilities for the students.

At Noor Al Hooda, three areas are equally emphasised:

1. Faith and Knowledge in Islam;
2. Academic Excellence; and
3. Respect for our heritage.

The work of the College is driven by three separate goals:

- To develop strong *iman* (faith) in every student with a clear understanding of their religion, its practice, history and practical application;
- To prepare students for living in the wider community, by encouraging leadership skills, communication ability, self esteem and responsibility; and
- To provide a supportive environment which fosters the students’ strengths and supports their academic, social and practical pursuits.

The school currently enrols 162 primary students and 210 secondary students. The school is staffed by a total of 41 professional teaching staff (including 13 in the Primary and 28 in the Secondary) and 4 administrative staff.
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

While the school has many ambitious plans for a bright and rewarding future for students, its recent past has been fraught with challenges and difficulties that have caused excessive energies by the College Founders, Silma Ihram and Baheej Adada, to be devoted to survival. In essence the school while on its original site at Bankstown was given a soil report that indicated the land was a former dump.

This immediately set back all plans for building and future development, and the College had to seek alternative premises to relocate for the next 3 years. In the meantime it began legal action in the Supreme Court for damages suffered by not being able to pursue its previous aim of establishing on the edge of the airport. In 2005 the school won its case and the new site was opened in July 2003 by the NSW Governor, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC. Since that time, the school has made rapid progress in the face of increasing enrolments and enhanced subject options for secondary students enrolled.

2. VALUES IN THE CURRICULUM

A key feature of the College is the efforts taken by teachers to get to know every child and to understand their needs. This essential concern for children and their overall welfare is at the heart of the values that underpin the school’s operation. Therefore the efforts of teachers are driven by the need to encourage students to understand who they are and what is important in life. In this way the values are lived by both teachers and students in every way both in the classroom and in outside classroom activities. Consequently the school has no entry tests for students and caters fully for average as well as gifted students within its community. Similarly there is no discrimination among ethnic and cultural groups, with all students being made to feel very welcome.

The values are implicit within the school’s curriculum and are interwoven through all curriculum areas, ensuring that teachers are regularly addressing them in a variety of different learning contexts. Students are taught to value their culture and to know its strengths as well as its heritage and background. A key element of the outcomes of a value focus is to build students’ self esteem in relation to individual ethnic and cultural groups.

Such genuine concern for each student must therefore be translated into practice within the school in whatever ways are possible. Many students from the Muslim community do not speak English at home as a first language. Consequently, specialist help is required to assist them to develop in two languages simultaneously- Arabic and English ESL and Numeracy programmes are also provided for students struggling with their English and Maths. These are just two examples of how the key value of concern for each child is expressing itself through the school and its programmes.

3. COMMUNITY and CURRICULUM RESOURCES

As indicated previously, the school is not overly endowed with physical resources because of the financial stringencies experienced with the former history of the school. However, as the Principal has indicated, this has meant that the school has had to reach out to the community for resources. This has had a positive outcome, and the community has become one of the major resources for learning and addresses many of the philosophical challenges within the school relating to student cultural identity.

Consequently, the people within the community are seen to be more useful resources for students than books and video material. Nevertheless the enemy of time involved in
preparation makes the translation of these ideas into a reality a genuine challenge. Despite this, interfaith organizations such as Affinity are regularly used and the partnership now established is being carefully nurtured. Through this situation a number of community leaders, including some parents can be accessed from time to time however their presence cannot always be guaranteed.

4. INTERSCHOOL COOPERATION

The College Principal would suggest that there is a “hybridisation” of cultures occurring within the local community where Muslim students who are proud of their heritage also wish to adopt an Australian lifestyle and culture. However the effect of such social tools as the media is causing many of them to feel isolated and alienated. This marginalisation has a detrimental effect on both self esteem and school performance. Ultimately the school may respond in different ways. The first is to ensure that the school attempts to ensure that students feel safe and secure to pursue their Islamic heritage but simultaneously not to surround the students with a world that is distinctly different from the real world. Consequently the Principal is strongly committed to ensuring that the school is a genuine part of the local community. In this way it is as close as possible to the real world that the students will ultimately need to live in and contribute to. For this reason, any experiences such as interschool visits and community services become powerful tools in assisting the school to realise its outcomes or all students.

The following extract from the College’s website demonstrates the college’s commitment to interschool visits as a key strategy for building tolerance and intercultural understanding among its students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establishing Links with St Ignatius</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A chance meeting with a pioneer of Muslim Women’s activities in Sydney resulted in a desire to allow students from the prestigious Catholic boys school St. Ignatius, to exchange visits with boys from a Muslim high school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The boys from St. Ignatius had not previously had the opportunity to chat with the boys from Bankstown who came from a completely different socio-economic and religious culture. So it was with some trepidation that a carload of senior students headed from the North Shore, armed with their schools weighty Annual to meet with Noor Al Houda boys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within minutes of their arrival the teachers stepped back and the boys chatted happily about their common interests, concerns over the HSC and sport amongst others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits between the schools have continued with a fast paced Basketball match, return visits by Noor Al Houda students to attend morning Assembly and Mass with St. Ignatius, while a selection of Yr 9-11 students attended the Friday Jumaat at Noor al Houda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the future the focus is expected to be on a more academic challenge with a debate and an essay writing challenge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Goodness and Kindness Project

A major focus of Noor Al Houda’s activities involves the development of greater understanding and compassion between Muslims and other cultures. Australia is fortunate
to have so many different cultures which are allowed to not only practise their religion but also to teach and interact with each other.

When a former teacher of Noor Al Houda informed the school that he is actively involved with a new project aimed at increasing awareness and understanding between faiths he found immediate support from the school. Earlier this year the trio running the project visited the school a Christian lay speaker, a Jewish rabbi, and Seyfi a Muslim teacher who previously taught English and some drama to the students.

Demonstrating to the senior students how their preconceptions serve to encourage them into putting people into boxes, the trio were filmed by the Compass programme as they fielded questions about Palestine and ethics. The programme was aired on the ABC on Sunday 27th March, 2006.

Despite a fantastic turnout from many of the schools who had participated in the Goodness and Kindness Project run by the trio of religious spokesmen, the media decided not to celebrate the unveiling of a huge quilt made of individual squares with each child's intention to improve their world.

Muna from Year 5 spoke eloquently along with other junior speakers about a better world for the next generation, based on mutual respect and understanding. More than 1,000 students took over Macquarie St. while politicians sat and listened to the voices of the young leaders of tomorrow. Such good news unfortunately does not increase the ratings of newspaper or television.

Muna from Year 5 spoke eloquently to the hundreds of students about a better world before meeting with the former Premier Bob Carr in front of the quilt made by primary school students.

Noor Al Houda Islamic College Hosts Canadian Parental Experts

The recent visit of Drs Ekram and Mohamed Beshir has left a lasting impression on many students and staff in Sydney. Speaking to senior students of the high school the two speakers who are Egyptian-born Canadians reminded students of the important focus of their lives caring for each other, their religion and preparing for the akhirat.

With humorous examples students heard about the kind of person that a Muslim could be. Instead of focusing on the dos and don’ts of Islam, the doctors emphasised and clarified the competing emotions and concerns of teenagers. Living in a Western country as a practising Muslim is not only challenging but can also be a rewarding experience and an opportunity to develop knowledge and skills not available in other parts of the world.
A full day parenting workshop was run in Brundah Hall with workshops assisting parents to understand the needs of their children and how to respond to difficult situations based on a clear understanding of the *Qu’ran* and *Sunnah*.

The Beshir Doctors were extremely helpful and enlightening and many benefited from their talks and advice.

4. TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Principal of the College is a visionary and committed professional, who is constantly articulating her dreams for the school and the role that the teachers may play in achieving that goal. For this reason, there is constant dialogue and reflection upon action among the staff both formally and informally.

While there is only a limited budget for staff participation in formal professional development, the teaching staff acknowledges the valuable “on the job” training being received and the exchange of ideas that comes through constant dialogue. A key element of this dialogue revolves around the teaching of the *Values for Australian Schooling* and the implications of that for the College. Many staff members are constantly exchanging ideas about the ways in which they address these issues and the extent to which the broader community becomes the context for teaching the students about Australian values.

Members of staff at the school have also indicated the professional development received through the planning of school and community based intercultural understanding initiatives at two levels. This occurs not only in the planning, but the networks established with teachers from other schools have also proven to be extremely valuable. On such occasions teachers have the opportunity to share strategies and ideas for building interfaith understanding, irrespective of religious beliefs being espoused.

5. QUALITY PROGRAMMES

Due to the particular constraints that hampered the earlier development of this school, the formal establishment of systems to ensure quality programmes in values education are only in the early stages of development.

In the first instance, the Principal has articulated a very clear vision for the College focussed on the individual care for each student in the school. This care and concern related to each student’s social, emotional, personal and spiritual welfare as well as their academic and physical priorities. This vision is clearly understood by staff both in terms of its content and its implications for curriculum delivery. The vision is also understood by parents who are supportive of the vision and understand the implications for school/parental partnerships to assist the nurturing of their children.

In this way, the essential elements of the plan are in place and are already being reflected in the way the curriculum is delivered and the increasing range of options for students. However it must be equally acknowledged that this is seen as a journey that the Principal will continue to lead, the outcomes of which may not be immediately recognised. Despite
this, the elements are in place to ensure a rewarding future for students in relation to values education and the development of intercultural understanding.

6. FUTURE PLANS

The College is strongly committed to its ongoing work in the local community with students and will continue to refine this initiative, particularly in relation to interschool visits and community service. The College also remains committed to the provision of a comprehensive education for all students and will continue to extend the curriculum offerings as enrolments grow and resources permit. Simultaneously the College is in the early stages of a building and expansion programme that will enhance the quality of curriculum and teaching provision already being offered within the school. The passion of the Principal and the ongoing support of parents are not expected to waiver but to enhance the quality of initiatives already being undertaken within the school.
Case Study 4: Promoting Interfaith and Intercultural Understanding — Killester College, Melbourne, Victoria

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Killester College is a Victorian Catholic girls' secondary school. It is owned by the Brigidine Sisters and was established in 1955 to provide Catholic secondary education to the girls of the growing Springvale area.

In 2006, the vast majority of students who attend Killester College live in the Melbourne suburbs and parishes of Springvale, Keysborough, Noble Park, and Mulgrave. Total enrolment is approximately 800 students. There are approximately 90 staff at the school, who are largely lay teachers.

Killester College is a multicultural school with students from many faiths reflecting the demographic profile of the surrounding areas from which the school draws its students. Approximately 64% of students speak at least one language other than English. The cultural mix of students includes (but is not limited to) Italian, Greek, Vietnamese, Chinese Cambodian, Sri Lankan and Sudanese.

Killester is a school that prides itself on providing a strong, broad curriculum in a caring environment, based on Gospel values. In the current social and educational climate, the school is seeking to provide education that empowers students to become life long learners, who can think critically and achieve their potential. The school is aiming for its students to become adults who are confident in their interactions with others and can make positive contributions to society.

Mission Statement

The school mission statement which engenders the above philosophies is provided below:

Killester College has as its distinctive mission the provision of Catholic secondary education for young women, who are drawn from the diverse cultural and economic backgrounds of the Springvale area. We value the diversity of our students and strive to develop the whole person. Our motto, 'Strength and Kindliness' links us into a network of other Brigidine schools signifying that we belong to a large community.

To ensure that this mission statement is a living document for its students, staff, parents and community, the school endeavours to:

- create a school community which is clearly based on the values of Jesus;
- nurture Christianity in the Catholic tradition;
- appreciate one another's differences and individual worth;
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

- work co-operatively to develop responsibility, self-discipline and adaptability;
- maintain a school environment in which enthusiasm, joy and simplicity are valued;
- offer educational experiences that develop creativity, initiative and a love of learning; and
- provide opportunities for leadership that enable young people to make a contribution to their environment and their world.

Due to its origins in the Brigidine traditions and its diverse multicultural student populations, a large amount of work has been undertaken in translating the above focus areas to address interfaith and intercultural understanding at the school. In particular the above focus area that seeks students to ‘appreciate one another’s differences and individual worth’ has ensured that differences in terms of faith and culture are shared and embraced rather than isolated and ignored.

2. VALUES IN THE CURRICULUM

As a Catholic school within the Brigidine tradition, Killester is committed to fulfilling the Brigidine Core Values.

In Brigidine Education, these values are:

- be faithful to the Catholic heritage
- welcome all people, especially the most vulnerable
- celebrate all that is good with joy and gratitude
- engender a love of learning, hope and sense of purpose
- image and practise justice and service.

The school strongly believes that the values as indicated in the Values for Australian Schooling and identified in the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools fall comfortably into the existing Core Values. The school, over time, has developed policies and procedures to ensure implementation of its values.

In conjunction with its Mission Statement, the school has put in place strategies to ensure that the five Core Values are ‘living values’. In practice this has led to a number of priorities to be developed. These priorities include:

1. Religious Education, prayer and Liturgy that encourage engagement and reflection within the catholic tradition and the development of spirituality.

2. A curriculum that engages and challenges students to enjoy learning, develop thinking skills and achieve their best, with pedagogy that suits the different learning styles and needs of students.
3. An emphasis on literacy and numeracy.

4. A Pastoral Care Programme that welcomes all, and assists students to develop life skills which enable them to be resilient members of society.

5. A Co-curricular Programme that offers opportunities for students to develop social and leadership skills as well as interests which they can take on into adulthood.

In many of these priority areas the opportunities to put into action interfaith and intercultural education presents opportunities for students. However, it is not through specific activities that the school attempts to achieve this but rather to provide a structure that constantly reinforces and recognizes student, staff, parent and community behaviour in relation to interfaith and intercultural understanding. Opportunities to exhibit these types of behaviors are achieved through a variety of ways, both explicit and implicit, at the school. A sample of these opportunities is provided below:

- Reinforcement of core values in all documents developed by the school from the Student Prospectus to the Staff Handbook through to the school’s Future Directions documentation.

- Daily guidance for the students via the homeroom teacher, the assistant homeroom teacher and the year coordinator who have responsibility for encouraging students’ educational, social, spiritual and physical development.

- Frequent opportunities to meet as a homeroom, Year level or full school community to enable students to learn from each other, understand and identify with the school’s mission and make contributions to their world.

- Programmes and activities that regularly challenge students to identify their own rights and responsibilities as part of the school community and how these rights and responsibilities impact on others. This provides students with a chance to proactively examine their views in relation to interfaith and intercultural issues. Activities within the Religious Education Programme (which will be discussed later in this case study) enable students to investigate other faiths by visiting their places of worship in order to discuss and appreciate the differences in their beliefs.

- Professional development for staff to ensure consistent modelling with the school’s Core Values. Also professional learning that ensures a shared approach is undertaken by staff in the reinforcement and recognition of the Core Values.

- Wide and effective communication strategies of the school’s Mission and Core Values to students, staff, parents and the community are pursued through various mechanisms such as newsletters, websites, prospectus, parent interviews (that include interpreters for parents that have English as a second language).
In terms of interfaith and intercultural education, the school would suggest that it is through pursuit of its Core Values that social harmony is a key focus. However to ensure that this important area continues to be brought to the fore, the school has acknowledged in its recent 2006-2010 Future Directions document a key area which is designed ‘to develop an understanding of other faith traditions’. By explicitly identifying a focus in this area, the school has ensured that interfaith and intercultural understanding is in the foreground of the entire school community.

Many specific activities are conducted by the school to provide opportunities for students to put into practice their learning in the area of interfaith and intercultural education. Within the Religious Education curriculum area, students are involved in a Visiting Programme. This work challenges students to investigate and compare other faiths through visiting different places of worship. Sites visited in the past have included Buddhist, Hindu and Jewish Temples, Muslim Mosques plus other sites of note. Similarly, in the school’s Liturgy Programme students are encouraged to be aware of inclusive language so that all are considered regardless of race, sex or religion. In the Student Leadership structure, specific committees are run by the students in areas, but not limited to, Celebration and Community Services. Many ‘ad hoc’ activities enable students to engage with other faiths and cultures in their local community and to apply their learning in real life situations.

The school is also developing a professional learning programme for all staff in regard to ‘Interfaith Dialogue’. This work is looking to increase the awareness and knowledge of staff in regard to other faiths so that teachers are prepared to approach students from an informed and empathetic base. Interfaith networks are being developed to assist in the development of this work and to ensure the authenticity and relevance of the learning for staff.

Overall, the school would again advocate that it is more the culmination and reinforcement of the small things that ensure social harmony at the school. Experience would suggest that focus on a single event tends to be time limited which often results in time limited behavioral change.

3. INTERSCHOOL COOPERATION

Killester College initiates and participates in interschool projects wherever it is viewed suitable to the focus of the activity. In practice, this has generally translated into activities undertaken with other Catholic girls’ schools in regard to sports or specific projects such as community work. The challenge for the school in extending this type of interschool activity beyond sports and specific activities is time.

Notwithstanding this limitation, Killester College has had some engagement with Minaret College. Through Minaret’s work on interfaith dialogue, Killester has provided advice to this school regarding the Catholic faith and Brigidine values. Due to the similar geographic location of the school it was not uncommon for discussions to be conducted between the two schools in regard to living out their faiths.
The school acknowledges that a key benefit in engaging with other faith based schools is to authenticate the learning provided to its students.

4. COMMUNITY and CURRICULUM RESOURCES

Due to the holistic nature of values education delivery at Killester College, there is little specific resource that is used by the school to support learning in this regard. This is the same situation for any learning undertaken that encompasses interfaith and intercultural education.

Largely, teachers will source specific texts from their own resources or will use the internet or school library to illustrate to students a specific area of focus. The school considered that there was ample supply of resources to support interfaith and intercultural education. They believed the key to successful use of these resources lay with the framework within which it is taught. With a sound values framework, teachers believed that this area of learning has similar structures to other curriculum areas.

A key way of understanding new cultures has been through the engagement of the school’s parent groups and community members. Through engagement of these groups, the school has been provided with key insights into the cultures of its community and what must be done to ensure inclusivity of these cultures into the school. In the past parents have been encouraged to use the school as a meeting place with staff and within their cultural groups to try to break barriers through lack of English. Often one parent or staff member acts as an interpreter so that communication between school and parent is achieved. During school interviews parents are offered interpreters to support them through discussion with their child’s teachers. Through the school’s ‘Interfaith Dialogue’ work, key community members are being approached to advise in the development of professional learning packages for staff to ensure appropriateness.

5. TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In terms of values, interfaith and intercultural education, professional development at Killester College is not undertaken as a one-off activity. One way the school delivers in this area is through its Staff Handbook that provides teachers with a comprehensive knowledge of the school’s mission and values. This document also provides strategies for teachers to implement and reinforce these values which provide the structure and standard for their behaviour with students.

Extensive policy documents have been developed to support teachers in their actions. One of these documents is the Behaviour Management Policy that provides the framework and procedures for how student behaviour will be managed at the school. Teachers are actively encouraged to enforce this policy even for the smallest infringement to ensure that everyone’s rights and responsibilities are respected. The framework for the Behaviour Management Policy is cyclic with a focus on prevention, encouragement, awareness of the consequences and the need to repair and rebuild when behaviour displayed is not appropriate.

During 2006 a focus will be the development of an Interfaith Dialogue professional development activity for all staff. Staff members at Killester College come from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Most of their faith is grounded in the Christian tradition. In an attempt to educate and create a deeper understanding of the multi-faith culture in which
the school is situated, the school believes it is important to engage in conversations among its staff and in the wider community.

With this in mind the school aims to:

- Use staff meeting time for input on aspects of an ongoing dialogue (e.g. historical background; perspectives we bring).
- Spend time deepening and articulating its own faith’s experiences and traditions through structured reflection and sharing.
- Host forums with representatives from various faith and cultural traditions in order to further the conversation and to appreciate some of the issues people face.
- Encourage contact with local inter-faith networks.
- Arrange visits to various places of worship as part of the professional development of staff members.
- Encourage staff to be involved in further study so that their horizons and perspectives may be broadened.

The school anticipates that any interfaith and intercultural dialogue will generate its own paths and momentum and this will call for resilience and flexibility.

6. QUALITY PROGRAMMES

Within Religious Education, assessments are undertaken in line with standard testing regimes for that curriculum area. Formal measurement of other values education programmes is not undertaken by the school nor does it formally measure many of its interfaith and intercultural activities. How the school determines whether it is delivering quality in these areas is through the culture that it has achieved within the student populations. Anecdotally, feedback from parents and the community suggests that the school is doing well in this area.
Case Study 5: Building awareness of Australian civic values and interfaith and intercultural understanding — Islamic School of Brisbane, Karawatha, Queensland

1. SCHOOL CONTEXT

The Islamic School of Brisbane was established in January 1995 in a single classroom with approximately 30 students in the Rochedale mosque. In 1996 the school moved to its present site in demountables until 2003 when construction of permanent buildings was commenced. The school now operates from Prep to Year 12 on the one campus and the first Year 12 students graduated last year. The school was very proud of the fact that all Year 12 graduates were eligible to attend tertiary education. At the time of the case study there were 400 primary schools students and 113 secondary, totalling 513 enrolments, however numbers are increasing rapidly. The teachers appointed to the school come from a variety of cultural and geographic locations, more than half of the 38 staff coming from non Muslim backgrounds.

The school offers high quality education at both primary and secondary levels. The school is now situated on the outskirts of the city next to a large nature reserve, the Karawatha forest. Socio economic status is of a working class nature, with most parents self employed and working in a trade based vocation. Consequently school fees are very low compared to the majority of private schools.

The Islamic School of Brisbane is:

- a project of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Inc (AFIC)
- a member of the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland (AISQ)
- funded by both the Queensland and Australian governments
- registered to offer courses from Preparatory Year to Year 12
• accredited to enrol both local and overseas students

In accordance with the school’s philosophy, Brisbane Islamic College strives to:

• Instil and uphold Islamic principles
• Provide an education of the highest quality
• Create an environment that will encourage disciplined behaviour
• Encourage the pursuit of excellence and reward outstanding effort and achievement
• Provide the means for all students to develop to their full potential
• Allow students to advance according to the capabilities bestowed upon them by Allah
• Establish a strong foundation for the future endeavours of the students in the community and encourage students to become life-long learners
• Encourage students to contribute actively towards the betterment of the Islamic community and humanity.

The school has also established a Mission Statement that is stated in the following way:

“To provide a high quality education in an Islamic environment, thus enabling our students to succeed in a constantly changing world”.

The school’s main objective is to provide an education of the highest quality. The medium of instruction is English in all subjects except in Arabic Language studies and Qu’ranic studies. The school follows the Queensland Studies Authority curriculum in all key learning areas. The teaching programme is tailored to cater to the needs of students of different ages, abilities, aptitudes and levels of development. The guidelines for standards of learning as stated in the Queensland syllabuses are adhered to and the school has devised evaluation and assessment procedures to ensure that the students achieve required educational standards.
2. VALUES IN THE CURRICULUM

Both the staff and the parents consider that high quality education is an imperative that this should be undertaken within a learning context that is strongly characterised by Muslim values. Parents have high expectations for the children to succeed and this reflected in their ongoing interest in school initiative, both within the classroom and the local community. As part of its commitment to academic excellence, the school prefers to be selective. This means that all children undertake an entrance test and must pass that test before entry is granted. In this way, a key value held preciously by teachers, parents and students is that all students must do their best always and that only the best is acceptable. As indicated above the latest Year 12 graduates reflect the academic focus of the school and its strategic intent for academic success.

The school regularly enters outside school competitions for which it receives due recognition. The University of New South Wales Mathematics competition is one such example of the competitions that students regularly enter.

A further more structured example of the school’s focus on academic standards is derived from its ongoing experience with the Australasian Schools Competition. The extract from the school’s website is instructive in this regard:

_The Australasian Schools Competitions are designed to benefit the students in many ways. In addition to providing an excellent experience in taking external examinations they help develop logical thinking and reasoning skills in our students._

Observations in classrooms also demonstrated teachers’ ongoing commitment to an inquiry based approach to learning where children, where possible, work in small groups engaged in problem solving and discussing a range of issues whether they be social, personal or academic. It would appear from discussions with staff that this approach is employed wherever possible to encourage students to see a range of solutions to a single issue and to facilitate their becoming independent learners. Adhering to such values is very consistent with the overall philosophy of the school.

The focus on academic standards is however not at the cost of other aspects of the students’ development. For example, the teaching of morals and ethics is part of the fabric of the school. The development of student values is seen to be part of the responsibility of all teachers, not just those teaching religion. All teachers are expected to model high standards of values and good manners. In addition, the morning school assembly each day discusses values such as caring for others, showing responsibility and so on. The values that are taught are the same as Australian values however the religious element brings these to the forefront and gives impetus to personal accountability for actions.

Students regularly engage in practical, community based initiatives, e.g. collections for Bali victims and Anti-Poverty Week. Of greater significance however is the Multi-Faith Unity Camp that is being developed at the time of the case study visit. This event is planned for all students from Years 8-12. The event will also assist the development of leadership capacity among those students who aspire to become Youth Leaders now and in the future. This is a national event organised jointly by the Muslim Witness Association and the Islamic Council of Queensland. While on previous occasions this camp has been attended only by Muslims, it is now open to students from all religious backgrounds and is expected to have an extremely positive impact on those students attending in terms of their understanding of
other religions and their underpinning beliefs. This occasion has been supplemented by St Paul’s Anglican College that has previously organised multi-faith forums.

3. COMMUNITY and CURRICULUM RESOURCES

The school acknowledges the values articulated within the *National Framework for Values Education* and sees no conflict with the explicit values stated within the document. Nevertheless it is used more as one of a number of resources used by school staff, when engaged in curriculum planning efforts. Because of the school’s heavy emphasis on academic standards and its simultaneous attempt to include all other aspects of the students’ development, curriculum overcrowding poses as a major challenge. Despite this, the school also makes time to address the religious beliefs of the Indigenous people. Through its Indigenous studies focus, the school conducts a day around “Aboriginal Games”, where students learn a variety of Aboriginal customs and ritual through learning games distinctive to that culture.

In this way the school makes use of real life experiences wherever possible as the tools for building student understanding. The engagement with the community is therefore a paramount aspect of each student’s development. In those situations where real life experiences cannot be employed, teachers refer to secondary sources such as books and electronic media.

4. INTERSCHOOL COOPERATION

Interschool cooperation is seen as just one tool employed by the school for engendering interfaith and intercultural understanding by students. The approach taken by the school is to visit several schools each year of different faiths and backgrounds but rarely does the school return to the same school year after year, preferring to take the students on new and different experiences.

A key reason for choosing different schools from year to year is the ongoing efforts of the school to change people’s (sometimes) sceptical perceptions of Islam and the Muslim way of life. For this reason it is seen as beneficial for the College to visit as many other different schools as possible. The availability of time and finances does however become an inhibiting factor for students and their parents because of the high costs of student transportation. Despite these limitations, the school is currently in the process of developing sister school relationships between themselves and other faith based and government schools.

5. TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Formal teacher professional development is not a common occurrence in the school because of the demands already being placed on teachers. In contrast the teachers generally have strong professional networks that are highly collaborative and facilitate sharing of a range of professional practices.

6. QUALITY PROGRAMMES

This school is very explicit about its overall purpose and how it plans to achieve its outcomes in a superior way. The school ensures that all stakeholders are very clear about
its purpose, communicated through a range of media and parents are interviewed at the time of enrolment to ensure that they understand the focus of the school. The school uses a variety of external school based competitions as a means of benchmarking student performance from both a state-wide and national perspective. Where the data is seen to be inferior to comparable schools, the Principal and teachers are committed to exploring the reasons for the results and to ensure that they are improved.

7. FUTURE PLANS

This school has been operating for a little more than ten years. During that period it has built a sound reputation for the quality of teaching and resultant learning provided by students. The Principal clearly identifies the school as being in the early stages of a journey, that he has been a part of from the beginning. The parents would appear to be satisfied with the achievements of their children and see no reason to change the focus of the school in the immediate future. As enrolments expand in the school, curriculum options will equally expand. At that time the school will continue to monitor its standards to ensure that the high levels already attained will be sustained in the face of rapid expansion and ongoing change within the school and its local community.
Case Study 6: Promoting interfaith and intercultural understanding through government, catholic and independent school perspectives: Arncliffe Public School and Arncliffe West Infants School, Sydney NSW.

Arncliffe Public School and Arncliffe West Infants School are the focus of this case study because of the schools’ collegial approach to their work with other schools in their area in terms of promoting an understanding of other cultures. Both schools have participated in a range of activities in which children have worked together to appreciate the culture of others as well as their own. These activities have involved students from eight Sydney metropolitan schools representing the three education systems (government, catholic and independent). Participating schools include Arncliffe Public School, Arncliffe West Infants School, Athelstane Public School, St Francis Xavier’s School, Rockdale Public School, Bexley Public School, Our Lady of Fatima Kingsgrove, Al Zahra College, Al Rissalah College. Activities have been guided by a ‘Harmony Committee’ which comprise the Principals of the eight participating schools. The background to the Harmony Committee and activities undertaken are further discussed in Section 4 of this case study ‘Interschool cooperation’

1. SCHOOL CONTEXT

Arncliffe West Infants School is a small Sydney metropolitan school with enrolments of approximately 70 students. Approximately 85 per cent of students are from language backgrounds other than English and 58 per cent of students are from Arabic speaking backgrounds with majority being Muslim. There is an emphasis at the school on providing challenging, relevant educational programmes that equip students with the skills, knowledge and positive values that ensure a sound foundation for life long learning. At all times a strong sense of community is fostered as staff and parents work in partnership to meet the academic, social, physical and emotional needs of our young learners, in a safe and happy environment.

Arncliffe Public School is a medium sized Sydney metropolitan school with enrolments of approximately 400 students. More than 70 per cent of students are from language backgrounds other than English and more than 30 per cent of students are from Arabic speaking backgrounds with a large percentage of Muslim students. The school has been established for over 140 years and has a large number of older historic buildings.
2. VALUES IN THE CURRICULUM

The schools believe that the interfaith and intercultural activities of the Harmony Committee are a good medium to reinforce the core values of the schools. Each school has developed their own set of core values that are meaningful and realistic to their students’ everyday context and as a result have not adopted the values as indicated in Values for Australian Schooling and identified in the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools. In this way, they have ensured that their core values have been written in a way that all students at the schools are able to understand them (this being particularly important at Arncliffe West Infants School where students range between 5 and 8 years of age).

The core values for Arncliffe Public Schools are as follows:

- We believe that participation and trying our best is success
- Our school motto is loyalty and truth
- We are responsible and active learners
- We respect everyone’s right to be safe and happy
- We care about our community and environment
- We work together as a team
- Everyone has a say
- We are a proud school community.

Core values for Arncliffe West Infants School have been kept to a small number to ensure that the Infants students can remember them and more importantly respond to them. Similarly the values have been kept simple and relevant to the students. The four core values at the school are as follows:

1. I am kind to others
2. I keep my hands and feet to myself
3. I show respect to teachers and others
4. I stay safe in the playground.

Core values are not explicitly taught at either school but rather integrated into all curriculum activities, the daily life of the students and in management of behaviour. To ensure that the above two sets of values are the basis of all programmes and activities at the schools, a lot of effort is placed on providing opportunities for teachers to raise students awareness about school values, for students to then act upon the values, and for
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

discipline structures to be set in place when core values of schools are challenged. The schools believe the best way to provide values education is through positive role modelling by teachers and students and by the way “things are done at the schools”.

An explicit way Arncliffe Infants ensures that their core values permeate all activities at the schools is through its Behaviour Record Card system. The four school values are used as the basis for assessing students’ action when a value is not followed. Students are initially asked to identify the value that has not been followed to reinforce to the students that it is this value system in which that school operates. The students are then asked to identify their behaviour which conflicted with the value and finally they are asked how they intend to fix the situation so that they do not challenge school values again. This approach is very similar to that undertaken in restorative justice programmes and has proved very successful for most students at the school. Those students who find it difficult to work through their actions are then provided more attention by the school to assist them.

A sample of the Arncliffe Infants Behaviour Record Card is provided below:

---

**Behaviour Record**

**Name:**

______________________________

**What rule did I break?**

- I am kind to others
- I keep my hands and feet to myself
- I show respect to teachers and others
- I stay safe in the playground

**What did I do?**

___________________________________________________

**How can I fix it?**

___________________________________________________

Teacher:_______________________ Date:_________
Arncliffe Public School reinforces its core values through the School Plan. This Plan uses the core values as the starting point for all strategic planning work. Future priorities, be it literacy, numeracy or multicultural activities have the core values as the base of all planning undertaken in regard to these areas. Another way the school reinforces the core values is in sporting events. The school has endeavoured to refocus students’ participation towards “having a go” rather than winning. The Principal noted that it is now commonplace to hear the same level of loud applause at assemblies when their sports team loses as when they win. A future priority for the school is to print their values on posters to be placed in every classroom to raise students’ awareness of what can be expected from the school, teachers, fellow students and themselves.

3. COMMUNITY and CURRICULUM RESOURCES

As values education is taught across all curriculum areas and is not an explicit area of study at the schools, no specific resources are currently being used. In terms of interfaith and intercultural understanding, resources would be used that link to the particular faith or culture that is the focus of the discussion. Most of this work is undertaken when students work through a Celebration Unit in the Human Society and its Environment curriculum area. This unit of study looks to examine the differing nature of celebration of different faiths and cultures.

The school suggested that in general there was no difficulty in obtaining resources to support the teaching of interfaith and intercultural understanding. Community representatives from various cultures are often brought into the school to support particular cultural understanding activities.

It was suggested by the schools that the main challenge was for teachers to find the time to ensure that lessons were meaningful to the student rather than superficial. Teachers require preparation time to develop lessons that challenge students to reflect the differences between their culture and the culture that they are studying. The schools believed that it is only through this type of lesson structure that students can acquire greater depth to their understanding of other cultures.

4. INTERSCHOOL COOPERATION

As mentioned in a previous section of this case study, both Arncliffe Public School and Arncliffe West Infants School have been involved in an interschool activity to promote interfaith and intercultural understanding to their students. This work has been running since 2003 when the Chairman of Al Zahra College, Mr Ahmad Mokachar, invited all local principals to visit his school in an attempt to develop positive relationships between the schools in the area. Some of the principals said “no”, some said “I will think about it” and a few immediately replied “yes”. These principals had already recognised the need to develop cultural and religious cohesion within their community and the need to work towards common values within the diverse communities of the State, Catholic and Independent sectors.

In June 2003, the first group of principals met from these schools and so the Interschools Harmony Committee was born. The main aim of the committee was to work towards improving cultural and religious understanding within a range of different faiths.

The Interschools Harmony Committee is made up of four State Primary schools - Athelstane, Arncliffe, Arncliffe West Infants and Bexley Public Schools; two Catholic schools - Our Lady of Fatima, Kingsgrove and St Francis Xavier Arncliffe, and two Islamic schools - Al Risallah College Punchbowl and Al Zahra College Arncliffe.
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

Principals meet once a term to formulate ideas, discuss issues, re-connect and support each other. Each meeting was hosted by a different school, developing relationships and building on the values of respect and tolerance.

Early Stage 1 and Stage 1 groups were formed to support curriculum development and share resources. These meetings resulted in the establishment of networks between schools where teachers have had the opportunity to engage in professional dialogue around Key Learning Areas. Each meeting has a mutually decided purpose linked to specific outcomes, with time made available during school hours for teachers to interact professionally.

While the principals meet, two student leaders from each school participate in activities relating to shared values and the establishment of positive relationships. The leaders play games, debate, participate in art, creative writing and informal and formal conversations leading to friendship, trust and acceptance. It is through these initiatives that the schools’ common values and beliefs are promoted and recognised.

Some major projects of the Harmony Committee over the past 2 years follow:

- Six to eight students from each school were selected to participate in writing and performing a play promoting harmony, tolerance and co-operation. The play was set in a mythical land at a mythical time. The characters were the inhabitants of three villages, represented by different coloured clothing - red, yellow and blue. After many years of war between the villages, the inhabitants finally decided to live together in peace. To mark the agreement, the adults decided to build a great tower in the land between all three villages. However, they could not agree on the shape and started to argue and insult each other and so the project was discarded.

  The children, however, decided to work together and fix the problem, resulting in a Friendship Tower being built that incorporated all three colours and a combination of the shapes each village wanted. The play was purpose written with the theme of harmony and co-operation and was a great success.

  The play was performed in front of a large audience of parents and community members from all 8 schools at the St George Bank Auditorium, Kogarah.

  This performance was followed up by repeat performances at each participating school in order to access the whole school community. This was a great opportunity for the schools to promote their values throughout each school and into the wider community.
• In 2005, it was decided by the Committee to select two students from each school who showed talent in the areas of writing and art to participate in a book project with renowned children’s author Nadia Wheatley and illustrator Ken Searle. This entailed a combined student effort to create a book focusing on the local Wolli Creek bushland. The project was entitled “Going Bush”. The students’ writing and artwork are being collated into a book to be published in 2007 by Allen and Unwin.

The project entailed an initial excursion to Wolli Creek Reserve followed by a school-based workshops hosted by Al Zahra College. For many of these students and their parents it was the first time that they had contact with the Islamic faith. However, the trust that had been already established over the years with each school community resulted in parents from the Catholic and State schools happily entrusting their children to the Al Zahra College each week knowing that they would be happy and safe and well cared for.

• In addition to the work undertaken by the students for the book project, parents also established friendships while waiting for their children each week at Al Zahra College. Two parents in particular, one from Bexley Public School and one from Our Lady of Fatima Kingsgrove, decided to commemorate the project by painting a portrait of the author and illustrator with some of the students involved. They also wrote a poem about their journey with their children as a way of expressing their feelings and emotions at the outcome of this project.

• Another initiative to resource the book project was a dinner function on the occasion of International Peace Day hosted by Al Zahra College and generously supported by Al Risallah College to raise much needed funds for the book project. A painting was donated to be auctioned at the dinner and together with price of dinner raised $25,000 which has been used to cover the expenses of the project and to fund future initiatives.

• In 2006, Stage 2 and 3 teachers will continue to build on the networks already established with teachers from the eight participating schools in 2005. Teachers in the process of setting dates for stage-based meetings.

• Additionally in 2006, school leaders meetings will continue. This activity is in acknowledgment that each year school leaders change and the process of developing mutual respect and understanding for each other continue. The one thing that stands out to all sectors involved in this initiative is that their “students have more in common, more similarities than they have differences”. As the Harmony Committee has developed and evolved, this statement has become more evident in each layer of exchange from principals, to teachers, to students, to parents and ultimately to the wider community.

• The Harmony Committee saw the need to widen the scope and number of students that could interact and exchange knowledge and experiences. It was therefore decided to use Harmony Day in 2006 as a catalyst for bringing the schools together on a larger scale. Thirty students from each school walked or were bussed to Arncliffe Park to have fun, make friends and demonstrate what “harmony” really looks like. The students, teachers and parents were delighted to spend several hours together in collegiality and friendship.
Each school nominated a colour and the children wore eight ribbons each. During the course of the day, they had to connect and talk to students from the other schools and exchange ribbons until they were wearing 8 different coloured ribbons. Watching the children introduce themselves, interact while exchanging ribbons and then climbing onto a ride together was the highlight of the day for principals, teachers and parents.
In September 2006 the schools will be holding an Interschools Sports Carnival at Hurstville Oval. This will provide a larger number of students, teachers and parents with the opportunity to interact and build positive relationships.

In terms of the future for the Harmony Committee and its work they have discussed the possibility of the following prospective activities to involve students, teachers and principals in different, yet meaningful ways. Some of these plans include:

- A production by talented drama students from the eight schools led by a professional drama teacher;
- Stage 2 teachers from each school working together to develop and trial a unit of work on “harmony” with a multicultural perspective; and
- Principals to continue to liaise and work together on a term basis throughout the year, including dinner meetings, celebrations of achievement and sharing of resources.

5. TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

No formal professional development has been undertaken by teachers from either school in relation to teaching Values for Australian Schooling or in regard to building interfaith and intercultural understanding. The schools suggested that this is where much work is required as many teachers are unable to provide a positive approach to education in this area. For example, it was felt that many teachers could not make the link for children in terms of providing a positive response to children about differing religions. It is important from the very early stages in learning that children are shown the way to honour the difference rather treat it as a deficit.

6. QUALITY PROGRAMMES

The schools reemphasised that if all education is set in the tone of the school’s core values then quality would be ensured. Quality programmes should have strong leadership to ensure that the quality filters down into the school community. It is only through this strong leadership that the boundaries are set and reinforced as to what is expectable behaviour. As discussed previously in this case study both schools have endeavoured to achieve the setting of these boundaries through the profiling of their core values in all facets of life at their schools.

To date measurement of achievement against the core values has been anecdotal for the schools with the exception of the Student Behaviour Record at Arncliffe West Infants School. The schools strongly support this non-prescriptive approach to assessing values education as their preferred approach to ensure that change is not linked to a subject which has a beginning and end to the learning but rather success that links to appreciation and celebration of difference.

8. FUTURE PLANS

Future plans for the schools in terms of interfaith and intercultural understanding will be through the work of the Interschool Harmony Committee including attempts to increase the activities to involve more students form the eight participating schools.
Interschool Cooperation

“.... Building mutual understanding through cultural exchange is respect in action - taking the time to learn about other people’s culture so that instead of rejecting and stigmatising them, you can understand and appreciate them.” (Iemma, 2006)

Among the case study schools visited as part of this project, the development of intercultural understanding among students was considered to be a high priority for the majority of schools. Among those institutions however, Islamic schools were particularly committed to the notion of assisting their students to build understanding of diverse cultures and the religious beliefs that underpin them. A key tool for initiating such action was the organization of school visits as an initial step in interschool cooperation. Indeed such actions are also consistent with the Muslim Schools Charter.

While the above Charter provides the mandate for initiatives such as interschool cooperation, it is apparent from the data gathering undertaken, that interschool cooperation is equally seen by students, teachers and parents as having enormous benefits in achieving the espoused vision statements of the Muslim schools. A number of explicit benefits are seen to be achieved through interaction with local schools of different faiths:

- Reinforces understandings of shared Australian values for students
- Increases student understanding of intercultural issues
- Clarifies student misunderstandings about cultural differences
- Builds student empathy
- Assists student understandings of cultural differences based on different faiths and religious beliefs
- Enables teacher exchange of ideas
- Provides an opportunity for teacher networking and sharing of teaching ideas and resources.

While the benefits for students are clear, the professional opportunities provided to teachers through this experience should also be acknowledged.

The following Exhibit illustrates the range of activities that schools have cooperatively undertaken.
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

NSW Islamic Schools are involved in active partnerships with other schools and the community in the areas of academia, religion, sport and the arts. These partnerships provide richer environments for all students to learn and grow:

- At Noor Al Houda Islamic College in Strathfield, students recently participated in the special two day “Crossroads of Conflict” forum with students from Moriah College and Giroy College.

- Students at Noor Al Houda Islamic College also learn about other religions in their final years and visit temples, synagogues and cathedrals with students from other schools and religions. The College even shares its site with a Hindu Temple.

- Over the past two years, Rissalah College in Lakemba has been a strong contributor to a joint venture with local Catholic and Government schools to regularly exchange ideas and resources between teachers from Early Stage One to Stage Three. The programme also involves specific project where students work together. At the movement several students are writing a book.

- Another example is at Al Noori Muslim Primary School where the school participates in annual meetings with St John Vianney’s Catholic School and Holy Saviour to discuss educational challenges such as numeracy skills, bullying and interfaith relations.

- A number of schools, including Malek Fahd Islamic School, participate in the Harmony Project with Christian and Jewish groups as well as other Muslim groups. A Certificate of Appreciation has been awarded to the School for promoting community harmony and participating in interfaith activities such as the Interfaith Forum 2005. Canterbury Council and Bankstown Council also undertake Harmony programmes that actively involve Islamic Schools.

- Like most Islamic Schools, the Green Valley Islamic College participates in the Goodness and Kindness Programme where representatives from many faiths speak to the children about other religions and cultures.

- In 2003, Al Zahra College in Arncliffe took the initiative to invite local Catholic and Government schools to participate in a broader partnership of dialogue on education issues. The partnership, which continues today, has involved meetings of teachers to exchange ideas, the joint writing and production of a play called Friendship Tower, and the publication of an interschool book by primary students.

- Students at Al Zahra College have also benefited from multiple interschool programmes. Initially, students form St Brendan’s School at Budgewoi visited as part of their study on world religions. A strong rapport was quickly established among students and together they continue to celebrate key aspects of each other’s religions. Recently, an exchange programme has been established with the International Grammar School involving the students becoming a “Muslim for a day”.

- At Qibla College, community members such as fire fighters, police and ambulance workers spend a fund day each year with students to celebrate Eid-dul-Fitr Festival (the celebration after the month of Ramadan).

- Students from the Australian Islamic College of Sydney in Mount Druitt regularly visit other schools to participate in interschool sport competitions among government and non-government schools students.

- An impressive contribution by an Islamic school is the assistance provided by Arkana College to Baan Baa Public School near Narrabri. Arkana assisted with fundraising to
help the rural school with its critical water supply in 2002, and in December 2004 sent every teacher and child at the school a Christmas hamper containing food and gifts. Arkana continues to help Baan Baa local community with financial support and food vouchers for the local butcher and grocery store.

### Community Contributions

Students from NSW Islamic Schools contribute to Australia through a range of community-based charities and fun days. Their contributions have included participating in:

- Clean Up Australia Day
- Charity Days, Shepherd Centre
- Book Week
- Goodness and Kindness Programme
- National Tree Day
- ANZAC day celebrations
- Canteen Day
- Mehboba’s Promise
- Bandaged Bear, Westmead Hospital
- Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey, 2004
- Jeans for Genes Day
- Tsunami victims appeals
- Mother’s Day
- Sponsoring Careflight Australia
- Jump Rope for Heart, Heart Foundation
- Fundraising for Alana Foundation
- Daffodil Day

Many Islamic schools work with businesses and government agencies to improve the quality of life in their local communities. Malek Fahd Islamic School is an active participant in Stream Watch and contributes to the protection of the health of local waterways by testing water quality in streams and rivers. The School works closely with Bankstown City Council to monitor the Cooks River.

- Students from Arkana College in Kingsgrove entertain local senior citizens in aged care homes every Senior Citizens Week.
- Students from Arkana College sang the first songs to welcome international athletes to the Olympic Village for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.
- Students at Al Sadiq College in Yagoona invite members of the RSL to address the school on ANZAC Day, following the College’s participation in the ANZAC Schools service at Hyde Park.

(Extract from ‘Islamic School in NSW’, produced by the Association of Independent Schools of NSW, 2005)
Factors hindering greater interschool cooperation

While many schools agree on the value of increasing interschool cooperation, they also point to a range of factors that limit their ability to do so. All schools point to the demands of an already crowded curriculum and the need to prioritise some activities over others. The level at which schools can engage in interschool visits is thus most often constrained by practical barriers rather than a lack of willingness or goodwill. The following factors are most often described as hindering further interschool cooperation:

- the lack of administrative support to facilitate organization of visits
- the lack of teacher preparation time necessary to maximise student visits
- the absence of a relevant contact person in other schools, unlike Australian International Academy (AIA) where a Values Coordinator has been established
- differing diets representing different religions can make student catering quite challenging
- lack of understanding about dress requirement required to undertake visits to mosques and synagogues.
- the challenges of ongoing communication among schools through electronic media
- transport can sometimes prove to be a challenge especially where funding is involved.
Quality Assurance and Professional Learning

Quality Assurance

Discussions with key stakeholders both inside and outside school settings, as well as observations in case study schools, would demonstrate that the issue of quality assurance is not their immediate priority. Some teachers would suggest that the notion of quality assurance is perceived like evaluation in many schools- an afterthought when implementation is complete and reflection on achievements begins. The practical reality in the schools visited would generally indicate that there has been very little discussion at the whole school level about issues relating to the assurance of quality about Australian values being taught. In some cases schools have attempted a variety of quality assurance strategies from an ad hoc and unsystematic approach.

In contrast however, in those schools where there would appear to be some commitment to the notion of quality, this discussion is built into the initial planning phases of values development. More specifically, schools appear to be taking a whole school perspective and focussing on the notion of “beginning with the end in mind”. The expected outcome being focussed upon in schools is the development of “intercultural understanding” but it should be noted that this is more explicit in some schools than others.

In this way teachers appear to be working in teams, in consultation with parents, in determining the exit profile of students. The outcome of such discussions produces a set of values and characteristics that would underpin student behaviour and actions. Once agreement has been established on these issues, teaching teams then set about planning the most appropriate curriculum experiences to facilitate these outcomes. It should be noted that schools engaged in this process appear to undertake such discussions within the broader consideration of the National Framework for Values Education. Irrespective of this focus, the starting point appears to emanate from a link to the school’s existing curriculum.

Indeed one Islamic school in Victoria has also introduced the recently innovated “Thinking Curriculum” as an additional tool to enable students to become more responsible decision makers about their behaviour and actions. The “Thinking Curriculum” treats both content and processes differently. Content includes concepts, principles, generalizations, problems, facts and definitions. Process includes learning strategies and skills, creative and critical thinking, thinking about thinking (meta-cognition) and social skills. While traditional curricula tend to teach content and process separately, a Thinking Curriculum wedds process
and content, in real-world situations. Students are taught content through processes encountered in the real world. Some thinking and learning processes in the Thinking Curriculum apply across all content areas and all areas of life and thus are generic: for example, decision making, problem solving, evaluating, and comparing. Such a focus enables young people to constantly assess and refine their values in real world contexts as they engage in regular school learning.

Such an approach is consistent with the essential ethos of the International Baccalaureate, a qualification that was offered at one of the case study schools from Prep to Year 12. The International Baccalaureate offers the Primary Years programme (IBPYP) the Middle Years programme (IBMYP) and the IB Diploma in the final two senior years of schooling. The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. For this reason, the overall culture of the school was highly compatible with the overall intention of intercultural understanding. Through its curriculum, the schools endeavours to develop young people who are inquirers, thinkers, communicators, risk takers, knowledgeable, principled, caring, open-minded, well balanced and reflective. Such an approach is very clearly in alignment with the discussion around developing the exit profile of students and “beginning with the end in mind”.

While some schools consider that team based planning and implementation are essentially the end of the exercise, those committed to quality assurance in values education then build an assessment and reporting system around the key characteristics of the students’ exit profile. This exercise is undertaken by all teachers who will be using the assessment process as well as ensuring the ongoing representation of parents in the exercise. More commonly however many schools are increasingly building on their planning by ensuring that common messages are given to all grade levels, e.g. through school assemblies, prayers, themes and special events such as harmony day and so on. In faith based schools, the common themes are strongly underpinned by the basic values derived from the religious beliefs of the school.

Increasingly schools visited during data gathering would highlight the importance of modelling, e.g. by older students to the junior students and by staff to students. A common theme among principals was that teacher recruitment placed high priority on the teachers’ character. This was seen as one way that would ensure teachers would “walk the talk”, thereby increasing alignment between talking about values relating to intercultural understanding and espousing these through action. Such teacher behaviour is seen as one aspect that can reinforce the importance of teaching values from a quality perspective. The actual teaching methodology for values development being employed in the majority of Muslim schools visited was seen to be an important feature of systematically assuring quality. In the majority of classrooms, teachers espoused a methodology that has the following characteristics;

- Student centred classrooms focussing on the application of student initiative
- Strong use of inquiry, inductive methods led by students wherever possible
- Many opportunities for youth leadership both within the classroom and the broader school context
- Opportunities to empower students to take greater responsibility and accountability for learning outcomes, particularly in values development
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

- Student responsibility for the building of student portfolios as examples of ongoing evidence of outcomes being achieved
- Frequent use of technology in the development of student projects relating to values development, e.g. Skype, Google Earth
- Frequent opportunities provided by teachers for students to engage in self reflection on learning achievements
- Provision for students to engage in “values in action” activities, which grow in scale as students move from junior to senior school. These often include community service activities, e.g. from participation in Clean Up Australia days to contracted 70 hours per year working in community facilities such as Nursing Homes.

Each of these strategies is deliberately designed to assist students to become independent learners, who take responsibility for learning outcomes and their own behaviour generally.

One of the major and enduring challenges of teaching values and ensuring quality in both Primary and Secondary schools is the translation of rhetoric into the reality of students’ behaviour. Many students are acutely aware of the response that teachers expect to hear when having discussions reflecting values development and clarification. However the dialogue and related student responses do not guarantee transferability of these into student actions. Discussions with case study schools reflect the need to build a bridge between the rhetoric of student discussion and reality of student behaviour.

One suggested solution that appears to be gathering momentum is the notion of student conferencing around key achievements. In a small number of schools identified for case study analysis, the challenge of transferring student rhetoric to student action has been clearly diagnosed. Within these schools, as an initial step, it is now school policy that all students set regular objectives in relation to values development. Each student from Prep to Year 5 is expected to establish and maintain a student portfolio of samples of students’ work that reflect ongoing development. This portfolio in the junior classes is most frequently in the form of hard copy examples. However as students progress to more senior levels within the primary school, there is evidence that transitions are being made to more digital examples which are facilitating storage of students’ work. These portfolios then become the basis of a student conference that occurs at least twice per year among teacher, parent and student. It has been reported that such documentation provides an excellent catalyst for student reflection and discussion during these conference periods.

At more senior levels of schooling some students have had the opportunity to establish their own criteria by which their development is measured in terms of the development of values and the early stages of intercultural understanding. In these situations the students are empowered to establish the parameters by which they succeed in relation to community service programmes. In this situation, students negotiate, plan and deliver community service in an identified setting for a total of 70 hours. This service is documented and is part of the student’s broader curriculum responsibility. Early signs according to some teachers are that students would appear to demonstrating more responsible behaviour in the school setting as a result of their participation in this initiative. Importantly, this coherent approach to the field of Values Education is another means by which quality can be monitored through the eyes of students as well as teachers.

Not all schools refer to their Values Education programme in a similar way. For instance one Islam school visited as a part of the case study methodology chooses to discuss its initiative in terms of a “Moral Education” programme. This school is acutely aware of the need to
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

make the initiative a sustainable and high quality programme and has begun the journey to ensure that this is achieved. Their story is summarised below:

This programme, which was started in 1999, aims at educating the school community: teachers, parents and especially the students about the main principles of morality as reflected in the Islamic faith. These principles, however, are universal in their approach because of the universality of the religion itself. These principles are:

- The love of and the Submission to the absolute truth
- Mercy
- Love for Others
- Will Power
- Self Motivation
- Patience
- Social or Group Motivation
- Magnanimity
- The Love of Giving.

Each of these principles covers a number of values. In addition to these principles the Moral Education Programme covers a number of themes that strongly support its objective of teaching about values in real life. These themes are:

- The Character of the person who prays
- The Character of the person who fasts
- The Character of the person who performs pilgrimage
- School Rules (Hard work, Manners, Obedience, Asking Permission, Respect and Care)
- The Noble Principles that should be deeply rooted in the self
- Unacceptable social behaviour

This school’s Moral Education Programme is a whole school programme and is taught over a period of around three years or more, thus the school children will be exposed to it twice during their primary education period. Each principle or theme is studied for one term. Weekly messages in the form of wise sayings that represent one aspect of the principle or theme are written on a board in the assembly area and are explained to the student at the beginning of the week. The whole school repeats the message daily for the whole week. Parents are informed about the theme and its details and about the related weekly messages in the school Newsletter. On Fridays, the sermon is used to concentrate on the chosen message and to explain its details through concrete examples or didactic stories. The emphasis, again, is on how to transform values to real behaviour.

In 2005 the school completed a project funded by AGQTP entitled “Love for others in Human Society and its Environment”. Two units of work in HSIE were produced to exemplify teaching the value of love for others in this key learning area.

To enrich the programme, the school added the nine Values for Australian Schooling to the programme. In this way the school shares with other schools in the country the education of these universal values. In term one this year (2006), the school taught the school community about the care for the self: the body, the mind and the soul; and care and
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

compassion for others: the Creator, parents, the teachers, our friends, our neighbours and all human beings. Term two will be about “doing your best”.

Through this programme, the students will be exposed to a large number of moral issues and values. The school has started integrating the above values in the different programmes of the key learning areas taught at the school, in order to relate them to real life and make them an integral part of the educational process. In this way the opportunity to build an ongoing framework that may focus on issues of quality may be enhanced. In the case of this school, an initial early step was the mapping of core values against the various key learning areas within the school’s curriculum.

While credible initiatives have been identified in case study schools during the data gathering period, a common trend may be identified in relation to the Islamic schools within the project. In each case, key stakeholders from the schools have taken the initiative to lead interschool visits with schools of a different faith. A key aspect of these visits is to assist students to develop their understanding of other faiths and hence build intercultural understanding. However some teachers allude to the fact that it is also a professional learning experience for teachers in that it enables them to benchmark existing school initiatives with the programmes being undertaken by schools being visited. Such an experience is not only beneficial for student learning but also enables professional staff to reflect on existing values initiatives and identify other programmes that can be undertaken at the local level. Such opportunities only occur at present when teachers from other schools engage in dialogue about common outcomes. The interschool visits provide such an opportunity.

In summary therefore, case study schools attempting to focus on quality assurance have taken the systematic path of working through existing curriculum documentation and building from curriculum based initiatives already happening in those schools. Moreover in these schools there would appear to be a culture of evaluation for ongoing improvement already operating in the school setting. Such a culture is a key aspect if there is to be enduring commitment to the notion of ongoing quality assurance, in contrast to its being just a passing fad. In addition, some principals have emphasised the importance of teacher modelling as a strategy for ensuring that the important messages are being transmitted to students in a consistent manner. In these situations there are regular awards for students demonstrating values and the teachers are constantly reinforcing key messages relating to values development not only through their dialogue but also their actions. It would appear therefore that if quality assurance is going to be an integral part of the school’s operation, a number of key factors need to be working in unison throughout the whole school:

- A culture of evaluation and ongoing improvement
- A whole school approach to planning and implementation
- Clear understandings about student exit profiles
- Partnership with parents to support the values being articulated
- Strategies for bridging the gap between student rhetoric and student actions

It is only through such planned and systematic strategies that we can expect to move towards the notion of intercultural understandings as a direct outcome of the quality assurance strategies that are described in this Chapter.

There have been a number of recent research projects in Australia that provide examples of how such an integrated approach can be applied more widely. These include the *Dare to*
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

Lead project conducted by the Australian Principals’ Professional Development Council (APAPDC) and the associated “What Works” series, which may provide a useful model for further work in this area.

Professional Learning

Data gathered during this project clearly indicate that there is no priority at system or sector level to provide teachers with the opportunity to learn about the key principles of the Islamic religion or to promote understanding of Islamic values within the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools. In contrast however, there is a growing awareness of the need for teachers to build a greater understanding of the meaning and parameters of intercultural understanding.

Indeed, many of the teachers interviewed would suggest that the issue is broader than understanding the principles of the Islamic religion. Instead, a growing need has been identified for teachers to understand the basic principles of the most commonly occurring religions within contemporary Australian society. These might include Christianity (including both Anglican and Roman Catholic perspectives), Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism. Evidence of this trend is the rapidly growing sales of the recently published “Big Beliefs” book being used by teachers to update their knowledge of these important religious concepts. Such sales however underpin the perceived lack of professional support being offered currently to teachers at the systemic level.

One document published by the Asia Education Foundation entitled “The Really Big Beliefs Project: A Train the Trainer Professional Learning Programme” provides a structured and engaging approach to providing teachers with professional development experiences specifically focussed on the Big Beliefs book.

More particularly, the professional learning programme aims to:

- Increase knowledge and understanding of the beliefs featured in The Really Big Beliefs Project curriculum resource;
- Skill teachers to comfortably and effectively explore these beliefs in the classroom using the text;
- Explore contemporary practice in Australia;
- Make links with local curriculum priorities and national initiatives including civics and citizenship and values education; and
- Encourage participants to deliver subsequent professional learning programmes the “Big Beliefs” text.

The advantage of this carefully structured package is that it not only provides background knowledge to teachers of the major religions of the world but it also provides a range of practical teaching/learning experiences that ensure student engagement and teaching with sensitivity.

A range of flexible options has been suggested by the publishers for the delivery of this professional learning programme. These include:

- One-day programme;
- Half-day programmes;
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

- Two-hour workshops;
- Conference presentation; and
- Staff meeting session.

Each option has a particular focus. Presenters are encouraged to select the option that best meets the needs of the audience and the time available. The one-day and half-day programmes incorporate a visit of a guest speaker. It is important that in each session presenters highlight the web-based materials and also make space for reference to local curriculum priorities and national initiatives.

Each of the various programmes contains notes for the deliverer and a host of practical (and timed) activities to facilitate participant learning.

The professional learning project has been trialled on a small national scale with considerable success. However in order to maximise its impact and to assist a broader number of teachers, this professional learning package needs significantly greater exposure and familiarisation by a broader cross section of teachers in all states/territories and across all systems and sectors.

The personnel to be engaged in such a pilot would be key change agents/teachers from each educational district who could then be prepared to operate as a “Lighthouse School” in relation to a small number (6-8) of local schools. It is anticipated that within each cluster, schools from government and non-government sectors would be represented and would meet on a regular basis, sharing ideas and strategies for building notions of intercultural understanding.

The “Lighthouse School” model has seen significant success as professional learning model for teachers across a range of key learning areas and related curriculum initiatives. The tools of observation, discussion and input provided through the “Big Beliefs” professional learning package would give teachers the tools necessary to be able to communicate with peers and to engage in this initiative with students at an appropriate level.

A similar initiative, using the Lighthouse model has recently been employed in Victoria under the generic title of the “Schools as Core Social Centres” initiative.

The Schools as Core Social Centres project is a Catholic Education Office, Melbourne (CEOM) project funded by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth). The project is designed to assist leaders to address school wellbeing in a sustained way, with an emphasis on prevention and community partnerships fostering the development of social capital. It is understood that there are clear links between the promotion of wellbeing and learning and teaching.

In 2002 the Catholic Education Office, Melbourne (CEOM) in partnership with the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), established the ‘Schools as Core Social Centres’ project. In the initial stages the CEOM appointed a Project Officer to work across three inner city Catholic primary schools in Melbourne. In June 2003 VicHealth refunded the project for a further two years and the project will now continue through 2004 - 2005.

The project has been extended to incorporate a range of schools and the development of a Research Circle. The project is developing a model to inform the development of collaborative school community partnerships to facilitate the promotion of wellbeing and the development of social capital. Importantly the project acknowledges the links between the promotion of wellbeing, inclusivity and learning outcomes and effectively explores the interface between health and education practice.
The CEOM has a key role in supporting schools in the implementation of policy and programme initiatives in the area of whole school approaches to Student Wellbeing. The building of inclusive Catholic school communities to improve educational outcomes for all young people is facilitated through this process. The ‘Schools as Core Social Centres’ project initiative and the development of the partnership with VicHealth is part of this overall strategy.

The link with this project is that such issues around intercultural understanding are perceived to be a key element of student well being, a major focus of the CEOM project. More importantly, the CEOM has expressed the wish to be more directly involved on a school cluster basis with any future initiatives that may evolve from the DEST project under discussion. The CEOM has also made available the existing clusters of schools as the starting point for a more eclectic cluster of schools should there be more extensive piloting of the “Big Beliefs” professional learning package.

The notion of the development of social capital is also a key driver for personal well being in the CEOM project. Positive and strong connections between young people and their families, schools and communities are considered to not only act to build social capital but ensure that young people have a framework in which they can seek various forms of support. Young Muslim students were frequently heard during interviews to be seeking connections at both the local community level as well as the more national level in attempting to build their social and cultural identity. The synergy between both projects is therefore apparent and may be pursued in the future for the benefit of teacher professional learning as well as the young people in their communities.

Implicit in this discussion is that in order for children to develop intercultural understanding, teachers must first have a level of awareness and understanding which would appear to be absent in the teaching repertoire of many educators at the present. If intercultural understanding is to become a higher curriculum priority for schools in the future, it is evident that there will need to be a sustained cultural change in schools. While such change will be achieved most effectively through teacher/parent partnerships, it is teachers who will drive this change. Without the skills and knowledge necessary, teachers will be reluctant at best and unsystematic in their attempts to induce such change. Such comments, however, indicate that in some States/Territories, curriculum strands in secondary schools in the relevant “People and Environment” Key Learning Area do include such strands as “Religion and Society”, in which world religions are discussed and compared. It can only be assumed that teachers of this strand have been adequately prepared for the purpose. The message however is that if teacher professional learning is to be successful, it must have a curriculum hook. In other words, the first question asked by teachers in any professional learning scenario is “Where does this appear in the curriculum?” Once this question has been answered, a mandate for learning has been established and teacher motivation will be enhanced. When this question cannot be answered, teachers will no longer see the area as important and the concomitant amount of time in class will be devoted.
At the local level, some schools have already identified the need for such professional learning initiatives through curriculum hooks and have undertaken such learning opportunities as the Understanding Islam Seminar (August 2003). This session for teachers in the local area was designed to demystify key principles of the Islamic religion and reveal the commonalities between Islamic and Christian principles. Such initiatives however are rare and need to be replicated to build the confidence and competence of teachers in this challenging area.
Curriculum Resources

**The Curriculum Mandate**

At the outset, it should be noted that since all Islamic schools follow the approved curriculum or syllabus of the jurisdiction in which they are located, they are bound to observe, and have the same opportunities for teaching about interfaith and intercultural understanding as any other school within that jurisdiction. Our observations are that they do so, albeit in a perhaps more systematic way than most, and from an Islamic perspective. At the same time, all government and non-government schools in the jurisdictions have the same opportunity to teach about Islam as part of the current curriculum although the extent to which individual schools take up these opportunities varies from place to place.

Islamic schools, like many other schools, display the *Values For Australian Schooling* poster in their foyer, undertake activities in relation to *National Framework for Values Education* (see examples below), and some Islamic schools (like Malek Fahd Islamic School in Sydney) have participated in the initial Values Education Good Practice Study.

A complete mapping of the curriculum opportunities for promoting interfaith and intercultural understanding is beyond the scope of this project, but the following examples illustrate the kinds of opportunities that are available.

In the Tasmanian Essential Learnings framework, for example, under the Social Responsibility strand, one of the elements is “Valuing Diversity”. Teachers are provided with a sample learning sequence and sample units of work. One such unit, “*Whose Values Do You Value?*” is aimed at Years 7/8 and consists of a number of learning activities to be conducted over a 6-8 weeks period. The unit is summarised in Exhibit 8 below.

### Exhibit 8

**Whose Values Do You Value?**

In this unit students will explore the need to differentiate between the diverse cultural values and actions which denote prejudice, oppression and the denial of human rights.

This unit moves beyond comparisons between cultures to look at the value systems that underlie different cultural groups.

In our recent political climate it is necessary to understand and respect diverse cultural groups but
refrain from forming and perpetuating stereotypes originating from the actions of minority groups.

**Key Element Outcomes**

- Understands the interdependence of our world, values its diversity and acts for a more inclusive society.
- Understands the interdependence of individuals, groups and social organizations and participates positively in the building of ‘good and just’ communities.

**Overarching Throughlines**

1. Students will understand that cultural diversity enriches society. How does cultural diversity enrich society? Students will understand that while cultures differ in some ways there are many values which are universal.

*What values are universal?*

2. Students will understand that the values which guide behaviour and actions may not be evident to those of a different cultural group.

*How can we understand the values which guide the behaviour and actions of different cultural groups?*

**Unit Long Understanding Goals**

1. Students will understand in what ways cultural values systems are similar and different.

*In what ways do the values of cultures differ?*

2. Students will understand why tolerance and respect for cultural diversity are fundamental to a democratic society.

*Why is it important to understand and respect cultural differences?*

3. Students will understand the sensitive nature of cultural values and why it is important to suspend judgements and critically examine controversial issues.

*Do all cultural values have a place in Australian society?*

---

The following diagram shows the inter-relationship between the values that underpin the Essential Learnings Framework in Tasmania, and how these lead to the expected culminating outcomes for students. The example of a unit of work above demonstrates very clearly that there is ample scope for teachers to build intercultural understanding, drawing in materials concerning Islam and other religions if they so choose. The intention of the curriculum is that students should develop respect and tolerance as a consequence of exploring themes such as the above.

Other State and Territory curriculum and syllabus frameworks provide similar opportunities. It is not necessary here to document each of these, but one further well developed and extensively documented example from the NSW Board of Studies serves to illustrate the fact that multiple opportunities already exist for addressing the development of interfaith and
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

intercultural understanding in a systematic way, both within government and non-government schools.

Exhibit 9
THE TASMANIA ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS FRAMEWORK

In addition to these curriculum perspectives, opportunities for formal study of religions and comparative religions as part of Year 11 and 12 programmes are possible in several States and Territories. For example, in Victoria, students may elect to study two subjects for the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE).
Exhibit 10


Religion and Society

Unit 1: Comparative Religion
Unit 2: Ethics
Unit 3: The Search for meaning: Core beliefs;
Unit 4: - Challenges & response: Values of an ideal society

VCE Texts & Traditions

Selection of chapters of the Qur’an which promote universal values, e.g. Qur’an Chapter 49.
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

Examples of Current Resources

A full mapping of all resources available to assist schools and teachers to promote interfaith and intercultural understanding is not possible within the present project. However, there are many examples of physical resources, websites, and existing projects that may be built upon in future. How well known these resources are, and how accessible to teachers in practice they may be are issues that may well need to be addressed in future. The examples presented below have been provided by the stakeholders consulted for this project, and are by no means exhaustive. No attempt has been made to critically review these resources, and whether they are suitable and appropriate in all contexts has not been established.

Certainly, the point has been made in our school visits, and is confirmed in the earlier review of the literature, that not all of the materials currently available in relation to the principles of Islam are appropriate or relevant in the Australian context. With a few notable exceptions, there are few novels suitable for study by students that present young Australian Muslims in positive circumstances. We are aware that work is underway by several authors to fill these gaps in resources, but further support from governments may be required to bring these into the public domain in a timely fashion.

It has also been suggested in a number of schools that the most important resources in this area are human resources — the people in the community. The challenge for teachers is to know how to most effectively harness these resources. The suggestion was also made that this could profitably be the focus of professional learning activities in future.

The Big Beliefs Project

Author: Emma Barnard and Thomas Cho with Meredith Costain
Publisher: Curriculum Corporation (2005)
Sponsor: This resource was funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training, and is part of the Access Asia range of materials developed and published by Curriculum Corporation as a project of the Asia Education Foundation.

Description: The Really Big Beliefs Project was developed for middle and upper primary school students in the areas of SOSE/HSIE, English and Religious Instruction/Philosophy. This resource provides a fictionalized, student-driven investigation into a number of major belief systems within Asia and Australia such as Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Taoism,
Shintoism and Hinduism. It presents students with a personalized introduction to the richness of cultural and religious expression. This resource is not a compendium of facts about world religions but rather engages the reader in a journey of discovery into intercultural learning. There is an accompanying website available (www.asiaeducation.edu.au/bigbeliefsbook/) which includes teaching activities, factual material, a professional learning component and useful links.

**Voices & Visions: Texts for the Senior English Classroom CD-ROMS**

**Publisher:** Curriculum Corporation  
**Sponsor:** Department of Education Science and Training under the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australia Schools Strategy

**Description:** This resource comprises a series of four CD-ROMS (each of which presents authentic and topical materials from an Asian country) for senior secondary students in English classes. It aims to promote cross-cultural understanding and communication through the critical analysis of texts. All secondary schools in Australia were provided with this resource in 2001/02.

**Australian Kaleidoscope**

**Author:** Julie Hamston with Kath Murdoch  
**Publisher:** Curriculum Corporation (2004)  
**Sponsor:** Asia Education Foundation
Description: This resource presents six case studies on people, places, beliefs and traditions, and explores the significant contribution of Asian cultures and people to past, present and future Australia. The book also provides a variety of written, spoken and visual texts and contexts for an exploration of the issues associated with citizenship and values education. It has been developed for use in the curriculum areas of Studies of Society and Environment/HSIE and English. The materials have been developed for teachers of years 4-6 but are readily adaptable for Years 7-8.

Developing Intercultural Understanding: An Introduction for Teachers

Author: Anne Cloonan - Deakin University, Anne Spencer - Asia Education Foundation and Sherryl Saunders - Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane

Publisher/Sponsor: This resource was funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training through the Asia Education Foundation under the Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme (2005).

Description: This resource offers primary and secondary teachers and curriculum officers an introduction to understanding interculturality and explores some approaches for teaching about cultures across a number of learning areas. It endeavours to enhance teacher capacity to design and implement curriculum where the educational outcomes is Australians who are ‘globally engaged, comfortable with diversity and with the skills to operate effectively across cultures with different worldviews and belief systems’.

Islamic Schools in NSW

Author/Sponsor: Association of Independent Schools of NSW (2005)

Description: In response to growing interest in the wider community about Islamic education, the Association of Independent Schools of NSW has developed a booklet to provide information about the educational programmes of Islamic schools and their participation in the broader Australian community.

Islam in Brisbane

Author/Sponsor: Brisbane City Council (2004)

Description: This brochure has been written with the assistance of the Muslim communities and is part of a strategy by Brisbane City Council to help Muslims feel they are welcome in Brisbane City and to ensure the wider community is better informed about Islam and Muslim ways of life. However, its distribution has been limited and copies of the booklet may be hard to obtain.
A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam

Author: I.A. Ibrahim
Publisher: Darussalam Publishers and Distributors, Houston, Texas, USA (1997)

Description: This book is a brief guide to understanding Islam. It discusses Islam in terms of identifying the truth of Islam, the Qu’ran and the Prophet Muhammad. The booklet then discusses the benefits of Islam for the individual and then provides general information on Islam, corrects misconceptions about it and answers some commonly asked questions.

Parts of this booklet may be considered contentious in the Australian context, particularly in relation to its discussion of Shari’ah law.

Web-based resources


The Australian Government through its commitment to promote harmony between people and groups of different cultural, racial, religion and social backgrounds has established the Living in Harmony Initiative. This initiative is primarily a community-based education programme. Its centerpiece is a community grants programme providing funding for projects designed to enhance community harmony and reduce racism and bigotry.

The Living in Harmony Initiative consists of three complementary elements, which provide a solid framework for meeting its objectives:

- A community grants programme for locally based projects.
- A partnership programme for project of national significance; and
- A public information strategy (including Harmony Day, held on 21 March each year)

Of particular reference to this project is Harmony Day which provides an opportunity for all Australians to:

- celebrate our many successes as a diverse and harmonious multicultural society;
- re-commit to our common values of respect and goodwill towards our fellow Australians of all backgrounds; and
- say ‘no’ to racism.
The Department of Immigration Multicultural Affairs has provided funding to host this website for the Living in Harmony Initiative. This website is accessible to all schools and is widely used.

2. Cultural Exchange Programmes in Schools
   ([http://www.culturalexchange.nsw.edu.au](http://www.culturalexchange.nsw.edu.au))

A NSW initiative called the Cultural Exchange Programmes in Schools has been established to provide schools with the opportunity to exchange with and learn from school communities different from their own. The programme is a cross-sectoral initiative between the NSW Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools of NSW. A website has been established to provide examples of successful cultural exchanges and to assist schools to search for partner schools to conduct and exchange. A Student Partnerships conference for participating schools took place in March 2006.


This national anti-racism education website for schools is managed by the NSW Department of Education and Training on behalf of all state and territory government and independent education systems.

The website brings together understanding of the nature of racism with practical strategies for countering racism in schools. It includes teaching ideas and activities, and factual information including a timeline of key events in Australia’s history, Australian international law, facts and figures about Australia’s cultural diversity and approaches to anti-racism education both in
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

Australia and internationally. Since its launch in 2000, the website has received over 34 million hits.


A joint project by the NSW Department of Education and Training and the Board of Studies that hosts a website which provides a wealth of resources about Australia’s cultural diversity and strategies to promote tolerance and understanding. The site contains more than 3,000 pages of articles, research, teacher guides, lesson ideas, audio interviews, video clips and Australian multicultural artworks.

5. Values Education for Australian Schooling (http://valueseducation.edu.au/values)

The Values Education programme is an initiative funded and managed by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). This website is a dynamic portal sponsored by DEST and maintained by Curriculum Corporation for Australian school communities to find out more about the Australian Government’s Values Education Initiative.
6. Civics and Citizenship Education
(http://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au/cce)

The Civics and Citizenship Education website contains resources, information, activities and links for teachers, students and parents involved in civics and citizenship education. The Civics and Citizenship Education website is sponsored by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training and maintained by Curriculum Corporation.

Civics and citizenship education promotes students' participation in Australia's democracy by equipping them with the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions of active and informed citizenship. It entails knowledge and understanding of Australia's democratic heritage and traditions, its political and legal institutions and the shared values of freedom, tolerance, respect, responsibility and inclusion.

7. Asia Education Foundation (Access Asia series)

The Asia Education Foundation (AEF) has developed over 65 texts including CD-ROMs and online materials as part of the Access Asia series of curriculum resources. The Access Asia series is published by Curriculum Corporation and has sold almost 90,000 copies and received 17 national awards. These resources are used in thousands of primary and secondary schools across Australia and include national guidelines for supporting teaching and learning about Asia, as well as cross-curriculum and country and learning area specific materials. Resources such as The Really Big Beliefs Project are available from this website.

8. NSW Catholic Education Commission (drop down menu - Other World Religions) http://stage.cecnsw.catholic.edu.au/reled/reled3.asp -

REMASKED image - RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DATABASE -

Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education
This database contains various resources available to teachers within the Catholic Education system in NSW. The resources available provide information in regard to other world religions that include faiths (but not limited to) such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. Most resources link to other websites such as the resource in regard to one Islamic resource as follows:

“http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/index.shtml - This is an excellent well presented summary of the features of Islam from BBC education. It includes History, Beliefs, Worship, Holy Days and Customs. Suitable for students Yrs 9-10 & 11-12.”

Additional Resources

Name: Cultural Diversity and Community Relations Policy
Author: NSW Department of Education and Training
Description: This is a policy document that outlines the NSW Department of Education and Training’s commitment to welcoming students and staff from all backgrounds and communities and promoting community harmony through developing understanding of cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. This policy is available on the Department’s website https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/student_serv/equity/comm_rel/PD20050234.shtml.

The policy has a number of support documents including:

- Assisting Refugee Students at School
- Community Relations Crisis Management Plan
- English as a Second Language Programmes in Schools
- Multicultural Education in Schools
- Interpreting and Transition Services for Schools
- Religious Diversity in Schools
- Supporting Students in Times of International Conflict.

The NSW Department of Education and Training is currently developing a guide for schools on religious diversity, with practical information for schools on how to ensure they are inclusive of and sensitive to the diversity of religions practised by students and their families.

All NSW syllabuses have embedded within them a number of mandatory cross-curriculum content areas, including multicultural perspectives. In addition, sample teaching units with multicultural perspectives have been developed for both primary and high schools and have been sent to all government schools.
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

Name: Cultural Diversity Calendar and Teachers’ Handbook
Author: NSW Department of Education and Training
Description: The cultural diversity calendar has been a feature of the NSW government schools for a number of years. It is both a public affirmation of support for cultural diversity and a teaching resource.

Name: Goodness and Kindness Campaign - An example of curriculum resource or an interfaith activity
Sponsor: Chabad House in co-operation with the Supreme Islamic Council of NSW
Description: This programme is jointly presented by a Muslim, a Christian and Jew, who visit schools with the aim of educating students about differences and to involve them in acts of kindness. It also sets out to excite children about their own ability to change their schools, community and ultimately, the world and to combat prejudice and promote harmony by demonstrating harmony in action.

Resources for Communities

The following are a small sample of projects and resources that may be employed by communities to develop interfaith and intercultural development programmes.

Religion, Cultural Diversity and Safeguarding Australia Research Project
Conducted for the Australian Multicultural Foundation by Professor Desmond Cahill, Professor Gary Bouma and Mr Hass Dellal and published in 2004.

In 2002, the Commonwealth Government, through the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, commissioned the Australian Multicultural Foundation in association with the World Conference on Religion and Peace (Australian chapter) and RMIT and Monash Universities, to conduct a series of consultations with religious, government and community organizations. It is part of a broader study in religion, cultural diversity and social cohesion in contemporary Australia.

The fundamental approach of the project was to place the role and activities of religion and faith communities within the context of the creation of social and moral capital, and to relate them to citizenship in a multicultural democracy built around the four principles of (1) civic duty (2) cultural respect (3) social equity and (4) productive diversity as outlined in the 1999 report of the National Multicultural Advisory Council, Australian Multiculturalism for a New Century: Towards Inclusiveness. However, given the breadth of the brief, it is essentially a mapping exercise.

The project aimed to examine the place and function of faith traditions and religious groups in an increasingly multicultural Australia operating in a world that is also
Increasingly globalised. It aimed to identify current and emerging issues as a basis for policy recommendations to government, and provide a basis for informed debate and concrete action in different sectors of the Australian community. It also indicated areas for further research and exploration.

The research outcomes of the project were launched on 21st December 2004. The project has produced three resources which are useful for reference by educators and community leaders.

- a report titled “Religion, Cultural Diversity and Safeguarding Australia”
- a manual titled “Australian Muslims: their Beliefs, Practices and Institutions”
- a multi-faith kit titled “Constructing a Local Multi-faith Network”

Each of these resources is available for downloading free of charge from the Australian Multicultural Foundation website.

**Conclusion**

The examples cited above demonstrate the existence of a wide range of resources available to help schools in the areas of interfaith and intercultural understanding. However there are some gaps, such as limited resources that portray Islam in an interacting contemporary Australian context. There are efforts within the Muslim community and Islamic schools to develop resources, but these will take some time to become commercially available. In the absence of resources, schools have often developed their own to considerable effect.

These resources include those with a broader focus on multiculturalism and anti-racism, as well as those with more specific intercultural and interfaith perspective. Some examples of recent resources include “Does My Head Look Big in This?”, and the Big Beliefs Book by the Asia Education Foundation.

Whether teachers know about these resources, and how well prepared they may be to use them requires further investigation. During the present project, it was noted that teachers often considered that people in the community are the best resource, but they often do not know how to access them or how to use this expertise most effectively. The capacity for schools to engage community members depends on the strength of networks established with the community, which can take considerable time to establish.
School and Community Relations

Schools cannot be effective in promoting social cohesion and harmony without considering the broader social context of interfaith and intercultural understanding. Inescapably, discussion of this context in Australia must include consideration of discrimination, racial and cultural prejudices, intolerance and negative stereotyping. While some Muslims consider they have been subject to increased harassment and vilification since September 11, 2001 (HREOC, 2004) and have been unfairly represented in the media (see for example, Collins et al., 2000; Mathews, 2001; Cleland, 2001; Cook, 2006), the case for reverse intolerance and non-acceptance of the validity of the “Australian way of life” by some Muslims must also be considered. An article by Miranda Devine (2006) for example, describes views expressed by a Muslim student association in Sydney, which opposes integration and assimilation of Muslims into Australian society.

It is not the place of this report to debate the merits of these views. The point to be made, however, is that in moving forward, strategies to enhance social cohesion must engage all parties, and cannot be promoted as an attempt by any particular group to obtain ascendancy for their views. The goal of such strategies should be the development of social relationships which truly reflect acceptance of differences. Malouf (2004) describes this goal as follows:

“We judge a society and its forms and institutions by the means it has set up for allowing conflicting arguments and views to be stated and then negotiated, resolved — resolved and re-negotiated; but without violence, in the acceptance that others bring to the public place different ideas of what is right and good, that at first sight seem irreconcilable but for which a compromise can be found; places where it is essential to the richness of society that views should differ, that argument should take place. A place, I mean, where no single voice prevails but none either is extinguished” (Malouf, 2004).

While many would describe Australia as being well advanced on the journey to attain this vision, it is evident that there is still some distance to be travelled, both here and internationally. As the recent Islamophobia report by the Runnymede Trust (see Stone 2003) in the United Kingdom recognizes, the twin goals of cultural pluralism and social inclusion, where all can play a full part in mainstream society, are undermined when people hold closed views about other groups. Closed views flourish when stereotypes are perpetuated by the media and by political and religious leaders; where cultural exchanges on a personal level are few; when ethnic communities become inwardly focused; where critical inquiry is discouraged; freedom of speech stifled, and those who are “different” in their speech, dress and customs are perceived as a threat to personal security and social
wellbeing. Arguably, these factors underpin the development of prejudiced views, regardless of who the “others” are perceived to be in any society.

Failure to address these factors can lead to what the Runnymede Trust describes as “institutional Islamophobia”, which in turn sows the seeds for resentment and disaffection and provides credence to the views of extremists. The Islamophobia report contrasts open and closed views in relation to Islam, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distinctions</th>
<th>Closed views of Islam</th>
<th>Open views of Islam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Monolithic/diverse</td>
<td>Islam seen as a single monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to new realities.</td>
<td>Islam seen as diverse and progressive, with internal differences, debates and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Separate/interacting</td>
<td>Islam is seen as separate and other (a) not having any aims or values in common with other cultures, (b) not affected by them, (c) not influencing them</td>
<td>Islam is seen as interdependent with other faiths and cultures (a) having certain shared values and aims (b) affected by them (c) enriching them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Inferior/different</td>
<td>Islam is seen as inferior to the West - barbaric, irrational, primitive, sexist</td>
<td>Islam is seen as distinctly different, but not deficient, and as equally worthy of respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Enemy/partner</td>
<td>Islam is seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism, engaged in a clash of civilisations.</td>
<td>Islam is seen as an actual or potential partner in joint cooperative enterprises and in the solution of shared problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Manipulative/ sincere</td>
<td>Islam seen as a political ideology, used for political or military advantage.</td>
<td>Islam is seen as a genuine religious faith, practised sincerely by its adherents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Criticism of West rejected/considered</td>
<td>Criticisms made by Islam of the West rejected out of hand.</td>
<td>Criticism of the West and other cultures are considered and debated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Discrimination defended/criticised</td>
<td>Hostility towards Islam used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society.</td>
<td>Debates and disagreements with Islam do not diminish efforts to combat discrimination and exclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Islamophobia seen as natural/problematic</td>
<td>Anti-Muslim hostility accepted as natural and normal.</td>
<td>Critical views of Islam are themselves subjected to critique, lest they be inaccurate and fair.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Countering closed views takes a concerted effort by both government and non-government organisations and institutions. Reports such as those by HREOC (2004) in Australia, and the Commission on British Muslims in the United Kingdom recognise that schools have a central role to play confronting negative stereotyping and misinformation as a long-term solution to overcoming anti-Muslim prejudice and intolerance. HREOC notes that while state and
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

territory education departments have specific anti-racist policies and programmes (as described above), the implementation of these policies is the responsibility of individual schools. An example of a project aimed at promoting intercultural understanding that will help to dispel misunderstanding is shown in Exhibit 11 below. Despite programmes such as these, concerns have been expressed that there is a lack of consistency in how these policies are addressed in different schools. HREOC recommends that increased collaboration between federal, state and territory education authorities be enhanced to promote greater implementation of anti-racism policies in schools and be fostered at the highest levels of educational decision making (i.e. the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education and Training and Youth Affairs).

Community leaders have a pivotal role to play in supporting schools in this drive against intolerance. They do so not only by their direct contributions to religious education within schools, but through their public and private words and deeds. It is fair to say that there is not unanimity of views across Australian society, nor even within particular communities, in terms of the acceptance of the veracity of the views of others, or even their right to hold these views. For example, statements attributed to Archbishop George Pell, in describing Islam as “not a tolerant religion and [difficult] to reconcile claims that Islam was a faith of peace with those that suggested the Koran legitimised the killings of non-Muslims” (see Morris, 2006), may not be supported by all Catholics. Other organisations associated with the Catholic Church, such as Caritas have strongly supported interfaith projects, as have individual Catholic schools which have enrolled significant numbers of Muslim children (Farquer, 2004). The Commission for Ecumenical & Interfaith Relations of the Archdiocese of Sydney has supported Project Abraham, in which Muslim, Jewish and Christians live together for an extended period to better understand each other’s beliefs.

As recognised in the National Action Plan in relation to the specific issue of interfaith dialogue and understanding, stakeholders consulted for this project confirm that schools both warmly welcome input from community leaders but also recognise the present limitations for them to do so. In relation to Muslim community leaders in particular, it was noted that many are extremely busy with other matters relating to community welfare, which require higher priority than working in schools. Other leaders are not particularly skilled or sometimes even interested in working with children. Few have specific teacher preparation that would facilitate their understanding of age appropriate teaching and learning strategies.

The consultations confirm there is currently a lack of systematic training available to assist the development of communities through tertiary institutions. (By the same token, there is little work within general teacher education programmes that would prepare classroom teachers to effectively promote interfaith and intercultural understanding). Building the capacity of the community to provide positive leadership remains an issue to be addressed.

However, some recent innovations are worth noting. Minaret College in Melbourne has initiated a tertiary level course aimed at increasing the leadership capacity of members of the Muslim community. The course will begin in 2007 and it is anticipated that it will cater for around 30 students each year.
### Exhibit 11

**TERTIARY COURSE IN ISLAMIC STUDIES: ISLAMIC COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP DIPLOMA**

#### Vision

The vision of the course is as follows:

- Produce a generation of Australian Muslim Community Leaders who are able to define and contextualize the meaning and position of a Muslim in the Australian society and lead within their communities; and
- Equip graduates with fundamental knowledge of Islam and skills to apply this knowledge and use the skills in their work in an intellectual way and professional manner that is coherent with and adaptable to the Australian cultural and historical milieu, national laws and social policies.

#### Mission

The Mission of the course is as follows:

- Provide an Islamic leadership community course, which integrates Islamic knowledge with communication, intercultural, research and practical skills that will allow the graduates of the programme to excel as Muslim community leaders.

#### Philosophy

The philosophy of the course is as follows:

- Provide graduates with the appropriate knowledge, training and self-confidence to perform their duties as Muslim community leaders successfully.

#### Values

We abide by the Islamic values that are derived from the Qur’an and the teachings of our Prophet Mohamed (SAW). We believe that:

- A sense of family and community is fundamental in the development of an individual;
- People have needs to be valued;
- Each individual is responsible for his/her own behaviour;
- Direct involvement in the community affects the quality of our life;
- All people can learn; and
- Each person is unique.

#### Goals

The goals of the course are as follows:

- Train graduates who feel proud to be Australian Muslim community leaders;
- Help students develop self-confidence, optimism, high self-esteem and respect for others, as well as achieve personal excellence;
- Respond to the current and emerging, political, economic, and social needs of the nation, by providing the adequate skills, which will allow graduates a maximum flexibility and adaptability in their future endeavor and other aspects of life; and
- Provide students with an understanding of and respect for Islamic cultural heritage and other religious cultural heritage, the cultural background of Aboriginal and ethnic groups, as well as other cultures. In other words, the understanding of other religions and cultures within Australia, and tolerance towards them.
Objectives
The objectives of the course are to teach the students the following:

- The fundamental components of Islam, which include Qur’an, Sunnah, Fiqh, and Usul Al Fikh;
- Public speaking and debating skills;
- Intercultural communications; and
- Research skills.

Strategies
The course will:

- Promote and enhance a dynamic educational environment with opportunities that will attract students who not only live in the South East region of Melbourne but from other parts of the country as well;
- Align and articulate curriculum, pedagogy, methodology and assessment; and
- Renew the commitment to respect and support each other through improved communication and collaborative working relationships.
- Support and sponsor change efforts that will improve the course.

In the Catholic Education Sector, Australian Catholic University is now offering a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Inclusive Schooling).

The course is designed to support school staff and personnel in the development of schools as places of inclusion, built on a foundation of Gospel values and Catholic social teaching related to social justice.

The goal of the course is to assist educators in understanding key factors which contribute to the capacity building of schools in improving outcomes for all through the development of positive learning environments. The course comprises four units of study:

- Foundations of Social Justice
- Social Justice: A Whole School Approach
- Issues in Inclusive Schooling
- Management of Change

There are other community development efforts happening at the local level. In Sydney, for example, Nadia Roudé, a well known author and member of the Muslim community, has been conducting courses for teachers in Catholic school to support their teaching about Islam.

It is also noteworthy that several Islamic schools view part of their mission as explicitly developing leadership skills of their students, so that in future they may take more prominent roles both within their own communities and in the broader Australian society. For example, in Perth, the Australian Islamic College brochure describes its goal for:

“…our youth to aspire towards excellence. We have been followers for too long and it is time to become leaders; not only on a national scale but also on a personal level. Being average is not good enough, the world is racing ahead of us and we need to excel in every single field to keep up.”
Our ultimate goal is for our next generation to be the best professionals (Scientists, Doctors, Engineers, Inventors, Media Personnel and Politicians etc.).”

Our observations in Islamic schools in all States visited confirm that these schools are encouraging students to be confident articulate and proud Australians, who look forward to providing positive role models for their peers. The same could be said for the students who provide student leadership through the committee structure at Killester College, and doubtless at many other schools not visited as part of this project. Already young people are playing important roles in Islamic organisations in some states, and are important contributors to government policy development at a national level. These young people provide great hope for the future.

The challenge nationally, is for all schools to recognise the potential of all students to make positive contributions to their communities and to the broader Australian society, and for acknowledgement of the strengths that all students possess. Leadership in this sense should not be seen as an elitist attribute, but one that takes many forms.

An example of a project that aims to address the needs of Muslim students attending government schools is described in Exhibit 9 below.

Exhibit 12

CULTURAL DIVERSITY PROJECT – PRESTON GIRLS SECONDARY COLLEGE

This project involves students, the families and teachers at Preston Girls Secondary College. It was undertaken as a result of school demographic data which indicated significant incidence of representation of students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds in early school leaving, discipline systems and poor performance outcomes. In response to this issue, Preston Girls Secondary College has worked in partnership with Victorian Arabic Social Services (VASS) by basing a Cultural Diversity Worker at the school to work with students, teachers and parents from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds.

The project objectives are:

- To generate better understanding of cultural diversity among students and staff of Preston Girls Secondary College.
- To improve students’ performance and retention rate at Preston Girls Secondary College.
- To facilitate improved relations among teachers, students and parents.
- To increase the participation of parents from the Arabic community in the life of the school community.

The project is still in progress but to date its achievements include:

- Engaging parents in different activities that led to the following services and outcomes:
  - Bi-Monthly meeting for the Arabic Parent Association addressing issues and concerns
  - Educational sessions on drugs parenting and coping skills – four sessions per month.
  - Information services through guest speakers from different services.
  - Two parents are supported on regular basis to maintain involvement and active role within the school council.
- Identifying issues of concerns to students and developing appropriate responses which included:
- Development of recreational activities with an educational focus, e.g. a full-day activity with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.
- Providing role models of Arabic youth through having them as guest speakers.
- Active participation of four Arabic Youth people in the Australian Arabic National Conference “Arab-Australians, Taking a Stand”, 31 October – 1 November 2002, at Dallas Brooks Hall, 300 Albert Street, East Melbourne.

The future plans for the project include:

- Home visits to some parents to provide support and to increase their level of participation in their children’s education.
- Involve students and parents in the Cultural Diversity Group which meets regularly and plan cultural diversity activities.
- Introduce a mediation programme to be implemented at the school as a way of dealing with conflict within the school community.
- Review the teaching resources on ethnic groups, update and promote widely through the school.

Reducing alienation of Muslim youth

There is ample evidence that many young Muslims feel a sense of alienation in Australian society. The causes of this sense of alienation are complex, deriving in part from differences between the traditions of the cultural groups from which they originate, intergenerational conflict, socio-economic hardship, and a sense of suspicion if not outright rejection from sections of the mainstream of Australian society. This alienation, in turn, is posited as one of the reasons why some turn to extremism.

It is undeniable that the actions of these extremists has led to anxiety within many communities around the world, including the Australian community, and indeed among many Australian Muslims. This anxiety is understandable, given the proliferation of global terrorism, and is further heightened by the knowledge that increasingly, these acts of terrorism have been planned and or executed by a small number of followers who are born and bred in the country where atrocities were committed.

This is a particular challenge for the 120,000 young Muslims who were largely born in Australia, or were very young when they arrived. They are Australians by right and feel as an Australian as anybody else. Yet, many of those young Australian Muslims have become in some ways confronted with their identity. For the impressionable among this group, for those challenged by the question of “who am I”, a credible counter view to the extremist view must be clearly put.

The work of the schools involved in this project have amply demonstrated that the values that underpin the true Islam faith are peace loving and consistent with Australian values, and true Islam can exist perfectly well within a secular society such as Australia. It has done, and it will continue to do so.

The challenge for the Australian community is to ensure that extremists are prevented from manipulating and recruiting vulnerable, impressionable young Muslims within Australia and, to create an environment which all young Muslims can become productive members of Australian society through education and satisfying employment.
These issues are similar to those experienced by earlier migrants to Australia, who also struggled with the frustration, the isolation, the confusion and sometimes the anger as they tried to reconcile the culture of their parents inside the home, with the cultures they were confronting outside the home - within the broader Australian culture. The lesson from this experience is that over time, change is possible, and to a large extent these things have been worked out.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Andrew Robb, reflecting on his childhood experience recounts:

“There were lots of frustrations, lots of anger, there were things said that should never have been said - there was discrimination, all of these things, because people felt edgy about the arrival of all these people from Italy and Greece, but as a community we worked through it …

As we worked together, studied together, played sport together, socialised together you start to see mutual respect grow; you’d started to see recognition of the strengths and new perspectives they brought. And the process of recognition was mutual. The respect was mutual. And we succeeded...

....The fact is overwhelmingly, people of Muslim faith came to Australia like everybody else, for the sake of their children; for education and opportunity; for a better life ... We require a way to manage a situation so that Muslims in Australia can get on with their lives - be normal, be accepted for who they are, like everybody else.”(Robb, 2006)

Helping Australian Muslims become integrated and connected to the mainstream community is essential for ensuring extremism is rejected in Australia, and to help Australian Muslims just get on with their lives.

The examples of interschool cooperation and projects that aim to increase social tolerance and cohesion described in this report are a sound starting point. How widespread such programmes are at present is unknown. For the longer term, special emphasis may need to be placed on supporting young Muslims within mainstream programmes which are designed to educate and train young people, get young people into good and lasting jobs, or which are designed to involve young people in community activities such as mainstream sports, arts or civic organisations. The ultimate measure of success in removing the sense of alienation felt by young Muslims will come when there is real progress in building a sense of worth and identity leading to full integration of young Muslims into the mainstream community.
Discussion

During the course of this research project, the discussions with stakeholders and visits to schools focussed attention on the need for the research to address the topic of the role of schools in promoting social cohesion in its broadest sense. While the origin of the project undoubtedly derives from national and personal security concerns expressed by the government and the community following acts of terrorism around the world, the issues surrounding the challenge of achieving social cohesion within a multicultural society go well beyond consideration of the relationship between the values of any particular group and the wider Australian society.

This is not to say that there are not particular issues affecting particular ethnic, cultural and religious groups. The early focus on Islamic schools and Islamic students perhaps helps to highlight some important concepts, but the lessons to be learned from their experience have far broader implications. These experiences raise significant questions about the nature of contemporary Australian identity, about the reality of “Australian” values, and about Australia’s future as a multicultural society. This project cannot even begin to address these questions. At best it can make a modest contribution to the ongoing debate that is both necessary and unavoidable. Indeed, scarcely a week goes by without reference to these issues in the media (see for example recent articles in the Sydney Morning Herald by Anne Summers and the 2005 Manning Clark Lecture by Hugh MacKay).

The importance of this dialogue, and indeed, the development of interfaith and intercultural understanding as one of the foundations of social cohesion has been recognised in an emerging body of work sponsored by the Australian Government through the Values Education programme, UNESCO, and others.

Pascoe (2005) for example, in an address to the 2005 Values Education conference, argues that as we are preparing students for the reality of globally connected lives, it is essential to relate our own values to a more universal values set. Common ground is important in considering the role that education can play in promoting intercultural and interfaith understanding and thereby contributing to initiatives to combat the threat of terrorism.

A shared understanding of and commitment to our own values is an important place to start. From there we can enter into dialogue. Maximum benefit will be gained from dialogue when we have some knowledge of the culture or faith we are encountering.

Other recent work in Australia has advanced this theme. At the 2005 conference of the Australian National Commission for UNESCO, Education for Shared Values and for Intercultural and Interfaith Understanding, delegates from 51 countries put the position...
that education has a role to play in the immediate and long-term process of building peace and intercultural and interfaith understanding. Educators cannot and do not work in isolation but support families, other cultural and religious institutions, governments, the business community, NGOs and the media in working towards more harmonious futures.

The report of the UNESCO conference (UNESCO, 2005) called on education systems (amongst other strategies) to incorporate common and agreed values into curricula and to prepare education content capable of promoting intercultural and interfaith understanding. It made reference to the necessity of preparing and supporting teachers for values teaching and the need for quality teaching resources.

A broad range of economic, environmental, demographic and political forces makes intercultural and interfaith understanding a necessity for modern nations rather than a matter of choice. Our global interdependence is recorded daily in economic and security treaties with our neighbours, cross-national environmental tensions related to water usage and air quality and markets which transcend national boundaries … and the spectre of terrorism lives within us Pascoe (2005). In addition to the anti-racism and multicultural education policies school systems have adopted, the need to imbue students with an understanding of universal values and intercultural and interfaith understanding is also being integrated across the curriculum. The rationale for this direction is reflected in the Introduction to the recent National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools recognises (p.4):

Now more than ever we live in one world. We face issues that can only be addressed internationally: sustainable futures, the changing world economy and security of people and environments.

Australia, like many countries, requires citizens who are globally engaged, comfortable with diversity and with the skills to operate effectively across cultures with different world views and belief systems. In particular we need to ensure that young Australians are prepared to engage with peoples from the Asian region.

According to General Peter Cosgrove (2000), “Good neighbours learn to speak each other’s languages... Good neighbours learn to respect each other’s religious and cultural beliefs. Good neighbours learn to allow for difference and to be inclusive. Good neighbours spend time together. Good neighbours understand that contentious issues should be resolved through negotiation.

As discussed in the earlier section in relation to the curriculum mandate for work in this area, school systems have responded to the challenges of the modern globalised world with curriculum which pays as much attention to processes of physical, personal and social development as traditional disciplines and interdisciplinary capacities. For example, the recently launched Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) published by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, (2005) argues that all students need to develop capacities to:

- Manage themselves as individuals and in relation to others;
- Understand the world in which they live; and
- Act effectively in that world (VELS Overview p. 4).

There is a strong alignment with the implicit values behind these curriculum frameworks and the values in the National Framework for Values Education. For example, the VELS learning principles — learning for all, pursuit of excellence, engagement and effort, respect
for evidence and openness of mind — mirror many of the values in the *National Framework*. Curricula such as the VELS and the WA Curriculum Framework make it easy for teachers to implement values as part of the process of learning.

The various curriculum and syllabus documents developed at the State and Territory level provide the context within which teachers may readily take action in this important area. The influential role that teachers can play in taking advantage of this mandate is captured in the quote below.

“...it should be said that as teachers we play a key role in multi-faith and multicultural dialogue. There are people in our community who choose to stay uninformed, uninvolved and silent. If we are among the silent and uninvolved people, then we are, in effect trumpeting dangerous and often prejudiced views. *Our silence will boom within our community.*” (Neil Mitchell, Killester College 2006)

As the *National Framework* notes in its Introduction, there is a significant history of values education in government and non-government in Australia. One noteworthy project is the Harmony through Understanding Project conducted across Jewish, Islamic, Catholic, Government and other non-government schools in Melbourne. The project brings students face to face to get to know one another and to discuss their cultural and religious differences. It has been conducted successfully for a number of years and is lauded by all those involved as increasing intercultural and interfaith understanding and providing an opportunity for students to move from their comfort zone to get to know ‘the other’.

A good account of values education approaches in a range of different schools is contained in the Australian College of Educators’ 2002 Yearbook *Values in Education*. Amongst the descriptions, Principal Christine Cawsey describes principles of learning at Rooty Hill High School in New South Wales which predate and predict the Australian Values; Paul Forgasz surveys the literature on teaching values in Jewish schools; and Salah Salman, Principal of King Khalid College in Melbourne provides an Islamic perspective. One can make the judgement that all these schools could integrate the Australian Values with ease. Indeed, as they are ‘values literate’, they are already a step ahead.

At the same time, the *National Framework* provides a valuable resource for reflection on appropriate “starting points” for school activity. The nine *Values for Australian Schooling* are a mix of democratic virtues, ethical dispositions, personal attributes and learning principles. As such some will lend themselves to explicit modelling in classrooms while others will require cross-curricular and whole school approaches. Some teachers could feel ill-equipped to respond and professional development will be required.

While initial learning can happen in formal settings, changes in behaviour usually require opportunities for students to spontaneously demonstrate the attainment of an attribute in a real or simulated situation. Such opportunities will need to be carefully planned and teachers will require some guidance.

School structures and organisation and teacher attitudes and behaviours will be as influential as learning opportunities. Unequal learning opportunities, inconsistent discipline, lack of follow up on absenteeism or lack of pastoral care will all speak volumes to students about the real values in the school. Conversely, teachers knowing students’ names and asking after their wellbeing, applying consistent consequences to misdemeanours, correcting work in a timely fashion and providing constructive feedback also implicitly demonstrate the values in the school. School leaders and teachers will need to ensure that they model the values they espouse. There is an old saying that “values are caught, not taught”, which neatly sums up the point that it is not sufficient to teach about
values, but that within school communities, all members must also demonstrate those behaviours in all that they do. The case study schools above provide clear examples of how this can be practically achieved.

This modelling of appropriate standards of behaviour or “living the values” is implicit in the kinds of relationships that sustain a civilised society. As argued in his launch of the NSW Rights and Responsibility policy, Iemma (2006) argues that from a broader perspective,

“Society does exist but only as the sum of human attitudes and actions — the millions of small and not-so-small things we do to build communities and bind us together:

- the small gestures like saying hello to a stranger or looking in on an elderly neighbour
- the ties that bind a family like sitting down at the dinner table for a meal and family conversation
- the everyday civilities like offering a seat on a bus to the elderly
- the duty of respect we owe to civic leaders like teachers, police and clergy.

These are some of the examples of the web of courtesy and consideration that make us a civilised society. When we ignore these things, we simply have a collection of individuals who do whatever they can get away with, subject only to whether or not they might be hindered by the law.

Respect and responsibility are not solely the domain of the law because if people’s sole motivation for responsible behaviour and good citizenship was the fear of punishment, we would be a very sorry society indeed. Parents and teachers know that it is not enough. They know that young people need to be given an internalised sense of responsibility that comes from a good family and a good education. They want our future citizens to be well behaved not because it is required but because it is right”.

Recognition of the necessity for interfaith and intercultural understanding as the basis for both harmonious relationships within communities and as a platform for Australia’s economic development is a theme that has been embraced by all levels of government around Australia. In Queensland, for example, the Premier Peter Beatty has noted:

“It is important to meet the prospect of ongoing global insecurity and an international climate of intolerance and fear with improvements in local harmony and respect for diversity of race, religion and language. ... Queensland can demonstrate we have a world of difference that strengthens and unites, rather than divides us. We can make our communities open and inclusive and increase our capacity to share prosperity.” (Queensland Government 2006, Premier’s Message).

More pointedly, in its Statement on Protecting Our Community: Attacking the Causes of Terrorism, the Victorian Premier, Steve Bracks notes in the forward to the Statement notes that:

“Governments must take a long-term view to address the causes of terrorism. The Victorian community gains great strength from its long history of democracy, diversity and harmony. The Government believes that an effective approach to terrorism must include measures to prevent, at its roots, the rise of radicalism that advocates terrorism. This can only be achieved through cooperation and
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

partnership with faith and community leaders together with their communities.”
(Government of Victoria 2005, Foreword)

The Victorian Government Statement goes on to say:

“Australia has reached a point where counter-terrorism measures are also likely to impact on the elements that define Australia as a nation and Australians as a people. Decisions taken by governments at this point will define not only how our society will function in the future, but also how we are perceived as a nation and how we interact with the global community. This is why the decisions that governments make must be balanced, proportional and effective.

Australia is a free and secular nation in which all religions are treated fairly and equally. Our society is defined, amongst other aspects, by a belief in elected government, a commitment to the rule of law, to equal rights for all before the law, and the freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of association. Our society is tolerant of a range of religious, political, social and cultural beliefs, requiring its citizens to peacefully co-exist with people of different beliefs and values. Australia’s strengths come from these beliefs and values. If we surrender these qualities, we hand terrorism a victory....

... The motivation for a person to attack their own society can stem from a lack of commitment to the institutions and principles that form the foundations of that society. Education is crucial to the ongoing well-being and security of our community. Schools and a range of other learning institutions are foundation stones for the development of democratic values and the creation of a cohesive and inclusive society.” (Government of Victoria 2005).

Supporting schools to play an enhanced role in this work is important. It is about the future of Australia as a nation. The future can be one in which we can explore our differences with respect and understanding on the common ground of shared values, traditions and citizenship — or it can see an escalation of the ugly, intolerant and violent events that have become commonplace, not just in Australia but around the world. Only one of these possibilities should be considered acceptable, and it is one that requires strong commitment from educational authorities and community leaders at all levels.

Challenges for the future

It is clear from the review of policies, resources and professional development opportunities above that there is ample scope for schools and teachers to promote social cohesion and to increase interfaith and intercultural understanding through the frameworks already in place. Whether teachers know about these resources and know how to use them is another matter. Undoubtedly, as the case studies above demonstrate, many schools have already accepted the challenge, both through specific projects and activities, or as an integral part of the way they go about their business. Yet it is also clear that there is much more that can be done.

Arguably, schools have always had a significant role in the socialisation of young people. Socialisation is the process by which individuals internalise norms and values of a society and are able to integrate into it. It is a process that begins from birth and is ongoing. With children, much socialisation takes place overtly and is subject to scrutiny. However, much of it also takes place very subtly (Butorac and Lymon, 1998). As the premier of NSW, Morris Iemma, remarked, in launching the NSW Government’s Rights and Responsibilities policy...
“...schools are the place - above everywhere else - where our future is rehearsed. Schools are the engine room of multiculturalism and integration. They are the places where we learn the grammar of cooperation and respect. Where we gain the social tools to understand and accept one another. Above all, it is the place where we learn what it means to be Australian - the common language, history, traditions and culture we share as a nation and as people. That is critical because our diversity means nothing without our unity around a central group of common values, stories and points of reference.” (Iemma, 2006)

What might prevent schools from playing a more effective role in promoting interfaith and intercultural understanding? The answer that most frequently and most readily given by teachers — and an answer often given in relation to any curriculum innovation — is that they lack the time to plan and implement appropriate activities. They point to the already crowded curriculum, and ask what should be abandoned to make room for learning about other faiths and other cultures. Such views have some legitimacy, particularly in the senior years where examination syllabuses impose considerable demands on both teachers and students to ensure mandated course content has been covered. Certainly, we have heard in our school visits for this project, that lack of time, rather than lack of good will, is the greatest impediment to increased cooperation.

Yet the lack of time argument disguises a deeper issue about the relative priority that is given to some aspects of schooling over others. Like any topic that schools may be asked to address, the enthusiasm of staff to “do something” about it depends on the degree to which action is seen to be imperative. Fullan’s (1991) work on educational change processes suggests that innovations are more likely to take hold when there is a clear mandate for action, and where there are multiple sources of pressure brought to bear, for example, when parent and community concerns are added to systemic policies. Further, Fullan’s work suggests that change is most likely to occur when schools are not only pressured to change, but are also supported to do so, for example through professional development programmes. Curriculum innovation and changes in school and classroom practices are also when the need for change and the motivation for change, as well as the substantive areas to be addressed align with teachers’ world views and the overall ethos of the school. Australian teachers respond best when there is a perceived benefit to themselves and their students. They do not respond well to perceived political dictates. While they may initially comply with minimal requirements, they do not do so with any enthusiasm or internalisation of change required.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the government schools that have done most to implement practical steps that demonstrate intercultural and interfaith understanding are those with high proportions of Muslim students. Schools such as MacArthur Girls High School in Sydney’s western suburbs, for example, have set aside a room for Muslim students to conduct midday prayers. The challenge for schools nationally comes perhaps in situations where the school and community are more mono-cultural or where international events appear to have little reality in the local context. This issue, which might be termed isolation, potentially affects all faith-based schools as well. This issue is taken up again later in this discussion.

The successful alignment of school ethos and promotion of tolerance and social cohesion is well demonstrated in the case study schools, like Killester College in Melbourne, where the implicit commitment to multiculturalism springs from the social justice traditions of the founding religious order. Together with the strong belief of staff that to function effectively as a school community, teachers and students must know each other as people,
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

developing intercultural understanding is a natural and fundamental aspect of the school’s operation.

This consistency of approach is, of course, possible in schools which have the capacity to ensure that staff, students and parents support the essential mission of the school. Presumably teachers would not seek employment in those schools if they did not agree with its espoused principles nor would parents choose to send their children to a school if they did not also support its rules, policies and practices. Not all schools, especially government schools have this capacity — and must therefore attempt to balance the competing and often conflicting views of staff and parents.

The limited priority given to interfaith and intercultural understanding by schools nationally at the present time may well reflect the deep divisions in Australian society on these matters. As the SBS and HREOC research cited earlier suggests, there is by no means universal acceptance that even the well established concept of multiculturalism is either “a good thing” — or even possible, given the continuing debate about the compatibility of Islamic law and cultural practices with contemporary Western notions of democratic society.

Breaking down isolation

Students in Islamic schools interviewed as part of this project, (particularly girls), often described their schooling experience as being sheltered or “living in a bubble”. While this was welcomed by the students, because they believed that their school provided them with a safe and secure learning environment, free from discrimination and harassment, they also recognised that this did not necessarily prepare them well for the outside world. This is not a phenomenon that is unique to Islamic schools and is potentially applicable to many schools that strive to provide a similar sheltered environment. In some of the Islamic schools visited, students received explicit lessons on dealing with and responding to discrimination in positive ways. Students considered these lessons to be useful. The challenge for schools in delivering such lessons is that unless they are sensitively handled, there is the potential for reinforcing negative views of the wider society and perpetuating a view of Muslims as victims, thereby increasing the sense of alienation said to be experienced by some Muslim students. Any group that lives apart from the mainstream will almost inevitably feel a sense of separateness, and will be seen by the wider society as different, unless there are explicit attempts to break down barriers and increase understanding. This is perhaps why Muslim schools have placed considerable emphasis on, and taken the lead in initiating interschool visit programmes. Role modelling by both Muslim and non-Muslim teachers has also been given a high priority in these schools, emphasizing the importance of mutual respect and positive relationships. Similarly, community service programmes in Muslim schools reinforce notions of giving as well as receiving support from the wider community.

As has been argued elsewhere in this report, it is not these activities per se that are effective in breaking down barriers, but the fact that they are part of an explicit, overall strategy for decreasing isolation in which individual activities are not ends in themselves, but part of a cumulative experience from which the key messages for students are articulated and reinforced by all members of staff.
Achieving real depth of understanding

Like many educational innovations, any effort to increase the extent to which schools teach interfaith and intercultural understanding will face the challenge of ensuring that these efforts go beyond superficial activities to those that achieve deep understanding. Research on educational change suggests that there is a tendency for schools to simply “re-badge” their current activities as innovations. Teachers say “we are already doing this, we just call it a different name”. For example, there may be a tendency for schools to believe that since they may already be celebrating Harmony Day, that this is all they need to do. Similarly, none of the individual activities documented in the case studies are sufficient in and of themselves to achieve the depth of understanding that is likely to lead to change of the magnitude that is required. This is not a criticism of these schools or these activities, but recognition of the fact that real change comes from the combination of efforts on many fronts that make the difference. Celebrating festivals, sharing food and other such activities are perhaps an important starting point, but are seldom sufficient for deep real understanding — indeed they run the risk of reinforcing stereotypes. Interschool visits achieve little if they are not elevated beyond sporting contests if they do not also provide opportunities for students to enter into genuine dialogue.

Likewise, there is a need to ensure that all students are engaged in intercultural and interfaith learning, not just a select few. Research has again shown the tendency for some schools to think they are doing good work in this area, while in reality they are doing good work with some, but not all students. In doing so, they inadvertently promote further marginalisation and alienation of those who do not participate at an elite level. For this work to have any credence and to achieve the ultimate goal of empowering all young people to participate fully in society, great care must be taken to ensure the rhetoric of inclusivity becomes a reality.

Conclusion

The foundations for increased work to promote greater intercultural understanding within schools are already established. There are a range of resources and professional development opportunities available to assist teachers and schools, should they choose to do so. Yet there is also clearly scope for further work in this area. The case study schools provide illustrations of some of the principles of best practice in each of the areas reflected by the Terms of Reference. The challenge for the future is to ensure that all schools aspire to these standards.

In doing so, a number of issues will need to be resolved. First among these is the need to elevate schools’ work in developing interfaith and intercultural understanding as a priority nationally and locally. As noted above, teachers already feel that the curriculum is overloaded, and for this area to be given greater priority will mean that action must be perceived to be imperative.

Second, schools require support in a number of practical ways. An issue raised by the case study schools was that it takes considerable planning time to establish appropriate programmes, even before they attempt to implement them. For this reason, strong support from school leaders is required to provide funding for teachers to be released from class to do this planning, and for this work to be seen to be important. At the same time, the outcomes from activities must be seen to have intrinsic merit and to be worthwhile for students and others, if there is to be any chance of continued widespread acceptance.
Demonstration of the achievement of worthwhile outcomes requires that thought be given to early identification of what behaviours and attitudes are expected to be exhibited and what may need to change. Student learning outcomes need to be recorded and communicated to the school community.

At the same time, there is a need to ensure that schools’ work in this area equips students with a deep understanding about the beliefs and cultures of others. There has been a tendency for efforts in the past to encourage superficial activities that may have high visibility, but do not lead to real attitudinal change or real knowledge beyond stereotypic images. This deep understanding comes when the promotion of social harmony, acceptance of cultural diversity and mutual respect are deeply ingrained in the culture of the school. This is reinforced through explicit teaching, and is reflected in the rituals and symbols used to express the school’s culture. It comes when there is genuine sharing of knowledge and acceptance of the school’s ideals by all teachers and is supported by parent and community leaders, who model the values in public and privately.

The challenge for Australian school systems for the future in promoting greater social cohesion is well summed up in the following quote by Dr Paul Brock in a graduation address at the University of New England earlier this year:

“...In all its complex aspects, what has been called the ‘war on terror’ dominates so much of contemporary social and political discourse. [Yet] where will we find the foundations of wisdom to identify and expose contemporary intellectual, religious or spiritual ignorance? What will guide and encourage us to identify and reject political leadership of deceit, cowardice, humbug, or corruption?

How can humanity progress towards that human fellowship preached by founders of the world’s great religions whose inspiration and sanctity have so consistently been besmirched by bigots or selective fundamentalists? What will protect us from evils imposed both under the banner of terrorism and the banner of protecting us from terrorism? Where Londoners are not only protected from terrorists’ bombs but also from cold-blooded killing by police who then [hide behind] a farrago of lies...

To what do we look? Surely it must be to education, in all of its depth, breadth and rigour, in all of its intellectual, moral, spiritual, physical and cultural dimensions. In particular, a quality of public education that is informed, honest, critiqued, and properly resourced. That is properly idealistic and properly sceptical. That celebrates compassion, justice, and human rights. That repudiates tyranny, ignorance, fundamentalism of all kinds, and terrorism - whatever and wherever its sources.

That is a huge task. But without [it] we will all be condemned to the inevitable consequences of failing to learn from history.” (Brock, 2006).

Brock’s words speak to the need for courage and conviction in taking on interfaith and intercultural understanding as a serious endeavour, rather than accepting the status quo. From a practical point of view, in planning the way forward, the framework initially developed by Edmonds and others in the early 1980s which identifies factors demonstrated to be associated with high quality schooling outcomes may provide a potential starting point for thinking about the kinds of practices and processes that are required to develop. While the factors in this framework do not provide a recipe for success, it may prove useful for identifying areas in which development can take place in a coordinated manner. This framework is described further below:
• **Clear School Mission** – In the effective school, there is a clearly articulated school mission through which the staff shares an understanding of and commitment to instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures and accountability. Staff accept responsibility for students’ learning of the school’s essential curricular goals.

• **High Expectations for Success** – In the effective school, there is a climate of expectation in which the staff believe and demonstrate that all students can attain mastery of the essential content and school skills, and the staff also believe that they have the capability to help all students achieve that mastery.

• **Instructional Leadership** – In the effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates that mission to the staff, parents, and students. The principal understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional programme.

• **Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress** – In the effective school, student academic progress is measured frequently. A variety of assessment procedures are used. The results of the assessments are used to improve individual student performance and also to improve the instructional programme.

• **Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task** – In the effective school, teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential content and skills. For a high percentage of this time students are engaged in whole class or large group, teacher-directed, planned learning activities.

• **Safe and Orderly Environment** – In the effective school, there is an orderly, purposeful, businesslike atmosphere which is free from the threat of physical harm. The school climate is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning.

• **Home-School Relations** – In the effective school, parents understand and support the school’s basic mission and are given the opportunity to play an important role in helping the school to achieve that mission.

The case study schools reported in this project amply demonstrate these factors in action. As we have argued consistently throughout this report, it is the totality of these efforts that is likely to lead to success rather than any one specific activity, no matter how spectacular this might appear to be.

This project has provided some initial insights into how schools and school systems may promote interfaith and intercultural understanding, yet many challenges remain. The following recommendations are made in order to help address these challenges.
Summary of Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested:

It is recommended:

1. That all Australian Governments (through the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs) commit to increasing interfaith and intercultural understanding as a national priority for schooling.

2. That a comprehensive project be commissioned to examine the broader issue of the role of schools nationally in promoting social cohesion through interfaith and intercultural understanding in the contemporary Australian context. This study should:
   - Have a broad focus on the faiths and cultures most commonly represented in the Australian school population
   - Examine the role that all schools, including government schools and faith-based schools, can play in initiating interfaith and intercultural understanding
   - Comprehensively document and evaluate the effectiveness of ways in which Australian schools from all sectors approach the teaching of values with a particular emphasis on developing interfaith and intercultural understanding
   - Identify principles of good practice in relation to the planning, implementation and ongoing evaluation of school/community activities and programmes leading to social cohesion within the broader community
   - Identify good practice strategies in government and non-government schools that assist the development of Australian values, consistent with the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools
   - Identify ways in which appropriate examples, such as case studies of good practice can be effectively disseminated to schools and school systems, for example through DEST/DIMA linked websites, national forums, publications and award schemes.

Interschool cooperation

3. That schools be assisted to develop more systematic strategies to increase interschool cooperation, reflecting whole school community approaches linked to identified learning outcomes for students. This may include a pilot project that establishes “Harmony clusters of schools” similar to those described in this report, that focus on joint activities around the building of interfaith and intercultural understanding. The
establishment of these clusters would be preceded by appropriate professional
development for participants, appointment of cluster leaders to coordinate the
activities. The clusters could be supported and monitored by external project
managers, as in other recent national demonstration projects such as the Values
Education Good Practice Project.

**Curriculum Resources**

4. That funding be provided for the development of student-focused multimedia
resources that portray the positive experiences of different religious and cultural
groups in contemporary Australian contexts.

5. That funding be provided for the development of teacher-focused resources for
utilising current materials relating to interfaith and intercultural understanding in local
school contexts.

6. That funding be provided to revise and trial current professional development
resources such as the Asia Education Foundation’s “Developing Intercultural
Understanding: An Introduction for Teachers” as the basis for a national professional
development programme. The revised resource should ensure that there is sufficient
focus on the interfaith dimension of intercultural understanding.

**Quality assurance and professional learning**

7. That funding be made available for the development of professional learning
programmes for teachers to:

   - increase teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the principles and beliefs of
     various religious groups, including understanding Indigenous spirituality.
   - build strategies for developing empathetic attitudes towards diverse cultural
groups and sensitivity in dealing with intercultural issues (see point 6 above)
   - develop skills in using resources to effectively promote social cohesion
   - map and document the links between the professional development resources
     and State/Territory curriculum frameworks to enhance their practical
application and integration with existing teaching practices
   - support research efforts aimed at providing Islamic school some strategies for
     integrating Islamic teachings in secular education systems. An example of such
activities includes a project at Minaret College on ‘Exploring the cultural
interface between Islamic education and the Victorian Essential Learning
standard’. These projects are practical examples of efforts to bridge the gap
between different existing cultures at the local level.

8. That a project be initiated to develop a framework and process that will enable
systematic monitoring of the quality of school practices and student learning outcomes
in relation to intercultural and interfaith understanding.

9. That professional learning opportunities be provided to assist school communities to
implement this framework through the development of strategies aimed at:

   - developing a whole school approach, that encompasses whole school planning
   - starting with the expected outcomes in mind, or exit profiling of end of primary
     end of secondary students, agreed by all stakeholders including parents,
     communicating clear expectations (parent and community partnerships)
• establishing an assessment and reporting system based on the profiles (expectations)
• continuously reinforcing values through all areas of the curriculum, both explicitly and implicitly
• ensuring that common messages are given to all grade levels, e.g. through school assemblies, prayers, themes special events such as Harmony Day, Clean Up Australia Day and so on.
• recognising the importance of modelling, e.g. by older students to the junior students and by staff to students.

School and Community Relations

10. That grants be provided for enhancing the capacity of community organisations to contribute to schools’ work in the area of interfaith and intercultural understanding.

11. That initiatives such as national forums and award programmes be established to showcase and share ways in which schools are successfully demonstrating student capacity for community leadership.

12. That avenues be explored for enhancing the capacity of pre-service teacher education courses to include a focus on interfaith and intercultural understanding.
References


Association of Independent Schools (AIS) of NSW, 2005, Islamic Schools in NSW, Sydney: AIS.


Collins, J; Noble, G; Pynting, S; and Tabar, P, 2000, Kebabs, Kids, Cops and Crime, Annandale NSW: Pluto Press.


Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education


Malouf, D, 2004, “The city as we know it is an artefact”, Public Lecture addressed to the First Brisbane Institute Annual Dinner, 24 March.


Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), 2005, Victorian Essential Learning Standards, Melbourne: VCAA.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Project Advisory Committee

Appendix 2: List of Stakeholders Contributing to the Review

Appendix 3: Data Gathering Instruments

Appendix 4: Prime Minister’s Meeting with Muslim Community Leaders - Statement of Principles

Appendix 5: List of Islamic Schools and Colleges in Australia

Appendix 6: Being Australian - NSW Board of Studies Unit of Work for Stage 2
## Appendix 1: Project Advisory Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Department of Education, Science and Training | • Dr Declan O’Connell, A/g Director, Values and Languages Education Section  
• Dr Rapin Quinn, Assistant Director, Values and Languages Education Section |
| Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs | • Ms Kerry Maguire, Project Manager, Multicultural Affairs Branch |
| Australian Council for Islamic Education in Schools (ACIES) | • Mr Abdul Rahman Najmeddine, Chairperson |
| Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) | • Hon Terry Aulich, Executive Officer |
| Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) | • Professor Sue Willis, President |
| Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) | • Mr Malcolm Hunt, Professional Assistant to the Executive Director, Association of Independent Schools of NSW |
| Australian Joint Council of Professional Teaching Association (AJCTPA) | • Ms Anne Tumak, President  
• Ms Sue Gazis, Vice President |
| Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council (APAPDC) | • Susan Boucher, Chief Executive Officer |
| Muslim Community Reference Group - Schooling Sub-Group | • Mr Mustapha Kara-Ali (Chair)  
• Mr Ali Roudé, Chairman, Islamic Council of NSW (also Principal, Rissalah College NSW)  
• Dr Mohammed Taha Al-Salami, President, Iraqi Islamic Council of Australia  
• Mr Mohamed Hassen, President, Minaret College, VIC  
• Mr Ahmad Mokachar, Chairman, Al Zahra College, NSW |
## Appendix 2: Stakeholders Consulted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE/TERRITORY</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Department of Education &amp; Training</td>
<td>Ms Hanya Stefaniuk, Manager Multicultural Programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NSW Catholic Education Commission</td>
<td>Ms Annette Crothers, Assistant Director Education Programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NSW Association of Independent Schools</td>
<td>Mr Malcolm Hunt, Professional Assistant to the Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commission for Ecumenical &amp; Interfaith Relations, Archdiocese of Sydney</td>
<td>Sr Giovanni Farquer, Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rissalah College</td>
<td>Mr Ali Roudé, Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs Hajr Toefy, Deputy Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Staff, students and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noor Al Houda Islamic College Pty Ltd</td>
<td>Ms Silma Ihram, Principal (on leave)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr Geoff Clark, Acting Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Staff, students and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Al Zahra College</td>
<td>Mr Ahmad Mokachar, Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Catholic Education Office</td>
<td>Ms Phillipa Lovell, Values Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ms Lucy Carroll, Education Officer, Leadership &amp; School Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>La Trobe University</td>
<td>Dr Linda Bennett, Vic Health Public Research Fellow, Principal Researcher Muslim Youth Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minaret College</td>
<td>Mr Mohamed Hassan, Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Staff, students and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australian International Academy (formerly King Khalid Islamic College)</td>
<td>Mr Abdul Rahman Najmeddine, Deputy Director (Primary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Staff, students and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Killester Catholic College</td>
<td>Ms Leanne Di Stefano, Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr Neil Mitchell, Religious Studies Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Staff, students and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Department of Education, and Children Services</td>
<td>Ms Jackie Thompson, Policy &amp; Programme Officer, Multicultural Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATE/TERRITORY</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SA Association of Independent Schools</td>
<td>Mr Garry Le Duff, Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training</td>
<td>Ms Clara Deans, Project Officer, Values Education, Syllabus Development and Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Catholic Education Commission</td>
<td>Mr Tony Kitchen, Executive Officer, Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Association of Independent Schools</td>
<td>Ms Janene Rosser, Senior Education Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Islamic College of Brisbane</td>
<td>Dr Malbrik Noor, Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Staff, students and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training</td>
<td>Mr Bruce McCourt, Manager, Curriculum Development and Support Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr Paul van Campenhout, Curriculum Executive Officer, Curriculum Development and Support Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ms Amanda Day, Values &amp; Drug Education Forums Officer, Curriculum Development and Support Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>Ms Sue Tolbert, Acting Assistant Director Curriculum Standards and Support, School Education Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ms Jan Kiernan, State Advisor Asia Education Foundation &amp; Acting Values Education Contact Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Australian Council for Islamic Education in Australia (ACIES)</td>
<td>Mr Abdul Rahman Najmeddine, Chairperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO)</td>
<td>Hon Terry Aulich, Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australian Parents Council</td>
<td>Mr Ian Dalton, Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum Corporation</td>
<td>Ms Julie Harris, Project Officer Values Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ms Barbara Bereznicki, Project Officer Values Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asia Education Foundation</td>
<td>Ms Maureen Welch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Data Gathering Instruments

ENCOURAGING TOLERANCE AND SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH SCHOOL EDUCATION RESEARCH PROJECT

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION WITH SCHOOL LEADERS

The purpose of this interview will be to generate information to help build a case study about tolerance and social cohesion. This interview will take the form of a general discussion, focusing on the following areas:

1. SCHOOL CONTEXT
   - Location of the school
   - A brief history of the school
   - The mission and purpose of the school
   - Current enrolment - number of students and other demographic characteristics
   - Recent achievements and future challenges

2. VALUES EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM
   - Does the school have a particular policy/philosophy in relation to the teaching of values?
   - How does this translate into practice within the school?
   - To what extent are interfaith and intercultural understanding articulated school priorities for your school?
   - In what ways does the school promote interfaith and intercultural understanding?
   - How does your school teach values as indicated in the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools?
   - How do teachers plan for the teaching of values?
   - What factors currently foster/hinder the teaching of values in your school?
   - What opportunities do students have to demonstrate the values they are taught? (Is learning of values formally assessed and, if so, in what ways?)
   - How are parents/community involved in the teaching of values?
   - What further work is contemplated terms of improving learning in values education?

3. COMMUNITY and CURRICULUM RESOURCES
   - What resources does the school use for teaching values?
   - What resources does the school use to promote interfaith and intercultural understanding (including the contribution of Islam to Australian society)?
   - What resources are required but are not available at present to support the teaching of values?
What links does the school have with community leaders and how does this influence the teaching of values education?

4. INTERSCHOOL COOPERATION
• In what ways does the school engage with other schools to promote interfaith and intercultural understanding and mutual respect?
• Why were these activities initiated?
• What benefits have been gained from these activities for:
  o students
  o teachers
  o parents
  o the community?
• What if any challenges arose in engaging in these interschool activities and how were they addressed?
• What opportunities are there for increasing the current level of interschool cooperation? How can these be activated?

5. TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
• What, if any, professional development have teachers and school leaders experienced in relation to teaching *Values for Australian Schooling*? How was this undertaken?
• What, if any, professional development have teachers and school leaders received in relation to building interfaith and intercultural understanding? How was this undertaken?
• What additional professional development is required to assist teachers in their work in this area?

6. QUALITY PROGRAMMES
• What are the key elements in a quality programme in values education as they apply to this school?
• What processes have been established to ensure the quality of values education in this school?
• What are the school’s greatest strengths in values education?
• How does this school evaluate its values education programme? What action does the school take after completion of such evaluations?

9. FUTURE PLANS
a) What plans for the future does the school have to increase interfaith and intercultural understanding?
b) What aspects of values education does the school plan to emphasise in future?
ENCOURAGING TOLERANCE AND SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH SCHOOL EDUCATION
RESEARCH PROJECT

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION WITH TEACHERS

The purpose of this interview will be to generate information to help build a case study about tolerance and social cohesion. This interview will take the form of a general discussion, focusing on the following areas:

1. VALUES EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM
   - What do you consider to be the school’s greatest strengths in values education?
   - How does your school teach values?
   - How do teachers plan for the teaching of values?
   - What factors currently foster/hinder the teaching of values in your school?
   - In what ways does the school promote interfaith and intercultural understanding?
     What is your role in that process?
   - What opportunities do students have to demonstrate the values they are taught? (Is learning of values formally assessed and, if so, in what ways?)
   - How are parents/community involved in the teaching of values?

2. COMMUNITY and CURRICULUM RESOURCES
   - What resources do you use for teaching values?
   - What resources does the school use to promote interfaith and intercultural understanding (including the contribution of Islam to Australian society)?
   - What resources are required but are not available at present to support the teaching of values?
   - What links does the school have with community leaders and how does this influence the teaching of values education?

3. INTERSCHOOL COOPERATION
   - In what ways do you engage with teachers in other schools to promote interfaith and intercultural understanding and mutual respect?
   - Why were these activities initiated?
   - What benefits have been gained from these activities for:
     - students
     - teachers
     - parents
     - the community?
• What if any challenges arose in engaging in these interschool activities and how were they addressed?

• What opportunities are there for increasing the current level of interschool cooperation? How can these be activated?

4. TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

• What, if any, professional development have you experienced in relation to teaching Values for Australian Schooling? How was this undertaken?

• What, if any, professional development have you received in relation to building interfaith and intercultural understanding? How was this undertaken?

• What additional professional development is required to assist you in your work in this area?

5. QUALITY PROGRAMMES

• What processes have been established to ensure the quality of values education in this school?

• How does this school evaluate its values education programme? What action does the school take after completion of such evaluation?
ENCOURAGING TOLERANCE AND SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH SCHOOL EDUCATION
RESEARCH PROJECT

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION WITH STUDENTS

The purpose of this interview will be to generate information to help build a case study about tolerance and social cohesion. This interview will take the form of a general discussion, focusing on the following questions:

1. Could you describe what a typical day at your school looks like? (ice breaker)

2. What activities have you participated in that teach about values such as harmony, justice, tolerance and respect?

3. Why do you think these are important?

4. Can you talk about ways that students in this school demonstrate these values in their daily lives?

5. What opportunities have you had to help you understand what people from different cultures believe in and how they live?

6. What similarities and differences have you noticed in the beliefs and values of different groups in Australian society?

7. How well do you think values education helps you to participate in broader Australian society? (Secondary students)
ENCOURAGING TOLERANCE AND SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH SCHOOL EDUCATION RESEARCH PROJECT

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION WITH PARENTS

The purpose of this interview will be to generate information to help build a case study about tolerance and social cohesion. This interview will take the form of a general discussion, focusing on the following questions:

1. What are the key values you believe schools should teach children in Australia?

2. What do you consider to be the best aspects your child’s school currently teaches values to help them live in Australian society?

3. How important do you think it is for children to understand the beliefs and lifestyles of people from other cultures? Why do you say this?

4. In what ways do you think schools can promote social tolerance and social cohesion?

5. How well do you think the way this school teaches values education helps your children to participate in broader Australian society?
ENCOURAGING TOLERANCE AND SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH SCHOOL EDUCATION RESEARCH PROJECT

AREAS FOR DISCUSSION WITH JURISDICTIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS

The purpose of this interview will be to generate information to help build a case study about tolerance and social cohesion. This interview will take the form of a general discussion, focusing on the following areas:

1. Overview
   a. General observations about the interrelationships between Islamic government and non-government schools in promoting interfaith and intercultural understanding and mutual respect

2. Interschool Cooperation
   a. Extent of current interschool cooperation between Islamic schools, other faith based schools and secular schools, involving students, teachers and parents, and covering all aspects of school life.
   b. Factors which hinder interschool cooperation and how they can be overcome or fostered more systematically

3. Quality Assurance and Professional Learning
   a. Ensuring quality in the teaching of values
   b. Professional learning opportunities for values education including any gaps in provision

4. Curriculum Resources
   a. What curriculum resources are currently available to help students have a better understanding of Islam among (mainstream) Australian students and demonstrate how it can be compatible with other Australian values and cultures?
   b. Curriculum resources available to assist all schools promote interfaith and intercultural understanding, and any gaps in provision

5. School and Community Relations
   a. Strategies for working with community leaders to support Islamic schools and other schools with a high proportion of Islamic students, in values education activities.
Appendix 4: Prime Minister’s Meeting with Muslim Community Leaders—Statement of Principles, 23 August 2005, Canberra

An overriding loyalty to Australia, and a commitment to its traditions, values and institutions is the common bond that unites us all. In confronting the challenges of terrorism, we agree that:

1. All Australians are subject to the laws of this country, and in turn are entitled to equal protection under those laws.
2. All Australians should respect and participate in the democratic institutions and practices of this country.
3. All Australians unconditionally reject and denounce all forms of violence or terrorism and acts or language which promotes hatred, violence or terrorism. Such behaviour has no role in advancing the political or religious objectives of any group and is contrary to the values embraced by all Australians.
4. Violence and acts of terrorism committed in the name of Islam are a perversion of the Muslim faith.
5. Acts of terrorism are repugnant to all Australians, and in particular it leaders, have a responsibility to challenge and counteract those who seek to encourage the use of violence and terrorism in the name of Islam. The government must support and encourage Islamic leaders to challenge and to eradicate extremism.
6. We commit ourselves to work together with all Australians to produce positive outcomes which protect Australia against violence, terrorism and intolerance and promote our common goals of harmony and understanding.

We together have agreed:

- our discussions today represented an important exchange of ideas between the Australian government and the Islamic community that should continue;
- the Australian Government will seek the cooperation of the Governments of the States and Territories in working towards a national strategy to address intolerance and the promotion of violence;
- those present will continue to take a lead working with their communities and with other Islamic organisations to promote harmony, mutual understanding and Australian values within their communities and to challenge violence and extremism; and
- the Australian government will ensure that its programmes and policies enhance mutual understanding between the Islamic community and the broader Australian community and promote the Australian values of harmony, justice and democracy.
### Appendix 5: List of Islamic Schools and Colleges in Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>State/Territory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al Amanah College</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Faisal College</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Hidaya Islamic School</td>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Noori Muslim Primary School Ltd</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Qibla College</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Sadiq College</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Zahra College</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkana College Ltd</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashraful Madaaris High School</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Islamic College of Sydney (formerly King Abdul Aziz School)</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane Muslim School Inc</td>
<td>QLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dar Ulum College of Victoria</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Preston Islamic College</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Valley Islamic College</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illim College</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isik College (Geelong Campus)</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isik College (Keysborough Campus)</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isik College (Broadmeadows Campus)</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isik College (Mildura Campus)</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic College of Brisbane Ltd</td>
<td>QLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic College of Canberra</td>
<td>ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic College of South Australia</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Schools of Victoria (Werribee Islamic College)</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian International Academy (formerly King Khalid Islamic College of Victoria)</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langford Islamic School</td>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malek Fahd Islamic School</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manningham Community School</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minaret College</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Hira College</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>State/Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim Ladies College of Australia</td>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noor Al Houda Islamic College Pty Ltd</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rissalah College</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sule College</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Australian Islamic College (Kewdale Campus)</td>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 6: Being Australian – NSW Board of Studies Unit of Work for Stage 2

Being Australian

This unit has been written for a multi-stage classroom. The activities are designed to complement the learning in Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the HSIE syllabus and have students work towards the achievement of outcomes relevant to each stage. The unit can be taught as a multistage unit or as a separate unit for one of the stages. It can also be used in a class across two stages.

The green shading indicates teaching activities for all stages, while the yellow shading indicates teaching activities for students in stages one and two and the turquoise shading indicates teaching for students in stages two and three. There are also many activities that are specific to one stage and allow for group work and the development of skills and content from the HSIE syllabus. These multistage units provide an example of the ways the mandatory subject matter and outcomes can be incorporated into teaching and learning in HSIE K-6.

Being Australian provides the opportunity to develop background knowledge using a wide range of oral, visual and written text types, including discussion. Teachers can further develop this material to support the teaching of the Talking and Listening, Reading and Writing outcomes of the English syllabus.

Syllabus links

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1 Outcomes</th>
<th>Stage 2 Outcomes</th>
<th>Stage 3 Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultures</td>
<td>Cultures</td>
<td>Cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUS1.3 Identities</td>
<td>CUS2.3 Identities</td>
<td>CUS3.3 Identities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies customs, practices, symbols, languages and traditions of their family and other families.</td>
<td>Explains how shared customs, practices, symbols, languages and traditions in communities contribute to Australian and community identities.</td>
<td>Describes different cultural influences and their contribution to Australian identities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUS1.4 Cultural diversity</td>
<td>CUS2.4 Cultural diversity</td>
<td>CUS3.4 Cultural diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describes the cultural, linguistic and religious practices of their family, their community and other</td>
<td>Describes different viewpoints, ways of living,</td>
<td>Examines how cultures change through interactions with other cultures and the environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Subject Matter

### Students in Stage 1 will learn about:

#### Cultures
- cultural characteristics of families
- groups to which students belong, including the family
- symbols used by different groups, e.g. badges, flags
- similarities and differences between ways in which families express their culture, e.g. celebrations
- languages spoken by other groups and families
- different ways of communicating
- customs and practices important to students, including celebrations
- belief systems of groups and families in their community and in other communities
- traditional and religious stories important to students, beginning with Dreaming stories.

#### Environments
- the globe as a representation of Earth
- everyday words for location, position and direction, e.g. left, right, mountain, city
- uses of places in their local area
- natural, built and heritage features in the immediate environment and in other areas

### Students in Stage 2 will learn about:

#### Cultures
- origins and backgrounds of people in the local community
- the diversity of groups within and between communities
- easily recognisable symbols used by the local community, e.g. coats of arms
- languages spoken within communities, including the original Aboriginal languages spoken in the local community area
- places of religious and spiritual significance in the local community, including the special relationship of Aboriginal people to the land
- major customs and celebrations of religious and other community groups.

#### Environments
- geographical terminology, e.g. north/south/east/west, Equator, Tropic of Cancer, Tropic of Capricorn, North/South Pole
- significant natural, heritage and built features in the local area, New South Wales and Australia, and their uses
- the location of major cities, rivers and mountains in

### Students in Stage 3 will learn about:

#### Cultures
- cultural influences and other factors affecting identity, e.g. peer pressure, popular culture
- the cultural diversity of Australia and other nations
- national symbols (e.g. national anthem, flags, coat of arms), national culture represented by ballads, songs and colours, and significant sites (e.g. the Opera House, Uluru, the Snowy Mountains Scheme)
- colloquial words associated with cultural influences
- traditions, belief systems and practices of Australians, including celebrations.

#### Environments
- physical, political and cultural regions and main reference points in Australia and the world, including the continents and some capital cities
- geographical terminology, e.g. latitude, longitude
- selected natural or built heritage sites in the world, through case studies.
• personal and shared values and responsibilities towards features, sites, places and environments.  
• New South Wales and the capital cities in Australia  
• local and other Australian communities.

### Part 2: Being Australian: Australian Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CUS1.3 Identities</strong></td>
<td><strong>CUS2.3 Identities</strong></td>
<td><strong>CUS3.3 Identities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies customs, practices, symbols, languages and traditions of their family and other families.</td>
<td>Explains how shared customs, practices, symbols, languages and traditions in communities contribute to Australia and community identities.</td>
<td>Describes different cultural influences and their contribution to Australian identities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Develop and stimulate discussion on “What is important about being Australian?” Use the DD Big Book *Australians All, I am Australian* page 22. Use this text to focus discussion on what values we hold as Australians and what symbols represent Australia. Begin to include information on a class chart that is kept and developed over the course of the unit. | CUS1.3  
• gives information about their own family background, including languages spoken at home, religion(s), traditions, practices, customs, celebrations and stories  
• identifies languages spoken in the school and other communities and participates in activities that involve using a different language |
| Brainstorm “Who lives in Australia?” Encourage discussion focus by asking: Are all families the same? | Develop and stimulate discussion on “What is important about being Australian?” Use the DD Big Book *Australians All, I am Australian* page 22 and *Common Ground*, page 22, found in the DD Middle Primary Readers. Use these texts to focus discussion on what values we hold as Australians and what symbols represent Australia. Begin to include information on a class chart that is kept and developed over the course of the unit. | CUS2.3  
• uses text to identify values that considered to be important to Australian society  
• identifies and describes significant symbols of state and national life in Australia |
| | CUS3.3  
• investigates the ways in which Australians express their identity  
• investigate the Australian values, characteristics, features and symbols that are recognised nationally and internationally |
| | | |

Erebus International  
- 133 -
|谁出生在其他国家呢？等。  | | 培养宽容和加强社会团结通过学校教育 |
| Create a poster using magazine pictures showing many Australians.  | | | |
| Using *Families* picture kit (Peter Leyden) discuss how families are similar and different.  | |  | |
| Students select the picture, which best represents, their family. Discuss and give reasons why this picture was chosen.  | |  | |
| Students draw and label their own family. Present to the class.  | |  | |
| Discuss and list the place of birth of students or their parents. Valuable teaching ideas are available in *Treasures: The Gallery*. Suitable student worksheets and photo broadsheets are also available in this DET resource. Teachers book  | |  | |

| | **identifies characteristics that make another family different or similar to their own** |
| | In groups students draw a values shield and illustrate with six symbols that they would use to represent Australia for someone overseas. They should choose six symbols to represent things that they believe really identify Australia, and that most Australians would recognise and value. See page 71 and Handout 1: *We Remember DD Middle Primary Units*. |
| | **gives information about own family background including language(s) spoken at home, religion, traditions, practices, customs, celebrations and stories** |
| | Examine the Commonwealth Coat of Arms (Handout 2: *We Remember, DD Middle Primary Units*, also available in DD poster kit) without revealing what it is. Ask students where they might have seen this symbol. Consider its meaning, asking students whether they can identify any of the components, and, when it is used today. |
| | **examines different symbols representing Australia and evaluates their purpose, significance and importance** |
| | **explains how symbols reflect Australian identity** |
| | In groups students draw a values shield and illustrate with six symbols that they would use to represent Australia for someone overseas. They should choose six symbols to represent things that they believe really identify Australia, and that most Australians would recognise and value. See page 71 and Handout 1: *We Remember DD Middle Primary Units*. |
| | **demonstrates an understanding of different viewpoints about what is an Australian identity and gives their own viewpoint** |
| | Examine the Australian flag. |

| Erebus International | - 134 - |
Locate these places on the globe and world map.

Model a family tree to include children and their family up to their grandparents. Include country of origin and illustrate.

Examine the Australian flag. Use the video *Our National Flag since 1901* or refer to the web site: [www.australianflag.org.au](http://www.australianflag.org.au)

Research the floral emblem (the wattle) and discuss as above. Discuss with students who uses or needs these symbols.

What do the symbols above say about Australia? Why are they important? Do they represent all Australians?

The Discovering Democracy units are accessible online at (1)

Use the video *Our National Flag since 1901* or refer to the web site: [www.australianflag.org.au](http://www.australianflag.org.au)

Research the floral emblem (the wattle) and discuss as above. Discuss with students who uses or needs these symbols.

What do the symbols above say about Australia? Why are they important? Do they represent all Australians today? Why/ why not?

Students develop a debate or write a discussion developing aspects of:

What symbols are important to Australia today? How useful are the symbols we have to represent the values we have here in Australia?

The Discovering Democracy units are accessible online at (1)

Review class chart “What is...”
Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education

Review class chart “What is important about being Australian?”

Follow links to units online.


This is the direct link to the resource on the NSW Department of Education and Training’s web site.