



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

ANIC President's Report 2023-2024:

Imam Shadi Alsuleiman

All praise is due to Allah, and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah.

Assalamu Alaikom Wa Rahmatu Allahe Barakatuh,,

In 2023-2024, Allah SWT blessed me with the opportunity to serve Islam, the Muslim community, the Imams, and the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) in many ways and opportunities.

I recognise that my position as the President of the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) is both a responsibility and an honour to serve my fellow Imams and community. I also complement the ANIC Executive Committee members for their confidence, trust, effort and cooperation in their support and achievements of ANIC.

On behalf of the ANIC Executive Committee, I deliver this annual report.

Areas of Key Focus and Achievements in 2023-2024:

- **Imams Network:** ANIC has constantly communicated with all Imams in Australia, to maintain the bond and brotherhood and provide ANIC's updates and progress with the Imams. We worked tirelessly to ensure the Imams were constantly updated and included in all significant matters and concerns of ANIC and the Muslim community. We also kept an open forum for the Imams to communicate and give their feedback and suggestions freely and openly.
- **Local Community Engagements:** ANIC has constantly engaged with key stakeholders from the Muslim community, in particular, the Imams, Dua'at, leaders, Islamic organisations and centres. We exerted all efforts to include community leaders in discussions and consultations on the affairs of the Muslim community and its future.
- **Media and Public Statements:** ANIC issued over 40 public statements in 2023-2024, reflecting the views of ANIC, Imams and the Muslim community. The statements issued varied in taking a strong stance on many religious, human rights and political issues on the Muslim community, particularly in the last 12 months, addressing the war on Gaza, and recently in Lebanon, the occupation and the ongoing genocide committed against our brothers and sisters by the Israeli occupation. These statements also include the preservation of Islamic and Muslim integrity in Australia and globally and reinforcing ANIC's position at the forefront and its leadership of the Muslim community.



ANIC continues to shift the media toward reporting on Islam and Muslims in an unbiased and religiously mindful way. ANIC has employed a full-time media monitoring officer to monitor, communicate, and engage with media agencies, journalists, reporters, and regulators and address issues of concern to the Muslim community; we have seen significant progress and development in the media's response to ANIC's concerns and correspondence. ANIC will continue striving toward a more dignified, positive, and respectful approach by the media toward Islam and Muslims.

- **Social Media:** We advanced ANIC's presence on social media and other platforms, particularly on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Youtube, ultimately resulting in a robust online presence. ANIC's social media presence on different platforms has reached over 65,000 followers and continues to grow. As a result, we focused on ensuring that ANIC maintains and is up to date with any form of contemporary exposure and communication. We continue to engage with a social media consultants to assist with ANIC's ongoing growth and exposure. This includes the recent facelift and development of the ANIC branding and website.
- **Public and Media Spokesperson:** Br Bilal Rauf, the ANIC spokesperson and senior advisor, made numerous public and media statements on behalf of ANIC, particularly during the recent war and aggression on Gaza. Through these platforms, he successfully elevated ANIC to a strong position in the media space professionally and eloquently. ANIC continues to engage with the media agencies, peak bodies and departments, particularly the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) and the Australia Press Council (APC).
- **Political Engagements:** ANIC has and continues to meet and engage with senior political leaders from all political parties in Australia, major Government agencies, and religious organisations, advocating Muslim community issues and concerns. ANIC ensures its presence in all Government and non-government forums to address the community's concerns.
- **Advocacy and Activism:** ANIC has been a leading organisation advocating and addressing the Muslim community's interests and concerns. Some of these activities include:
 - a) The danger of Islamophobia on many fronts and aiming to ban Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim sentiment in Australia. The rise in Islamophobia in the last year revealed a significant gap in how our community reacts and responds to Islamophobic attacks. As a result, ANIC began developing an initiative called 'Action Against Islamophobia (AAI)' that aims to provide confidential crisis support for anyone who has experienced Islamophobia, anti-Muslim hate, racism, discrimination, bias, or bigotry. Additionally, AAI delivers information on the resources available to support those affected and referrals to legal and mental health services. They held local forums in Sydney, Queensland and Melbourne that centred on directly addressing the community's needs when dealing with Islamophobia and implementing the responses to adjust AAI's approach and raising awareness on the Christchurch Massacre and the danger of Islamophobia, including holding an online forum commemorating the Christchurch Massacre with over 10,000 views and engagements online.
 - b) Actively lobbied and engaged with the Federal Government to take a firm stance in support of the Palestinian people, condemn the occupying Israeli state and hold it to account, recognise the State of Palestine, grant visas to the Palestinians, and change the visa class to



allow the newly arrived Palestinians to live in Australia and benefit from all its public services.

- c) Conveyed a strong voice supporting our brothers and sisters abroad and in foreign affairs, particularly Palestine, East Turkistan, India, and others.
- d) Promoting the importance of Clean Up Australia Day and the Islamic position on purification.
- e) ANIC continues to work closely with faith leaders and all parties to address climate change and its impact on the environment and future generations.

- **Australian Religious and Faith Communities Network:** ANIC participated in the Religious and Faith Communities Network of all Australia's major religious and faith groups. We contributed positively to the Network in preserving faith and bridging the gap with other faith groups in Australia. ANIC fostered a strong relationship with like-minded religious organisations and saw the common interest and mutual benefit in this relationship. This includes ANIC's contribution towards the first of its kind, the Australian Faith Council, which will advocate matters of faith to the decision-makers. ANIC has co-signed many letters and submissions that we share with other faith communities to protect the rights and freedom of faith and their institutions.
- **ANIC Halal Authority:** Exerting all efforts to gain credibility in the Halal Certification market and get ANIC's name out there on local and international markets. We continue to engage with local and international authorities and major players in the industry. We aspire to regulate the Halal certification market and work on standardising the local Halal certification industry. ANIC Halal Authority has grown 100% from the previous year and has made a strong presence both locally and globally. ANIC Halal Authority operates with a well-versed and experienced team, maintaining a high level of professionalism, integrity, and transparency.
- **Updating the ANIC Policies and Procedures:** The ANIC Executive Committee focused on developing many policies and procedures in various areas, ensuring that ANIC is an institution for all and many generations to come and has strong governance and policies in place.
- **Submissions:** ANIC has made a diverse range of submissions to the Australian Federal and State Governments, raising concerns on matters pertaining to the Muslim community, primarily focused on Anti-Discrimination Bills, Religious Freedom, vilification laws, the proscription of Right-Wing White Supremacy on The Terror List in Australia, and the recognition of Palestine. **These submissions include:**
 - 1- Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security - Prohibited Hate Symbols and Other Measures.
 - 2- A review of the NSW Law Reform Commission of section 93Z of the Crimes Act 1900 (NSW) (Act). In submitting, ANIC has conferred with various Muslim community organisations focused on providing community services and support throughout Australia. ANIC has also benefited from feedback provided by Australian Muslims to its members. Accordingly, the issues raised in the submission are reflective of the views prevalent in the Australian Muslim community, including among other Muslim organisations. The submission aimed to seek legislative protection against religious discrimination under the Anti-Discrimination Act, emphasising the need to consider community experiences. The



goal is to balance safeguarding against hateful speech inciting violence while preserving essential freedoms, including freedom of speech, association, and religion.

- **Marriage Celebrants:** Registered over 30 new Imams as marriage celebrants in the past year and empowered the Imams with this recognition from all states and territories.
- **Reflecting on Christchurch - 4 Years Later.**

ANIC held a 5th anniversary of the Christchurch mosque massacre online to solemnly reflect on the tragic events and the innocent lives lost.

15 March 2024 is a date that is etched into the collective mind of Muslims around the world. It is a date on which 51 men, women and children were murdered and many more injured at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. It was a massacre against a people simply because of their religious beliefs and activity. The men, women and children were praying at the time in the mosques. In New Zealand and around the globe, including in Australia, people continue to gather and mourn the victims and pay their respects to the families of the victims in commemoration of this tragedy.

ANIC extends its prayers and support to the brothers and sisters affected by the Christchurch tragedy and its sincerest gratitude to the people and organisations who continue to commemorate this sad tragedy and show their support for justice and humanity.
- **ANIC Islamic Finance Authority (AIFA):** ANIC established AIFA (ANIC Islamic Finance Authority) to support Australia's Islamic financial services industry. It offers services on Shariah compliance certificates, accreditation, industry standardisation, and advice. It also provides advocacy and research to promote Islamic finance and fulfil Australian Muslims' financial and banking needs.
- **Australian Islamic Education Services:** ANIC is an approved scripture provider for Islamic Special Religious for Muslim students in public schools in NSW under the Australian Islamic Education Services and has expanded to different states, starting with the ACT and QLD. AIES has held several workshops for its volunteers and has increased its teacher volunteer base. AIES intends to reach out to all public schools with Muslim students and provide Islamic education. This includes initiating the Friday Juma'a prayers at different schools.
- **ANIC Women's Advisory Council (AWAC),** with now 22 prominent Muslim women from different states and territories. The Council strives to maintain a stronger connection with the Australian Muslim Women leaders and prominent community members. The objective of this advisory council is to proactively hear the concerns, feedback, and suggestions from the council members regarding what is in the best interest of the wider Muslim community. This included (but is not limited to) surrounding issues and affairs that concern Muslim women in our Australian community. The Council is working on developing a document on the ideal Australian Muslim family that will address the Islamic values and principles of establishing a family and living an Islamic way of life in Australia.

AWAC held its first-morning tea, inviting over 40 prominent Muslim sisters and leaders to engage, network and have an open and robust discussion addressing the affairs of the Muslim community, particularly matters pertaining to Muslim women and their role in the Muslim community.



- **Determination of the Beginning and End of the Month of Ramadan Forum:** The Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) resolved to initiate a forum to determine the beginning and end of the Month of Ramadan. This forum aims to unify the Imams in declaring and announcing the beginning and end of the Month of Ramadan, foster a good understanding of managing disagreements and differences of opinion amongst them, and unite the Imams and the Muslim community. The forum will have three stages:
 1. To narrow down the differences and disagreements within the Imams that share the same methodology, primarily Moonsighting and Calculation.
 2. To coordinate the groups with different opinions on determining the beginning and end of the Month of Ramadan, discuss, dialogue, and share a better understanding of the different opinions on this topic.
 3. To have an agreed methodology in determining the beginning and end of the Month of Ramadan or a mutual and respectful understanding amongst the Imams on this topic.

- **ANIC had partnered with the National Zakat Foundation (NZF) as a Zakat collector partner to facilitate Australian Muslims in fulfilling the obligation of Zakat.**

- **Last Ramadan, the National Muslim Community Iftaar was held together with the Alliance of Australian Muslims (AAM). ANIC held its third National Muslim Community Iftar 2024-1445H at the Orion Centre - Campsie, with over 300 guests attending.**

Muslim community leaders and Imams attended the Iftar to break fast together, showcase the unity of the Muslim community in Australia and stand in solidarity with their brothers and sisters in Gaza – Palestine. Despite Ramadan being a time of spiritual elevation and happiness, this year, our hearts were filled with sorrow as the Israeli Occupation continues to strike and kill innocent Palestinians in Gaza, commit genocide and illegal settlements and violate international laws and UN resolutions during this holy month.

- **ANIC continues to play a significant role in the Alliance of Australian Muslims (AAM), uniting the Muslim community and organisations from all states and territories and bringing together the Muslim community on the common denominators and interests that all Muslims agree to and aspire to achieve.** ANIC aims to support the AAM to be the face of the political face and advocacy of the Muslim community. The Alliance of Australian Muslims (AAM) hosted the Australian Muslim Community Leaders Summit 2024 on Sunday, 12th May, in Campsie - Sydney and Online.

Prominent Muslim organisations and community leaders from around Australia attended the Summit to discuss important issues of concern to Australian Muslims and the future of the Muslim community in Australia, particularly during the current crises and challenges faced by the Muslim community and Ummah and the war on Gaza.

The AAM aims to serve as a collaborative platform to coordinate and enhance efforts for the common benefit of the Australian Muslim community. Further, the AAM continues to stand with and contribute to the broader Australian society.

The summit focused on:

 - Working together during difficult times, particularly the current war on Gaza and the ongoing aggression by the Israeli occupying forces on the Palestinians,
 - A Political Engagement and Advocacy Framework
 - The role of media & social media



- **Global Imams and Scholars Council (GISC):** ANIC is a co-founder and contributed to establishing The Global Imams and Scholars Council (GISC). Seven of the world's leading scholars and Imams Councils in Western and English-speaking countries have formed the Council to preserve the Islamic and Muslim identity in the West and collaborate on the greater good of the Muslim world and Ummah. ANIC attended the first retreat held by the GISC in Istanbul - Turkey, to connect with their fellow brothers and Imams from around the world and engage and share experiences with other like-minded organisations, councils and countries. This year, the Council of Imams in Japan joined the GISC, and many other Imams councils worldwide expressed interest in joining.
- **Launch of Muslim Community Fund:** Earlier this year, the Muslim Community Fund was launched with the support and establishment of the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) and the Alliance of Australian Muslims (AAM). Its primary purpose is to serve the community's most pressing needs and interests while supporting programs, organisations, initiatives, and other Muslim-run projects. The Muslim Community Fund is a values-driven organisation, embedding Islamic tradition and principles at the core of every project and initiative. Guided by this ethos, we are dedicated to passionately advocating for and addressing the Muslim community's most pressing priorities by:
 - Building a brighter, united future for Australian Muslims
 - Finance our community's local needs
 - Building a solid and united Muslim community with a shared vision
 - Elevating our community at a local and government level
 - Building a stronger community through a stronger identity

The Muslim Community Fund aims to support programs, organisations and initiatives that serve the diverse needs of our local Muslim community, primarily:

1. Preserving the Islamic Identity
2. Media engagement & lobbying
3. Community outreach programs
4. Mentorship programs
5. Political engagement
6. Advocacy and legal support

Our Objective & Vision in Moving Forward:

**To Place ANIC in the Position of Religious and Islamic Authority in Australia,
To strive to preserve the mainstream Islamic identity, the Muslim's integrity and
To represent the interests of the Muslim community in all ways and forms.**

This year has been exceptionally challenging for our community and the Ummah, including the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC), especially with the ongoing massacre and genocide being committed against our brothers and sisters in Palestine and recently in Lebanon. The Palestinian cause and the concerns of our community will always remain a primary focus for ANIC.



A special thanks to the ANIC Executive Committee members for their cooperation, leadership, confidence, and ongoing support.

I also acknowledge and thank the outstanding work and efforts of the ANIC Advisory Committee, which works tirelessly and volunteers its time to serve the Muslim community.

Thank you and we Ask Allah to continue using us in serving His religion and servants.

Regards,

Shadi Alsuleiman

President

Australian National Imams Council

Date: 13 October 2024