

18th of August 2014

PRESS RELEASE

Muslim Community Leaders meet with the Hon. Tony Abbott MP Prime Minister of Australia Today

A broad cross section of Muslim community leaders were invited to a meeting with the Prime Minister Tony Abbott today. The meeting provided the community with an opportunity to air their concerns and engage in discussion about recent statements on anti-terrorism and other global issues.

The Mufti led the discussion by stating that "safeguarding and protecting Australia's safety and security is part of our creed." He went on to say that "keeping Australia safe means working within different channels" but that it was also "important to preserve the value of freedom while maintaining the country's security".

The following items were discussed:

- The community is concerned about the language and rhetoric that has been used in relation to security in the light of the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East. Concern was expressed about the continuing use of divisive language when the majority of the Muslim community is Australian born and raised.
- It was stressed that Australian Muslims have a vested interest in the ongoing safety and security of the country. Violence and extremism, whether in Australia or abroad, will never be endorsed nor supported.
- The community stressed the need for strategies which focused on research-established causes for some young people being tempted to join overseas conflicts.
- The community is committed to working collaboratively towards outcomes that do not infringe the civil liberties of any member of the Australian public and to ensure that no policies are hastily implemented without due and thorough consideration.
- In the recent past considerable funds have been allocated towards policies that are aimed at reducing the potential for extremism in the community, but have not been effective in resolving the issue. Those attending made it clear that much of the expertise and scholarship that the government and the

community needs for more effective solutions has not been adequately accessed or developed.

- Attendees stressed the need for appropriate risk assessment of any measures proposed in order to ensure that they do not result in the further marginalisation or victimisation of any members of the Muslim community.
- Any policies or statements should be fair and balanced without being perceived as targeting the Muslim community, when the issues affect all Australians equally.
- It was highlighted that Australia needs to maintain its ethical and moral leadership in tackling global issues and devise sound foreign policies that uphold human rights, are balanced and do not negatively impact on any section of the Australian community.

We welcome the Prime Minister's initiative in listening to the community's concerns and we stress the utmost need to continue the process of sustained engagement and consultation.

Those who attended included:

Office of the Grand Mufti of Australia
Australian National Imams Council
Affinity Intercultural Association
Australian Muslim Women's Association
Ashabul Kahfi
Centre for Islamic Dakwah and Education
Islamic Council of NSW
Islamic Women's Welfare Association
Lebanese Muslim Association
Majlisul Ualamaa of Australia
Muslims Australia (AFIC)
United Muslims of Australia
United Muslim Women's Association
Zetland Mosque