

Mosques open doors in order to embrace all



National Mosque Open Day visitors at Lakemba Mosque on Saturday 29 October 2016. From left: Mr Jihad Dib, Ms Tanya Pilbersek and Mr Tony Burke (right). Photo by ZIA.

Abu Anees, *Australasian Muslim Times*, 3 November 2016

On Saturday 29 October Mosques all around Australia welcomed thousands of people of all faiths and diverse background, men, women and children, in order to build community understanding and harmony.

National Mosque Open Day is an annual Australia-wide event initiated by the Lebanese Muslim Association (LMA) with support from the Department of Social Services.

The event features a number of mosques across the nation simultaneously opening their doors to the public and inviting them to come in and explore their local mosque.



Visitors browsing through the exhibit inside Lakemba Mosque. Photo by ZIA.

This year National Mosque Open Day was the largest ever, featuring increased number of participating mosques across Australia, in capital cities as well as in regional towns, giving more Australians the chance to visit and be welcomed into their local mosques.

One of the oldest and largest mosques, the Imam Ali Mosque in Wangee Road, Lakemba was visited by thousands of people last Saturday to observe prayer services, listen to the recitation of Quran, and look at the exhibition on Islamic teachings, practices and cultural activities within the mosque.

A number of politicians and interfaith leaders visited the Lakemba mosque throughout the day meeting the congregation as well as the visitors.



Jihad Dib, the state member for Lakemba and the NSW Shadow Minister of Education was readily available at the front steps of the mosque welcoming visitors and engaging people into conversation.

Visitors found a unique experience and flavour, representing the multicultural make-up of the congregation at Lakemba Mosque.

There were information brochures and booklets on Islam and Muslims as well as Australasian Muslim Times newspaper to be picked up.

The visitors tasted free BBQ, special tea, sweets, food and engaged themselves in activities at the mosque throughout the day.



Of particular notice was the way a lot of non-Muslims, among them an overwhelmingly a large number of women simply sat on the carpeted floor of the Lakemba Mosque attentively listening to the melodious live recitation of Quran in Arabic, possibly a unique spiritual experience to listen to the revelation that Muslims consider the Words of God.

This year the following mosques formally took part in the National Mosque Open Day 2016:
New South Wales: Lakemba Mosque, Cabramatta Mosque, Blacktown Mosque, Orange Mosque, Islamic Society of Albury-Wodonga, Sultan Fatih Mosque - Newcastle,

Victoria: Virgin Mary Mosque - Hoppers Crossing, Albanian Australian Islamic Society North Carlton, Geelong Mosque

Australian Capital Territory: Canberra Islamic Centre

Queensland: Rockhampton Mosque, Mareeba District Mosque, Cairns Mosque, Masjid Salam – Marsden, Garden City Mosque – Harristown, Islamic Society of Gold Coast Inc. - Arundel

Tasmania: Hobart Mosque -West Hobart

South Australia: Marion Mosque - Park Holme.