

Be The Bridge

In January 2015 MWA participated in #BeTheBridge, an initiative founded by Gill Hicks (survivor of the London 2005 Terrorist bombings now double amputee) that aims to bring people together - both physically and through its very intention. Members gathered on the steps of the Sydney Opera House to call for more empathy and tolerance of different religions and cultures and greater efforts to eradicate ignorance.

No matter one's cultural or religious/non religious backgrounds, whatever the difference may be, #BeTheBridge encourages all people to find the strength and confidence to endeavour to understand more about 'the other'. The group is made up of members from Muslim, Jewish, Christian and atheist communities from around Australia.



Promoting Peace In Words And Actions

MWA is heavily involved in initiatives that foster and promote a greater dialogue between all citizens. Promoting peace, inter-cultural and inter-religious understanding through shared knowledge and experiences has led to greater education, awareness, and progress.

MWA is regularly called on to present on Islam and Muslims. From talks at schools, universities, hospitals, rallies and protests, on radio and TV, cultural and religious awareness programs, conferences, as well as general neighbourhood and community groups, MWA plays a significant role in conducting community education and development.



Education

One of the goals of MWA is to increase self reliance and promote participation of Muslim women in the wider community through various forms of education. This year MWA has conducted an array of classes, information sessions and workshops to equip women with skills, information, and increase access to mainstream services. These activities have reduced isolation and increased access to further education and training in mainstream services as well as access to many other relevant services.

Information sessions have also been conducted in order to educate women about different aspects and opportunities. These have included information sessions on self-employment business opportunities, women only self defense workshops, domestic violence education, yoga classes, and first aid courses.

MWA also holds specially developed religious classes with a focus on making religious knowledge accessible and attainable for Australian Muslim women. One of the most successful classes of the year was a special short course on the life of Fatima al Zahra, daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This was truly an inspiring course that had a remarkable affect on all those who had the chance to attend.



MUSLIM WOMEN ASSOCIATION



Established 1983

2014 - 2015

32ND ANNUAL REPORT

Supporting and representing Muslim women and their families for over 30 years

Linking Hearts

One of the most significant achievements of 2014-15, and after a long and difficult process for both staff and management, MWA was excited to launch Linking Hearts: Canterbury Bankstown Multicultural Family Homelessness Support Service on Tuesday 24th March 2015.

culturally sensitive support options for those at greatest risk of homelessness. Linking Hearts is a program funded under the NSW Department of Family and Community Services Going Home Staying Home reforms.

Linking Hearts, a new service supporting individuals and families in need, was launched by then NSW Minister for Family and Community Services Gabrielle Upton, and then NSW Minister for Citizenship and Communities Victor Dominello.

"I welcome this new program aimed at helping to ensure the most vulnerable in society, including new migrants and refugees, are able to access the services they need regardless culturally and linguistic background," Ms Upton said. "In particular I pay tribute to the Muslim Women's Association, led by Maha Abdo OAM, for its dedication to supporting migrant families, especially women and children, across Sydney at risk of homelessness and domestic violence."

Linking Hearts is a new innovative program that builds on strong interagency relationships to provide holistic and



Mr Dominello said Linking Hearts would provide culturally-appropriate services for individuals at risk of homelessness, including women and children escaping domestic and family violence and refugees requiring crisis care accommodation.

Working with the MWA on this key initiative will be our key partners: BaptistCare NSW and ACT; Creating Links (NSW) Ltd; Southern Sydney Women's Therapy Centre Inc; Domestic Violence Service Management; Metro Assist Inc.

Muslim Women Make It Happen

International Women's Day 2015, themed "Make It Happen", saw MWA participate in events Australia wide. From local events held as part of the Canterbury Women's Initiatives Network, to MWA CEO Maha Abdo presenting the keynote address at the Sky Foundation International Women's Day Luncheon in Townsville, Nth Queensland. Ms Abdo was special guest at the Hear Our Voices Women's Gathering in Hobart, Tasmania; and she also presented at the Australian Bahai Community interfaith event.



123 Drive

MWA has been providing financial support to single women and women with children who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence to undertake driving lessons and obtain their driver's license. The 123 Drive Program has been running in partnership with Canterbury Domestic Violence Liaison Committee (DVLC) and the funding is provided by Canterbury City Council. The aim of the program is to assist women and women with children to overcome isolation, connect with and gain access to services and support available in their community. The program also aims to enhance client's skills and encourage them to become self-reliant and independent.



Promoting A Healthy Lifestyle

MWA hosted a free four week program that was concerned with educating participants on healthy food and lifestyle choices. Each session focussed on good health, healthy eating and physical activity. The program focussed on key skills and guides for staying motivated for a healthy and bright future.

In April 2015, MWA participated in the Halal Food Exhibition and organised a cooking segment for the day, including a chef who demonstrated the preparation of a Halal meal. While the event experienced some protest outside, a large number of the guests were non-Muslim and all were incredibly enthusiastic and excited about understanding the traditions and importance of Halal.

Olive Ribbon Campaign



The Olive Ribbon Campaign was launched In December 2014 as an expression of solidarity with Arab and Muslim communities, created in response to racially based misinformation and attacks against individuals and communities across Sydney. The Olive Ribbon Campaign is a partnership between MWA,



Western Sydney Community Forum, Arab Council Australia, and Sydney Alliance, to enable our members and friends to demonstrate our unity and desire for valuing all of humanity.

SAYIT

This year's SAYIT Program has been the most successful to date. With over 100 girls participating in the program, MWA has continued to run an inspiring, educational and interactive program specifically aimed at raising social awareness among young girls. SAYIT is aimed at girls aged between 7 and 17 years and runs on the first and third Saturday of every month. As well as the regular SAYIT program involving motivational discussions, inspirational lessons, practical skills, and a mini SAYIT Eid fete, the girls also celebrated their achievements at the end of 2014 with a specially planned fun day consisting of horseriding, archery and outdoor games.



MIM



Now in its third year, relaxing environment. MIM provides a chance for MIM (Mothers Inspire Mothers) has proven to be a much needed initiative for Australian Muslim mums. MIM is a mothers group with the aim of enlightening, inspiring, and supporting Muslim mothers in a comfortable and

relaxing environment. MIM provides a chance for mothers to meet up and learn from each other and share each others stories and experiences. MIM has provided an excellent support base for mothers facing everyday challenges and trying to balance out their various commitments and demands.



Violence Against Women Is Everybody's Problem

Violence against women is a whole community responsibility and MWA has promoted dialogue and action to ensure women feel safe and respected both in and out of the home. Great partnerships have been developed within the wider community that are serious about approaching this issue in a cooperative and sustainable way.

Since 2007, MWA has played a vital role in the 'It's Time to Talk' project, which is a community awareness campaign about domestic violence; it's aim is to challenge the silence which surrounds domestic violence.

We want to promote the idea that all members of the community need to speak out against violence in the home if we are to end it.

We participated in an array of events as part of the White Ribbon Day campaign for the elimination of violence against women. Reclaim the Night Sydney saw hundreds of people from all walks of life gather to show their solidarity with Muslim women and MWA CEO spoke about the need for sincere action for peaceful co-existence with respect.



Finances

Income	
Grants	1,608,355
Membership	11,510
Rent	47,812
Other Income	23,910
Total	1,691,587
Expenses	
Education & Community Services	263,274
Employment & Related Expenses	782,020
Administration	204,476
Facilities & Maintenance	65,541
Other Expenses	26,250
Total	1,341,561
Performance	
Income	1,691,587
Expenses	1,341,561
SURPLUS	350,026

Management Committee

Executive Officer	Maha Krayem Abdo OAM
President	Joumana Harris
Vice President	Rouba Allouche
Secretary	Amna Elghoul
Assistant Secretary	Manel Tlais
Treasurer	Lola Taleb
Assistant Treasurer	Mirna Hadid
Committee Member	Souha Alameddine
Committee Member	Rawaa Rustom
Committee Member	Samaa Mursi
Committee Member	Sylvana Wehbe
Committee Member	Hajrija Kamenjas