

# Gold Coast Muslims denounce violence as 'appalling'

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THE Gold Coast Islamic community has condemned the riots in Sydney and insists its religion promotes peace and understanding.

As Sydney was coming to terms with violent protests about an anti-Islamic film on the weekend, Gold Coast Muslims were coming together with the community at the city's multicultural festival. Gold Coast Islamic community spiritual leader Imam Imraan Husain said the behaviour was appalling.

"The Prophet promotes love, kindness and understanding, not hate and violence," he said. "I understand why the Muslim community is upset about the anti-Islamic film but it is not the way to deal with it.

"On the Gold Coast it is important to our community to be at one with all cultures. There was a great example of that at the multicultural festival today.

"It gives us a good feeling to be part of a diverse, cosmopolitan society on the Gold Coast." Muslims at the festival yesterday said they were embarrassed by the behaviour in Sydney.

One woman, who refused to be named, said it cast a bad light on Muslims.

"It is not the right, civilised way to act," she said. "There are better ways to deal with racism."

Meanwhile, Saudi Student Club president Ahmed Alazmi said people from all cultures had to accept each other.

"The student club has a stall at the city's multicultural festival each year and it is great to see everyone from each different country in the one place," he said. "We came here from Saudi Arabia to see other cultures and to embrace them, not to have violence."

Organisers said the festival was a raging success and protest riots in NSW had not affected the atmosphere. Festival head Ben Brauer said it was the biggest year yet.

"The official count isn't in yet but I'm sure there was more than last year, so at least 35,000 came during the two days," he said. "We are growing the festival and will expand it to include individual events at other locations during the week after the weekend festival."