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To his acute embarrassment O'Connor was then forced to admit he plagiarised sentences from an online encyclopedia frowned upon in academic circles for lacking intellectual rigour



It's a beat-up: Islam head

JUST days after the September 11 atrocity in New York in 2001, the mosque at Kuraby in Brisbane was burnt to the ground.

Angry young Muslims wanted revenge. Seventy of them went to their imam, Dr Mohamad Abdalla, calling for retaliation. "My immediate response was to tell them: Whoever did this, we will forgive them," he said.

"I told them it was the time to show that Islam is not violent. I urged them to use the incident to begin a process of reconciliation."

Dr Abdalla defused what could have been the start of an ugly religious feud.

He took youth Muslim leaders to meet the Police Commissioner, Bob Atkinson, in a bid to promote harmony.

Can this be the same man accused of running a

terrorist ring from Griffith University?

"There is no justification in Islam for killing any human beings - in times of peace or in times of war," said Dr Abdalla, director of the university's Islamic unit.

After the Kuraby fire Dr Abdalla took comfort from words on a singed page from the Koran where Mohammed says a strong man is the one who can control himself in times of anger. The words were all that survived the inferno.

Dr Abdalla agrees that Islam is shrouded in controversy. And he does not see anything sinister in accepting money from the Saudis to run his Islamic school. "If there are no strings attached, I don't mind where the money comes from," he said. "At the end of the day it is the university

who decides, not me."

Born in Libya 37 years ago, Dr Abdalla and his family lived in Jordan for three years before migrating to Sydney.

He is married with a young son and completed a degree in micro-electric engineering before studying Islam at Griffith.

He has travelled widely promoting Islam and has spoken in Catholic cathedrals and state schools.

"We have differences between religions but we should respect those differences and talk about them," he said. "Why should we let them become an obstacle to peace?"

He is upset at the "totally biased" coverage of the Saudi funding controversy. "Our people lose hope when they read something like that," he said. "It makes people angry.

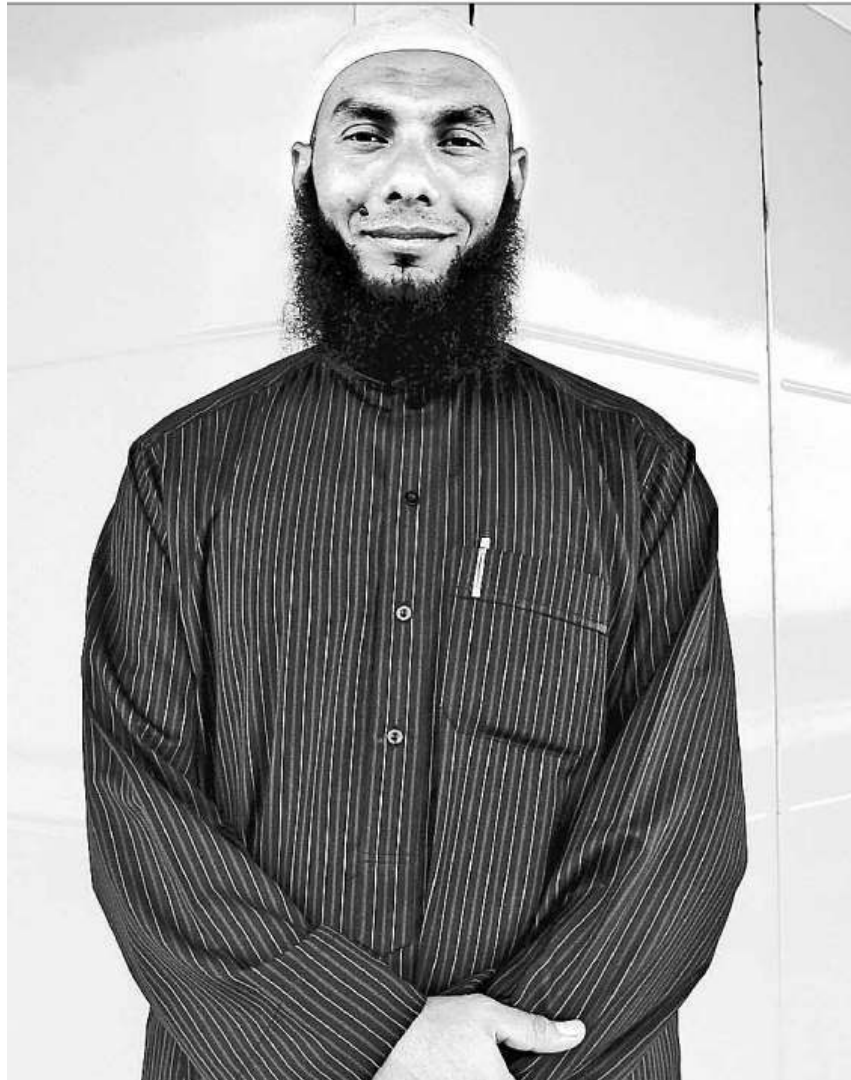
And there was nothing secret, that was all lies.

"\$100,000 from the Saudis, so what? Harvard university got \$20 million and eight universities in the UK, including Oxford and Cambridge, have received \$233.5 million since 1995."

A towering figure, Dr Abdalla is not nearly as foreboding as he may seem. He preaches peace and speaks with disdain about militant Islam and Osama bin Laden. "Like any religion there are moderates and extremists, fundamentalists and lunatics," he said.

"He (bin Laden) has committed crimes in the name of Islam that go against every command and tenet of the faith.

"Don't forget the Saudi government is an ally with the West against extremist fundamentalists."



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PEACEMAKER ... Dr Mohamad Abdalla, head of Griffith University's Islamic Research Unit, says Harvard, Oxford and Cambridge have taken many millions of Saudi money.