



PRESS RELEASE

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**932 Bourke Street
Zetland (Sydney)
NSW - 2017.
P O Box 7185, SSBH
Alexandria NSW - 2015.
AUSTRALIA.**

Tel [02] 9319 6733

Fax [02] 9319 0159

Email: admin@afic.com.au

Web: www.afic.com.au

**AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL
ISLAMIC ORGANISATION
REPRESENTING
MUSLIM COMMUNITIES**

**45 Years of Community
Services**

30 January 2009

We Are One

The President of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils-AFIC, Mr Ikebal Patel today applauded the decision of the Federal Government's new Diverse Australia Program which will target racism and intolerance.

Mr Patel said, the view of Islam is clear: God says in the Quran.

"O people, We have created you from a male and a female and made you into races and tribes so that you may know each other. Surely the most honored of you in the sight of God is the one who is the most righteous of you" (49:13).

He stated, instead of enabling human beings to know each other better, there is no reason why these diversities should create barriers, or cause animosities among human beings. The colour of one's skin should not be a determining factor in access to services or resources.

Mr Patel further added that effectively combating racism and intolerance depends to a large extent on the anti-racist message filtering down to the whole of civil society. This requires activities aimed at spreading anti-racist messages among the general public and making it clear in relevant circles at national and local level, as well as organising activities to exchange information and raise awareness of the issues related to combating racism and intolerance.

Mr Patel stated that AFIC is well placed and actively involved in the various sectors of society in an intercultural dialogue based on mutual respect seeking effective solution to combat racism and intolerance.

Mr Patel stressed, however, work remains to be done and organizations such as APRO and FECCA working in consultation with community and faith based organizations will be instrumental in effecting necessary changes.

Mr Patel stated the UNESCO principles on tolerance:

"Consistent with respect for human rights, the practice of tolerance does not mean toleration of social injustice or the abandonment or weakening of one's convictions. It means that one is free to adhere to one's own convictions and accepts that others adhere to theirs. It means accepting the fact that human beings, naturally diverse in their appearance, situation, speech, behavior and values, have the right to live in peace and to be as they are. It also means that one's views are not to be imposed on others."

He reiterated, respect for diversity comes when we recognize, the dignity of the human beings, the basic equality of all human beings, universal human rights, fundamental freedom of thought, conscience and belief.

Mr Patel said, Islam recognizes all these principles and AFIC will assist Government, its agencies and other NGO's in ridding Australia of this insidious plague.

For further information, please contact:

MR. IKEBAL PATEL (CHAIRMAN) AT 0419 418 237.