

## More ridiculous claims against Dr Abdalla

If 'secretive', as claimed by *The Australian*, then the Tabligh Jamaat (TJ) group must be one of the worst kept secrets in the Muslim world. Established in India in the 1920s, TJ has a presence in over 80 countries around the world. The main activities of the apolitical movement are to encourage Muslims to be more religiously observant, particularly in terms of prayer, charity, and fasting, as well as to provide social support to Muslims who are isolated, sick, or disadvantaged. Muslims associated with the TJ spend considerable time in mosques and regularly make spiritual journeys to mosques in different towns, states, and countries.

In Australia, the TJ operates with the full knowledge and support of the mosques in which its members are present. Although many Muslims see TJ members as conservative in terms of their views and appearance, they are generally appreciated for their simplicity and reminders of traditional Islamic values, norms, and manners. While actual TJ members generally comprise only a small proportion of the congregation in most Australian mosques, it is not uncommon for large numbers of the congregation to join TJ study circles after prayers to listen to narrations of Prophetic traditions.

It is this traditional focus that attracted Dr Mohamad Abdalla to the movement in his younger days. While he is not a leader of the TJ, he maintains a close association with the group as he does with various other organisations within the Muslim community. As Acting Imam of the Kuraby Mosque for many years, Dr Abdalla was expected to develop positive relations with various Muslim groups and to build bridges of tolerance and understanding between the Muslim community and the wider Australian society. He is widely acknowledged for his success in both these regards.

Time and again Dr Abdalla has been a voice of forgiveness and restraint. In the aftermath of the burning down of the Kuraby Mosque in September 2001, it was Dr Abdalla who calmed the Muslim community and began working with various levels of government on engagement strategies. He has subsequently played this role at times of other major issues such as the Cronulla riots. Dr Abdalla should be judged on his work; false assumptions and innuendos are no bases for a fair assessment of this important Australian figure. It is unbecoming for *The Australian* as the national daily of this country to tolerate sensationalist, inflammatory, and biased journalism like that of Richard Kerbarj. Mr Kerbarj has previously been proven to have written misleading articles but has chosen to not correct these. A correction is expected this time.

Statement endorsed by:

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