

**Letter of Solidarity with the Flinders University Islamic Community
from Flinders Multifaith Chaplaincy.
Friday 22 August 2014.**

Following the Federation of Australia in 1901, Australia became notorious for its policies which disallowed the arrival of many people into the Australia community. The set of policies was collectively known as the White Australia Policy. Many Australian citizens were embarrassed by those policies and the policies were seriously criticised by many other countries.

Australians have always been interested in travel and many visited other countries including those in South East Asia, the Middle East, in Western Europe and in Africa. Australians, particularly young Australians, have visited many other countries and explored the many aspects culture, language, foods, social norms and religious beliefs.

The lifting of the restrictive practices enshrined in the White Australia Policy permitted many people to visit our country and to migrate to live in Australia. Over the past 30 years Australia has witnessed the arrival of large numbers of people from different countries across the world. Those people brought with them their culture, their foods, their traditions and their religious beliefs. They included people who were Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, Baha'is and those from other spiritual traditions. In Australia, there renewed interest in the exploration of other traditional and indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices. It is now common to find mosques, temples and churches and religious buildings associated with many different faith traditions in Australian communities.

Over the years, many of the migrants have distinguished themselves in public life, and have contributed immeasurably to the cultural fabric of a rapidly changing Australia. Many have adopted Australian citizenship and become dynamic members of our communities and made significant contributions to the development of our country.

At the same time, large numbers of foreign students have studied in Australia. The number of international students coming to Flinders University has been very significant for many years. Many have contributed to cultural and ethnic understanding, and to life in the University. Many have returned to their home nations with memories of positive and enriching memories of their time in Australia.

We as Chaplains, have been privileged to be part of this process. We welcome international and domestic students of all religious persuasions and spiritual traditions both to Australia and to Flinders University, and are excited to play our role in the development of a mature, multi-cultural, and multi faith Australia, a tolerant and peaceful society prepared to offer a welcoming hand and a warm heart to all migrants of all traditions, an Australia outward looking,

vibrant, and inclusive. We know that many who have come to Australia have escaped persecution, civil conflict, and violence in their countries of origin, and that they look upon Australia as a sanctuary, a place where they can rebuild their lives and practice their religion free of danger and discrimination. We shun and condemn any attempt to cast suspicion on, single out any religious group for condemnation or chastisement, and we regard such statements as a betrayal of Australian traditions, and an abandonment of the Australian ideal of a "fair go".

As Chaplains we pledge that the 'Oasis' will continue become a focal point for the growing awareness of, and acceptance, of all peoples within the Flinders University community irrespective of their nationality, their cultural background, their ethnicity or their faith traditions. Flinders University strives to be a multicultural, multi-faith and successful pluralistic community. The University has committed significant priorities and resources to the on-going development of Oasis as a focal point on this campus for the open and honest acceptance of people of good will regardless of faith, and the promotion of the tolerant, accepting Australian society we believe in.

The Oasis Team includes chaplains of various faiths and traditions. We wish to renew and strengthen our pledge and commitment to acknowledge, accept and embrace all peoples irrespective of their language, cultural, national or faith traditions. We adhere to the principles of cooperation and dialogue, to extending warm hospitality and understanding to all who use our facility for worship, for study, for scholarship, for cultural activities or as a quiet place to meet friends and new people.

We accept the differences and celebrate the diversity and similarities characteristic of the many groups of students and staff within the University community. We are enriched by your presence.

The Oasis Team