

# National Showcase Seminar

Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion  
through School Education

25 & 26 May 2006

REPORT

The National Showcase Seminar was held at Parliament House in Canberra on 25-26 May 2006.

It was organised and managed by the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

# Background to the seminar

Following the Prime Minister's Summit with Muslim community leaders in Canberra on 23 August 2005, a Muslim Community Reference Group (MCRG) was established by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) and charged with informing the development of a National Action Plan based on the Statement of Principles agreed at the Summit. One of the agreed Principles states that:

*the Australian Government will ensure that its programmes and policies enhance mutual understanding between the Islamic community and the broader Australian community and promote the Australian values of harmony, justice and democracy.*

DEST worked closely with DIMA, contributing to the development of the Action Plan. It also worked in consultation with the Schooling Sub-group of the MCRG to undertake a research project: 'Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education'. The project, managed by DEST and funded by DIMA, was designed to promote interfaith and intercultural cooperation as well as values education based on the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools*. The outcomes of this project provided input into the development of the Action Plan which aims to address threats to Australia's social cohesion, harmony and democracy.

The National Showcase Seminar was based on the work of schools identified in the research project. It aimed to:

- present key findings and six good practice case studies from the research project;
- assist the schools which were identified in the research project to present case studies; and
- facilitate discussion about interfaith and intercultural cooperation with the view to promoting values education based on the *National Framework*.

The good practice case studies chosen were Minaret College (Victoria), the Australian International Academy (Victoria), Killester College (Victoria), Arncliffe Public School and Arncliffe West Infants School (New South Wales), Noor Al Houda Islamic College (New South Wales) and the Islamic College of Brisbane (Queensland).

Case studies were to showcase:

- inter-school cooperation between Islamic schools, other faith-based schools, and non-faith schools aimed at reducing the potential isolation and alienation of Islamic youth;

- Islamic schools assisting Muslim students and their parents to understand that Islamic culture can harmoniously co-exist with Australian civic values and cultures; and
- schools that promote the understanding of Islam among Australian students and demonstrate how it can be compatible with other Australian values and cultures.

The Seminar was attended by 73 participants, including representatives of Islamic schools, government and non-government schools, teachers, principals, education authorities and students. The Seminar program is included as an appendix to this report.

The purpose of this report is to provide seminar participants and other interested parties with a synthesis of the outcomes of the seminar, drawn from Seminar addresses and other material provided by the presenters. The report takes the form of a summary of the major addresses integrated with material from panel sessions, workshops and participant responses to a range of seminar issues.

# Major outcomes of the Seminar

The Seminar facilitator, Michael Rowland, welcomed participants and briefly outlined the background to the Seminar. He then introduced Noel Simpson, Branch Manager, Quality Schooling Branch of DEST to give an overview of the project.

## Background and overview of the project

Mr Simpson addressed the importance of the Seminar that it is seen as a first step in a much longer journey. He stressed the nature of the critical issues under discussion at the Seminar, their sensitivity, especially in relation to the work of schools, and acknowledged the work of the Schooling Sub-group of the Muslim Community Reference Group which takes place in the context of the agreed *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools*. He then outlined the nine *Values for Australian Schooling* identified in the *National Framework*, including:

- Care and Compassion
- Doing Your Best
- Fair Go
- Freedom
- Honesty and Trustworthiness
- Integrity
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion

Despite having difficulties in achieving an agreed wording of the nine values, he discovered that the process of doing so had been positive for all involved in the community consultation. Dwelling on the last of the nine values, he indicated that it was deliberately worded as 'Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion' (in that order) because of the belief that understanding or empathy must precede tolerance, which in turn is required before inclusion.

With reference to the recent second National Forum on Values Education, he noted that it has been possible to track the changes in the year between the two Forums. During the first National Forum, there was quite a lot of debate about the necessity for a set of agreed values, whether they were in any sense 'Australian' rather than international and whether they should be made explicit. By the time of the second Forum, however, there seemed to be general acceptance that the nine values do, in fact, represent community values in Australia and need to be explicit. The challenge has become to work on how these values are applied in all aspects of schooling. To give students (as lifelong learners) a language through which they can use to guide their own learning, an explicit values framework is absolutely critical.

Moving on to outline other related Australian Government programs, Mr Simpson mentioned Civics and Citizenship Education, Studies of Asia and Languages Education. There is now a new National Statement on Languages Education for Australian Schools and that the Statement puts intercultural understanding as its

principal rationale. This places the challenge of applying intercultural understanding through languages education firmly before Australian schools.

He referred to the national policy on multiculturalism as another backdrop to the current work. He then compared the Australian context with that of other countries which do not have a similar national policy, and pointed out that multiculturalism policy was also used to guide the current project.

He indicated that the term: 'tolerance' in this project operates within the context of 'social cohesion' which is itself based on a commitment to the fundamental values of Australian society and democracy. This project aims to examine issues affecting young Muslim students who are at risk of alienation in schools, and to document responses that encourage the messages that Islam is compatible with, and can live alongside other faiths, and that Islam is also compatible with Australian values.

The Erebus International report on the project will examine:

- the extent of current inter-school cooperation between Islamic and other faith-based and non-faith based schools;
- factors which hinder inter-school cooperation, and how to overcome them;
- the availability of professional learning opportunities for teachers;
- how to promote understanding of Islamic values in relation to Australian values;
- curriculum resources available to help students understand how Islamic values are compatible with Australian values; and
- strategies for working with community leaders to support schools in values education activities.

In addition, the report will detail six examples of good practice in schools.

Although the final report will not be available until June the interim findings are revealing good news. For example, State and Territory curriculum guidelines actually provide a mandate for schools to undertake work on intercultural cooperation. As well many Islamic schools are involved in initiatives such as cooperation with other schools, and that these are increasing mutual understanding and the development of common values.

At the same time there are some challenges emerging from the research, such as the fostering of more systematic inter-school cooperation and the promotion of quality assurance of teaching and learning in this area. It was probable that further curriculum resources would need to be developed.

Mr Simpson concluded that in the end these issues come back to communities of people of goodwill, supported by governments and education systems across the country, being willing and prepared to involve themselves in encouraging tolerance and social cohesion.

## Minister's opening address

Mr Rowland introduced the Hon Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Education, Science and Training.

Ms Bishop began by officially welcoming participants to the Seminar and stressing the importance of the issues under discussion. She emphasised that in a shrinking and often insecure world, it has never been more important to fight against extremism and find ways of encouraging social cohesion, mutual understanding and tolerance. This Seminar provided a wonderful opportunity to discuss ways of doing this through our schools.

She addressed the Australian Government's belief that education and schooling provide the fundamental, essential and enduring foundations upon which to build a cohesive and productive society. and that all school students should have the opportunity to understand and appreciate the values that underpin our society. This belief is actualised through the \$30 million *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools*.

The nine agreed values are fundamental to both the Christian faith and Islamic teachings. There is a great deal of commonality between the two faiths and, indeed, between the broad range of faiths represented in Australia.

Schools are important in imparting knowledge about where we, as a people, have come from and where we are going. We have an opportunity now to embrace a better understanding of the historic relationship between Muslims and the wider Australian community. How many people know, asked Ms Bishop, that it was Muslim fisherman who made the first non-Indigenous contact with the Australian continent, well before the first European contact? How many people know that many Muslims came to Australia on British ships during the 1800s? The role of Afghan Muslim camel drivers in the development of Australia is somewhat better known.

The first Islamic schools in Australia were weekend schools set up in Sydney and Melbourne in the 1950s, to be followed by the emergence of full-time schools in the 1980s. Today there are some 29 Islamic affiliated schools in Australia, supporting some 14,000 students and operating in five States and the Australian Capital Territory. The Muslim Schools Charter, originated and coordinated by the Australian Council for Islamic Education in Schools, is significant in the teaching of values in Islamic schools.

This Seminar was designed against the backdrop of the Summit called by the Prime Minister in August 2005, when Muslim leaders met with him and talked about pressing issues facing the community. The Summit resulted in an agreed Statement of Principles, which was taken to the highest level of government, through the COAG (Council of Australian Governments) process. At the COAG's special meeting in September 2005, all States and Territories and the Australian Government agreed on the development of a National Action Plan based on the Statement of Principles.

The principals, teachers and students from the schools represented at the Seminar are to be congratulated for their work in promoting social cohesion, particularly through inter-school events such as debating, sports and teacher and student exchanges. In addition, it is the view of the Australian government that all parents have the democratic right to choose the best educational environment for their children and that, having paid their taxes, they are entitled to receive public support for their choices.

Ms Bishop concluded that she was pleased to take part in the Seminar and wished all participants well for their future endeavours.

## Interim findings from the research project

This session was addressed by the three consultants from Erebus International: Dr Robert Carbines, Dr Tim Wyatt and Ms Leone Robb.

The aims of this research project are:

- *to examine issues affecting Muslims at risk of potential isolation in schools; and*
- *investigate what schools, systems and sectors are currently doing to encourage the message to Islamic youth that Islam is compatible with, and can live alongside other faiths and Australian values.*

The consultants said they felt privileged to work with selected schools on good practice case studies as they found that the schools:

- were uniformly fine educational institutions;
- had students who were proud of their own school;
- had a passion for education;
- wanted to do their best; and
- had something to say to the rest of the world.

Dr Carbines discovered that the values education in the case study schools were being modelled by the teachers in the school, and that there was a strong alignment between the values of the schools and the values of the parents. At the same time, he noted that explicit values education was only a small part of the curriculum.

He pointed out, however, that this was a small sample of schools and that we should be careful about generalising too much on the basis of their experience. Nevertheless, the researchers had tried to emphasise the strengths of the case study schools in an effort to produce material from which others could learn.

Research methodology included:

- an analysis of documentation including curriculum statements, research literature and resources materials;
- interviews with key stakeholders representing various organisations; and
- six case studies conducted in government and non-government schools in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

'Key stakeholders' included State and Territory education authorities in all systems and sectors, a range of academics, parent groups and others involved in values education, such as Curriculum Corporation and the Asia Education Foundation.

Dr Wyatt then used the Terms of Reference of the project, to make a series of points about interim findings, as follows:

### **The interrelations between Islamic, government and non-government schools in promoting interfaith and intercultural understanding and mutual respect**

State and Territory curriculum frameworks provide a mandate that encourages schools to undertake work to build interfaith and intercultural understanding. This gives legitimacy to their activities and promotes sustainability.

Many schools have commented that this area fits with their own ethos and some have been involved in this work for a long time, while others have found that a developing multi-cultural school population has been a catalyst.

Some schools with high proportions of Muslim students undertake this work to minimize the potential for student alienation and to help them to respond positively to possible discrimination.

The study revealed that success is greatest when:

- Interfaith and intercultural understanding is taught across the curriculum.
- The purpose and expected outcomes of activities are explicit. While some schools maintain that values are implicit in these activities, there is a danger of loss of focus without explicit specification of expected outcomes.
- Parents and school views are in alignment. The support of parents is an absolutely essential element of success.
- A multi-pronged, systematic approach is employed. While some schools rely on an effort only on Harmony Day, such an approach is unlikely to maximise success.
- The values underpinning interfaith and intercultural understanding are modelled by teachers and students within the school.

### **The nature and extent of current inter-school cooperation, including the factors that influence such inter-school cooperation**

This is currently occurring in a variety of forms, such as sports, school visits, debating competitions, joint celebration of Harmony Day, discussion groups around topics such as spirituality, teacher exchanges, student camps and virtual networking using Information Technology tools.

One perceived advantage for students is that barriers, misconceptions, prejudices and stereotypes are broken down, while knowledge about other cultural and religious practices is promoted. Students also receive better understanding of their own cultural and religious identity.

At the same time, cross cultural and religious friendships are formed and many friendships persisted in the case study schools after particular events.

Success is greatest when:

- Teachers are well prepared personally and professionally.
- The visit has a clear purpose linked to specific curriculum outcomes. It is not enough just to organise sporting activities. These activities should be linked to specific curriculum outcomes in a range of learning areas.
- Strong administrative support is provided. While a single teacher can make some difference in the short term, no program will be sustainable without the support of the school leaders.
- Teacher preparation time is made available to plan the visit cooperatively with the partner school.
- Practical issues have been considered, e.g. appropriate catering arrangements, dress code discussed, transport links. Lack of attention to these matters can lead to the failure of otherwise admirable activities.

**Current arrangements for ensuring quality in the teaching of Australian values in schools nationally, to promote understanding of Islamic values within the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools*, including any gaps**

Success is greatest when:

- A whole school approach is adopted.
- Planning starts with the end in mind (e.g. exit profile – what does our goal look like?).
- A formal assessment and reporting system is developed in relation to the exit profile. Although outcomes in such areas are often not measured, a system for doing so makes the importance of the activity clear. It should include student self-assessment or reflection.
- Values are continuously reinforced throughout the curriculum both implicitly and explicitly and common messages are given to all students by all teachers.

**The availability of resources currently to help students to understand how Islamic values are aligned with Australian values, including any gaps**

Although a large range of resources exist nationally to help schools promote interfaith and intercultural understanding, these may not be well known or teachers may not be confident in using them.

There is also limited material portraying Islamic youth positively in contemporary Australian contexts, and noted that work remains to be done in this area.

Examples of resources that may be used for intercultural and interfaith understanding include:

- Websites (e.g. Racism- No Way!, Harmony Day, Australian Values, Making Multicultural Australia).
- Teacher resources, such as *Big Beliefs, Australian Kaleidoscope, Visions and Voices*.
- Community resources from multi-faith networks, such as the Australian Multicultural Foundation kit.
- Teacher Professional Learning opportunities such as 'Developing Intercultural Understanding – An Introduction for Teachers' (Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme/ Asia Education Foundation).

### **Current strategies for working with community leaders to support Islamic schools and other schools with a high proportion of Muslim students, in values education activities**

There are some leadership courses for Muslim students are being organised at the local community level through Islamic schools but that many schools look to leaders in the broader community to take greater roles in relation to building interfaith and intercultural understanding. However, Islamic schools explicitly aim to develop students to become community leaders in the future.

At the same time Muslim community leaders are already 'thinly stretched' and there are many demands on their time.

School Alumni Associations could be a starting point for leadership capacity building and noted that other faith contexts were not explored as part of this research.

### **Challenges for the future**

Challenges for the future and issues for consideration are:

- How to provide sufficient time for teachers to plan and implement appropriate activities?
- How to elevate interfaith and intercultural understanding as a school priority nationally and locally as many schools will not take on these matters until they are seen as imperative?

- How to move from superficial activities to deeper understanding that supports interfaith and intercultural cooperation as an important part of the values held by all Australians?

### **Questions and comments from the floor**

Dr Mohammed Taha Alsalami of the Iraqi Islamic Council of Australia asked whether there was a chance that multi-faith schools could be set up in Australia. Dr Carbines responded that he knew of one school principal who was considering setting up such a school. Dr Wyatt remarked that there are no existing models for such a school, while another audience member insisted that many government schools are precisely multi-faith communities.

Rabbi Ralph Genende of Mt Scopus Memorial College, Victoria, asked whether the researchers had any ideas about how to move from more superficial activities to deeper ones. Dr Carbines responded that deeper activities depend absolutely on schools' alignment of values. Without this, activities are always likely to be superficial, especially in an environment when there is strong competition from a number of quarters for space in the curriculum.

## Good practice schools case studies (1)

*How Islamic schools can assist Muslim students and their parents to understand how Islamic culture can co-exist with Australian civic values and raise awareness of Australian values and history.*

Workshop sessions were delivered on this topic by Minaret College and the Australian International Academy, both from Victoria.

### **Minaret College**

Minaret College was established in 1992 with a student population of 27. It is now a K - 12 school with about 840 enrolment in 2006. It is situated in the south-eastern region of Melbourne in the City of Greater Dandenong. Since its first batch of students graduated in Year 2000, the college has consistently achieved an excellent success rate in the VCE, and many of its graduates are currently studying in universities including The University of Melbourne, Monash University and RMIT.

The on-going development of the College and its unique curriculum constitute an exciting initiative in the integration of Islamic teachings in secular education. The School provides Muslim students living in southeast Melbourne with the option of a balanced education. It also welcomes students from overseas. It is a school based on innovation and modern teaching practices.

At the moment, Minaret College is the only Islamic school in Victoria offering its students the VCE Religion and Society at Unit 3 & 4 level. VCE Texts & Traditions is also offered at this level.

The College has participated in the Victorian Youth Parliament and it is a respected member of the Debaters Association of Victoria. It was one of the founding members who established the Australian Council of Islamic Education in Schools, which is an umbrella organisation for Islamic schools in Australia. The College initiated the annual Badr Science Competition in 1999, and is playing a leading role in organizing inter-Islamic schools sports and athletics.

#### *Presentation*

This presentation described the strategies and processes used by the College in teaching moral values to its students and parents and making them understand that Islamic culture can co-exist with Australian values. It also highlights the College's successful inter-faith dialogue activities with 12 non-Islamic schools in Victoria including State, Catholic, Christian and Jewish schools.

Strategies described included:

- Mission Statement
- Balanced and integrated curriculum
- Education research

- Effective home-school links
- In-service teacher training
- Parent education

### **Australian International Academy**

Australian International Academy (formerly King Khalid Islamic College) is an independent registered educational institution managed by a professional College Board. The Primary Campus of the College is situated in the suburb of Coburg, about 10 km North of Melbourne, and the Secondary Campus of the College is located in the suburb of Merlynston about 12 km north of Melbourne.

The College, established in 1983, is Australia's first full-time day Islamic school. The College population has a wide range of students from different ethnic backgrounds including Arabs, Turks, Anglo-Saxons, Indians, Pakistanis, Somalis, Ethiopians, Eritreans, Malaysians, South Africans and others. The College also accepts overseas students, the number of which continues to grow.

#### *Presentation*

The presentation concentrated on the college's background, structure and curriculum.

It provided information as to how the college's curriculum incorporates intercultural awareness and its values journey. The presentation explored ways in which the values framework fits into the curriculum and extracurricular frameworks and how the college inculcates both its mission statement and values into sustainable programs across the college (P-12) with a focus on encouraging tolerance and social cohesion.

Students discussed some of the activities that they have participated in that teach about values such as harmony, tolerance, justice and respect. They also discussed why they think it is important and some of the similarities and differences that they have noticed in the beliefs and values of different groups in Australian society.

A display of student work and projects was also presented.

## Summary of groups' discussions

The first day of the Seminar concluded with small group discussions focusing on the question:

*How can the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools be used to support tolerance and social cohesion?*

The groups agreed that the *National Framework* is a holistic document and therefore well-placed to support tolerance and social cohesion. In providing a common language for discussion it is an excellent starting point for schools talking about and working on values education and will assist in embedding values in curriculum, pedagogical practices and student welfare.

The *National Framework* focuses on our commonality and puts values up front as an essential aspect of society. It encourages continual review of our practice in implementing values education and illustrates what good teachers have been promoting for a long time.

In discussing the use of the *National Framework*, participants recognised that it:

- Can be used for schools to revise their Vision or Mission Statements or strategic plans.
- Promotes interactions between schools, parents, teachers and students.
- Assists in teaching students about media representations of various groups and avoiding the development of cynicism.
- Promotes harmony whereas the media often thrives on conflict.
- Requires the support of citizens, politicians and the media.
- Assists in our modelling of behaviour, as teachers or school leaders.
- Supports the idea that schools are the places where values are put into action.
- Takes 'values' away from being seen as having only a religious base.

The groups also agreed on the need for further development of resources, posters, good practice examples and teacher professional learning. It was suggested that 'tolerance' may not be the best word for the concept behind the term as it was important that students were not just 'tolerating' each other but were developing a true understanding and compassion for the diversity in our Australian community.

## Current curriculum resources

On the second day of the Seminar, Mr Rowland briefly summarised the first day's events, in particular Mr Waleed Aly's speech at the Seminar dinner, attended by 56 participants. He then introduced speakers to present issues relating to current curriculum resources for promoting tolerance and social cohesion.

### Asia Education Foundation

Maureen Welch of the Asia Education Foundation (AEF) introduced the work of the Foundation indicating that it:

- is a Foundation of the Asialink Centre at The University of Melbourne and Curriculum Corporation;
- receives funding of AUD \$1.8 million from DEST;
- works in partnership with all State and Territory education systems; and
- has four strands of national strategy as follows:
  - **Policy development.** This has resulted in the *National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools*, a nationally agreed document.
  - **Curriculum resources** have been developed for students at all stages of schooling, in Studies of Society and Environment, English and Arts.
  - **Professional learning.** The 2002 *Review of Studies of Asia in Australian Schools* revealed that 'teacher knowledge is still the greatest barrier'. There are, however, a range of professional learning programmes for teachers; many of which are freely available online including graduate programmes delivered through universities, and study tours to countries of Asia.
  - **Partnership.** The AEF has developed a wide range of partnerships with, for example, teacher professional associations, parent organisations and universities.

The *National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools*, aims that young Australians, by the end of their schooling, would be able to:

- Understand 'Asia';
- Develop informed attitudes and values;
- Know about contemporary and traditional Asia;
- Connect Australia and Asia; and
- Communicate effectively with people of the Asian region.

The 2002 Review of Studies of Asia in Australian Schools revealed that three factors make a difference to students' knowledge:

- Whole school commitment;
- Teachers' access to a wide range of resources and professional learning; and
- Formal structured classroom teaching

Ms Welch indicated that these factors are likely also to be at work in efforts to encourage tolerance and social cohesion through school education.

Turning to specific Access Asia curriculum resources, she detailed the following:

### ***The Snapshots of Asia series***

There are nine books in the series, each providing a snapshot of one country, and giving students and teachers opportunities to explore another culture and compare and contrast with their own.

### ***The Really Big Beliefs Project***

Intended for junior primary students, this text is a student-driven investigation of beliefs and ways of life. It does not describe each religion in detail, as there are many such resources, but rather uses the voices of real people to explore how they live their lives. Online classroom activities and web links for further research are found on the AEF website.

### ***Australia Kaleidoscope***

This is a text for secondary students and looks at the influence of Asia on Australian culture. It contains the story of a Western Australian Muslim woman working to break down barriers between Muslims and other Australians.

### ***Voices and Values: Citizenship in Asia***

This text is also for secondary students. It includes a case study about Indonesia and introduces readers to the *Pancha Sila* (five precepts of Buddhism) and the five pillars of Islam.

### ***Voices and Visions: Indonesia***

One of a series, this text was developed for senior English classes, but has many applications. As a National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) initiative, it has been provided free to all Australian secondary schools.

It includes 40 texts from Indonesia in translation and provides a wealth of opportunity to explore the social, cultural, political and historical context. There is an online tutorial (to support teachers) and a professional learning program on the AEF website.

**The AEF website: [www.asiaeducation.edu.au](http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au)**

Other resources available through the AEF website include State and Territory contacts and networks, curriculum resources and directories, evaluation reports and research, professional learning programs, information about study tours and conferences in Asia, an email discussion group for teachers and a regular newsletter.

### **Curriculum Corporation**

David Brown of Curriculum Corporation asked whether there was really anything new in the current discussion about values education. He argued that values had actually been taught for thousands of years, and that the history of Australia is a narrative with a recurring theme of sectarianism and division. In this context, he defined an ongoing 'quest for values education good practice'.

The 'quest' is now being pursued through:

- The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools;
- Good practice in schools; and
- Values education resources.

Mr Brown described the Good Practice Schools (Stage 1, 2005-6) Project, in which 26 school clusters have addressed a range of approaches. Their stories of 'sharing different worlds' will be part of the Final Report, which he indicated will soon be available on the Values Education website at:  
<http://www.valueseducation.edu.au/values/>.

Stage 2 of the Project, to take place in 2006-8, and for which 25 school clusters are being sought. A specific focus this time will be 'Intercultural and Global Contexts'

Specific resources which have been developed for the Values Education programme are :

- Values for Australian Schooling Kit;
- Values Education website; and
- Values Education Curriculum & Professional Learning Resources 2006-08.

### **The Values for Australian Schooling Kit**

The Kit has recently become available and focuses on supporting school forums and teacher professional learning. Its purpose is to "support schools in making values education a core part of schooling through the implementation of the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools."

The five components of the Kit are:

- A copy of the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools*;
- *Values Education Forums: Engaging your school community*;
- Values for Australian Schooling professional learning resources (Primary or Secondary);
- 3 large format posters; and
- 'Talking values' DVD.

The *National Framework* as the 'foundation stone' for this work, containing as it does the vision, guiding principles, key elements of good practice and the nine shared values.

*Values Education Forums: Engaging your school community*, was designed to support individual schools in planning and conducting values education forums in their school communities. It contains background about the Values Education programme and the context for values education forums, advice on how to conduct a school forum, some case stories, and a tool box of 12 templates.

The professional learning resources are based on the credo: "that it is teachers and quality teaching, that will, in the first instance, make a significant difference to strengthening values education and improving outcomes for students in all schools."

The aims of the resources are to familiarise teachers with the *National Framework*, to engage them in professional learning about values education, to provide practical advice on providing values education, and to foster improved outcomes for students. They include seven units of work, together with case studies and appendices.

The seven units of work are:

- The nature of values;
- Values education in Australia;
- Developing values education in your school;
- School vision and values;
- School governance, policies & programmes;
- Classroom teaching & learning; and
- Values education and the school community.

The posters ('Values education good practice – the key elements', 'A whole school approach' and 'The values we share'), together with the 'Talking Values' DVD are intended to support all the other elements. The DVD is suitable for both school forums and in professional learning and offers a video, extended interviews and case

studies, two power point presentations with speakers' notes and support notes for using the DVD itself.

The Values Education website ([www.valueseducation.edu.au/values](http://www.valueseducation.edu.au/values)), contains newsletters, news about national events, resources, State and Territory happenings and information about Good Practice Schools projects.

Mr Brown concluded that a range of further curriculum and professional learning resources is being developed. These will deal with how to integrate values in learning areas and school culture, and how to integrate values into the development of student civic and social skills as well as exploring values in intercultural and global contexts.

## **Good practice schools case studies (2)**

### ***How mainstream schools can promote understanding of Islam and demonstrate its compatibility with other Australian values and cultures.***

Workshop sessions were delivered on this topic by Killester College (Victoria) and Arncliffe Public School with Arncliffe West Infants School (New South Wales).

#### **Killester College**

Killester College, a Victorian Catholic girls' secondary school established by the Brigidine Sisters 50 years ago, is a multicultural school with students from many faiths. Total enrolment is about 800 students. Approximately 64% of students speak at least one language other than English. The cultural mix of students includes (but is not limited to) Italian, Greek, Vietnamese, Chinese Cambodian, Sri Lankan and Sudanese.

Since the early 1990s Killester College, along with other Brigidine schools, has developed and worked from a set of core values. These values are strongly reflected in written policies, curriculum and co-curricular activities as well in the school's involvement with the wider community and the pastoral care of staff and students.

The presentation, including visual images and discussion, covered some of the school's story, the way it tries to live the core values and the on-going challenges.

#### **Arncliffe Public School with Arncliffe West Infants School**

Arncliffe Public School is a medium sized Sydney metropolitan school with enrolments of approximately 400 students. More than 70 per cent of students are from language backgrounds other than English and more than 30 per cent of students are from Arabic speaking backgrounds with a large percentage of Muslim students.

Arncliffe West Infants School is a small Sydney metropolitan school with enrolments of about 70 students. Approximately 85 per cent of students are from language backgrounds other than English and 58 per cent of students are from Arabic speaking backgrounds with the majority being Muslim.

Both schools have participated in a range of activities in which children from various cultural backgrounds have worked together to appreciate the culture of others as well as their own. These activities have involved students from eight Sydney metropolitan schools representing the three education systems (Government, Catholic and Independent). Participating schools included Arncliffe Public School, Arncliffe West Infants School, Athelstane Public School, St Francis Xavier's School, Rockdale Public School, Bexley Public School, Our Lady of Fatima Kingsgrove, Al Zahra College and Al Rissalah College. Activities have been guided by a 'Harmony Committee' which is comprised of the Principals of the eight participating schools.

*Presentation*

Karen Shehata of Arncliffe West Infants School began by reviewing the history of the Harmony Committee, which began in 2003 when the Chairman of Al Zahra College, Ahmad Mokachar, invited all local principals to visit his school in an attempt to develop positive relationships. Those principals had already recognised the need to develop cultural and religious cohesion within their community and the need to work towards common values across sectors.

In June 2003, the first group of principals met and the Committee was established. The main aim of the Committee was to work towards improving cultural and religious understanding within a range of different faiths.

Stephen Vrachas of Arncliffe Public School explained that the principals meet once a term to formulate ideas, discuss issues, re-connect and support each other. Each meeting is hosted by a different school, developing relationships and building on the values of respect and tolerance.

Ms Shehata added that other groups have been formed to support, and that at each of these meetings student leaders from each school participate in activities relating to shared values and the establishment of positive relationships.

Other activities discussed included:

- Meetings of teachers to support curriculum development and share resources.
- Student participation across eight schools in the writing of a play promoting harmony, tolerance and co-operation. The play was eventually presented at the St George Bank Auditorium, Kogarah.
- In 2005, two students from each school participated in a book project with children's author Nadia Wheatley and illustrator Ken Searle. The work is to be published in 2007 and uses local Wolli Creek bushland as the focus for writing about the development of harmony in the community.
- A dinner function on the occasion of International Peace Day was hosted by Al Zahra College and generously supported by Al Risallah College to raise much needed funds for the book project.
- The project's achievements were presented at the first Multicultural State Conference that was held in March 2006.
- On Harmony Day, 30 students from each school assembled to have fun, make friends and demonstrate what 'harmony' really looks like.

## **Good practice schools case studies (3)**

### *How interschool cooperation can reduce potential isolation and alienation of Islamic youth.*

Workshop sessions were delivered on this topic by Noor Al Houda Islamic College (New South Wales) and The Islamic College of Brisbane.

#### **Noor Al Houda Islamic College**

Noor Al Houda Islamic College is a comprehensive K-12 school currently operating from heritage buildings in South Strathfield. The school was founded in 1995. The school grew from a girls' high school to include a three-stream primary school, boys' high school and child care centre within three years. The school currently enrolls 162 primary students and 210 secondary students.

As a faith-based school, there is a continuous emphasis on social values, which provides a platform for teachers and students to create a climate of respect, cooperation and spirituality. The school strives to use the exemplary behaviour of the prophet Muhammad and faith in Allah to inspire its staff, students and community.

The focus of the school's presentation was the important values of respect, tolerance, perseverance and resilience. The school endeavours to portray these values with some humour and insight.

The school has been very active in interfaith activities with Jewish and Christian schools over the last few years. This presentation incorporated what has been learnt, some of their experiences and thoughts during these interactions. As Muslims in a multicultural country, the school would like to explore the concept of citizenship in the school curriculum. The school is very aware of the importance of their role to contribute to society as Australians and value the freedoms enjoyed as part of that society. The school hopes the presentation conveyed this pride in being Aussie Muslims.

#### **The Islamic College of Brisbane**

The Islamic College of Brisbane is situated on the southern outskirts of the city next to a large nature reserve, the Karawatha State Forest. Comprising a primary and a secondary campus, the school currently accommodates 540 students from a variety of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. This diversity is also reflected in the teachers appointed to the school, who come from a variety of cultural and geographic locations, with more than half of the 38 staff coming from non-Muslim backgrounds.

The school follows the Queensland Studies Authority curriculum in all key learning areas and instruction is in English in all subjects except Arabic Language and Qur'an studies. Classes are coeducational and of mixed ability, with a specialist unit available to support students with language or learning difficulties.

As much as possible, the Islamic College of Brisbane makes use of real life experiences as a basis for values education. The school's presentation, Memetic engineering – school as a medium for social cohesion – outlined the approaches taken to inspire worthy values in students. 'Memetic' simply refers to the creation of ideas and behaviours that take 'on a life of their own'. In order for this to happen, students need to know what values such as respect and responsibility look and feel like as much as they need to know what they mean and why they are important. Interschool events such as Harmony Day, sports exchanges or broader initiatives such as the Multi Faith Camp are some of the approaches used at the school to reduce the alienation felt by Islamic Youth.

## **Discussion: Key messages and recommendations**

The final session of the Seminar was introduced by Mr Rowland, who indicated his personal appreciation of the constructive and positive atmosphere generated over two days. Powerful conversations and strong presentations were features of the Seminar.

Participants were then asked to consider recommendations or comments about future directions.

Salifu Baba of Minaret College commented that he had been in discussions Killester College and that in their local area of Springvale they are ready to go beyond the existing interfaith dialogue. They were planning, within the context of the new Victorian curriculum guidelines, to organise regional meetings of principals to work on curriculum issues.

Participants acknowledged the incredible amount of work that government schools do every day, in working with students from different nationalities and different faiths in a harmonious way. Government school students constantly deal with the issues associated with values. It was hoped that in future discussions there would be more talk about working with government schools as well as faith-based schools.

Concern was expressed that large parts of the Australian community live in more remote or regional areas where diversity is not present and in moving forward we need to explore ways of providing experiential access to diversity where it does not exist so that we learn to value it. We need to find a way to teach about tolerance and acceptance of diversity that is applicable even in context that lacks diversity.

It was suggested that for schools to be successful in these areas they need to develop a more contemporary approach to their parent communities so that parents and school are working in complementary directions and schools are simply not doing things for parents.

Mr Rowland then invited Dr Declan O'Connell, Acting Director of Values and Languages Education Section, Quality Schooling Branch of DEST to make some remarks in closing.

### **Closing remarks**

Dr O'Connell commented that the Seminar had a real atmosphere, energy, enthusiasm and commitment, and that he was already seeing schools wanting to strengthen their commitment to working with each other and to working with other schools in their districts.

He reminded participants that this was a 'Showcase Seminar'. As a 'Showcase', it was able to publicise some of the good work going on around tolerance and social cohesion in schools, while as a 'Seminar' it enabled participants to look forward to where we might be going.

Dr O'Connell then noted the strengths of the group brought together by the Seminar: people from the schools, people from the Schooling Sub-group of the MCRG, people from systems and sectors and other national organisations and representatives of parents and teachers.

He then outlined two paths forward. Firstly, there is COAG's commitment to develop the National Action Plan to strengthen the promotion of tolerance and social cohesion and the rejection of extremism. Schooling will be at the heart of the Plan. Secondly, the Values Education programme which has been up and running for two years. He encouraged all schools to take advantage of the opportunity to hold values forums under that programme, and mentioned that it would be perfectly acceptable for schools to organised larger scale events if they desired to do so.

He then thanked all participants for their contribution to the Seminar and wished them well in future work.

Mr Rowland also thanked all participants and highlighted the cooperation between the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) and the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). He then thanked the Erebus Consulting consultants, the representatives of Curriculum Corporation and the Asia Education Foundation and Mr Waleed Aly for the Seminar dinner address.

He especially thanked the principals, teachers, students and community members of schools who had participated in the Seminar, congratulating them on their impressive work in their own communities and in the Seminar presentations.

## Appendix: Seminar programme

# NATIONAL SHOWCASE SEMINAR

## Encouraging tolerance and social cohesion through school education

PROGRAMME	THURSDAY 25 MAY 2006
	Michael Rowland – Facilitator
10.30 am	Arrive Parliament House and undertake security clearance
11.00 am	Tea and coffee
11.30 am – 12.00 noon HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ALCOVE	<b>Introduction</b> – Michael Rowland  <b>Background and overview of the project</b> – Noel Simpson, Department of Education, Science and Training
12.00 noon – 12.20 pm HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ALCOVE	<b>Official welcome</b> – The Hon Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Education, Science and Training
12.20 – 1.00 pm	Lunch
1.00 – 2.00 pm HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ALCOVE	<b>Key findings from the research project</b> – Dr Robert Carbines, Dr Tim Wyatt, Ms Leone Robb, Erebus International Questions and clarification
2.00 – 3.30 pm	<b>Good Practice Schools Case Studies: How Islamic schools can assist Muslim students and their parents to understand how Islamic culture can co-exist with Australian civic values and raise awareness of Australian values and history</b>
	SENATE ALCOVE Minaret College, VIC
	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ALCOVE Australian International Academy, VIC
3.30 – 4.00 pm	Afternoon tea
4.00 – 4.45 pm HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ALCOVE	<b>Discussion: How can the National Framework for Values Education in Australian schools be used to support tolerance and social cohesion?</b>
4.45 pm	Conclusion Day 1
6.30 pm	Bus departs Rydges Capital Hill for dinner
6.45 pm	<b>Seminar dinner at the Ottoman Restaurant</b> Dinner speaker – Waleed Aly, Executive Committee Member, Islamic Council of Victoria
10.00 pm	Bus departs for Rydges Capital Hill

## PROGRAMME

FRIDAY 26 MAY 2006

9.00 am	Arrive Parliament House
9.30 – 9.45 am HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ALCOVE	<i>Welcome and recap of Day 1</i> – Michael Rowland
9.45 – 10.30 am HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ALCOVE	<b>Current resources</b> – Maureen Welch, Asia Education Foundation – David Brown, Curriculum Corporation
10.30 am – 12.00 noon	<b>Good Practice Schools Case Studies: How mainstream schools can promote understanding of Islam and demonstrate its compatibility with other Australian values and cultures</b>
	SENATE ALCOVE Killester College, VIC
	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ALCOVE Arncliffe Public School, Arncliffe West Infants School, NSW
12.00 noon – 1.30 pm	Lunch
1.30 – 3.00 pm	<b>Good Practice Schools Case Studies: How interschool cooperation can reduce potential isolation and alienation of Islamic youth</b>
	SENATE ALCOVE Noor Al Houda Islamic College, NSW
	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ALCOVE Islamic College of Brisbane, QLD
3.00 – 3.30 pm HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ALCOVE	<b>Discussion: Key messages and recommendations</b>
3.30 pm	Conclusion of the seminar