

MOSQUES AND MUSLIM SETTLEMENT IN AUSTRALIA

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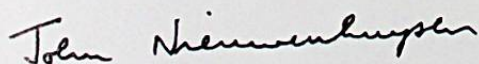
Foreword

It is well known, and the subject of much analysis, that Australia in the post-war period has received an impressive diversity of immigrants from a multitude of nations. It is less widely a part of research and informed discussion, however, that, as part of this rich mixture, there is a growing religious variety among the new communities which now call Australia home. For instance, almost 1 per cent of the Australian people today claim Islam as their religion. This follows the flow of settlers from Turkey, Lebanon, other countries in the Middle East, and Asia.

It is both possible and timely to examine the role of religion in the settlement history of Muslims in Australian society. It is also important that analysis be available, not only because Muslims are the largest non-Christian religious group in Australia, but also since insights on the subject have a pertinence broader than the group itself; the role of religion in settlement is an underdeveloped, but important and fascinating field.

Many of the subjects dealt with in the prolific output of the Bureau of Immigration and Population Research are sensitive and Professor Gary Bouma's *Mosques and Muslim Settlement in Australia* is no exception. Professor Bouma has risen admirably to the occasion, however, in his perceptive, careful, clear and scholarly study. His work expertly covers the historical background to Australia's changing religious profile; the patterns of Muslim settlement and the role of religion and mosques in this; as well as issues such as the future of Islam in Australia and accommodating Muslims here. The book concludes with a set of recommendations.

This study fills a gap in the literature and provides an intriguing glimpse of a hitherto relatively neglected aspect of immigration research—the role of religion in settlement, and the experiences of those professing a faith different from the majority of other members of Australian society. A strength of the coverage is that it does not avoid the difficult issues of prejudice and harassment, or media portrayals of religious groups. Another strength of this book, and a source of considerable pride to the Bureau, is that its preparation has been greatly assisted by community-based steering committees in two cities. Professor Bouma rightly acknowledges this co-operation, and that of all participants in the survey. On behalf of the Bureau, I join him in this expression of thanks and commend all who helped, as well as the author, for this excellent result of their endeavours.



JOHN NIEUWENHUYSEN

Director, Bureau of Immigration and Population Research

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Muslims of both Middle Eastern and Asian origin have been immigrating to Australia since the early days of settlement. According to the 1991 Census there were nearly 150 000 followers of Islam here, 35 per cent of whom were born in Australia.

However, Islam is still not well understood and is sometimes feared by the wider community. Through eighty-one in-depth interviews, *Mosques and Muslim Settlement in Australia* provides a rich, fascinating picture of what it is like to be a Muslim in Australia. We see the hardships, delights, ambitions, fears, challenges and dreams of this group of immigrants, and what emerges is a picture of successful settlement; of change and growth on the part of the settlers and their fellow Australians; of struggle and satisfaction.

It is clear that religion is an important aspect of the settlement of Muslims. Their faith has provided strength in times of stress and the religious organisations which they set up provide support and are now a focus for community life.

This book provides one chapter in the success story of Australia's transition to a multicultural society, including becoming religiously plural. Muslims have carved out a niche in Australian society — they have negotiated what to change, what to adopt, what to let go and what to keep—and many Australian institutions have changed to accommodate them and their religion.

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