

MEDIA STATEMENT – 18 January 2019

AUSTRALIA DAY VISION 2019 - The Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims & Jews

As we mark the 231st Anniversary of the establishment of the colony of NSW and the way it led to the birth of modern Australia we, as people of faith, wish to make this contribution to public discussion.

The ancient wisdom of the Psalms contains a call to gratitude. "Let the Nations be glad and sing for joy" (Psalm 67). We are a blessed Nation of plenty. We have challenges, but we have faith that with goodwill and careful leadership we can address them and develop a society which embodies ideals of respect, responsibility and mutual concern.

Australia has become an attractive home for people of many backgrounds and cultures and we are continually enriched by the wisdom, knowledge and history of the First Peoples. If we can flourish and live well together, we can provide a beacon of hope to the whole global family.

With gratitude come questions for a national conversation. How should we now live? What platform do we wish to set for future generations?

Our sources tell us that compassion is the key to living the best of lives as a people.

We have a vision of Australia guided by the principle that we would not act towards another as we would not want them to act to us.

The dynamic of the golden rule is beautifully expressed in the holy texts of our three Abrahamic faiths (Christianity, Islam and Judaism). In Matthew 7:12 we read: "Therefore whatever you desire for others to do for you, you shall also do to them; for this is the law of the prophets". In an early surah of the Qur'an, God asks Prophet Muhammad to remember the sorrows of his childhood and make sure no one else in his community would endure this deprivation. (Qur'an Surah 93). The Torah teaches "Love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:18)

How wonderful it would be if Australia truly was a place in which no one suffered due to their ethnicity, culture, gender, skin colour, sexual orientation or faith!

It is not our aim to enter the discussion regarding a change of date for what has become our national celebration. It is our concern that, on this date and on others, we change as Australians, to lead to the fulfilment of each of our own, and our Nations' potential. The first step in this involves listening to one another and speaking openly, honestly and thoughtfully.

We ask that Australia Day 2019 become the beginning of better listening, more compassion and genuine gratitude for all that has been provided to us.

Signed by: Co-chairs, Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews

Ms Elizabeth Stone
Interim General Secretary
National Council of Churches
in Australia (NCCA)
Mob: 0437 402 884

Imam Dr Amin Hady
Director, Interfaith Affairs
Australian Federation of Islamic
Councils (AFIC)
Mob: 0401 425 031

Mr Jeremy Jones AM
Honorary Life Member
Executive Council of Australian
Jewry (ECAJ)
Mob: 0411 536 436