

Islamic Museum celebrates its fifth anniversary

Mei Nee Cheong, *Australasian Muslim Times*, 8 March 2019



Ged Kearney, Federal Member for Batman with Islamic Museum Founder, Moustafa Fahour OAM (left) and Islamic Museum of Australia's Chief Executive Ali Fahour (right).

An afternoon tea to celebrate five years since the opening of the Islamic Museum of Australia was attended by more than 80 guests joined by staff and volunteers at its Melbourne premises on Thursday 28 February 2019.

Images revealing the former water bottling facility on the site where the Islamic Museum of Australia now stands, and its transformation into an architecturally designed centre of learning are now on display at the Museum to celebrate five years since opening.

Keynote speakers at the event included Ms Ged Kearney, Federal Member for Batman and IMA Founder Moustafa Fahour OAM.

Islamic Museum of Australia CEO, Mr Ali Fahour, said he was excited to share and re-live memories from the Museum's early days with the community.

“The Museum opened on 28 February 2014, there was a heightened sense of anticipation in the community after years of fundraising to make it happen. Looking through our archived photos brought back great memories, especially for those who have been involved from the beginning,” said Mr Fahour.



Ged Kearney, Federal Member for Batman with staff and volunteers at the Islamic Museum during their Five Year Anniversary celebration.

The Museum was established as a space that both portrays the beauty of Islam and imperatively, offers educational experiences that deepen the visitor's understanding of Islam.

“The idea was conceived post 11 September 2001, negative sentiment towards Muslims and Islam was on the rise. A comfortable learning space that, among other things, offered the opportunity to dispel myths about Islam was more than necessary.”

Five years on, the Museum's Director of Education, Ms Sherene Hassan said the Museum continues to meet these objectives.

“The most rewarding aspect of the museum is to witness firsthand the transformation of students after a visit. Many look tentative and visibly uncomfortable when they first enter the museum. By the end of their visit, they are relaxed and smiling with a newfound respect for Islam and Muslims,” said Ms Hassan.

Caulfield Grammar teacher, Ms Ellen Langmead agrees with this sentiment, “The Islamic Museum of Australia is one of the most valuable venues our students visit as a part of the Year 9 program. The space combines the beauty of a gallery, the information of a museum and the education of an immersive classroom. Most crucially, the staff offer students a chance to interact, ask questions and break down misconceptions. Without a doubt, all students leave this venue as more informed young people who are infused with a new confidence about how the world and all of its people fit together.”

Mr Fahour said the education sector is important to the Museum, “Since opening, the Museum has welcomed over 50,000 guests, around two-thirds of whom have been school students. We have been well supported by educators who see the value in including a visit to the Islamic Museum in their teaching plans. Our curriculum linked activities ensures the Museum experience is relevant to learning areas across primary and secondary levels.”

“We are pleased the Museum continues to be high on the list not just for educators but the community at large. It's a great privilege to share the beauty of Islam with our guests.”

The Islamic Museum of Australia is located in Thornbury, in Melbourne's north. It is the only Islamic museum in the country and provides educational and cross-cultural experiences for all ages. The Museum is open 10am – 4pm, Monday to Saturday.