

Open-air Taraweeh prayers in Lakemba: A historical moment

Rubinah Ahmad *Australasian Muslim Times*, 21 April 2023



For open-air mass Taraweeh prayers for American Muslims, it was Times Square in New York. Its Australian equivalent was held in Haldon Street, Lakemba where thousands of men and women from all over Sydney gathered on Wednesday 19 April, for a historic night of prayer in conjunction with Lakemba markets Festival “Ramadan Nights”.

The unprecedented occasion was organised by the Canterbury Bankstown Council in partnership with Masjid As-Sunnah Lakemba for the 29th night of Ramadan. It was the largest Taraweeh prayer ever held in Australia.



“Peace be onto you, brothers and sisters. Dear guests, welcome to the heart of beautiful and peaceful Australia. Australia is Sydney and Sydney is Lakemba and Lakemba is Haldon St where we are all gathering tonight,” Sheikh Abdul Salam Zoud greeted the crowd.

The event took place on Haldon St, which is transformed into a month-long global food bazaar during Ramadan, welcoming tens of thousands of Muslims and non-Muslims.

The proceedings began with Isha prayer and were followed by Taraweeh prayer

In the middle of the Taraweeh prayers, Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud delivered a short talk about the meaning of Ramadan and fasting.



After Taraveeh prayers, Councillor Bilal El-Hayek delivered a short message saying, “Tonight, Alhumdullilah, this is history in the making.”

He spoke about how he convinced the Council to do hold this Taraveeh prayer saying, “We have to do this, this is what the community wants. We’re there as the voice of the people and by the will of Allah, we managed to deliver this to the community.”

He then ended his speech by thanking the Mayor, Khal Asfour, the council staff, the police and the rangers wishing the crowd Eid Mubarak and that he will see them next year again in this place during Ramadan.



The event was a huge success, and social media was flooded with positive comments.

“Jazak Allahu khayrun for all your efforts and the efforts of Sheikh Abu Bakr, council, and community. Definitely the most beautiful and heartwarming sight to see. We hope more of these nights are possible next Ramadan,” commented Eman Roumieh Sanoussi. Another Facebook user, Ahmad Darwiche, said, “This is Islam ☑ at its finest ♡ Hamdiallah and May Allah (SWT) guide us all.” Even non-Muslims were moved by the event, as Jakallini Tbatth wrote, “I’m an atheist, but this looks like a hugely moving event.”

The night of prayer in Lakemba was not just an observance of the fasting month of Ramadan, but also a testament to the beauty and strength of Islam as it is freely practiced in Australia.

The event brought together people from all walks of life to pray together and honour the values of community, compassion, and devotion. It was a powerful demonstration of the power of faith to unite people and bridge cultural divides.

