

Australia Day 2010 Report

In historic terms, the 26th of January marks the anniversary of the arrival of the First Fleet of 11 convict ships from Great Britain. However, on this day the whole nation comes together to celebrate what's great about Australia and being Australian.

In line with this, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of Australia, as every year, celebrated Australia Day at the Bait-ul-Huda Mosque in Sydney where a number of dignitaries and guests from outside the Ahmadiyya Community were present. A short program was organised at the Mosque to commemorate this day on Tuesday, the 26th of January 2010. Earlier in the day, the Australian flag was raised. The program was chaired by Ramzan Sharif and commenced at 2pm with the recitation and translation of the Holy Quran by Syed Tariq Ahmad. Next, everyone was up standing for the Australian National Anthem, which was led by a group of Atfal. Ramzan Sharif then paid respect to the Dharruk elders and the indigenous people from whom the land where the mosque is located was inherited.

Throughout the program Ramzan Sharif asked various general questions about Australia, with the child answering the question correctly receiving a small prize. The first speaker was Ataul Awal Nasir who spoke about the responsibilities of an Ahmadi Muslim in Australia. He began by highlighting the fact that Australia is a great land with many natural wonders, hence everyone is required to care of the natural resources. Service to humanity is an essential part of an Ahmadi's life, which is evident when the members of the Ahmadiyya Community take part every year in the Clean Up Australia Day, donate blood, offer physical and financial aid at times of natural disasters around the World, assist the needy and visit various aged care facilities. The speaker then brought the audience's attention towards the Khuddam Pledge, where it states that one should offer every sacrifice for the sake of religion, country and nation. He concluded by praying that Australia continued to be a peaceful and prosperous nation.

9 year old Maheen Ashfaq then gave a brief speech on 'Australia – My Home Land.' She described patriotism as to love one's country. From this, loyalty, integrity, sacrifice and courage are the values that one learns. She also quoted the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) saying that "every good act is charity." Zain Khan followed Maheen's speech by presenting a brief history of Australia.

After this, Nadeem Mirza and Abdul Majid Khan shared their feelings on 'what Australia has done for them?' They both described their personal experiences with the trials and tribulations they faced living in Pakistan because of their faith and religion. They highlighted that the freedom of thinking and expression that they have gained moving to Australia has been a blessing for themselves and their children.

Next, 10 year old Abdul Rahman talked about 'Jihad.' He stressed that that the media portrayed Jihad incorrectly as the greater Jihad is of one's sacrifice to be better in all walks

of life, hence 'always striving for the better.' He pointed out that the Holy Quran teaches the true Jihad, which is certainly not what the extremist so-called Muslims are practicing.

Farhad Jan Khan then proceeded to welcome all the guests. Cnr. Tony Bleasdale, who was representing the Mayor of Blacktown City Council, was up first. He had also achieved an OAM earlier that day, making this day extra special for him. He conveyed best wishes from the Mayor and then pointed out that Australia is all about tolerance, respect and love for each other. Australia day highlights the national pride among the citizens.

Next was Cnr. Kevin Connolly's turn on the stage. He was representing Louise Markus, the Federal Member for Greenway and initially conveyed the best wishes from the Mayor of Hawkesbury City Council. He also expressed how humbled he was to hear the speakers and congratulated the Ahmadiyya Community on their commitment to humanitarian services.

Cnr. Kathie Collins from the Blacktown City Council also shared her feelings on the day. She firstly thanked the Ahmadiyya Community for the invitation. She pointed out that she is a Catholic and experienced discrimination from others in the past; hence she understood the experiences of the Pakistani Ahmadis. She acknowledged the contribution of the Ahmadi Community towards various humanitarian causes but challenged the Community to become Plasma Blood Donors, take more active part in the Cancer City Council and the Blacktown Relay for Life. She finally mentioned that the general Community needs to take care and respect the Indigenous people living in Blacktown.

After this, Farhad Jan Khan read out the message from the Mayor of Penrith City Council, who conveyed his best wishes and pointed out that Australia Day is all about celebrating people, diversity, friendship and freedom. Another Sikh guest also expressed his feelings by advising the audience to love all human beings and the nation of Australia.

Finally, Ramzan Sharif thanked all the guests, the speakers and the audience and ended the session by the motto of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, which is "Love for All, Hatred for None." Silent prayers were led by Ramzan Sharif at 3:30pm to officially end the session, where after refreshments were served for everyone to bring an end to a successful Australia Day Program.