



A Brief History of Waikato Muslim Association Hamilton, New Zealand



Narrated by:

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WAIKATO MUSLIM ASSOCIATION (INC).

الجمعية الإسلامية – واكاتو



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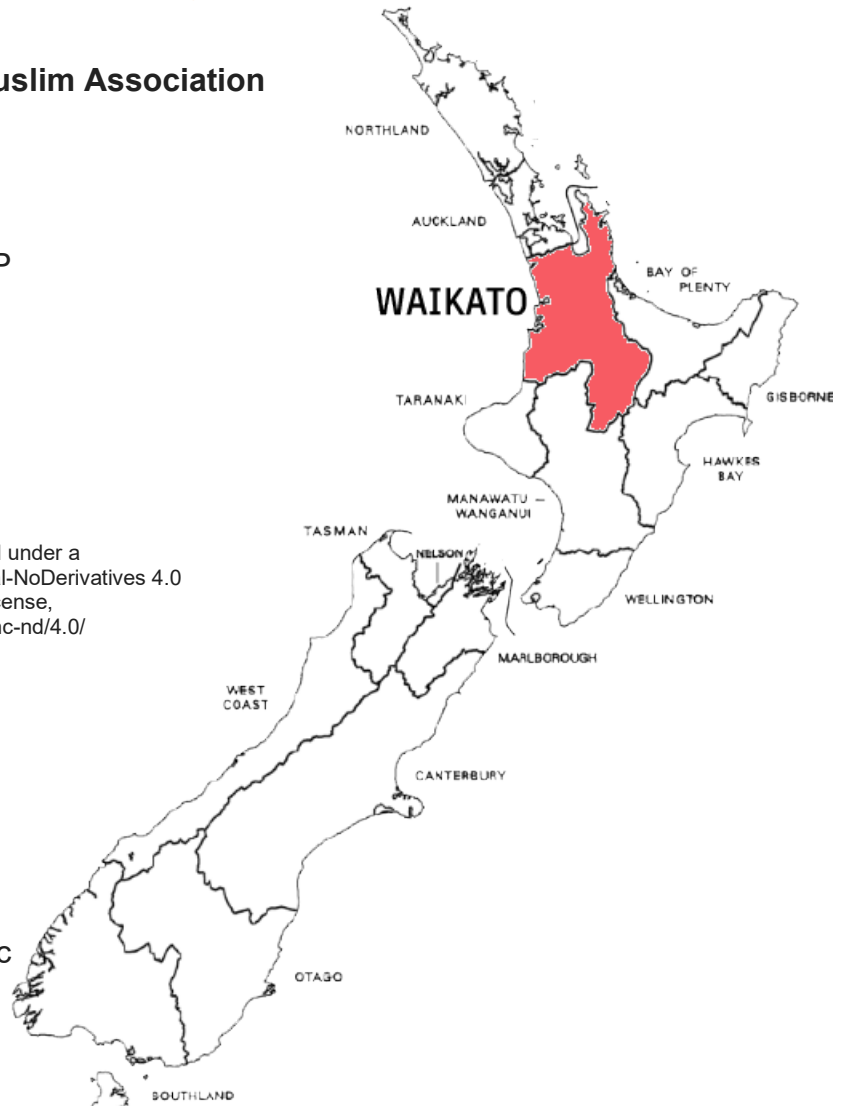
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Foreword

My first meeting with Dr Anis Rahman in 2003 at the Hamilton Mosque was filled with energy and curiosity. He was keen to find out what made me move from Australia to NZ. What was my origin and background? Those details created an immediate connection with him. I still remember his saddened face when I mentioned that I am only here for 2-3 years. His spontaneous response was – ‘we will shackle your feet and never allow you to leave NZ’. Here I am two decades later, experiencing his warmth, care and concern for me and others around him.



Dr Anis Rahman demonstrates an excellent example how one should balance religious and communal responsibilities. As a Senior Leading Scientist, he has established credibility through his research achievements, with over 250 publications. His research performance has earned him international fame. He was cited in “Who’s Who in the World” (15th edition, 1998) and “Outstanding People of the 20th Century” (1st ed., 1999). He was a winner of 12th Khwarizmi International Research Award from Iran in 1999. His scholarly contribution goes beyond publication of papers, he has served as a Senior Executive Committee member on national and international scientific Societies in his field of Plant Protection. A scholar, well respected by his colleagues and friends.

On the religious front, Dr Anis Rahman’s contribution and visibility is outstanding. A well-known name locally and nationally. A founding member of the Waikato Muslim Association, a first recognised Imam of the Muslim Community in Hamilton, he continues to deliver Friday Khutbahs and lead Eid Prayers. At the national level he was the founding member of the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ). A member of the FIANZ Hilal Committee since its inception, he served as its initial Chairman for several years. His communal contributions go well beyond the Muslim Community. In recognition of his contributions to Public Service and the Community, he was awarded a Queen’s Service Order (QSO) by NZ Government in 2003, made a Justice of the Peace in 2004 and honoured with a Civic Award by the Hamilton City in 2015. His piety continues to evolve and benefit the local community.

Dr Anis Rahman’s decision to record the brief history of Waikato Muslim Association is yet another example of his dedication and preparedness to serve the community. Blessed are the communities where skilled elders and professionals generously volunteer their time and skills to evolve the community. Our Association is fortunate and thanks Allah SWT for His Mercy that we have Dr Anis Rahman with us.

Dr Asad Mohsin FAIM, FNZIM

President, Waikato Muslim Association Inc.

August 2022

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

(IN THE NAME OF GOD, MOST GRACIOUS, MOST MERCIFUL)

Preface

I decided to write this brief history of the Waikato Muslim Association focussing on the early struggles of Muslims in our region and the building of a united community. It provides details of the initial gatherings of the community, formation of the Association, securing a property in Hamilton and building of the current Masjid and educational facility. It is difficult to remember exactly all the significant dates, the valued contributions of various individuals and even the names of everyone involved. So, I offer my sincere apologies for the errors and omissions in this memoir.



As the population grew and the new Millennium arrived, Muslims from many parts of the globe joined us and helped make substantial progress to build on the achievements of the pioneers. Only a very brief summary is included of the activities over the past two decades. The list would be very long if I attempted to cover the names and contributions of all individuals involved. This information is current however, and the community is familiar with most of it.

I hope this brief record of early history will provide some understanding to our present and future generations of the struggles their ancestors have gone through. I also trust this will motivate them to work together and continue building on this record, *In Sha Allah*.

Dr Anis Rahman PhD, QSO, JP
Hamilton, New Zealand
August 2022 (Muharram 1444)

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1. *The First Muslim Family to Settle in Hamilton, 1972?*

Born in Azamgarh, India and educated in Canada, I travelled with my wife and a young daughter from Vancouver to land in Auckland on the morning of 10 June 1972. I had accepted a Scientist position in Hamilton with the then New Zealand Department of Agriculture. Historical records show that a few Muslim males had lived in Hamilton/Frankton in the past, but no Muslim family had ever made this city their home as yet. So, with our intention of staying for at least 2 years here, I believe we became the **FIRST MUSLIM FAMILY** to settle in the city of Hamilton. My story and that of early Muslims from that date and a brief history of our regional Muslim Association begins here.

1.1 The City of Hamilton in 1970s

New Zealand, on the whole, was a laid-back country then. Everyone left their workplace as soon as the working hours finished and got busy doing things around their house – gardening, painting, concreting, building things for their kids, adding something to the house and sometimes building the whole house. No shops opened during the weekend, not even grocery stores. Banks opened only from 9.30 am to 3 pm. If one wanted to go to the bank, the post office or get a haircut or to avail any other services, it had to be done during the week. Nobody would mind at work, how could they? The country had only one black and white television channel which operated 3pm to 9.30pm. No advertising was permitted on TV.

Hamilton was an underdeveloped town with less than 100,000 people and very limited facilities. It was also a quiet town compared to cities I had come from. The bus service was limited and available only during the day. Everything looked old and backward. The first time I saw the city bus station, I almost cried. It was nothing more than a tin shed. Where I have come to, I thought!!

Our family was almost immediately in the newspaper when our daughter Anjum Rahman was featured on the front page of the Waikato Times of 19 July 1972, with a heading “Skilled Linguist at Six”, because she spoke five languages.

2. Initial Difficulties as a Muslim Family in Hamilton

Records show three Muslim men from India were working in the fruit trade around Hamilton over the 1920s and 1930s but their ultimate fate is unclear. We also discovered that Late Wazir Ali Shah (grandfather of Amin Farooqi) was buried in the Hamilton East cemetery (next to Hamilton Gardens) on 16 September 1928. But unfortunately, we did not find any Muslims living in this city when we arrived here. As we started searching for Muslim families in and around the region, we found the family of Mohammed Hussain Sahib in Ngaruawahia before the end of 1972. He had migrated from Fiji in 1969 to undertake employment at the AFFCO freezing works in Horotiu. Soon after we met Amin and Hanifa Farooqi, with their little son Shambeel, who were living in Putaruru with the family of his father-in-law, Hafizur Rehman. This family hailed from the Punjab region and has been in Waikato since early 1917. As we had a lot in common culturally and religiously, we became the best of family friends. Another family was that of Drs Khalid and Razia Sandhu from Pakistan living in Kawerau and sharing a GP's practice there. But within a couple of years, they shifted to Wellington and have lived there since. Dr Sayeed Pasha from Pakistan was working at Waikato Hospital for a short time but soon shifted to England with his wife. Dr Haris Fuard from Sri Lanka had moved to work at Waikato Hospital soon after, but we did not meet him for some time.

Luckily, a Fijian brother in Vancouver had given us the name and phone number of Brother Mohammed Yakub Khan from Fiji who lived in Mangere, Auckland. Through him we found the contact of Mahmood Suleman Bhikoo, the then President of New Zealand Muslim Association (NZMA). Ramadan wasn't too far away, so we contacted him and soon became a close friend of his family and a part of the wider Gujarati and Muslim community in Auckland. Most of the Muslim families were living in Ponsonby or South Auckland suburbs at the time, and the only one *Musallah* was in Ponsonby. We were lonely in Hamilton, our family was small; we had a car and petrol was only 47c a GALLON, so almost every second weekend we were in Auckland, attending a wedding, engagement, *aqeeqah* or other large community function.

There were no Halal meat shops or any way of getting halal meat, other than going to a chicken, sheep or a beef farm and slaughtering an animal there. Most of the baked products (bread, cakes, biscuits etc.) had lard (pig fat) in them as that was the cheapest fat for bakers. If lard was not used with the dough, they would use it on the bottom of pans in which the products were baked because of the less sticky nature of lard. There were very few baked products which we could buy. We used to order Riezenstein bread (baked by a Jewish company) from Auckland

through the local dairy, which was delivered only twice a week. There were no shops for Indian products in the city.

3. *First Ever Jumah Salat in Hamilton, 1975*

The only time we could pray one of our daily salats in *Jamaat* was when we visited each other, but unfortunately, we could not have Jumah salat because we did not have the minimum four Muslim males in the city required for this congregation. With under-developed and windy roads, travel to and from long distances was not easy so it was not possible for Muslims in nearby towns to join.

Then in June 1975 Allah SWT sent a *Tabligh* Jamaat from Durban, South Africa led by the famous Bhai Paadia, the national Jamaat Ameer for that country. This Jamaat was instrumental in starting the first ever Friday congregational prayer in the city which was prayed in the living room of our house. They also inspired the scattered Muslim residents of Waikato to start a regular Jumah salat. I heard them crying profusely in the dead of the night making dua to Allah SWT to help establish regular Jumah salat in the city. Although it seemed a remote possibility at the time, their dua was accepted and weekly Jumah salat has continued since then, *Alhamdo Lillah*.



Figure 1: 69 Carrington Avenue, Silverdale, where the first Jumah Salat in the city of Hamilton was held in 1975 and which served as Hamilton 'Masjid' until 1984.

3.1 The Initial Congregational Location for Muslims, 1970s

Our house at 69 Carrington Avenue in Silverdale (Figure 1), which we bought in 1974, was the first Muslim house in the city of Hamilton. It was located conveniently close to the University of Waikato for foreign Muslim students. The *Tabligh* Jamaat brothers advised us to set aside one room in the house for salat, which was designated as the temporary ‘Masjid’ of Hamilton and served as the site of many communal affairs for a decade until 1984. The weekly Friday salat and regular religious gatherings for various occasions continued here until a property was acquired for the Muslim community. *Taraweeh* prayers during Ramadan were organised at different houses in a family environment. Having a little more religious knowledge than the rest of Muslims in Hamilton at the time, I became the lay Imam for this city and remained so for many years to come, including delivering Jumah *khutbahs* at regular intervals thereafter. Once we started praying Jumah and Eid salats in Hamilton, our visits to Auckland became a little less frequent.

3.2 The First Hujjaj from Hamilton, 1978

The first Muslims from the city of Hamilton to perform Hajj were Mohammed Hussain Sahib and myself, along with our spouses in November 1978. There were no official mechanisms for going to Hajj from New Zealand in those days. We obtained our visas from the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Singapore and went as visitors with a bank draft in our hands which was the only mandatory requirement at that time. My wife and I took a long route via India and Pakistan, while Mohammed Hussain and his wife headed directly for Jeddah. Unfortunately, none of us had much knowledge about Hajj and its rites or any elder/*aalim* to guide us; just a real desire to be a part of the unparalleled rituals and fulfil this important pillar of Islam by being there. This also created a number of practical difficulties, such as securing appropriate accommodation, transport and meals. Our almost complete lack of knowledge of Arabic language often made the situation worse. We did manage to go through all the required steps though (Figure 2) and returned back from Jeddah with a wish and sincere promise to come back again for Hajj in the near future, organised and better prepared *In Sha Allah*.



Figure 2: Dr Anis Rahman and Qamar Shamim Rahman, first of the four Hujjaj from Hamilton, November 1978. The other two were Hj. Mohammed Hussain Sahib and his wife.

4. *Slow Progress of the Muslim Community (1972-1980)*

The number of Muslims was increasing very slowly in Hamilton. Only a few people came and some of those soon moved to Auckland due to lack of employment opportunities here. A few were male seasonal workers or Halal slaughtermen from Fiji on temporary visas who would return home. Jalal ud Deen and his wife Rubina were a classic example who, although very good practicing Muslims and active in our community, stayed here only a couple of years. Jalal ud Deen served as the second President of our Association. Mohammed Hakim Sahib, nephew of Haji Mohammed Hussain, joined the family in Ngaruawahia and was a regular attendee at our Jumah salat. Mrs Alma Jacob had shifted to Hamilton with her two daughters from Taumarunui in 1973. She was among the real pioneers as her husband, Muhammed Faqir Jacob, had come from Kajurwala in the Punjab region in early 1920s and she had joined him in Taumarunui in 1949. Her family provided considerable support to the community whenever required. Her grandson Tariq Ashraf has continued this family's enormous contribution. Two active members who came from Fiji included Hanif Ali who

was working in the Hamilton City Council and Munif Ali who was learning to fly with the Waikato Aeroclub. Munif's father was the much-loved personality, Late Abbas Ali, who lived in Masterton at the time and later in Auckland for many years. After receiving his flying licence Munif Ali headed to work with Singapore Airlines and later with Saudia Airline. His brother Hanif Ali and niece Rehana Ali have been the stalwarts of Muslim community in Wellington for decades. Dr Haris Fuard, who had migrated from Sri Lanka to Hawera in 1971, moved to Hamilton in 1974 to work at Waikato Hospital. We didn't meet him for a year or two but once we did, he became the backbone of our community, later serving as President of the Association for several years.

A student from Bangladesh, Mesbah-us Saleheen, came with his wife Leena and young son Lovell in 1975 to study in the Geography Department at Waikato University. After receiving his degree, he soon returned to his home country. The ensuing years saw a large influx of Muslim students from Malaysia. Their High Commission rented our property on 283 Dey Street, which served as 'Malaysia House' for several years and was used for their regular gatherings. Most of these students are now in high positions in Malaysia and we often catch up with some of them in Kuala Lumpur.

The real find at the time was Nizam Flynn, originally from Hamilton (Hillcrest) who converted to Islam in 1975 when he married Yasmin binti Mohamed in Singapore. He was working at Horotiu freezing works along with Hj. Mohammed Hussain Sahib and Mohammed Hakim Sahib. He was very interested to increase his knowledge about Islam and spent hours with me regularly learning to read Quran. Later he bravely embarked on a Bachelor's degree in Islamic Economics at the newly established International Islamic University (UIA) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. A popular and modest person, Nizam was always prominent in the community for several years and served in various positions in the Association before and after his studies.

My late father Qari Mohammed Yasin joined us in December 1975. He was *Haafiz-e-Quran* and a fully qualified *Aalim*. He was a very pious person and regularly prayed *Tahajjud* and other *Nafil* prayers. Unfortunately, it was the 'wrong' time for him to be in Hamilton from an Islamic perspective. There weren't many Muslims to make use of his knowledge. Hj. Mohammed Hussain's son Ahmed was one of the few to benefit from his teaching. With no Masjid in Hamilton, he missed the daily congregational prayers and because of his strong desire to do *I'tekaaf*, he decided to return back to India just before Ramadan, having spent less than a year with us.

4.1 The Birth of Waikato Muslim Association, 1975

As our Muslim community increased and started getting together regularly, we started thinking about forming a local Association. Muslims of Manawatu had started one recently with smaller numbers than us, through the valiant effort of Dr Ashraf Choudhary. As a result, the Muslim Association of Waikato was established *informally* in 1975 by 3 families representing 10 people.

A special general meeting was held on 8 July 1979 in our home at 69 Carrington Avenue and it was resolved there was a definite need for registering an Association in the region. A committee was appointed for achieving this aim and Amin Farooqi did much of the required paper work. Fifteen members signed the Application for Incorporation on 17 November 1979 (Figure 4). This application was approved on 30 January 1980 and the Association became a distinct legal body (Figure 3), with “28 registered members comprising eight families”, as reported in Vol 1 Number 1 (Page 13) of the FIANZ magazine, *The Muslim*. We named it the Waikato-Bay of Plenty Muslim Association, as we were thinking about people living in Rotorua and Tauranga as well.



Figure 3: Certificate of Incorporation issued on 30 January 1980.

APPLICATION FOR INCORPORATION

We, the several persons whose names are subscribed hereto, being members of the above-mentioned society, hereby make application for the incorporation of the society under the foregoing rules, in accordance with the Incorporated Societies Act, 1908.

Dated this 17th day of November, 1979.

Signature, Occupation, and Address of Applicant	Signature, Occupation, and Address of witness
1. ANISUR RAHMAN, SCIENTIST 69 CARRINGTON AVE HAMILTON	A. Rahman
2. ANJUM RAHMAN, STUDENT 69 CARRINGTON AVE, HAMILTON	Anjum Rahman
3. HANEEFA FAROOQI, HOUSE WIFE 21 SANDERS AVE. HAMILTON	H. Farooqi
4. QAMAR RAHMAN, HOUSEWIFE 69 CARRINGTON AVE HAMILTON	Qamar Rahman
5. ANWER BANO REHMAN, CLERK 4 3 TEE ST POTARURU	Anwer Rehman
6. HAMIDAH BANO, HOUSEWIFE 21 SANDERS AVE 3 TEE ST. MORRISVILLE	H. Bano

TWO copies of this application are required. Members should sign in the same place in each copy. A witness may not be a signatory. P.T.O.

Signature, Occupation, and Address Applicant	Signature, Occupation, and Address of Witness
7. HAFEEZUR RAHMAN Retired 3 TEE ST POTARURU	H. Rehman
8. MOHDHANIF LABOURER 51 SEFTON CRES HAMILTON	M. Hanif
9. N. HANIF, STUDENT 51 SEFTON CRES HAMILTON	N. Hanif
10. ZAIN HANIF, HOUSEWIFE 51 SEFTON CRES, HAMILTON	Z. Hanif
11. HABIBUR RAHMAN, SALERMAN 3 TEE ST POTARURU	H. Rehman
12. ANWER REHMAN MOHAMMAD HAFIS FUARD, G.P. 20 KINGSLEY ST. HAMILTON	A. Rehman
13. JUDITH G. FUARD, HOUSEWIFE 20 KINGSLEY ST. HAMILTON	J. Fuard
14. SHEIK AHMED ALI, APPRENTICE CRYSTAL GLASS CO. K DRIVE, HAMILTON 60 69 Carrington Ave	S. Ahmed
15. RAIHANAH YAHYA, STUDENT 261 A, RIVER ROAD HAMILTON	Raihanah Yahya

WITNESS TO ALL THE FOREGOING SIGNATURES
M. A. FAROOQI, ACCOUNTANT
21 SANDERS AVE
MORRISVILLE.

Figure 4: Names and signatures of the fifteen Muslim members who signed the initial Application for Incorporation for the Association, on 17 November 1979.

The inaugural president of the Association was the late Hafizur Rehman, father-in-law of Amin Farooqi. Amin himself, then residing in Morrinsville, took up the position of Secretary and accepted the huge load of getting the community and Association established and progressing. Jalal ud Deen became our next President along with Ahmed Hussain Sahib as the Secretary. Jalal and his wife Rubina had studied at Massey University to become professional teachers. Although Jalal had a nice job in Hamilton, his family decided to move to Auckland soon after as they were concerned about the religious education of their children. In 1981 Nizam Flynn was elected the third President of the Association. He held this post until early 1983 when he left to study at the newly created International Islamic University in Malaysia. Upon his return in 1987, he served as the Secretary of the Association and was also in the FIANZ Executive Committee. His family was very active in the community until he took up a teaching job in Brunei and moved there in July 1996. Nizam was very good in producing regular Newsletters, initially in his handwriting, and keeping the community informed of activities and events as they happened.

4.2 FIANZ is Born, April 1979

After a discussion within Muslim Association of Canterbury, Dr Mohammad Hanif Quazi corresponded with the different Muslim groups in Auckland, Wellington and Palmerston North and floated the concept of forming a federation of the Muslim organisations in New Zealand. An exploratory meeting was held in October 1978, with representatives from the New Zealand Muslim Association (NZMA), the International Muslim Association of New Zealand (IMAN) and Manawatu Muslim Association (MMA). This was followed by another exploratory meeting, held in Palmerston North in February 1979. As a result of these two discussions, Muslims across the land then met in the Ponsonby Masjid in Auckland on 15 April 1979 to create the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ), with Mazhar Krasniqi appointed as the inaugural President. A constitution was also drafted at this meeting, although it wasn't adopted and signed until the next meeting in Wellington in September 1979. Our Association joined FIANZ the next year. In the ensuing years, HJ. Mohammed Hussain Sahib from our Association served as the Honorary Treasurer for a while. Initially our Association had one representative on the Federation Council. In 1996 it was increased from one delegate to two, on the grounds that membership was now over 500, *Alhamdo Lillah*.

One of the perennial thorny issues of the Muslim *ummah*, viz. moonsighting and deciding the date for a new Islamic month came up often, as Wellington and

Auckland sometimes celebrated *Eidul Fitr* on a different day. This issue, along with daily salat timetables and Ramadan timetables for different cities were the tasks assigned to the *Hilal* subcommittee which I chaired for many years. Another focus of the Federation has been Halal certification in negotiations with the New Zealand Meat Producers Board. Thus, the FIANZ Halal subcommittee initiated by Dr Ashraf Choudhary has been another important one. This has been chaired in later years by Dr Mustafa Farouk and has greatly benefited from his expertise and knowledge in this area as an internationally renowned meat scientist. Both these subcommittees have been extremely helpful in uniting the Muslim *ummah* across New Zealand.

5. *Progress of the Muslim Community (1981-1985)*

The Muslim population in Hamilton was growing only at snail's pace, but membership of our Association now included folk from outside the city of Hamilton as well. Jumah salat was being held also in Te Aroha now, with the valiant effort of Amin Farooqi, at the residence of brothers Jemal and Abbas Hodzic. Known as "Jim" to his Kiwi friends, Jemal had arrived in New Zealand in 1962 from Bosnia to work on the Manapouri power station in the South Island. In 1969 he married a Pakeha woman and in 1978 they settled in Te Aroha where they lived, along with his brother until 1985. They then shifted to Auckland where Jemal was active as Patron of the South Auckland Muslim Association until he died in October 2004.

Although still small in number, members of our community were enthusiastic and were getting together as often as possible. This was obvious from the first ever article about Ramadan which appeared on the front page of Waikato Times of 13 July 1983, with a photograph of a young Nizam Flynn and his son Yusuf Adam. It mentioned that "More than 50 Waikato Muslims gathered in Hamilton today to celebrate the end of Ramadan. This ceremony included Pakistanis, Fijians, Indians, Malaysians, Yugoslavs, as well as New Zealanders". During Ramadan in 1984 our 7-year-old son, Nadeem Shafiqur Rahman, featured in Waikato Times (29 June 1984, Page 1) as the first Hamilton-born person to finish reading the entire Quran (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Nadeem Shafiqur Rahman becomes the first Hamilton-born person to finish reading the entire Quran, *Waikato Times* (29 June 1984).

The adoption of Halal slaughter in most of New Zealand's freezing works now provided both employment and income for some Muslims, and also served to slowly increase the size of the Muslim population. In 1984 Hj. Mohammed Hussain Sahib was appointed regional Halal Supervisor, a post he held until 1996. Soon after, almost all the lamb meat sold in New Zealand butcher shops was Halal; a welcome development over the situation we faced upon our arrival to this country.

5.1 Waikato Muslims Get an Islamic Centre, 1984

Once the Association was registered in 1979, concerted efforts to raise funds for an Islamic Centre in Hamilton started in early 1982 with local collection drives and trips across New Zealand soliciting financial support from Muslims. We also received a donation from the Wellington based IMAN. A property suitable for the purpose, with a central location and 1,760 square metres of land, was identified but was well beyond our financial means. So, Amin Farooqi and I made a trip to Auckland during the weekend to raise the still required balance of \$17,000 as a *qarde-hasana* and the current property at 921 Heaphy Terrace (Figure 6) was bought on 15 December 1983 for a sum of \$58,000. The property was legally transferred to the Association on 7 February 1984. FIANZ then assisted our Association with a \$15,000 loan to repay the contributions made by the individuals in Auckland who had come to our aid. At that time the community consisted of 42 Muslims including all adult males and females.



Figure 6: 921 Heaphy Terrace, the first Islamic Centre of Hamilton, February 1984.

A consent application was soon lodged with Hamilton City Council to use the property as a place of worship. Despite a number of objections (Figure 7), the resource consent was granted, *Alhamdo Lillah*, albeit with a number of conditions such as restricting noise, building fences and a car park.

HAMILTON CITY COUNCIL



CITY ADMINISTRATION
DEPARTMENT

Please ask for: Mr Hastings
Your ref:
Our ref: 48/23/H6-5 BJH:CLW

Municipal Offices
Caro Street
Private Bag
Hamilton New Zealand
Phone (071) 81-919

Please address all correspondence to the Director

13 September 1984

The Secretary,
Waikato Bay of Plenty Muslim Association (Inc.),
C/- 30 Corrin Street,
HAMILTON.

Dear Sir,

APPLICATION FOR PLANNING CONSENT TO USE EXISTING HOUSE AS AN ISLAMIC CENTRE

Further to my letter of 14 August 1984 I advise that 7 objections were received against your Church's proposal to use an existing house at Heaphy Terrace as an Islamic Centre. The objections were from:

1. Mr and Mrs M.E. Burrows - 18 Ascot Road, Mount Maunganui
2. Mr and Mrs W.E. Clementson - 917 Heaphy Terrace, Hamilton
3. Mr P.J. Fraser - P.O. Box 10-164 Hamilton (*61 Boundary Road*)
4. Mr and Mrs R. James - 53 Boundary Road
5. Mr K.J. Laurence - 42 Boundary Road (79 Comries Road)
6. Mr R.L. Le Sueur - 59 Boundary Road
7. Mr W.D. Stewart - 14 Omokoroa Road, R.D. 2, Tauranga (*46 Boundary Rd*)

A planning report is now being compiled and once this has been received I will be advising you of a hearing date. At this stage it appears the hearing could be dealt late next month.

In the meantime I will be pleased if you will let me have the hearing fee of \$50.00.

Yours faithfully,

B.J. KENSINGTON
DIRECTOR CITY ADMINISTRATION

Per: *B.J. Kensington*

Figure 7: List of objections received against the application for planning consent to use 921 Heaphy Terrace as an Islamic Centre, September 1984.

The House on Heaphy Terrace property was an old three-bedroom villa. A few walls in the house were knocked down to make a big prayer hall for men and a room was also set aside for ladies. This property became the Hamilton Islamic Centre (Figure 8) and the focus of the community, as gatherings for salat and all functions then shifted from our house to this place. The Friday prayers, one or two daily salats, various religious and community functions and Quran lessons for youth were held there regularly. An article in Waikato Times of 21 November 1984 (Page 5) spread the news of this “New Base for Muslims” and mentioned “an official opening for February or March next year which will coincide with a seminar to which a cross section of religious scholars, Muslims and non-Muslims, would be invited.”

Waikato Muslim Association played a significant role in the years of early development of FIANZ, and hosted its biannual meetings in Hamilton in October 1980 and 1983. During later years, members of our Association continued to hold senior Executive Committee positions and making very significant contributions to establishment of Muslim community in New Zealand (for more information refer to Section 9.1).



Figure 8: From left: Dr Anis Rahman, Hj. Mohammed Hussain Sahib, Dr Anwar Ghani, Hj. Anver Gujarati, and Mohammed Afiz, in front of the first Islamic Centre in Hamilton.

6. *Progress of the Muslim Community (1986-1990)*

The Muslim community had started growing at a faster pace in the mid-1980s due to more relaxed immigration policies of the new Labour Government and the 1987 coup in Fiji, which caused the exodus of many Fijian Indians, including Muslims. Now we also had a more diversified community. Nizam Flynn came back from Malaysia in 1987 after completing his Bachelor's degree in Islamic Economics. He became a very active member as before and put a renewed life into our community. He also served as the Secretary of the Association for several years. In April, 1988 Mohammed Afiz, who was a tertiary student in Auckland in the 1970's and qualified as a Chartered Accountant, returned from Fiji with his family to settle in Hamilton. He soon joined the Executive Committee of our Association and held various positions including Treasurer, Secretary and Vice President before being appointed President in 1995 and then FIANZ Delegate in 2003. A very informative article about Ramadan prepared by the Association appeared in Waikato Times of 6 May 1989 (Setting sin aside in Ramadan's month) which promoted the beliefs and activities of Muslims to the wider public.

During 1988/89 the Waikato Muslim Association grappled with the challenge of financing a new car park at the Islamic Centre as per City Council regulations. An appeal for this was circulated nationwide in a FIANZ newsletter. At the AGM of 27 March 1988 members elected Dr Haris Fuard the President and Nizam Flynn the Secretary of the Association. This was repeated a couple more times in subsequent years. By the end of the decade, the number of Muslims in the region had reached around 150, including children and youth.

Children from our Association were active in participating in Quran competitions organised by FIANZ in 1988 and 1990. Many of our children, including Nadeem, Shadia, Shambeel and Naveed, along with us, attended the first New Zealand Islamic Youth Training camp held in beautiful Hanmer Springs, supported by the charismatic Wellington Imam, the late Sheikh Khalid Kamal Abdul Hafiz. A year later, our Association also organised a large very well attended and conducted FIANZ Youth Camp near Hamilton.

6.1 *'Halal' Becomes a Household Word in NZ, 1980's*

To people in Western countries, as well as many other parts of the world, 'Halal' meant no pork or a food item containing no pork/pork-derived products. Muslims of my generation would remember getting a 'Moslem' meal in aeroplanes with the tray containing picture of a pork crossed in red. This all changed when the

Government of Iran described ‘Halal’ as *Zabeeha*, viz, an animal killed by a Muslim according to *Shariah* (Slitting throats in the Moslem way – with God’s love, Christchurch Press, 21 September 1979, Page 17). The adoption of such ‘Halal’ slaughter in most of the freezing works at the insistence of the Government of Iran also provided employment and income opportunities for Muslims and helped increase the size of the Muslim population. FIANZ played an important role to help the New Zealand Meat Board develop and prosper this trade. In 1984 Hj. Mohammed Hussain Sahib was appointed the first regional Halal supervisor for FIANZ, a post he held until 1996.

In September 1987 a new restaurant, the Viceroy of India, opened on Bryce Street in Hamilton and started offering a few Halal dishes. Six years later the first fully Halal compliant Turkish restaurant started when Ramazan Semiz from Samsun and his New Zealand wife Kerry opened the Saglik Café on Grey Street in October 1993. He was soon joined by his brother Ayhan who also married a local lady, who took the name Ayesha. He took great measures to ensure all the food was Halal (Waikato Times 28 April 1994, Page 17). In 1999 the Semiz family relocated to Rotorua and worked hard to build a Muslim community there. Now Muslims of Waikato were looking forward to the opening of a Halal butchery in the region!

7. *Progress of the Muslim Community (1991-1995)*

This decade saw a significant increase in the number of Muslims in the region as well as in facilities and activities. A decision was undertaken to fundraise towards improving the facility at 921 Heaphy Terrace. Nearly \$40,000 was raised to build a two-bedroom house on the site for a religious teacher, and Hani Qalqalaq hailing from Palestine was appointed. Around this time a gifted personality, Niaz Al-Somai, an optometrist from Syria arrived in Hamilton. He started sharing the task of leading *salat* and delivering Jumah *Khutbah* with me. He was particularly talented and soon completed M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees at Waikato University. His Ph.D. thesis submitted to University of Waikato was the first ever to start with *Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim* and a verse from Quran about honey. He was then doing post-doctoral research simultaneously with AgResearch in Hamilton and the University of Auckland. He further completed a Master’s degree in clinical pharmacy from the University of Otago through distance learning and took up a career as a pharmacist. On 1 March 1992 members elected him as President of our Association for one year. The next year on 18 April 1993 Dr Haris Fuard was

re-elected President and held the post for a couple of years during which our community made significant progress.

In March 1991, Hamilton Muslims joined with Christians, Jews, and other faiths to publicly pray for peace following the first Gulf War. “Some 150 people gathered in Hamilton’s Parana Park for the special ‘People Praying for Peace Service’ organised by City Councillor Brian Impson” (Waikato Times 4 March 1991, Page 1). The active Muslim presence in such interfaith peace efforts was specially highlighted. Later that year, the Anglican Vicar, Bruce Kelly and our President Mohammed Afiz jointly arranged a widely publicised inter-religious service in the City Council’s Reception Lounge (Waikato Times 26 October 1991, Page 3).

Over 21-23 December 1991, our Association organised the FIANZ national Muslim Youth Camp at the Karakiriki Christian Camp near Hamilton, one of the earliest of its kind. This was a very well conducted large event attended by 48 boys and girls from around the country and turned out to be a huge community effort. The objective of the exercise was to give Muslim youth more social experience with other Muslim youth and to provide greater knowledge of Islam. All our children did very well again, with Shadia getting the First prize for being the best overall participant and Shambeel bagging the second prize. The event was in the memory of young participants for many years and showed what a small community can do when they work together.

In August 1992, Hamilton’s first Muslim to be appointed a Justice of Peace (JP), Mohammed Hassan was sworn in at the Hamilton Courthouse (Hamilton Press 12 August 1992, Page 8). He had migrated from Fiji in 1987 and became a New Zealand citizen in 1991. Achieving this appointment within 5 years of his arrival in New Zealand highlighted his dedicated involvement in the community. At the time of the swearing ceremony, he was Secretary of our Association and later also served as Secretary General of FIANZ for a short period. Since then, Mohammed Afiz, Dr Sayeeda Bano, Dr Anwar Ghani and myself have also been appointed Justices of the Peace.

At the May 1995 AGM of the Waikato-Bay of Plenty Muslim Association we farewelled our long serving President Dr Haris Fuard and appointed Mohammed Afiz in that position who held it until 2003 when he was appointed FIANZ delegate. This well-spoken, future looking leader started working hard to raise the status of the Muslim community, not only in Hamilton but also in Waikato as well as nationally. He was instrumental in developing and progressing our Muslim community over these years, improving our facilities and most importantly keeping us united.

President Mohammed Afiz was most ably assisted by community minded professionals like Drs Anwar Ghani and Mustafa Farouk who were establishing their roots in the city. These two individuals progressed much further to take Executive positions in FIANZ and made several huge contributions that will leave many bright spots in the history of Muslims in New Zealand. Some of the other Executive members of the committee who were very active during this time included: Dr Habib Rahman, Alam Topari (as Vice President); Mohammed Tayyab and Abdul Wahab (as Secretary); Nadeem Rahman, Arif Khan and Abdul Mukhtar (Boya) Ali (as Treasurer). These individuals and many others assisted the Association during years of the fastest growth of our community and improvement of our facilities. Some of them later shifted to Auckland with their families and have continued voluntary contributions to the local Associations and the community there.

7.1 Somali Refugees Arrive in Hamilton, 1993

In July 1993, the Waikato Muslim community welcomed the arrival of the first 36 Somali refugees. “The Somalis were brought to Hamilton by the Waikato-Bay of Plenty Muslim Association and the Hamilton Refugee Migrant Service” (Waikato Times 3 July 1993, Page 1). An article entitled ‘A long way from home’ (Waikato Times 20 May 1995) which had photos of young looking Abdirizak Abdi and Halima Jelle provided their background history and difficulties faced by them in the new land (Figure 9). It mentioned some 100 Somali refugees were living in Hamilton at the time. A further 115 refugees arrived during 1997 (Waikato Times 26 August 1997, Page 1) and by 2001 there were over 800 Somalis living in Hamilton, constituting around one third of the total Muslim population of the region.

This bolstering of the number of Muslims necessitated a proper decent size Masjid in Hamilton. Being the recent migrants and also as a part of their religious culture, Somali men were accustomed to performing their daily salat in a Masjid. Thus, their arrival in the city witnessed the regular establishment of five daily prayers in congregation (*Jamaat*) every day, something we had been trying unsuccessfully over the years.

One of the very able Somali brothers, Ismail Gamadid, also took over the helm of our Association as its President after the departure of Mohammed Afiz to Auckland. Being attached to the Masjid and community, he did an excellent job for many years until his departure to Australia in 2015. Abdirizak Abdi and Mohamed Khalif have also been quite active and contributed in many ways.

MAGAZINE



WAITING: Tiirig Diiriye. PICTURE: Jane Scouler

Meanwhile, in Hamilton — and in Kenya the waiting goes on.

Halima Jelle had to leave it all behind — the house, the car, and her second husband. For the past year the mother-of-three has been living in Hamilton East, coping in a foreign land with her three young children Ahmed, Hussein and Ayan.

In Mogadishu, the Somali capital, Halima was a student and then a housewife, married to an army colonel, who later died of jaundice. "My husband had a good job. We had everything in Somalia. Even a car, house, TV and video. It was a nice life. But civil war took away this comfortable, happy life and Halima had to flee the country, leaving behind her second husband, a student she married after her first husband died.

Now, she manages on a benefit of \$300 a week, desperately hoping to be reunited with her husband, a step-daughter, her father and other relatives. "We do quite well but it's not enough. My relatives in Somalia need some help from us and we use the phone a lot. It's very expensive."

Halima wants to work but cannot get a job because her English is not good enough. She is learning to use a sewing machine and spends three days a week learning English at Waikato Polytechnic.

The children attend school in Hamilton — "a very nice school with a lot of nice teachers". "They (the children) like it here. They are very happy, but sometimes they ask how we can live without relatives — or their father."

However, Halima is happy with New Zealand, particularly Hamilton with its pleasant countryside, and she says the people are very friendly. Neighbours help out and some Somali friends take her shopping in their car.

While anxious to be reunited with her family, Halima realises she cannot go back to Somalia, where war destroyed everything. "I think we will be Kiwi," she adds.

Tiirig Diiriye has her 12-year-old daughter, Ayan, nearby to help translate when her English fails, but frustrations about her native Somalia come through in three words she uses often: "it's no good."

When she arrived in New Zealand two years ago with no money and five children, she went through the city "lottery" process and was allocated Hamilton.

Since then some of her family have moved here but her husband Abdir, who was a bank manager before the war, is still in Kenya. Waiting.

Tiirig had a letter from him the day of our interview. She speaks quickly but quietly in Somali, her distress as obvious in her clasped hands as it is in her voice.

"Food's very hard to get (in the Kenyan camps), and there's no money to buy it," Ayan interjects.

She says some immigration officials have gone out to see Abdir and may bring him to New Zealand.

"I need help from New Zealand government," Tiirig says. "They help me before, and now I need more help."

Last week some of their Hamilton East neighbours broke their back fence, and Tiirig says they sometimes bang on the house.

She would rather move to Melville, she says, but her daughter is not so keen.

Ayan says it was hard in Hamilton at first.

in the Somali capital of Mogadishu, admits that won't happen for many years.

Abdirizak has lived in Hamilton for nearly two years, studying accounting and economics at Waikato University, and becoming accustomed to colder weather.

He came to New Zealand as a refugee with his sister-in-law who got out for medical reasons, but he was forced to leave his family behind.

Abdirizak has 13 brothers and sisters, many with their own children. Both his parents are dead and all but two of his brothers and sisters live in refugee camps on the Kenyan border.

Attempts to bring family members to New Zealand have failed, leaving Abdirizak with little hope. He says he has battled for two years but doubts he will ever get his family out of the camps.

He believes he can do more to help by sending his family money. And he knows what kind of conditions his family is living in, having spent 11 months in a camp before arriving in New Zealand. "It is really very awful."

"I just felt so relieved because I had got out of it. Then I thought I have to come to a peaceful country and have to start all over again."

Abdirizak's transition to life in a new country has been relatively easy — with the exception of the first few months of dealing with social welfare and employment agencies.

"But I was lucky enough to go to the only university in Somalia, which taught English, so my English was good when I came to New Zealand."

Somalia does not have a welfare system and Abdirizak was shocked when he was told to go on the dole. "I was very much ashamed when I was told I was allowed a government hand-out."

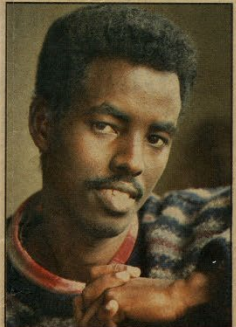
Abdirizak managed to get a part-time job cleaning telephone booths for Telecom which helps pay for university and living costs and allows him to send \$2500 home each month.

Adapting to living in New Zealand has gone well, he says. Unlike the Muslim women whose bodies remain totally covered, with the exception of their faces, Somali men wear "regular" Kiwi clothes, he says.

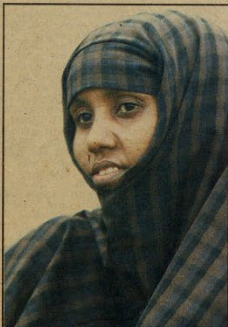
Abdirizak's dark skin has caused some confusion. "Most of the people don't know where I am from and I always get asked if I'm from the Solomon Islands. I had never heard of these Solomon Islands."

Many of Hamilton's Somali refugees get together on a regular basis for company, a meal and to share any problems, Abdirizak says. And they keep waiting for news of loved ones.

Interviews by Susan Peppersell, Darren Greenwood, Oliver Roberts, Feta Goldsworthy.



ABDIRIZAK ABDI: hopes to return home to Somalia one day. PICTURE: Stephen Barker



HALIMA JELLE: wants to be reunited with her family. PICTURE: Kent Gledhill

A LONG WAY FROM HOME

About 100 Somali refugees live in Hamilton. They're trying to build a new life — but they're missing home and worrying about loved ones still trapped in Africa. We report.

HALF A WORLD AWAY, in the refugee camps of Kenya, the lucky escapees of the bloody civil war in Somalia queue for food, live in makeshift shelter and try to survive.

In Hamilton East the fortunate few plucked from camp horrors practise English, go to work, learn new skills and fret about their families.

But in Kenya and in Hamilton East there are equal measures of despair.

Living in this city are about 100 Somali refugees whose husbands, wives, children, brothers, fathers, sisters, mothers and grandparents are still in camps. Their dark skin and the traditional flowing clothes worn by the Somali women make them colourful additions to Hamilton's increasingly cosmopolitan mix. They attend school, polytechnic and university and several hold down jobs.

The Somali refugees in Hamilton and their loved ones in Kenya are the casualties of clan warfare which erupted in the East African country after the downfall of Somali dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991, leaving thousands dead, injured or homeless.

Barbara Reifem, of Hamilton's Refugee and Migrant Service, has spent many hours

helping the Somalis adjust to their new lifestyle.

She describes them as a vital people able to make things work for themselves.

She says they are natural storytellers with a gift for bargain-hunting stemming from the bartering society they have been used to.

"But they are concerned about their relatives. They feel it very badly," she says.

A team of six New Zealanders, including two Somali interpreters, is currently in Kenya, charged with finding and verifying 249 relatives of the Somalis already in New Zealand.

Immigration Minister Roger Maxwell has agreed the 249 "immediate priority relatives" can come to live in New Zealand.

Barbara Reifem says 69 of the 249 are from families who have settled in Hamilton.

She also says there are about another 352 relatives unable to be granted New Zealand residency at present.

Hours and hours of work has gone into collecting photographs, the correct historical information and birth certificates to release family members from the camps. Coupled with this is the endless form-filling in the hope some family members who don't qualify with this group may get in anyway.

'Just man fighting, not woman. My country's no good now.'

Figure 9: A long way from home. Somali refugees in Hamilton, Waikato Times (20 May 1995).

7.2 IWCNZ Conference Held in Hamilton, 1994

In 1991 some Muslim women of New Zealand met in Wellington to form a national organisation, the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand (IWCNZ), to cater for the growing needs of Muslim women. From Hamilton Qamar Shamim Rahman played a major role in its establishment and Anjum Rahman became the first Secretary. In 1994 its fourth national conference was held in the Hamilton Islamic Centre with the theme 'Caring and Sharing: The Way of a Stronger Community'. Over 70 delegates participated, including Sisters Aziza Abdel Halim and Alfah Johanna from RISEAP in Malaysia. Anjum Rahman organised this conference almost single-handedly, with the help of local women. Another of these conferences was held inside the new Masjid over 9-11 April 1999, with the theme 'Education in Islam'. Over 120 Muslimah attended this event. Participants at the 1994 Conference are seen in Figure 10 and the 2018 conference in Figure 11.



Figure 10: Participants at the 4th National Conference of IWCNZ held in Hamilton, 1994.

Annual conferences of IWCNZ have become a focal point for Muslimah, young and old, from different parts of New Zealand. Organised in a different location each year, the programmes include contemporary topics of interest for Muslim women and guest speakers of international fame.



Figure 11: The Administrative Council of IWCNZ at the March 2018 annual conference, held in the Wellington Islamic Centre. Left to right: Anjum Rahman, Dr Maysoon Salamah, Aliya Danzeisen, Munira Khan, Leila Adam.

8. Progress of the Muslim Community (1996-1999)

Members of Waikato Muslim Association were now actively working with other faith groups in the city (through Waikato Interfaith Council), with Hamilton City Council and the local news media, as pointed out in the article “Muslims highlight contributions” in Waikato Times 29 May 1996, Page 3. President Mohammed Afiz was also running a regular weekly programme on local Community Radio bringing activities and events in the Islamic calendar to the notice of Hamiltonians. Stories and news items about important celebrations like Ramadan and the two Eids were appearing routinely now in the local newspapers and radio. Local political, civil, and religious leaders were being invited to Eid celebrations (Figures 12 and 13) and other functions (Waikato Times 2 March 1998, Page 2). The recently arrived, obvious, and different looking Muslims of African descent were being noticed by the locals, especially the abaya-clad and chadar-covered women. The next couple of decades witnessed a period of sustained growth of Muslims and their activities in the city.



Figure 12: Hamilton Mayor, Margaret Evans (holding a scroll in hand, third from right) as a guest at our Eid Celebration, in early 1990s.



Figure 13: Association lawyer, Mr. Alan McAllen (third from right) and his wife (next to him) as guests at our Eid Celebration in 1997.

During Ramadan 1996 our Association secured the services of a Qari named Fahri Abdul Halim Mustafa, courtesy of the Egyptian Government, to recite Quran in *Taraweeh* prayers. Unfortunately, he was not a *haafiz*, so he recited only a few *ayaats* in each *rakaat* rather than finishing the whole Quran during the month as we had expected. It turned out to be a disappointing experience and a favour not to be accepted again. As the community grew, we have produced many local *huffaz* to lead our *Taraweeh* prayers.

8.1 Planning Starts for a Masjid, 1996

The change of immigration rules was bringing increasing numbers of Muslims and their families to the region. The unexpected arrival of Somali refugees, who frequented the Islamic Centre more regularly made the converted house at 921 Heaphy Terrace increasingly small for our congregational prayers, especially on Fridays. Consequently, a decision was taken after Ramadan in 1996 to build a proper Masjid on this 1,760 m² centrally located property. The Association launched a serious nation-wide fundraising drive to secure money for this purpose. President Mohammed Afiz and Dr Anwar Ghani travelled to Malaysia to collect funds while I was working for a short period as a Visiting Professor at University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. We received great support from Professor Dr Kamal Hassan, the first Rector of the International Islamic University, as well as some friends there. This effort also secured a substantial donation of NZ\$100,000 from Daim Zainuddin, Economic Advisor to the Government of Malaysia at the time.

Local architectural firm Stiles & Hooker was contracted to prepare plans for the half million- dollar project ('City Muslims seek bigger mosque' Waikato Times 29 January 1996 Page 3). The person who provided the most help and expertise at the planning stage of the project was an engineer, Hj. Anver Gujarati. He also prepared the sketch for the small minaret simply by looking at photos of Masjids in different calendars. This provided us a uniquely designed Minaret for our dream Masjid. It was sad to see this quiet, community-oriented person shift to Brisbane a few years later with his family.

When the architectural plans were submitted to Hamilton City Council, there were several objections from the general public through Letters to the Editor in local newspapers. Some example letters appearing on a single day in Waikato Times are shown in Figure 14. The objections included uninformed assumptions such as ringing of bells in mornings, noise late at nights, traffic congestion and unfortunate attacks on Islam and Muslims in general. An Editorial in Waikato Times of 3 May 1996 (Page 6) summed up by saying an "unpleasant attitude is

being manifested in debate over a proposal from the Waikato-Bay of Plenty Muslim Association to build a mosque in Claudelands”. It suggested that religious intolerance breeds hatred and violence. Four serious objections were lodged with the City Council and considered at the formal hearing of our application. “Dennis McLeod attacked anti-Israel Islamic teachings, saying the mosque would be the start of Islamic people taking the whole world” (Waikato Times 27 April 1996 Page 3).

Construction of city mosque opposed

Waikato Times 17/5/96

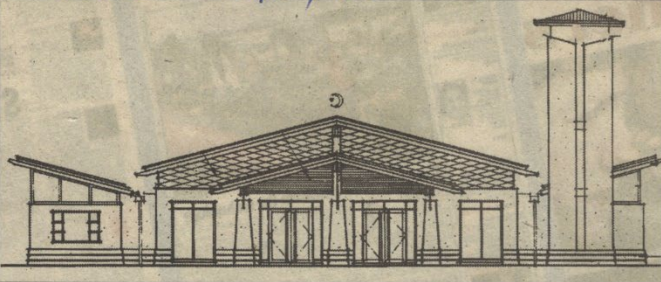
I STAND against the building of a mosque in Hamilton because Islam is a counterfeit religion and I will not support it.

I am a Christian. I know God loves me and wants everyone to know Him, His mercy and His justice. I don't understand the social and political implications of an Islamic temple. But I'd rather die upholding the Name of Christ than live silently in a society where "free religion" lets everyone go to hell smiling contentedly. Religion rules, but only Christ reigns.

CAROLYN MIERS
Hamilton

Mosque thoughts

I too would like to register my objection to the building of a mosque. I endorse MP Wakefield's



DRAWING BOARD: east elevation view of the proposed mosque.

the Hamilton Council of Churches, that Christians support the building of a mosque. The Hamilton Council of Churches is not the voice of Christians in the city of Hamilton. It makes me wonder what mandate they feel they have to speak on behalf of Churches that refuse to be part of their liberal points of view. The statement that Christians have an affinity with Muslims is incorrect. Why are Christians martyred in the Muslim nations around the world?

Perhaps the Hamilton Council of Churches should contact the Christian Churches in Hamilton before making such statements that are incorrect and not a true representation of the Christian Church.

NOEL BOWKER
Hamilton

(Letters, May 7). Are our city planners feeling the effects of the present pre-election hysteria?

Hopefully our city planners would be respected for their "Yes" being "Yes" and their "No" being "No".

H J SPYVE
Hamilton

Not voice of Christians

As a Christian and a Pastor of a Christian Church in Hamilton I take exception to the statement made by

Figure 14: Many objections for the construction of Hamilton Masjid, Waikato Times (17 May 1996).

Mary Clarkson, President of the Hamilton Council of Christian Churches, and the Reverend Alan Leadley wrote letters to the editor of Waikato Times voicing their support for the project and welcoming Muslims to the city. “We affirm that as Christians we have an affinity with Muslims as people who worship God and honour the name of Jesus” (Waikato Times 13 May 1996, Page 6). A further public statement supporting the Masjid project (Figure 15) was also signed by the Anglican and Roman Catholic Bishops, the Methodist Superintendent, and the Presbyterian Moderator (Waikato Times 25 May 1996, Page 3). It was heartening to see this unsolicited support coming from the people of Christian faith and from many other quarters – and we really needed it to overcome the baseless objections.

25/5/96

Mosque plan wins support

Four Waikato Churches have combined to sing the praises — in the name of basic human rights and freedom of religious expression — of a planned Muslim mosque in Hamilton.

The Churches are preaching “love thy neighbour whatever class, race or creed they may be” as debate over the construction of a Claudelands mosque reaches a climax.

A Hamilton City Council committee is expected to decide on the Waikato Muslim Association’s proposal on Monday.

A joint statement supporting the mosque was issued to the *Waikato Times* today by Anglican Bishop of Waikato David Moxon, Hamilton’s Auxillary Roman Catholic Bishop Takuira Mariu, Methodist Superintendent of Waikato-Bay Of Plenty David Ancell, and the Presbyterian Moderator of Waikato Jim Findlay.

Figure 15: Many Christian churches supported the building of Hamilton Masjid, *Waikato Times* (25 May 1996).

Our application was discussed at a rather tense formal hearing of the statutory management committee of Hamilton City Council on 27 May 1996, attended by many of us and the Association lawyer Alan McAllen. Mark Wright, a lone opponent of the Masjid project present at this meeting said ‘One day New Zealand would pay for having the Muslim faith here’ (Figure 16). The City Council disagreed with him and deemed the anti-Islamic objections to be outside the resource management area. To our extreme delight, the resource consent to build a Masjid at this site was granted, *Alhamdo Lillah* (Waikato Times 28 May 1996, Page 1), even though the consent was attached with a number of conditions. This was a huge achievement for everyone involved with the project. The discussions of the past few months were summarised in an Editorial of Waikato Times 31 May 1996 entitled “Muslim- mosque brings out best and worst”.



Figure 16: We won the battle! Mosque planning consent received, Waikato Times (28 May 1996).

8.2 Hamilton Has its First Purpose Built Masjid, 1997

Bursting with joy and excitement, the community banded together to progress the dream into reality. Further concerted effort was made towards collection of funds to boost the required finances. Around a year after receiving the City Council's approval, the two old houses were sold and removed from 921 Heaphy Terrace (Figure 17) on Friday, 9 May 1997 (the first day of the month of Muharram in the Islamic calendar) to initiate the building work for the erection of the first purpose-built Masjid in Hamilton.



Figure 17: Houses at 921 Heaphy Terrace being removed to start construction of Hamilton Masjid, May 1997.

A foundation laying ceremony for the new Masjid was staged with senior Muslim leadership from across the country plus many local dignitaries and Church representatives (Figure 18). Attended by over 300 people, prayers were held by late Sheikh Khalid Kamal Abdul Hafiz, the popular Imam of Wellington Masjid, who emphasized peace and tolerance towards all people and all faiths (Waikato Times June 7, 1997 Page 18). After the Zohar salat Sheikh Khalid made a long dua with tearful eyes for successful completion of our project.



Figure 18: The foundation laying ceremony for Hamilton Masjid (top), and dua lead by late Sheikh Khalid Kamal Abdul Hafiz, Imam of Wellington Masjid (bottom). Seated next to him is WMA President Mohammed Afiz, June 1997.

A local builder, who happened to be part Māori, got the contract to build this beautiful new Masjid. He worked hard under the watchful eyes of Hj. Mohammed Hussain Sahib who was on site almost every day to ensure that all required materials were available on time (Waikato Times 6 August 1997 Page 3). The carefully designed windows and the unique minaret provided the special character required for a Masjid (Figure 19).



Figure 19: Construction of the Hamilton Masjid in progress, 1997.

As the work progressed, our finances dwindled faster than we had planned. To secure more funding for completing the Project on schedule, our President Mohammed Afiz made a quick visit to Qatar in 1997. In Doha Brother Salah Haroon, a former Treasurer of our Association, and his office staff were of great assistance in preparing and finalising the necessary paperwork to be able to collect funds there. Thanks to his efforts, we received a generous response and help from the Ministry of Auqaf in Doha as well as private donors. Further support from our own community through donations for specific items such as carpet, lighting, curtains etc enabled us to complete the building on schedule, *Alhamdo Lillah* (Figure 20).



Figure 20: Completion of construction of the Hamilton Masjid, December 1997.

Work on the Masjid building finished on 26 December 1997, just before the month of Ramadan started. An official open day and opening ceremony was staged on Saturday 28 February 1998. It included a special blessing from Tainui Māori leaders, including Mr Hare Puke (NZ Herald 27 February, 1998). They were delighted to be a part of the ceremony and welcomed the addition of a Muslim place of worship as guardians of this land (Figure 21).



Figure 21: Tainui Māori whanau blessing the Hamilton Masjid at the opening ceremony, 28 February 1998.

The opening ceremony was attended by the city Mayor Margaret Evans, several City Councillors, Church leaders, President of FIANZ Imam Ali and Sheikh Khalid Kamal Kamal Abdul Hafiz, Imam of Wellington Masjid (Figure 22). It also attracted many visitors on the day.

An *Aalim* and Haafiz, Qari Mohammed Sharif, originally from Peshawar, Pakistan but resident in Auckland for the past few years, was appointed the first Imam of our new Masjid. He remained in the city for only a couple of years before returning to Auckland, and later back to Pakistan.



Figure 22: Speeches by Hamilton Mayor Margaret Evans (top) & Sheikh Khalid Kamal Abdul Hafiz, Imam of Wellington Masjid (bottom) at the opening ceremony of Hamilton Masjid, 28 February 1998.

8.3 *The New Masjid is Burnt by Arsonists, 1998*

Vandals had caused thousands of dollars of damage one night during the construction of the Masjid by punching holes and scratching three swastikas on the walls (Waikato Times 22 October 1997, Page 3). Still no one knows whether prejudice, hatred or sheer vandalism was behind this attack. Some young Somali brothers started guarding the unfinished building every night from then on. The Muslim community was more determined than ever to finish building the Masjid on time and *Alhamdo Lillah* it did, and the community started using it.

Tragically on Thursday 6 August 1998 around 4 am, this newly built Masjid was gutted by arsonists (Waikato Times 6 August, 1998 Page 3). It appeared they had entered the building by breaking windows, sprayed the prayer hall with petrol and set it on fire. As a result, the inside of the Masjid was destroyed completely by fire. Damage inside could be seen through the doors and windows, but the outside of the building was mostly unscathed (Figure 23). The arsonists were hunted as Muslims grieved but police did not manage to find the culprits responsible, even though a substantial reward was offered by the New Zealand Insurance Company. It remains an unsolved mystery to this day.



Figure 23: Heartache! Our Hamilton Masjid was burnt inside by arsonists, 6 August 1998.

On the brighter side, there was a positive outpouring of overwhelming sympathy and support from the wider non-Muslim population of Hamilton (NZ Herald 13 August, 1998, Page 7). The New Zealand Prime Minister Hon. Jenny Shipley visited the burnt Masjid along with local MP Tony Steel to show her support and her disappointment with what had happened (Figure 24). A Mayoral Fund was launched immediately to raise financial support from the general public for the rebuilding project, which was undertaken over 1998 and 1999. Waikato Jewish Association President Dr Dov Bing said it was important for civic and community leaders to speak out against racism and bigotry. They also pledged support for the Masjid's re-building. Free space was kindly provided by Hamilton City Council across the road at Claudelands Showgrounds for Muslims to worship in the meantime (NZ Herald 7 August, 1998 Page A7). "Waikato Muslim Association president Mr Afiz said faith and the English language were the bonds keeping the Waikato's diverse Islamic society together at such a difficult time" (Waikato Times 11 August, 1998 Page 3).



Figure 24: Prime Minister Jenny Shipley and MP Tony Steel visiting the damaged Hamilton Masjid with community members, August 1998.

8.4 Reconstruction of the Burnt Masjid, 1999

With the overwhelming support of the wider Waikato community, Hamilton City Council and the New Zealand Insurance Company, reconstruction of the damaged building started within a few weeks of the tragic incident (Figure 25). The inside of the Masjid was restored to its original state (Figure 26) and chattels such as carpet, lightings and furnishings were replaced by the same or similar items. Contrary to our expectations, we didn't need to perform our religious activities in the Claudelands Showgrounds building for very long. By the Grace and Mercy of the Almighty Allah we were able to use our Masjid again by the middle of 1999, *Alhamdo Lillah*.

A re-opening ceremony was staged again to thank the community for their help and praise Allah SWT for the ease with which the place was restored (Figure 27). A special effort was made to invite guests who individually or through their organisation had supported us through this extremely difficult period, and there were many!!



Figure 25: Reconstruction of the damaged Hamilton Masjid, 1999.



Figure 26: Hamilton Masjid restored to its original state by the middle of 1999.



Figure 27: Re-opening ceremony of the Hamilton Masjid after the arson damage and reconstruction, July 1999.

9. *Progress of Muslim Community in the New Millennium*

With more immigrants, as well as significantly more Muslim refugees from Somalia, Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan, the Muslim population was increasing rapidly now. Arrival of the new very learned young Imam, Sheikh Mohammad Anwar Sahib, injected new blood in the community, old and young alike. The Masjid was full of activities now with more lectures, Arabic classes and social activities. An interesting article appeared about him and his family in Waikato Times on 6 October 2001 (Section A7). Even our young students were getting involved with the Association and were actively promoting Islam as a peaceful religion and appreciating political peace for New Zealand Muslims. “New Zealanders are very understanding and very accepting” said Shadia Rahman and Reza Fuard in a Weekend feature article in Waikato This Week (19 March 1998). Tariq Ashraf, a Hamilton Boys’ High School seventh-former at the time, said that being a Muslim in a non-Muslim country makes him feel special (Figure 28).

The hard-working President, Mohammed Afiz, continued to effectively lead the community and build relationships, but unfortunately for us he had to shift to Auckland in 2006. HJ. Mohammed Hussain Sahib followed him to Auckland soon after, as had some other pioneer Muslims of Hamilton. Amin Farooqi and family had left for Australia just before the turn of the century and Nizam Flynn had shifted to Brunei to work as a school teacher.

The departure of Mohammed Afiz was a very sad affair as we had not only lost a lively social friend but a really vibrant, well-spoken and forward-thinking leader. How to replace someone of that calibre was a real worry. But Allah SWT selects people for His work which must continue. While Drs Anwar Ghani and Mustafa Farouk took up the helm for short times, it was the late Ismail Dirie Gamadid who came forward in 2003 to carry the baton. Ismail was a middle-aged civil servant from Mogadishu with a M.Sc. degree in Forestry. He was an experienced bureaucrat with noted management skills. He excelled in keeping the community together as well as extending the links with non-Muslim dignitaries and political leaders. Everyone having an influential position in the city and many involved in national politics knew Ismail. He also attended usually 3 of the 5 daily prayers in the Masjid and knew all *musallees*, regardless of the country they originated from. He was also respected by the Somali community who comprised the bulk of those attending the Masjid regularly by now. He held the position of President until he shifted to Brisbane in 2015. After a brief stay there he went back to Somalia to fulfil his political ambitions. He did become a Minister in a provincial

Government but unfortunately passed away in the midst of holding that position in May 2020. *Inna Lillahi wainna elaihi raajeoon.*

WEEKEND FEATURE

Political peace for NZ Muslims

Muslim students living in Hamilton combine education with Islam. They tell DAVID WATSON about their feelings of acceptance among their New Zealand peers.

MASSACRES in Algeria, suicide bombers in Israel, Talebans in Afghanistan...

After scanning the daily newspaper's international pages, or tuning in to the world news on TV, some people may have the impression that being a Muslim is about murder in the name of God, and forcing severe moral values on entire populations.

But it's not, say three young Hamilton Muslims.

"To say that is like saying Christianity is about bombings and shootings because of the situation in Northern Ireland," Shadia Rahman, a 20-year-old Waikato University student, says.

"It's all political — it's not about religion."

She's part way through a law-management double degree and has no trouble integrating university life with serious adherence to Islam.

"I feel I stand out, that I'm different, because I have to pray and, during the month of Ramadan, fast."

"But I've played sport at university — badminton, table tennis, cricket and touch."

She was wearing a hijab, a traditional garment which covers the body from head to toe when she spoke to City Weekend. "But I do wear jeans occasionally."

Over the summer, she's been working as summer clerk at an Auckland law firm.

"It's been a good experience — everyone here was pretty accepting of my beliefs."

The Muslim prohibition on drinking alcohol gave her an interesting perspective on the firm's Christmas party.

"It was pretty bad seeing everyone else get drunk — it wasn't the best of experiences."

Being the only sober person at social gatherings is also a fact of life for St Paul's collegiate student Reza Fuard.

The 16-year-old, who is in the seventh term this year, says his classmates are "pretty good" about his faith.

"Yeah, I've been to parties where I'm the only sober one there, but I've never been hassled about not drinking."

Being a Muslim in a non-Muslim country makes Tariq Ashraf, a Hamilton Boys' High school seventh-former, feel special.

"We went to Pakistan over the school holidays and it made me realise how, in a Muslim country, everyone takes their religion for granted — it's a day-to-day thing."

"Here, you're in a minority and it makes you feel special."

All are involved in the Hamilton Muslim community.

Tariq Ashraf is the librarian at the new Hamilton Islamic Centre near Claudelands showgrounds, due to open this month.

Last month was special for Muslims. It was Ramadan, which means they went without food and drink during daylight hours.

"It's not that bad. You just concentrate on other things," Shadia Rahman says.

"It really sharpens and focuses your mind."

Reza Fuard was playing cricket for the Northern Districts under-17 team. Abstaining from food and not even having a drink during the day wasn't a problem.

"I don't go near the dining hall at school during the day. At lunchtime, I do other things."

All three say New Zealand's tolerance of minorities lets them live easily as Muslims in a non-Muslim country.

"New Zealanders are very understanding and very accepting," Shadia Rahman says.

Reza Fuard agrees.

"The whole thing with New Zealand is that you can live your life the way you feel comfortable with and it's not a struggle to live with your religion."

Tariq Ashraf agrees New Zealand is a "pretty good" place to be a Muslim.

"People are accepting and, like I say, I feel special being a Muslim in a country where most people aren't — I feel more like an individual here."

• There are approximately 600 Muslims in Hamilton, the Waikato/Bay of Plenty Muslim Association president Dr Anwar-ul Ghani says. "Of those, about 40 per cent are Somali refugees."



PICTURE: Colin Lusher

Here, you're in a minority and it makes you feel special'

CITY WEEKEND, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1998 — 13

Figure 28: Muslim students born in Hamilton combine education with Islam. From left Tariq Ashraf, Reza Fuard and Shadia Rahman, Waikato This Week (19 March 1998).

After the departure of Ismail Gamadid, Mubarik Ahmed took up the reigns in 2015. The hard-working dedicated brother Mubarik came to New Zealand from Singapore and initially lived in Napier. Since his arrival in Hamilton, he has made many significant contributions to the Muslim community here. Another very dedicated young person, Dr Hamid Mohammed, who was raised in Auckland and trained as a dentist at Otago University, moved to Hamilton in December 2005, the day I was leaving for Hajj along with four of my family members. Dr Hamid took up the position of Secretary in 2007 and has continued in this role by contributing on many fronts and taking responsibility for numerous activities. The quiet, humble Dr Hamid also performs salat in Masjid more regularly than any other Executive Committee member. Finances of the Association during most of this period were in the hands of Abdul Mukhtar (Boya) Ali and then the late Abdul Shamim. In addition to their duty as Treasurer, both these brothers also looked after the maintenance of the Masjid and associated properties, which now included the ECE/Madrassa building as well as the rental property behind the Masjid. I happened to be in Malaysia at the time, but I understand our community has never been in a greater shock than when Abdul Shamim suddenly passed away in June 2018 while busy serving his people, leaving a young family behind him. *Inna Lillahi wainna elaihi raajeoon*. A committed hardworking Shaheed Basha then stepped in as chairman of the building subcommittee to look after the now big job of building maintenance, as well as provide his expertise as a school teacher to our WISE Madrasa.

9.1 Contributions at the National Level

The Executive Committee members of our Association had now started making very significant and sustained contributions to the progress and welfare of Muslims nationwide. Dr Anwar Ghani stepped up to become Secretary of FIANZ for a few years and then served as its President for several terms. He greatly advanced the organisation's financial status as well as its links with many Islamic countries worldwide. Many well-known overseas Muslim dignitaries visited New Zealand during his tenure and several international symposiums, seminars and meetings were held in this country during that time. In recent years he has been prominent in New Zealand media (print, audio and visual), commenting on political and other events related to Muslims worldwide. Another member, Dr Mustafa Farouk, has been for many years the main force behind the FIANZ Halal Committee and has chaired its national Dawah and Outreach programmes (Figure 29). He has also served as Vice President and President of FIANZ and provided expertise in many Islamic matters. These two committed individuals often

worked together to enhance links with Muslim organisations outside New Zealand as well as raise funds for various community projects. All the while they have continued their involvement with our Association and achieved a great deal through their hard work. With their concern for Muslims in Rotorua who had been a part of our Association, they were instrumental in securing an Islamic centre in that city as well. This led to Rotorua forming its own Association and us dropping the Bay of Plenty from our name in the 1990s to become the Waikato Muslim Association.

www.waikatotimes.co.nz WAIKATO FOCUS SATURDAY, APRIL 2, 2011 B5

Nigerian Kiwi link to world of Islam

A new role with the Federation of Islam Associations of New Zealand will see Hamilton's Mustafa Farouk helping New Zealanders better understand the Muslim faith. **Jeff Neems** reports.

Mustafa Farouk

Muslim leader: Mustafa Farouk, pictured at Hamilton's mosque, is the national chairman of outreach and inter-faith programmes for the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand. **Photos: CHRIS HILLOCK**

Where were you born and when?
I was born in Jimeta-Yola, Nigeria, in 1981.

Where were you raised, and what was your childhood like?
I was raised in Jimeta-Yola, where I obtained my primary and secondary education.

I also obtained my early Islamic education in the same town city. I had a very happy childhood surrounded by an extended family and looked after by all the elders around.
The concept of "it takes a village to raise a child" was truly practised then with all elders looking after the young ones regardless of family ties.

I grew up in my hometown with children from different ethnic and religious backgrounds whose parents came from different parts of Nigeria. I remember my childhood with nostalgia. What is your current domestic arrangement?
I am married with five children.

How would you like to be remembered?
I would like to be remembered as a person who is passionate about promoting the understanding of Islam and for building bridges between faith and cultural groups.

He initially studied in Nigeria. "The whole idea was for me to be able to work with my people, particularly because we raise those animals like sheep and cattle," he says.
While studying in Nigeria, Farouk was active in student politics, demonstrating about human rights and economic issues.

"And, of course, in Nigeria, you can say whatever you want to say, but the Government just ignores it... and nothing will happen," he says.
A scholarship took him to Michigan State University, where he completed a Master's and a PhD before he returned to Nigeria to teach at Maiduguri University. He taught there for three years, but as political problems developed across the nation, Farouk realised his "newly acquired knowledge was wasting away".

With little funding for research, he headed back to the US, where he discovered the opportunity to work for AgResearch had emerged.
"I thought I would come and spend two years here, but I loved it so much, I stayed," he says.

Farouk returns to Nigeria every few years, including a recent two-month visit which involved extensive travel throughout the country to visit extended family.
He has two adult children (aged 20 and 18) living in the US, but his three youngest children (aged 8, 7 and 6) were all born in New Zealand, and are proud Nigerian Kiwis.

He is also a member of the New Zealand Food Safety Authority's halal meat committee, and contributes to science industry magazines and research publications. He has also been invited to speak on both science and voluntary work issues overseas.
Farouk was born into the Fulani nomadic tribe in northeastern Nigeria, a large ethnic community which is widely spread across central and western Africa. In Nigeria, the Fulani population owns a large percentage of the country's livestock.

That upbringing led to Farouk's interest in agriculture and food science, which

Islamic literature: Copes of the Koran and other Islamic publications line a shelf at the Hamilton mosque.

He leads prayers in Arabic and English from time to time, rotates other respected members to take on the same role, and it's a good reflection of the esteem in which he is held.
"Sometimes you have to coax people to come and do it (lead prayers)," he says.

Between 200 and 500 people will pray at the Mosque on a Friday – the busiest day of the week – and women pray in a separate curtained-off area. Farouk says only Muslims need follow the Mosque's rules relating to cleanliness, but non-Muslim visitors are asked to wear responsible and conservative clothing so as not to offend worshippers.
"This is the house of God, and it is open to anyone," he says.

Part of Farouk's roles with both the Mosque and FIANZ are to make the Muslim places of worship more welcoming to the wider community, as well as create an environment where New Zealand Muslims can practise their religion and contribute to society.
"My role is to let my people understand it is important to be open, to let people come and interact, and not live in isolation – and to tell people who are not Muslim that we are open, you can do business with us, and we are good people to be around," he says.

Although many misconceptions about Muslim still exist, Farouk says they are

Even if you are a bad Muslim, no-one

can say you are out," he says with a chuckle.
Although high-profile athletes such as Sonny Bill Williams, Anthony Mundine, Richie Ryan and Iqbal Hashimani all have converted to Islam, Farouk says all Muslims are considered equal.

"It's God who will change the person," he says. "All these guys came in to Islam, and we are happy, but we don't look at them as somebody who is different to the common person on the street."
They have chosen this way of life – we even have a major in the New Zealand Army who is a Muslim.

Farouk says the 2008 census revealed more than 400 Pakeha and Maori New Zealanders listed their faith as Islam.
Farouk is one of the elders at Hamilton's mosque, and while he downplays his seniority, it's clear he's an important figure in the local Muslim community.

"People do come and talk to me about issues, but they are not going to move away and tell me 'come and take this position,'" he says. "But they do come to me, and respect my opinion – as an elder, and as one who has been involved in the community."
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Figure 29: Dr Mustafa Farouk, the National Chairman of Interfaith, Outreach and Dawah Programmes of FIANZ, conducting a Dawah programme in the Hamilton Masjid, Waikato Times (2 April 2011).

I have been a member of the FIANZ *Hilal* Committee since its inception and served as its chairman for several years. Moonsighting and determination of dates for Ramadan and *Eidain* have been divisive issues for Muslim ummah worldwide. The FIANZ *Hilal* Committee membership includes several *Ulema*, scientists as well as technical persons with sound astronomical knowledge. This Committee has been a major force in uniting Muslims of New Zealand in relation to Islamic calendar dates, prayer times, Ramadan time tables, etc.

Musa Taukiri, Hamilton's long-standing Māori revert of Tainui decent (Figure 30), has been active on behalf of FIANZ in supporting the Māori reverts to Islam nationwide.



Figure 30: Musa Taukiri (second from left), Hamilton's Māori revert and in charge of helping Māori reverts nationwide, talking to Hamilton East MP, Tim Macindoe (second from right), in front of Hamilton Masjid.

Sadiq Nicholson, a local European revert since his early years (Figure 31), served as the FIANZ Muslim Youth co-ordinator for many years. A keen soccer player himself, he has been a popular figure among the Somali youth. Some of the Presidents of Waikato Muslim Association such as Mohammed Afiz, Ismail

Gamadid and Dr Asad Mohsin have assisted FIANZ directly on many issues over the years.



Figure 31: Hamilton born revert, Sadiq Nicholson (far right) and Musa Taukiri (third from right) with Dr Mustafa Farouk between them, at one of the Hamilton Mosque Open Day events.

In June 2003 I was honoured for my decades of community work with a Queens Service Order (QSO) award from the Governor General (New Zealand Gazette 4 June 2003, Page 1631). In 2015 I was also chosen for a “Civic Award” from the Hamilton City Council (Waikato Times 18 November 2015, Page 2). Dr Anwar Ghani and Anjum Rahman have also since been honoured with the prestigious MNZM Medal and Dr Mustafa Farouk with a Queen’s Service Medal (QSM) for their services to the Muslim community. The late Ismail Gamadid and Dr Sayeeda Bano had also received the Hamilton City Council’s Civic Award earlier. It is so pleasing and satisfying to see that city leaders and members of the City Council take note of the people working in specific communities which may not be obviously visible from outside.

In 2004 the first Muslim to be appointed to the police force in New Zealand started work in Hamilton. “Constable Mohammed Atiq, 26, came to New Zealand from Fiji in 1997 to study electronics and electrical engineering” (Waikato Times 30 November 2004, Page 4).

The first Muslim burial plots allocated for our Association by the Hamilton City Council in late 1980s in the old section of Newstead cemetery weren't required fortunately. The two deceased during that period (a teenage girl from Fiji and our first President Hafizur Rehman) were buried in the Auckland cemetery. A larger parcel of land was reserved in the new section of the Newstead cemetery in 1996 which has been slowly filling up. In November 2004 the Association negotiated with Waikato District Council for a self-contained area of burial ground at Jackson Street cemetery in Ngaruawahia. There was an official opening ceremony in 2005, with President Ismail Gamadid saying this new Muslim burial ground was a first for the region (Hamilton This Week 12 May 2005, Page 5). Burial plots here cost less than at Newstead cemetery.

9.2 Our Women Become Active: WOWMA is Born, 2008

There were now a large number of young women in the community, including many from refugee and migrant backgrounds. A group of determined Muslim women – Aliya Danzeisen, Anjum Rahman, Dr Asma Rahman, Asha Shire, Aisha Boulanouar and the late Mominah Ahmed – came together with a strong future vision and formed the Women's Organisation of the Waikato Muslim Association (WOWMA) in 2008. Although its aim was to support specific programmes and activities for all Muslim women, the major focus was to help the young *Muslimahs* to become confident and productive members and integrate into New Zealand society. Aliya Danzeisen, a teacher and former lawyer with an excellent community work background from USA, was assigned the youth portfolio and developed an exemplary WOWMA Youth programme to progress the aims of this organisation. It combines Islamic teachings with many healthy outdoor activities and supports the personal development and social integration of young Muslim women.

WOWMA has successfully connected a large number of *Muslimah* youth from various nationalities to each other and to their adopted country of New Zealand (Figure 32). Most of the girls from our own extended family have participated and benefited over the years. They have learnt to be proud of their identity as Muslim women and gained the confidence to go out in the wide world to become whoever they want to be. Aliya Danzeisen has managed to secure many grants from Government departments to support social, sport and health related activities as well as Islamic lectures and seminars. WOWMA has become an important and integral part of our Association, and reports its activities at the monthly meetings. It has also helped other Muslim associations in the country as well as the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand.



Figure 32: Aliya Danzeisen, Chairperson of WOWMA Youth Programme, with young Muslim girls of Hamilton (from left Kowna Ali, Khatra Omar, Fartun Abdi, Salma Salat and Khatra Mohamed), February 2013. Source: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/waikato-times/life-style/8347292>.

9.3 Ramadan and Eid Celebrations

Articles about Ramadan and Eid were appearing regularly in local newspapers and announcements were heard on Community Radio informing the public about major events of Muslims in the city. What an improvement *Alhamdo Lillah* over the situation during 1970s when we had to go to Auckland to pray *Eidain* salat. A pictorial article entitled “End of Ramadan” shows Mohammad Aziz and his family enjoying festivities of Eid (Waikato Times 20 January 1999, Page 2). Mohammad Aziz, the elder brother of our President Mohammad Afiz, who came to Hamilton much later was also quite active in the community and welcomed everyone with a smiling face. He later shifted to Auckland with his family where he has continued his contributions to Masjid at- Taqwa.

The 2002 Ramadan was featured prominently in two sections in Waikato Times of 7th December 2002, Pages 4 and 18 (Figure 33), with the latter page showing Mahmoud Dahroug, a long-standing community member originally from Egypt, hosting an *Iftar* at his house.



Figure 33: Muslims praying Eid Salat, and children celebrating Eidul Fitr, Waikato Times (7 December 2002).

An article in Waikato Times of 19 October 2004 (Page 11) shows a very young-looking Dr Mohammed Bahr talking about Ramadan – Moral Month time for faith and fasting. The softly spoken Dr Bahr, a medical professional originally from Egypt, moved with his family to Hamilton in 1998. Over the years, he has made a very significant impact on the community through his involvement in Tableegh Jamaat work and his concern for Islamic education of Muslim children.

Another example is a pictorial article on Ramadan showing Mohammed Ismaeel Omar and his family (Figure 34) breaking fast at our house (Waikato Times 6 September 2008, Section E2). Mohammed Omar, originally from Durban, worked as a dedicated BMW technician at Fairview Motors in Hamilton. His family was also involved in operating the short-lived Taaza Halal butchery in the city centre, before shifting back to South Africa. Our President and other Committee members were providing regular articles to local press at every opportunity to promote the occasions.

When our Muslim community was smaller, we all used to visit each other at their homes on Eid day. We had devised a system whereby Hamilton city was divided into East and West, with one side visiting the other in the morning and then hosting during the afternoon. We ensured that every house was visited on the day or at least during the week, a practice not practical any longer.

FIRST PERSON

Ramadan 'is part of our lives'

Ramadan began on Monday, marking 30 days of fasting, prayer and reflection for Muslims. Between dawn and dusk, no food or drink passes the lips of followers, with the aim of getting closer to God through fasting. One Hamilton Muslim family, from deli and halal butchery Taaza, talks to Kate Monahan.

Hajra Manjoo, sister and operations manager from Taaza:

"Ramadan is part of our lives, and something we look forward to through the year. It is the ninth month on the Islamic calendar. Like you have January, February or March, it's like another month on our lunar calendar. It is fasting for a month, for 29 to 30 days, from dawn to dusk. It is also an important time of reflection and prayer. It is a cleansing time, when we ask God for forgiveness because his doors are open."

Mohammed Omar, brother and one of Taaza's directors:

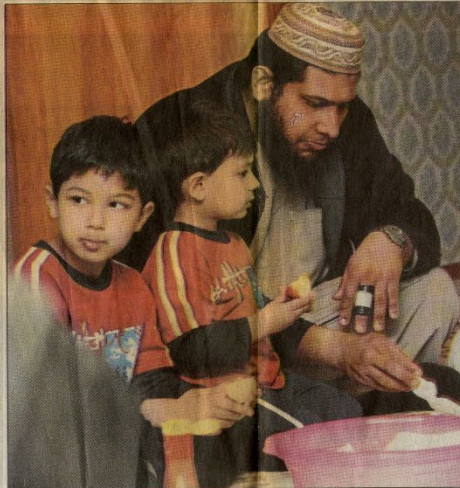
"Ramadan is about looking back into the past and what you have done and asking for forgiveness. It's a time of giving and self-control and you try not to get angry. It can be hard not to argue, or give in to your desires. You might want to eat a big luscious doughnut, or have a cigarette, but you can't have it. You do get hungry, but the reward is getting closer to God. The more hunger pangs you feel, the more you think of God. After a few days your stomach shrinks anyway, and you don't notice it so bad."

Hajra:

"In Islam, we have five pillars that shape our beliefs. One of them is fasting (sawm), and another is zakat (alms giving), which is about charity and giving to the poor. During Ramadan, you give money, and a certain percentage of your wealth to the poor. It's a fixed amount each year, depending on your income and the jewellery you own. It is evaluated by priests and you are told how much you have to give. It might be something like \$5 a day, for 30 days, so about \$100."

Mohammed:

"We wake up at 4am and say our prayers in the morning, before dawn. We start off everything we do with prayer. Everything we do is in God's name. We



BREAKING THE FAST: Hamza Omar, 5%, and his brother Ismael Omar, three, with their father Mohammed Omar. PICTURE: Kelly Hodel

pray five times a day, always towards Mecca. We ask Allah to help us through the day, to start out on a good note. During Ramadan, there is a special prayer for fasting said in the morning, and before breaking the fast in the evening. In the morning we can eat, as long as it is before dawn. I like cereals. I'll have my Ricees and Westix. We like our Western ways of eating."

Hajra:

"In the evening, we break the fast after the sun sets. We often gather with family and friends, and invite others over to our home, so it is a time of togetherness, too. Each night after we break our fast, one chapter of the Koran is recited by a one who has memorised the Koran by heart and knows the whole 30 chapters. Every culture around the world has a different way of doing it, although they are following the same patterns of fasting and prayer. The times change a little each day, depending on the time of sunrise, and sunset. The Waikato Muslim Association has a timetable to follow. It was about 5.15am at the beginning of the week, but gets earlier and earlier going into spring, to about 4.30am. For adult Muslims, you don't do it only if you are sick, and the doctor says you can't fast. In that case, you have to give more to charity, and give money to the poor."

Fatima Omar, their mother, who works behind the counter at Taaza:

"Children don't have to do Ramadan, but once you hit puberty, if you are a Muslim, you have to keep it. However, some kids want to be involved, so we let them do a half fast on weekends, so they can feel part of it."

Mohammed:

"I've done it from childhood, and have been brought up in a Muslim family. My forefathers are from India, but I was a fourth-generation South African Muslim Indian. There are about 100 different types of cultural backgrounds of Muslims in New Zealand. At our mosque there are Nigerian, Somalian, and we've got people from Egypt, Guyana and Oman, from all over the world. But Islam is the bond we share, that is to



FRIENDS GATHER: Hajra Manjoo, front, and Fatima Omar break the fast at Anis Rahman's house.

"You might want to eat a big luscious doughnut, or have a cigarette, but you can't have it. You do get hungry, but the reward is getting closer to God. The more hunger pangs you feel, the more you think of God."

— Mohammed Omar

believe that Allah is the one, and not to ascribe to any other Gods. And that the prophet Muhammed is the last and only messenger. Islam stands on five pillars; the first is to believe, the second is to fast, the third is charity, the fourth is to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca, and the last is to pray, five times a day. Those are the core of our beliefs."

Hajra:

"I moved to New Zealand in 2006, and being Muslim we made friends in the mosque and we decided to form a business. Three families and three sets

of partners have a share in Taaza. Two are from South Africa and one is from India. We saw the need for a different halal butcher, not only for Muslims, but for Kiwis. Kiwis like to experiment and try new things. We have ready-made spice mixes on the shelf, and ready-made sauces, and corn-fed free-range chicken. We age our steak. We Indians like to see it red with blood, but Kiwis like it hung for a while, for one or two weeks. A lot of Kiwis like to find out new recipes and how to use lentils and make dhal. We've been so busy leading up to Ramadan, with people coming in to get food. People like dates, which are sweet and good protein. They also like samosas during Ramadan, and we make our own, using top-quality mince and take off all the fat."

Mohammed:

"During Ramadan, people often treat themselves. What people are eating tends to change, so they shop for the day, not the week. They like to get special things for themselves, and like fresh things. They like rich things."

Hajra:

"Sometimes your eyes are bigger than your tummy. I hate going to the supermarket during a fast, as I come back with a whole supermarket basket full. At the end of it we have Eid, which is like Christmas."

We wear new clothes and make lots of lovely dishes and sweets, and give lots of presents. Kids get money and presents. It's a day of celebration."

Figure 34: Mohammed Ismael Omar and his family of Taaza Halal butchery breaking fast during Ramadan, Waikato Times (6 September 2008).

It is interesting to watch how things change with the growth of the community and its facilities. For prayers of *Eidul Fitr* and *Eidul Adha* we went to Auckland up to mid-1970s. Then these prayers were held in our house until we got the Hamilton Islamic Centre in 1983. The centre soon became too small as the Muslim population increased during the 1980s. Then we started hiring a hall in YWCA and high schools like Hamilton Boys' High and Fraser High school.

The above practice continued even after the Association acquired the Hamilton Masjid but now the very large hall in Hamilton Gardens was often used for the purpose. When a suitable venue was not available, Eid salat was held at times in the open at Hamilton Gardens (Figure 35), Claudelands Park (Figure 36) and Waikato University. The venue at Hamilton Gardens proved very suitable for us as its large hall could be easily separated for males and females (Figure 37). Although we had an Imam in Hamilton Masjid, I continued leading *Eidain* salats, except during the time of Sheikh Mohammad Anwar Sahib. I often felt very emotional to see the large crowd of men and women praying behind me and remembered the days when we had to go to Auckland for Eid salat due to a lack of numbers.

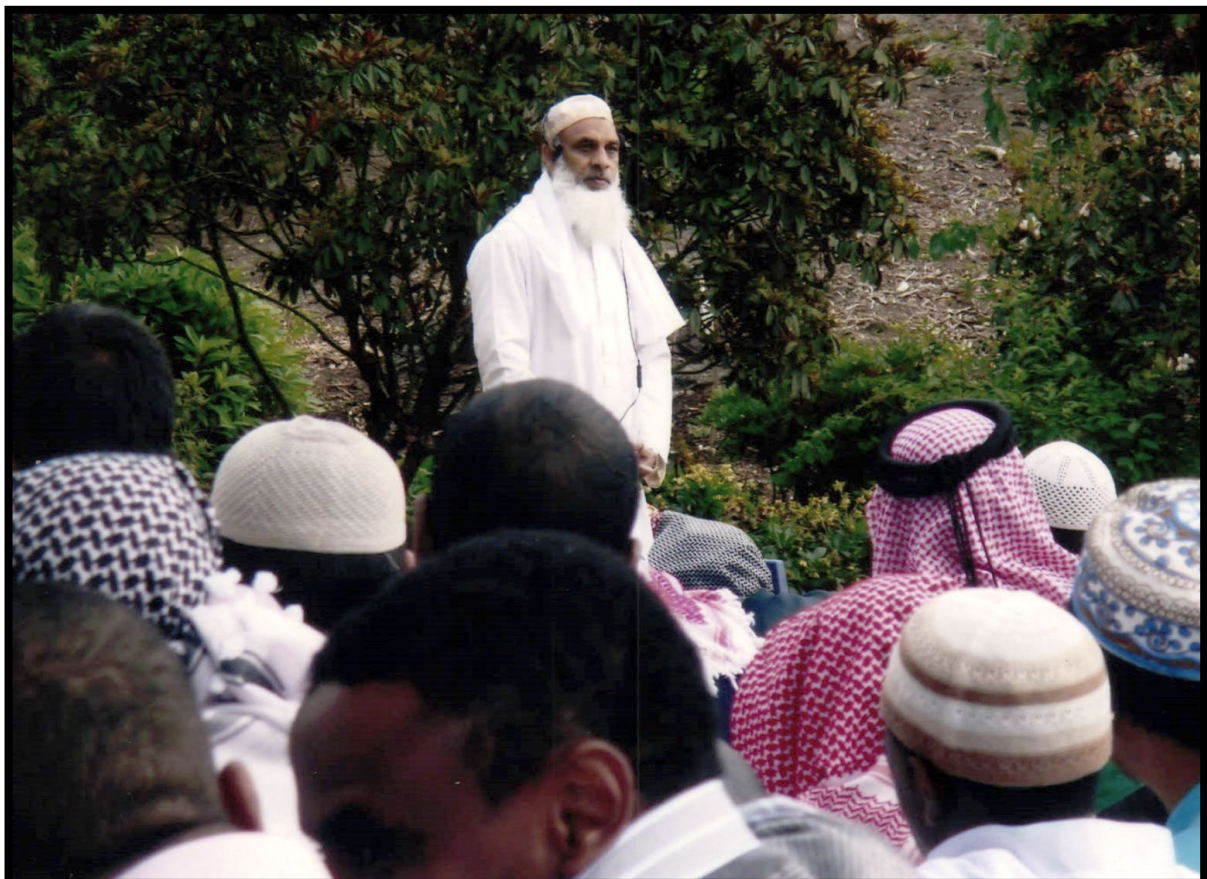


Figure 35: *Eidul Adha* prayer held outdoor at the Hamilton Gardens, November 2009.



Figure 36: Eidul Adha prayer held outdoor at the Claudelands Park, September 2016.



Figure 37: Eidul Fitr prayer held indoor at the Hamilton Gardens Community Hall, 2017.

Many people believe that to get something recognised on a national scale, one or more members of the community must enter the country's parliament. This was true for us as well in New Zealand. It was not until 2002 when the first Muslim MP, my close friend and a professional colleague, Dr Ashraf Choudhary entered the New Zealand Parliament that *Eidul Fitr* became a part of the establishment here. Dr Choudhary organised the first ever Eid function in Parliament with enthusiastic support from Hon Chris Carter, Minister of Ethnic Affairs (Figure 38). This has become an annual event in the Parliament and is attended by many MPs, Ministers and sometimes the Prime Minister.



Figure 38: Celebrating Eid in Parliament. From left; Treasurer of FIANZ, Daud Azimullah; Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Michael Cullen; Naveed Hamid, President of the Pakistan Association; Hon Chris Carter, Minister for Ethnic Affairs; and Abdul Osman, a member of the Islamic community in Auckland.

Dr Choudhary left Parliament in 2011, but the annual Eid celebrations have continued there, with FIANZ playing an important role in organising the event. The New Zealand Muslim community looks forward to the day when *Eidul Fitr* may be proclaimed a national holiday in this country or at least for the Muslims living here!!

9.4 Islam Awareness Week and Mosque Open Days

Members of the Waikato Muslim Association have played an active role in promoting Islam not only in our region but also at national level through FIANZ. Dr Mustafa Farouk served as the National Chairman of Outreach Interfaith and Dawah programmes ('Nigerian Kiwi link to world of Islam' Waikato Times April 2, 2011 Section B5). With support from other members like Dr Anwar Ghani, Dr Hamid Mohammad and Musa Taukiri, he introduced Islam Awareness Week, an idea soon picked up by FIANZ and run nationally every year. The week was kicked off on a Monday morning, usually in August, in Wellington attended by some dignitaries from Parliament. Many events designed to promote and publicise Islam were then held during the week in several cities in universities, schools, City Councils, churches and the like. The week finished on Saturday by many Masjids holding a Mosque Open Day which was advertised widely. Our Open Day format usually included a short formal programme attended by civil, church and community leaders, with general public welcomed the rest of the day. An example is the article "Mosque to open its doors" in Waikato Times (18 October 2003, A7) featuring Ismail Gamadid and Mohammed Afiz. Each year had a specific theme, and the concept has been very successful in building links with the wider New Zealand community (Figures 39, 40 and 41).



Figure 39: Posters displayed at a Hamilton Mosque Open Day during the Islam Awareness Week.



Figure 41: President Mohammed Afiz addressing guests at Hamilton Mosque Open Day. Sitting down is Hamilton West MP, Martin Gallagher, with late Ismail Gamadid.



Figure 40: Local attendees at Hamilton Mosque Open Day. From right to left: late Ismail Gamadid, Prof. Ali Jiang, Drs Asad Mohsin, Anis Rahman & Anwar Ghani, and Ismail Waja from Auckland.

9.5 Engagement with Local and National Politicians

One of the strong features of Waikato Muslim Association has been to regularly invite both national and local political leaders to our Masjid to familiarise them with our Muslim community and to showcase some of the activities and achievements. This has been as a result of a realisation that significant changes can occur in society, and our voices can be heard only with the support of the lawmakers of the country. The first Eid function, for example, did not take place in Parliament until a Muslim MP, Dr Ashraf Choudhary reached there. But it is not an easy task to convince the extremely busy politicians to visit and address a small community with a limited number of votes. Credit must go to our leadership who spent significant time and effort to build such good relationships with politicians in high positions at both local and national level.

The following are a few names as examples from a long list of dignitaries who have visited our Masjid and honoured us with their presence over the years, some more than once.

Former Prime Ministers of New Zealand:

Hon. Jenny Shipley (Figure 24), Hon. Helen Clark (visited 3 times, Figures 42 and 43) and Hon. John Key (visited twice, Figure 44).

Former Ministers of the Crown:

Hon. George Hawkins (Minister of Police); Hon. Chris Carter (Minister of Ethnic Affairs); Hon. Chris Finlayson (Attorney- General and Minister for NZ Security Intelligence Service); Hon. Jenny Salesa (Minister for Ethnic Communities); Hon. Don Brash (Former Leader of National Party); Hon. Andrew Little (Former Leader of Labour Party).

Former and current Members of Parliament:

Dianne Yates (Figure 45); Tony Steel (Figure 46); Martin Gallagher (Figures 40 & 42); Dr Ashraf Choudhary (Figure 42); Sue Moroney; Tim Macindoe and David Bennett (Figure 47); Michael Wood; Dr Gaurav Sharma; Jamie Strange (Figure 47).

Hamilton Mayors:

David Braithwaite; Margaret Evans (Figure 48); Russ Rimmington; Bob Simcock; Julie Hardaker; Andrew King (Figure 49).



Figure 42: Prime Minister Helen Clark on one of her three visits to Hamilton Masjid, with Members of Parliament Martin Gallagher and Dianne Yates on her left and Dr Ashraf Choudhary, far right.



Figure 43: Prime Minister Helen Clark on one of her three visits to the Hamilton Masjid, with community members.



Figure 44: Visit by Prime Minister John Key along with Members of Parliament David Bennett and Tim Macindoe to Hamilton Masjid.



Figure 45: Hamilton East MP Dianne Yates having a conversation with Dr Anis Rahman (right) and Professor Baki Hj Bakar from University of Malaya, Malaysia (centre).

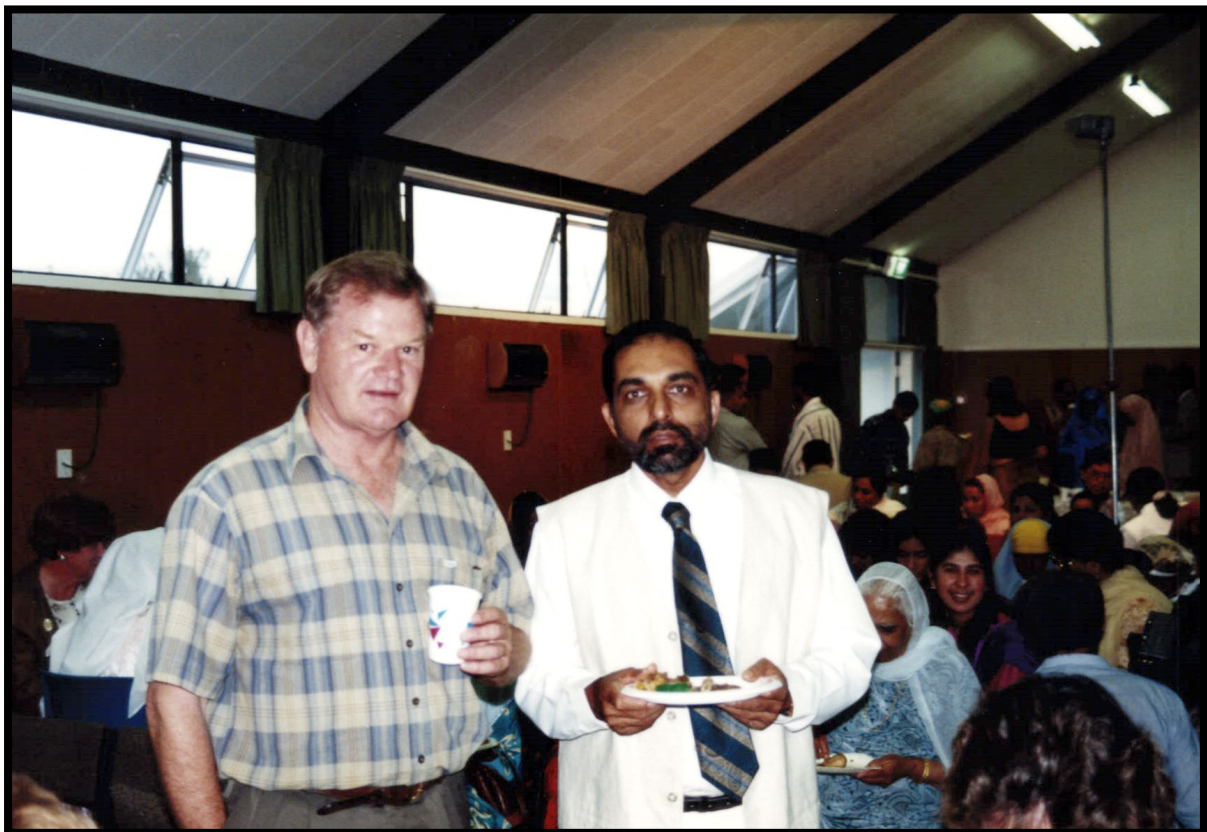


Figure 46: Hamilton East MP Tony Steel with WMA President Mohammed Afiz at an Eid function.



Figure 47: Visits to Hamilton Masjid by Members of Parliament for Hamilton East and Hamilton West who have supported our community over the years. Tim Macindoe and David Bennett in the top figure; Jamie Strange in the bottom figure, second from left.



TRY THIS ON: Mumtaz Wahid helps Hamilton Mayor Margaret Evans with some traditional Muslim headwear.

Mayor among visitors to Hamilton's new mosque

Waikato Muslims may have been praying there for two months, but Hamilton's mosque is now officially open.

The Waikato-Bay of Plenty Muslim Association opened its new \$500,000 mosque on Saturday.

President Mohammed Afiz said about 1000 people visited the building between 1pm and 7pm, including Hamilton Mayor Margaret Evans, Tainui Maori Trust Board chairman Hare Puke, and representatives of the Hamilton Council of Churches.

Other interested visitors included

neighbours "who said: 'We just wanted to see what it looked like inside'", Mr Afiz said.

"It's a great achievement and one that's given us a lot of content and satisfaction."

Up to 550 people have been gathering each Friday at the Heaphy Tce mosque, near Claudelands Showgrounds, since the New Year.

Work on the building started last June.

Up to 60 people are expected to use the mosque daily.

Figure 48: Mumtaz Wahid putting a scarf on Mayor Margaret Evans on one of her visits to the Hamilton Masjid, February 1998.



Figure 49: Hamilton Mayor Andrew King (second from right) at the FIANZ scholarship award ceremony. Also in attendance were Hamilton West MP Tim Macindoe, Hamilton City Councillor Paula Southgate, Waikato Multicultural Council President Ravinder Powar and WMA President Dr Asad Mohsin, June 2019.

Award Recipients from left: Anisa Osman, Rana Arif, Kamal Adam and Abdinajib Mohamud.

9.6 Engagement With the Wider Community

Waikato Muslim Association has been fortunate to receive strong support from many non-Muslim organisations for Islam Awareness week and other functions/activities. One such organisation is the Waikato Interfaith Council, made up of representatives from different faith communities in the city. The concept for this was championed by Dr Douglas Pratt of the Islamic Studies department at Waikato University and included regular participation and contributions from our Association, especially Dr Mustafa Farouk, Dr Anwar Ghani, Mohammed Afiz, Ismail Gamadid and myself. In later years Anjum Rahman became an active and popular member of this Council and made many major contributions. Our Association also supported various activities of the Interfaith Council such as Prayer for Peace, Environmental projects, symposiums

and seminars. Some of the activities and committee meetings of this Council have been held on the premises of our Association. Similar Interfaith groups have been very active in Wellington and Auckland and have received strong support from the local Muslim associations.

Christian support for Muslims in Hamilton cannot be overstated. Their unsolicited support at the time of building Hamilton Masjid is mentioned in Section 8.1. When Muslim refugees appealed for assistance to bring relatives from refugee camps overseas, Hamilton churches often came to their aid. For example, when Saynab Hassan launched a fund-raising appeal to bring her family out from camps in Kenya, the Anglican St Albans church contributed through donations and loans (Waikato Times 14 June 1997, Page 20). Our Association has consistently welcomed this support and has worked with them in many joint ventures such as the appeal against construction of the Sky City Casino in Hamilton in 1999/2000.

Our Association was also a member of the Waikato Multicultural Council (WMC). In addition to many regular contributions, three of our presidents have also served as the president of WMC, viz: Mohammed Afiz (2004-2006); Dr Anwar Ghani (2007-2010) and Dr Asad Mohsin (2010-2012). This cooperation has connected us with most of the migrant settlers of different faiths and backgrounds from various parts of the globe and highlighted the presence of Muslims in Waikato.

As the number of Somali immigrants grew, so too did their attendance and participation in Muslim community affairs. A pictorial in Waikato Times of 16 July 2005 (Section D8) entitled “Mosque People” shows mostly Somali brothers occupying the Masjid (Figure 50). Another example is an article in New Zealand Herald (26 September 2000, Section A7) entitled “Experienced hand aids refugees” with a picture of a young looking Abdirizak Abdi and describing the programmes and activities to support the Somali community in the city and beyond. Somali children were seen more regularly in many primary and high schools. Some of these have slowly made their way to Wintec and Waikato University. The 2013 government census recorded 2,919 Muslims in the Waikato region, up from 2,166 in 2006 (Rocket Science, August 2014, Page 8).



DEVOUT: Mohammed Farah prays after the 4pm service at the mosque.



SHOES OFF: Crutches and footwear are left in the hallway.



PATIENCE: Mohammed Yaser waits for his father to finish praying.

Mosque people

Their cultures and backgrounds are diverse but Islam unites them. Five times a day, the devout assemble at Hamilton's mosque. It is a place to gather, to keep in touch and to pray.

Pictures by **Iain McGregor**.



EEK-A-BOO: A girl looks out from behind a curtain.



STUDENT: Mohammed al Jama reads after a service.



PRAYER TIME: The mosque is packed during the midday Friday service.



LIQUOR: Muslim men socialise and eat pies after a Friday service.

Figure 50: Hamilton Masjid being well utilised by Somalis and others in the community, Waikato Times (16 July 2005).

9.7 *Dawah and Tabligh Efforts*

In addition to building the Masjid, facilitating the five daily prayers, Jumah and *Eidain* salats, organising children's Islamic education and youth camps, our Association has also paid attention towards *Dawah* and *Tabligh* activities. These have included offering lectures to local schools, University and churches, inviting local figures to our Masjid and major Islamic functions. The Association has also been active in hosting many well-known Muslim scholars from overseas. For instance, on 12 December 1998 FIANZ and WAMY hosted a 'Training Muslims in *Dawah* and Dialogue' seminar at our Masjid. The following day was a Mosque Open Day as part of the Islam Awareness Week initiated by our Association. On 22 November 1999 we hosted the national FIANZ Quran recitation competition for boys and girls, an event co-ordinated by Dr Mustafa Farouk and Ali Jaballa.

Both the Islamic activities and the *Dawah* programmes were strengthened by the appointment of Dr Mohammad Anwar Sahib as the permanent Imam for our Masjid in April 2000. Originally from Fiji, he studied in Saudi Arabia for nearly two decades and attained a PhD in Quranic Science from the Islamic University in Madinah. He held the position until 2005/2006 when he left for Auckland. Soon after another scholar and an expert in Islamic Finance, Sheikh Dr Ahmed Rufai joined us from Malaysia. He did a Ph.D. in Islamic Law of Transactions and Insurance from University of Malaya after completing degrees from the University of Madinah and Al Azhar University. He shared his knowledge and delivered Jumah *khutbahs* over a couple of years but then shifted to Qatar to work for an international organisation. The 5 daily prayers were led and are still being led by the Somali Sheikh Mohammad Abdur Rahman Hussein.

Many overseas Muslim scholars have visited and given lectures at Hamilton Masjid over the years. For example, in May 1998 Dr Jamal Badawi from Canada visited us as part of his FIANZ sponsored tour and gave a speech at the University of Waikato. Another young charismatic knowledgeable orator from Perth, Sheikh Yahya Ibrahim, came on two lecture tours and attracted a large audience on both occasions. The first decade following the building of our Masjid witnessed many Islamic preachers from Saudi Arabia, the most notable being Sheikh Saleh Al-Talib, the second Imam of Masjid al Haram (the Grand Mosque) in Makkah. He visited us in November 2012 (Figure 51) and gave a memorable talk on *Surah Al Hujaraat* (Surah 49 in the Holy Quran) which I still remember vividly. We also hosted many famous international visitors such as Dr Abu Ameenah Bilal Phillips, Yusuf Estes, Imran Hussein, Mufti Taqi Usmani, Abdur Rahman Green and Dr Ingrid Mattson (former head of the Islamic Society of North America). More recently, Dr Daniel C. Peterson from Brigham University of Utah gave an

interesting lecture at the Masjid in which he urged Westerners to better understand Islam (Waikato This Week 13 July 2000, Page 10).



Figure 51: Visit to Hamilton Masjid by the second Imam of Masjid Al-Haram, Sheikh Saleh Al-Talib and the first Saudi Ambassador to New Zealand, November 2012.

Local reverts to Islam have always trickled into the Masjid and contributed to affairs of our Association. Dr Mustafa Farouk has been extremely effective in helping many of these people, both males and females, seek and attain the light of *hidayah* from Allah SWT. There are too many names to mention, but a few that have provided us prolonged and sustained support are recorded here. In addition to Nizam Flynn mentioned earlier, our famous Muslim historian Abdullah Drury has worked hard to compile the history of local Muslim community; Sadiq Nicholson has laboured for years to organise Muslim youth activities and Musa Taukiri has connected us with the local Māori community as well as helping the Māori brothers and sisters throughout New Zealand who have accepted the guidance of Islam (see Section 9.1). In 2004 a National Islamic Converts Conference was held in Christchurch at Masjid Al Noor in which Sadiq Nicholson was a key speaker. One of the female reverts, Aliya Danzeisen, who migrated from USA to Hamilton in 2006, has made a very significant impact by working hard to support specific programmes and activities for Muslim women, especially the young *Muslimahs* (See Section 9.2).

9.8 *Tabligh Jamaat Activities*

After coming to New Zealand, I went out in *Tabligh Jamaat* for the first time from Auckland to Wellington for 3 days in late 1973. This *Jamaat* included Hj. Ahmed Suleman Bhikoo, Hafiz Muhammad Ismail Sidat, myself and an old brother from Fiji who was visiting here. However, *Tabligh* work didn't prosper in Hamilton during my first ten years due to lack of Muslims and because the few young migrants present at the time were busy in establishing themselves in this new land of opportunities. We did go to Auckland regularly to attend *bayans* of all visiting *jamaats* from overseas. Occasional *jamaats* from Auckland came our way, staying at my house or at Hj. Hussain's place in Ngaruawahia.

Jamaats started coming more regularly to Hamilton once we bought the property on Heaphy Terrace and established the Islamic Centre in 1984. To advance the *Tabligh Jamaat* work in our city, some brothers from Auckland including Br Asin Ali, used to come regularly to help with our weekly *gasht* for a couple of years. A *jamaat* from Sydney led by Sheikh Salman Haider in late 80s tried very hard to motivate local Muslims to establish the five daily prayers in our Centre, but it wasn't until the first batch of Somali refugees arrived here in 1993 that we were able to establish these on a regular basis.

I had managed to spend a few days in an international *Tabligh Ijtema* in Detroit during my travel to USA in 1980. Later, an international *Ijtema* was organised close to home in Melbourne in 1996 in which a large number of *akaabereen* (elders) from Nizamuddin in India were expected to attend. A large contingent of some 130 Muslims from New Zealand travelled on 5 April 1996 to join the occasion. Included in the group was my son Nadeem, President Mohammed Afiz and myself. This was a huge gathering with thousands in attendance. It was a very gratifying experience. We learnt a lot and made many new Muslim friends at this event. We were back in New Zealand on 14 April 1996.

With the growing Muslim population in our city and the sustained effort of Auckland brothers, *Tabligh Jamaat* work started getting hold once the Hamilton Masjid was built in 1997. Although we have struggled at times due to lack of our own commitment, the work has mushroomed now *Alhamdo Lillah*, with three centres in Hamilton and a total of eight centres operating in Waikato/ Bay of Plenty region currently and *Jamaats* going out regularly. Stalwarts like Jamal Ghazali (who has lived in Waikato region since early 1980s), Dr Mohammad Bahr (who arrived here from Egypt in 1998), Dr Abdul Ghaneey (a Nigerian brother who came here via England in 2007) and others have played a big role in the last two decades. The intentional move of Abdullah Sheikh and his extended

family from Auckland enabled us to get permission for Ladies' Taaleem in Hamilton in 2016. This family had the experience required for conducting ladies' programmes. We have managed to take 3 and 10 days *Masturaat* (Ladies) Jamaats from Hamilton and host many such Jamaats from Auckland and overseas.

10. *To the Next Level: ECE and Madrasa, 2012*

Having built the Masjid, the first facility required to be established by a Muslim community, our Association turned its attention to the next important task viz. an educational facility for the fast-growing generation of our children. The house on the left side of the Masjid and one behind the Masjid were acquired over the next few years through fund raising and *qarde hasana*. The Madrasa then shifted from the Masjid to the house behind Masjid. After a couple of years, children's education got a further boost, through the concerted efforts of Dr Mohammed Bahr and myself, with establishment of Darel Oloum Hamilton in 2008. Sheikh Shamsuddin, an Afghani resident of Hamilton well versed with the Holy Quran, took up the challenge of teaching young boys and girls. He was always on time and maintained excellent discipline. This successful venture ran until 2013 when our Association got a dedicated large building to establish both early childhood centre and a larger Madrasa.

10.1 Early Childhood Education Centre: Iqra Educare, 2014

The adjacent property on the left side of the Masjid provided an opportunity to build the long intended educational facility, but required a large sum of money, which we did not have. Dr Mustafa Farouk, Aliya Danziesen and the late Ismail Gamadid through their dedication, persistence and ability to convince people, managed to persuade the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) to support an educational project in Hamilton. With this substantial financial support and further local fundraising, the Association was able to embark on a new two storey building. One of the difficult conditions imposed by IDB was that funds would be released in instalments, and only after completion of each stage of the building work. Hj. Firoz Mohammed, a long-time resident of Hamilton city who now had a home construction company, came to the rescue and undertook to build this facility.

A foundation laying ceremony was held in October 2012, which was attended by local Muslims as well as the stalwarts of Hamilton who had now migrated to

Auckland, including Mohammed Afiz and Hj. Mohammed Hussain Sahib (Figure 52). Two representatives from IDB were also present at this ceremony (Figure 53). Hj. Firoz Mohammed personally donated the bricks used in the new building. Mubarik Ahmed undertook the role of Building Manager to work alongside him and ably provided all the support necessary to complete the project.



Figure 52: Foundation laying ceremony for the new ECE and Madrasa Building, Oct. 2012.



Figure 53: Present at the foundation laying ceremony were the representatives from Islamic Development Bank (on the left) and the two previous stalwarts of the Hamilton Masjid, Hj. Mohammed Hussain Sahib (right) and Mohammed Afiz (second from right), October 2012.

A questionnaire was circulated within the community and subsequently the “Inaugural WMA Islamic Conference” was held in the Migrant Resource Centre on 20 April 2013. The aim was to improve communications regarding the future trajectory and profile of the Association, including discussions on how best to utilise the new building. As a result, an early childhood education centre was planned to be based on ground floor of the building and resource consent for its operation was promptly granted by the Hamilton City Council (Stuff.co.nz 23 August 2013, ‘Hamilton Masjid gets its own childhood centre’). The facility was opened for admissions in May 2014. It became the first special character centre in the region based on the values and principles of Islam for our children from ages 2.5 to 5 years old. The establishment of this childcare facility was possible in a large part by advice and a targeted assistance for participation grant of \$100,000 from the New Zealand Ministry of Education. Tariq Ashraf, Hj. Abdirizak and President Ismail Gamadid did much of the hard work in liaising with and convincing the Ministry for this vital support.

A Governing Board led by Waikato University academic Dr Asad Mohsin was appointed to establish and run this centre. Dr Asad who grew up in India and Pakistan and worked in Brunei and Australia before coming to New Zealand, had all the required expertise for this expansive project. Natasha McCosh was appointed Head Teacher of this unique ECE facility in Hamilton which was named *Iqra Educare*. A year later, the report presented at the monthly meeting of Waikato Muslim Association lists many steps being taken to improve the non-participating enrolments. It took much hard work by the Board and financial support by the Association for a couple of years before the ECE was able to reach the standard and fulfil the legal requirements set by NZ Ministry of Education to receive government funding. Once on its feet and self-supporting financially, a strategic plan (2017-2020) was developed by the Board. Since then, the Governing Board and the staff of *Iqra Educare* have worked very hard to deliver a quality programme whereby the children of our community develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that support their life-long learning. It is now operating exceedingly well, with Sister Yasmin Khan as the board chairperson. She had done much work as part of establishing *Iqra* and has been involved with it since its inception. Maria Sammons as the present Head Teacher is delivering superb service and improving the standard, along with four excellent staff members. With her dedication, personal interest and sustained hard work, *Iqra Educare* has successfully achieved many milestones and has received many accolades and appreciations from the NZ Ministry of Education as well as our former Prime Minister Hon. John Key (Figure 54).



Figure 54: Visit by Prime Minister John Key to Hamilton Masjid and Iqra' Educare, November 2016.

10.2 The Madrasa: Waikato Islamic School of Education, 2014

In conjunction with the early childhood education centre, attention was also given to a Madrasa for school age children. Dr Mustafa Farouk once again, using his international connections, managed to get an *aalim* supported by the Government of Saudi Arabia to kick start the project. A young Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed was appointed Principal of our madrasa named Waikato Islamic School of Education (WISE). With four additional teachers, classes for boys and girls 6 to 14 years old were started on the floor above *Iqra Educare* on 8 March 2014. A Madrasa sub-committee, of which I was a part, chaired by Hj. Abdirizak Abdi, was established to help decide on the curriculum and to oversee operational details. The Madrasa sub-Committee report to WMA monthly meeting of May 2016 mentions that a computer room fitted with 16 computers is now available to students for reading and memorisation of Quran. *Alhamdo Lillah*, our Madrasa has operated at its peak with up to 5 teachers and 120 students (Figure 55). Although turnover of teachers has been greater than desired, Sheikh Rasheed has continued teaching as well as delivering Jumah *khutbahs* every alternate week in the Masjid.



Figure 55: Students, teachers and parents of the WISE Madrasa, in front of the Iqra' Educare/Madrasa Building, December 2016.

11. *Planning Ahead for a Brighter Future –*

Having successfully established *Iqra Educare*, Dr Asad Mohsin was now able to devote time for the betterment of the wider community. He accepted the position of President to fill the void left by departure of Ismail Gamadid to Australia. With his professional background and a long academic career, he had a visionary and wholesome approach to lift Waikato Muslim Association to a higher level. He was ably supported by Dr Ahmed Saleh (Vice President), Dr Nauman Maqbool (Treasurer) and Tariq Ashraf in particular towards achieving his goals. The accounting team of Dr Nauman, Dr Ahmed and Abdul Basit also worked hard to bring a fully professional approach to our accounting system. Sister Yasmin Khan, the new chair of *Iqra Educare* Board and its members have not only maintained but uplifted the standard of this unique educational facility and received many accolades from the Ministry of Education. Now there is a waiting list for new entrants. In his role as Assistant Secretary, Shahid Khan has successfully written many applications to get funding from Government and private donor organisations. WOWMA has done even better in receiving grants, particularly from various Government organisations, through the concerted efforts of Aliya Danziesen.

Dr Asad Mohsin worked hard and convinced FIANZ to jointly host the first NZ Muslim Leaders' Symposium in Hamilton in January 2018. This symposium brought together over a hundred Muslim leaders, including women and youth, from across the country to discuss opportunities and challenges, and develop future strategic direction for the Muslim community. Minister for Ethnic Communities Hon Jenny Salesa attended the day long symposium as the guest speaker. In her speech she acknowledged the social and economic contributions made by Muslims to the development of this country for over 140 years.

At this Symposium our budding home-grown lawyer, Tariq Ashraf, presented a summary of the draft Waikato Muslim Association Inc. Strategic Plan 2018-2038. This plan highlighted WMA's 'big picture' aspirational dream which Dr Asad Mohsin has been thinking about and discussing with members of the community. Tariq Ashraf, the main architect of the plan, presented it to the WMA AGM in May 2018 and it was duly adopted. Its visionary mission is to support Waikato Muslims by working with others and delivering effective and efficient services according to an agreed and resourced corporate plan. The implementation plans have to be developed annually to ensure progress towards achieving its goals.

With his long academic background in tourism, Dr Asad Mohsin also organised the 4th Halal Tourism and Hospitality Symposium in November 2018 at the

University of Waikato which was supported by FIANZ and Tourism Industry Aotearoa. This symposium aimed to help tourism operators, government agencies and communities understand the economic benefits of promoting New Zealand as a Muslim-friendly destination. It brought much kudos to both FIANZ and our Association. Dr Asad was also instrumental in the decision of Waikato University to establish four substantial scholarships for graduate studies for Muslim students from our community.

Dr Asad and his committee have built on the efforts of the late Ismail Gamadid to further enhance the mana and prestige of Waikato Muslim Association by communicating extensively with various agencies and personalities in the region. The unfortunate event of 15 March 2019, viz, the ‘Massacre of Muslims in Christchurch’ highlighted his efforts and placed our Association on the city map as a body that cares and supports not only its own community but is concerned with the well-being and development of this region.



A recent Eid celebration at Hamilton Masjid.

May Allah SWT keep the community growing and united!!

12. *Epilogue*

There can be little doubt that the Waikato-Bay of Plenty Muslim Association (subsequently re-named Waikato Muslim Association), as the pioneer Islamic organisation in the region, was the first real reflection of a united Muslim community. Although Muslims had lived quietly in the region for many decades, the creation of a formal organisation in 1979 signalled the point of transition from a fairly itinerant community into a settled one. It also initiated the pathway for a united future enhancement. The Muslim community since has been vibrant and vigorous, representing a plethora of races and nationalities which has thrown up a few unique challenges.

This brief record of the history of our Association also demonstrates the active participation and positive contributions of our members to the Waikato region, to nation-wide Islamic affairs, to the wider society and above all to the faith of Islam. Our women now use the large room in the Madrasa for congregational Jumah salat, because our Masjid is now barely coping with the number of Muslims joining us on Fridays. We have been hiring big halls in the city for the two Eid prayers for some years. No doubt more thinking and planning is now required for the future. Time for the next generation of Muslims in the city to rise up to the new challenges!! In the meantime, as a Patron of the Waikato Muslim Association, I continue to strive to keep the community together and to ensure the implementation of the goals our community set for itself, with the help of Allah the Almighty.

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Final Words

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

I am extremely privileged to be given the opportunity to assist in the compilation of this memorable and valuable history of the Waikato Muslim Association (WMA). When I immigrated to New Zealand with my family in 1988, Allah Almighty Guided me to choose Hamilton as my future abode. Soon we realized that we could not have chosen a better place to resettle, especially once we got involved in the regular activities and programmes at the Islamic Centre and I joined the executive committee of WMA.



As a person who has been involved with WMA in its years of rapid growth and building of the first Masjid in Hamilton, I have many fond memories of the achievements and events which have been captured in this document. Although I shifted to Auckland in 2006, I always feel and consider myself a “Hamiltonian” and a member of WMA. Let us not forget and for the benefit of our future generations, I am really glad that Br. Anis came up with this proposal and spent much time and effort in documenting these precious memories and records. May Allah Rabbal Alameen Accept our noble deeds and Reward us with immense ajr. Ameen.

Mohammad Afiz CA, JP

The documentation of history is axiomatic to the human condition: those who do not study the past are doomed to relive it. The Holy Quran incessantly makes an appeal for a keen study, meditation and understanding on this point. In Surah Al-Rum, (chapter of the Romans), we are admonished: “Have they not travelled the land and seen the nature of the consequences for those who were before them?” (Quran 30:9). Similar sentiments are articulated clearly in many other Surahs. Thus, we understand it to be vital to life, that we accurately record events and pass on the knowledge to future generations for their education and edification. To avoid the mistakes of the past, one must be properly aware of them.

I have reviewed this valuable document – that elucidates the significant events and points of the history of the Waikato Muslim Association – with great pleasure and I heartily commend Dr Anis Rahman for pursuing this noble endeavour. The general reader will be particularly impressed with the extensive references providing comprehensive supporting evidence, plus the breadth and profundity of vision in the text. I certainly hope other mosques and Muslim agencies make similar efforts. The construction of the Hamilton Jami Masjid in particular, stands as an important milestone in local history for all New Zealand citizens.

Abdullah Drury MA, MPhil



This booklet provides a brief history of the Waikato Muslim Association, focussing on the early struggles of Muslims in our region and the building of a united community. It provides details of the initial gatherings of the community, formation of the Association, securing a property in Hamilton and building of the current Masjid and educational facility. It records the valued contributions of the many individuals involved, who donated both their time and money. We hope this brief record of the early history will provide some understanding to our present and future generations of the struggles their ancestors have gone through. I also trust this will motivate them to work together and continue building on this record, *In Sha Allah*.

