



# USMAA NEWSLETTER

*The official newsletter of United Sri Lankan  
Muslim Association of Australia  
Vol I - 2020/2021 - September 2020*



**IT'S A LONG ROAD TO RECOVERY**  
*We have come a long way in our fight against COVID. The journey is not over and we need to remain patient. With Allah's help, we will prevail!*

## WELCOME TO THE LATEST EDITION

Assalamu alaikum dear Brothers and Sisters,

Welcome to our first newsletter for the year 2020/2021. This has been a tough year for us all and the Management Committee (MC) wishes to express their gratitude towards all members who have been showing a keen interest in the continuous improvement of USMAA and we look forward to your support in the future as well.

### What's in this issue?

Let's first meet the new Management Committee and take a look at the events during the first quarter of the current financial year. Afterwards we dive into some news and interesting topics. We have an interview with one of our members who decided to advertise his business with USMAA. We finish off with some thoughts to reflect on. Enjoy!

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Assalamu Alaikum dear USMAA Members,

As the popular saying goes, behind every dark cloud is a silver lining. Our beloved Prophet (PBUH) had also preached a similar message over 1400 years ago. Given that USMAA events revolved around the Mulgrave Community Centre, I had my doubts if USMAA would be able to keep its momentum going during COVID19. However, it was great to see how our members got together to support the students and needy families, thereby keeping the USMAA Family spirit alive. We also kept in touch through virtual events. I could not have been prouder to be proven wrong.

I am not one to praise my own tail, but I feel that I will be robbing the generous contributions by my team mates, the USMAA MC, if I did not shine the spotlight on them. To start off with, we have operationalised the entire committee with job specific titles similar to other not-for-profit organisations. This is merely an internal reference methodology for our convenience. Below are the initiatives and the projects currently on the fly:

Title	Who	Projects / Initiatives	Benefit to the community
Secretary	Ruzna S	Debating for Fun / Thinking on your feet / COVID Assistance Program	Build skills in school-goers
General Manager (Vice President/ Editor)	Rizan A	Responsible for all operations/ Jack of all Trades/ Master of Ceremonies	Gives the President time to concentrate on strategic initiatives
Treasurer	S Azmaan	Documenting the Treasurer's Handbook and invoicing the Membership and Trades	Making the future Treasurers' job a breeze, thereby getting more than one year of service, IA
Finance Ops Manager (Asst. Treasurer)	Faariq F		
Community Affairs Manager (Asst. Secretary)	Shazia F	Setup USMAA Matrimonial operation / Liaison for Youth SC / organises speakers for USMAA Zoom sessions	Help our youth with matrimonial services. Work with and groom our next-gen leaders to develop their skills
ICT Manager	Zafar I	All things IT and website related/ Obituaries page	Documented handover of IT procedures to future committees
Marketing Manager (Comm Member)	Naushad U	Responsible for bringing in the Trades adverts	Allows for intra-community purchasing and business promotion
Facility Manager (Comm Member)	Uzmaan N	Setting up the Mentorship Program	Introduce USMAA youth to willing mentors for guidance

By giving these gifted individuals an opportunity to place their stamp on these projects, it creates an atmosphere for future MC members to hone their skills and add another achievement not only to their USMAA repertoire, but also to their professional resumé.

A special mention goes out to Zafar for being the backbone of USMAA 2.0 Implementation as without him, none of this would have been possible as we rely heavily on the website as the face of USMAA. He often goes to sleep at 2 am finishing up his USMAA work, after our usual 10.30pm meetings! May Allah bless them all for their hard work. Ameen.

Jzk,  
Falih Shums

# **MEET THE TEAM**



## **RETURNING PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY – FALIH AND RUZNA SHUMS**

Falih has a Bachelor of Commerce majoring in Economics, Finance & MIS and works for the State Emergency Service (VICSES) heading up the Risk, BCP and Insurance functions. He is a DIY home repairs guru and an ardent rugby fan!

Ruzna has a degree in Business Administration and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Marketing. She is a Business Banking Manager at NAB.

Both are devoted parents of two and use their spare time for charitable work.



## **RETURNING TO THE TEAM – VICE PRESIDENT AND EDITOR – RIZAN ABDEEN**

Rizan is a gifted writer, cook, and kids' entertainer (Mad Scientist). He has a degree in IT and works for ME Bank in the IT Risk Division. He is also into gardening. He insists that he wants to remain as the Editor as well!



## **NEW TO THE TEAM – SEYAD AZMAAN AS THE TREASURER**

Azmaan has an IT degree and works as an General Manager. Azmaan will try to automate the invoices with his IT knowledge and make a breeze out of the Treasurer's job for future committees in sha Allah.



## **RETURNING TO THE TEAM – SHAZIA FALEEL AS THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY**

Shazia has a Bachelor of Business and Commerce and an MBA in HR. She has over 11 years of experience in professional services and the community services sector where her focus has been on building Learning & Development programs. Given her background, Shazia is passionate about uplifting the skills of USMAA youth, community development, awareness programs and supporting disadvantaged women and children.

## **MEET THE TEAM**



### **RETURNING TO THE TEAM – FAARIQ FURKAAN AS THE ASSISTANT TREASURER**

Faariq has a degree in Accounting. He works for Melbourne Water as an Accountant. Faariq is a new dad. Given the new commitments, he has requested to step down from his previous role as the Treasurer.



### **RETURNING TO THE TEAM – UZMAAN YAKOOB**

Uzmaan has a degree in Airport Management and is currently taking flight lessons to be a pilot. He loves taking road trips and playing the piano. He is no stranger to anyone as he is the son of the former president, Bro Nazeem.



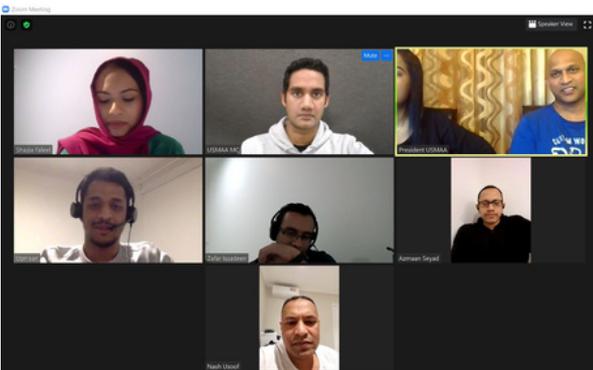
### **NEW TO THE TEAM (OFFICIALLY) – ZAFAR ISSADEEN**

Devoted dad, hiker, scout, renovator and IT guru. Zaf has been unofficially a part of the last Management Committee assisting us with the website development and upgrade. He has a degree in IT and heads up a team at the Vic government. He is the nephew of bro Imtiaz Issadeen from the formative years.



### **NEW TO THE TEAM – NAUSHAD USOOF**

Naushad has a Masters in Accounting and will bring his experience working as a General Manager in SL to uplift USMAA and the community. He is a devoted social worker and is a right-hand-man of A/Minister Hon Jason Wood.



## **MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MAKING A PLEDGE**

The new Management Committee made the following pledge.

I have joined the Management Committee;

- To serve Allah and the Community
- Not to pursue personal goals, and therefore have no hidden agenda and
- Not for any personal glory

## PAST EVENTS

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (25 JULY 2020)**

USMAA's first virtual AGM was held on 25th July 2020 via Zoom. Given the pandemic situation, we were compelled to host the session virtually. However, there was quite a big turnout and we were humbled by the support provided to us by the membership in general.

Unfortunately we were unable to table the financials as a result of a minor calculation error and it meant that an SGM had to be scheduled to table the financials.

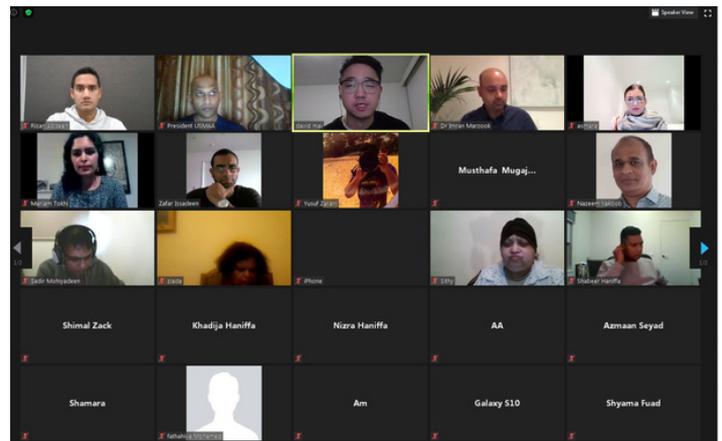
Several members voiced their pleasure on the progress and activities conducted by the Management Committee and the Sub Committees over the previous year and expects more events (at least virtually) in the current financial year.

### **EID LECTURE BY SHEIKH AFEEFUDDIN (31 JULY 2020)**

A 1 hour lecture on the topic "**Hajj and its benefits to our Ummah**" was conducted via Zoom by Sheikh Afeefuddin who is a prominent Islamic scholar and speaker. The lecture was well attended by the members and several important questions were posed to the Sheikh to which he responded by drawing from his knowledge and experience. Overall it was a very informative session and our members benefitted immensely.

### **PANEL DISCUSSION - COVID19: THE GROUND SITUATION (08 AUG 2020)**

A virtual panel discussion was organised via Zoom to educate our members regarding the ground situation in the state's battle against COVID19. We were fortunate enough to have two doctors from our own community, Dr. Imran Marzook and Dr. Mariam Tokhi, share their insights and experiences with the membership. In addition, we had Dr. David Mai and Asmara Jammali-Blasi (DHHS) provide valuable tips on staying safe and looking after our health during these uncertain times.



The panelists also answered a wide variety of questions from the audience. There was an excellent turnout by our members who reaped the maximum benefit from the session. The membership is grateful to the panelists for sparing the time to share their knowledge with us and not forgetting our Education Sub Committee who organised the event. In sha Allah we look forward to many more informative sessions that can benefit everyone.

## PAST EVENTS (CONT.)

### **LECTURE ON ASHURA - SHEIKH ALAA (22 AUG 2020)**

A lecture was delivered via Zoom by Sheikh Alaa on "The Hijri year, the day of Ashura and its importance in Islam." The Sheikh is no stranger to us and as usual, his practical advice and logical approach to solving problems was praised and admired by everyone. It was definitely an eye-opener for all of us when the Sheikh touched on other timely topics that were raised during the Q&A session. In sha Allah we will try to get the Sheikh again for more sessions during the course of the financial year.

### **SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING (12 SEP 2020)**

A Special General Meeting (SGM) was held via Zoom on 12th September 2020 to table the financials that couldn't be presented at the AGM in July. The financials were adopted and a few other pressing issues were discussed by the membership including the appointment of the Youth Committee. Once again there was a good turn-out which demonstrates that there is a keen interest among the membership in steering USMAA into the future.

### **ENERGY SIMPLIFIED WEBINAR (15 SEP 2020)**

The Positive Ageing Sub Committee organised a webinar with the assistance of the Consumer Policy Research Centre. The webinar focused on educating the community on various methods of controlling their energy bills.

**humanITix**



The tips were presented in a clear and concise manner and the presenters held a Q&A session afterwards. Several members raised queries regarding common issues that many of us face with regard to our energy usage and there is no doubt that everyone found the session extremely useful. It was a great initiative by the Positive Ageing Sub Committee and we eagerly look forward to their next event.

### **DEBATING WORKSHOPS FOR KIDS (19 SEP AND 26 SEP 2020)**

School holidays are usually the time when kids and parents venture out of town on vacation. However, the pandemic prevented us from organising any outdoor events for the kids. We seized the opportunity though to introduce the next generation of USMAA to the fascinating world of debating.

Two virtual workshops were held in September for a limited number of participants. We received several applications, but unfortunately had to allocate spots on a first-come-first served basis. The workshops were aimed at introducing kids to debating and teaching them the basics of building an argument, supporting it with evidence and countering arguments made by others.

## PAST EVENTS (CONT.)

The first workshop served as an introduction and in the second workshop, the kids were allocated into teams and assigned topics.



The kids were extremely attentive and showed great potential. Masha Allah our future is in good hands. A couple of additional sessions were held during the last week of September to help the kids in organising their arguments and running through debating formalities.

We are looking forward to the final workshop to be held in early October in sha Allah where the kids will engage in a debate to showcase what they learned.

## **USMAA'S VIRTUAL SPECTACULAR (19 SEP 2020)**

Where do I start with this one? All I can say is that if you missed out on this event, you missed out on a great deal of action and entertainment.

We revamped the Trivia Night into a mashup of a few different activities just to change things up a bit. There were 4 different rounds of games. Round 1 was Trivia via Kahoot, Round 2 was Brain Teasers and an Online Treasure Hunt. Round 3 was a Live Art round where participants had to recreate certain scenes/themes with items in their house and Round 4 was a Scavenger Hunt. Overall it was a spectacular night that lived up to its name. 11 teams of 4 - 6 participants took part and there's no doubt that everyone had one of the greatest nights of entertainment in a while.

The teams had come up with creative names and it was entertaining to see the chaos and excitement among the participants during the event. Masha Allah our members are extremely creative and they managed to come up with some novel ideas such as the ones below to recreate a Kandyan Perahara and a fruit market.



The winning team "Quaranteam: Nerd Immunity" won some cool Uber Eats vouchers.

We received wonderful feedback from everyone and some admitted that their hearts were racing long after the event was over. We are glad to have been able to provide a spectacular night of entertainment despite the COVID crisis. In sha Allah we will organise similar events in future, so stay tuned!

## OTHER NEWS

### COVID19 ASSISTANCE PROGRAM - 2

Following on the success of our first COVID19 Assistance Program, we relaunched the campaign to assist more Sri Lankan students in Melbourne who were struggling to make ends meet due to the pandemic. Masha Allah our community rallied once again and contributed generously to raise a little over \$5,000 which was used to provide relief to several deserving students. May Allah reward everyone who contributed to this cause. Ameen!

### DONATION OF FOOD RATIONS TO WE CARE VICTORIA

With some the funds collected from the COVID19 Assistance Program, USMAA donated 40 boxes of food rations worth \$1,000 in total to We Care Victoria which has been spearheading an initiative to distribute food hampers to the vulnerable members in our society during this period of lockdown.



We are once again grateful to the members who contributed to make this possible. A special mention should be made about Bro Naushad Usoof who is in the USMAA Management Committee and is also heavily involved with We Care Victoria. May Allah reward you for your efforts. Ameen!

### FOOD HAMPERS FROM ISLAMIC COUNCIL OF VICTORIA (ICV)

Through ICV, USMAA sourced 20-30 food hampers every month since May 2020 and distributed them to students and families in Melbourne who were affected by the pandemic and the lockdown situation.

### USMAA MATRIMONIALS

A new initiative is being launched by USMAA whereby our website will serve as a platform to connect potential life partners. Our aim is to help our youth find suitable partners within our community. We have had several requests to conduct this service and in sha Allah there will be more details coming your way soon.

## OTHER NEWS (CONTINUED)

### USMAA MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

A Mentorship Program has been launched to be able to connect potential mentors and mentees. The aim of this program is to have an ongoing relationship between mentor and mentee, so that our younger generation can be guided in the right direction in terms of career paths, developing skills and shaping their future. If you are keen to mentor anyone or be mentored, please reach out to our Facility Manager Uzmaan via an email to [facility.manager@usmaa.org.au](mailto:facility.manager@usmaa.org.au)

### USMAA TRADES PAGE

The USMAA Trades Page has been launched on the USMAA website and we have sent out an invitation to members to reach out to our Marketing Manager Naushad Usoof if they wish to publish an advertisement about their business or trade on the USMAA website. This is a great opportunity to reach out to our membership and it is also a fantastic opportunity for members to identify and support businesses run by other members. Please direct your queries to [marketing.manager@usmaa.org.au](mailto:marketing.manager@usmaa.org.au)

### OBITUARY NOTICES PAGE

Members are now able to submit obituary details by visiting the Janaza Service and Obituaries section on our website. You will need to fill out a simple form on the website with the information you wish to publish and hit Submit. After a quick review by our ICT Manager, the obituary notice will be published. This is a hassle-free method to get the notice out and we encourage our members to kindly use this facility when the need arises.

### COMPLAINTS PAGE

The USMAA website now has the option for members to provide any complaints directly to the Management Committee for inquiry and resolution. Members can find the complaints form on our website via <https://usmaa.org.au/usmaa-complaints-form/> to lodge your complaints.

### YOUTH COMMITTEE

After a lapse of a few years, we finally have a full Youth Committee. The team is extremely energetic and excited to serve the community.



They are currently drawing up plans for their calendar of events and are working together with the Management Committee. In sha Allah we can expect to see a few good initiatives from them in the near future which will be targeted towards the youth.

## **INTERVIEW WITH FAYAZ FROM SOLAR RUN**



*We caught up (virtually) with Fayaz Zurfick from Solar Run. He is no stranger to the USMAA Community. He was the first person to advertise with us in our USMAA Trades Page and we thought of getting to know a*

*bit more about him and to let him tell us his story that led him to this point in his life.*

### **Tell us briefly about yourself and what brought you to Australia?**

Assalmu Alaikum, My name is Mohamed Fayaz Zurfick. I came to Australia in 1995 to pursue my higher education and was hoping to go back to mother Lanka after 4-5 years. However, 25 years later I am still here and I am now an Aussie Mate. (Lol)

### **Tell us briefly about your business and where you operate?**

Solar Run provides solar panel installation and related services. I started the business with another friend of mine and the main office is in Williams Landing, but I operate from home/office in Endeavour Hills, South East of Victoria.

### **How and why did you get involved in this line of work?**

I got involved in this line of work as I have been working in the energy industry for 3 years and my passion is to see the world move towards ZERO carbon emissions.

### **What are some of the challenges you faced in your journey to this point?**

I have encountered several challenges. I was made redundant in my last job due to a restructure. I went into a partnership and opened up a restaurant (Café Pillawoos) last October and it was going good until COVID19 affected the hospitality and restaurant industry. I learned a lot and it was a great experience. The way I see it, you learn from your failures and keep trying. I believe that if you don't try, you won't know.

### **What do you love about your work?**

I have always been in customer relations and I have loved helping customers and listening to their problems. I see it as an opportunity to receive constructive feedback and improve ourselves in servicing our customers.

### **How do you add value to the community?**

I have always been a part of the community and community organisations. I have to thank my parents for leading by example when my siblings and I were growing up. They showed us how important it was to be a part of a family, the community and organisations.

I am currently the president of Mates Vision – a not-for-profit organisation that helps the underprivileged in Sri Lanka and Australia. Some of our ongoing projects are orphan support, widow empowerment, supporting young challenged school going children with their educational needs and feeding the homeless.

### **Any interesting or fun stories from work that you can share?**

Due to the current climate (COVID19) I work from home and I wanted to keep fit. I received an email from STEPtember – doing 10,000 steps a day for 28 days and at the same time to be able to raise much needed funds for people with cerebral palsy. I shared the thought with my workmates and to my surprise, 11 out of the 16 wanted to take part in the challenge. I was telling my wife over dinner as to how we as a team were going to do the STEPtember challenge and my 11 year old son Aqeel was curious. When I showed him pictures and explained the greater cause, he wanted to be a part of it too. Sometimes you can make a difference not only by taking on responsibility by yourself, but also by sharing it with others.

## INTERVIEW WITH FAYAZ FROM SOLAR RUN (CONT..)

### What made you advertise with USMAA?

Why not? I think this would be a great opportunity for businesses to be known to the community and also help the community. It is a great way of giving back to the community. People are passionate about the platform and their communities. Like forums, people will go to great lengths to help each other.

### What benefits can you provide our readers with?

Solar brings homeowners a simple and affordable way to power their homes with the sun and take control of their energy bills while helping towards a ZERO carbon footprint.

Our passion is to help Australians become more energy independent. After a tumultuous 10 years of constant price increases by power companies, black-outs and coal-fired power plant failures, we are seeing more Australians searching for a better solution. Recent statistics from the Clean Energy Council tell us that people are paying nearly \$1,500 to \$2,400 per year on their energy bills because electricity prices are quite high. It's no wonder that solar panels are going up on rooftops around the country at a lightning pace. We call this the solar revolution and Solar Run is ready to provide Australians with solar panel installation, solar hot water, solar battery storage and LED lighting to drive their energy bills down.

By installing some of our solar and energy efficient products in your home, you can realise real savings on your energy bill and protect your family budget from the endless sky rocketing electricity prices. What's more, you can feel great that you are giving back to the greater cause of generating renewable energy.

### Anything else that you wish to say to our readers?

I believe we have to embrace change and move forward to a better future. The recent events have taught me nothing is certain and that we need to go with the flow.

*The USMAA Management Committee wishes Bro Fayaz the best of luck in his journey and hope that our readers will reach out to him if they wish to purchase solar panels or related services. His contact details are given below.*



**LEARN THE POWER OF SOLAR**

**SolarRun**  
YOUR FUTURE IS HERE

**GO SOLAR TODAY**

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INSTALL A 6.6 KW SYSTEM WHICH INCLUDES TIER 1 PANELS AND AN INVERTER.

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Note: Above price is after STC and Solar Vic rebates including \$1850 interest free loan from Solar Victoria to be paid back over 4 years (\$39 Per Month)  
Additional charges apply for double story houses

Please contact or message  
Fayaz Zurfick on 0404 130 811  
[www.solarrun.com.au](http://www.solarrun.com.au)

## **EDITOR'S THOUGHTS**

Another quarter gone. It feels like a few weeks ago that I was scrambling to get the previous newsletter out and here we are again with 3 months gone by. Winter is over and with the change in the season, what can we expect?

The COVID crisis is far from over and we can expect some restrictions to be in place for several months to come e.g. face masks. As I mentioned in the previous newsletter, these are testing times and Allah has His plans for us. We have to trust His plan and remain patient.

Despite the COVID crisis, USMAA was able to conduct several virtual events. It is wonderful to see how we have adapted to the times to keep our organisation going and membership connected. Speaking of adapting to times, let me share with you an incident that took place a few days back. I was handling the technical side of the Zoom session during the Debating Workshop for Kids and at one point I was sharing a video off my laptop, but the audience couldn't hear it. I was humbled that a couple of kids (8 or 9 years old) quickly jumped in to tell me which setting I had misconfigured. I was amazed and happy at the same time to see how much the kids have adapted to online learning. It also goes to show that we can learn anything from anyone regardless of their age, gender, colour, background etc.

In addition, I thought to myself that these kids are fortunate to be born in this digital era and not have to endure the pain of connecting to the internet using a dial-up modem. I bet you can still remember that eerie noise it makes when establishing an internet connection. Anyway, it is nice to see that kids are embracing new tech and it is our responsibility to give them the freedom to learn things as well as the guidance to not misuse technology.

I thought of also touching on the generosity of our members when it came to assisting those in need during this crisis. It was heart-warming to see that we managed to collect around \$10,000 in total through our COVID19 Assistance Programs. May Allah reward everyone for their generosity.

Further, I want to touch on the good work carried out by the Janaza Sub Committee (JSC) even during the peak of COVID in Melbourne. Bro Eddie, Bro Imtiaz and the rest of the team have always been ready to drop everything and assist in the event of a death. They have even assisted other Muslim communities when the grieving parties have been struggling to find volunteers to conduct the necessary rituals. May Allah reward the volunteers for their sacrifices.

Finally I just want to extend our gratitude to the Trustees Bro Fahmi, Bro Eddie and Sis Sithy for their continued guidance. Special thanks also goes out to the Management Committee and Sub Committees for volunteering their time and effort to keep our beloved organisation going. A big thank you to all our members as well for being patient with us and providing their feedback to help us improve. May Allah bless you all and keep you safe. Ameen!

Jzk.

Rizan Abdeen (VP/Editor)