



United Sri Lankan Muslim Association of Australia



USMAA Centre - Letters to Councils

Aak dear USMAA Members,

As an update to the 'USMAA Centre Project' and 'The Plan' (currently saved in the USMAA website) the MC has applied to the following five (5) councils seeking a land to lease or a property with a building.

1. Monash City Council
2. Knox City Council
3. Dandenong City Council
4. Casey City Council
5. Kingston City Council

You may have realised by now that we would have had many plans and many attempts by previous committees, who relentlessly pursued this dream for the past 30 years, but every time it is a new process, a bit like a stop-start as none of those attempts are recorded or passed through, or at least I cannot find them in the folder (SharePoint) that gets passed on from committee to committee.

Our philosophy under USMAA 2.0 is "not how a single committee delivers on this project, but how multiple committees, year on year builds on the **one** project" IA. This is not about a single point of glory, but collective glory as one community.

I have therefore saved all the correspondence to the USMAA Centre page in our website, so that future committees can pick on where we have left off, IA.

I have also attached a sample letter that we sent to the the Monash City Council, that the Secretary drafted for me. Therefore, if you have any contacts within these councils, please try to influence it as you will not only have the gratitude of a whole community, but also from Allah.

Jzk,.Falih Shums



United Sri Lankan Muslim Association of Australia Inc

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28 April 2021

Property Department
Leasing and Licensing Policy
Monash City Council
293 Springvale Road
Glen Waverley

Dear Sir/Madam,

Lease of a Suitable Land or Property for a Community Centre

The United Sri Lanka Muslim Association of Australia was established 30 years ago by Muslim Sri Lankan migrants to keep the community spirit alive through charitable programs, fundraisers and event organisation. USMAA now consists of mainly second and third generation Australian Muslims who identify Sri Lanka as the nation of heritage. USMAA is also proud to say that we have members who are of non-Sri Lankan heritage.

USMAA has been blessed to hire (via an in-kind Hall Grant) the Mulgrave Community Centre for almost all of its events and functions. Unfortunately, the grant amount allows for only 10 events for the calendar year. In the past, this has been sufficient to meet our requirements. However, with the growth of our community and the change in the composition of our membership, our focus and requirements have also diversified. We are moving away from simply being an event-based association to one that wants to shape our community to be an integral part of the Australian fabric.

This was the intention behind the launch of USMAA 2.0 recently, a concept that reassesses our obligation to the wider community. To this end, we have identified the following areas of focus going forward:

- **Youth:** formulate a series of workshops focusing on sensitive matters relating to the youth. Our aim is to provide guidance to youth and prevent them from being swayed in to anti-social behaviour by building a support network for them to rely on
- **Primary and secondary school children of our members:** host monthly events that will foster their identity as Australian Muslims. Identity crisis is an issue facing our children today. Hence, catering for events with this focus will help in preventing many issues that is plaguing our youth today. In addition, general events like debating workshops, creative writing workshops etc will also be conducted to boost the academic and general profile of the children in the community especially those unable to avail of paid workshops of this nature
- **Seniors:** enable the seniors to meet regularly as a group to promote their overall well-being. Depression, family violence and lack of social interaction have been identified as main issues to address for this section of our membership. Our Positive Ageing Subcommittee is keen to host regular catch-ups aimed at providing an opportunity for the seniors to congregate
- **Women:** Providing a safe outlet to meet other like-minded Muslim women regularly through activities that are of interest to them e.g. counselling for violence against women, make-up tips, talks on menopause/post-natal depression etc.
- **Family sponsor:** be able to sponsor a handful of struggling families in Melbourne with the member subscription funds
- **Homeless projects:** currently our membership donates foodstuff at every physical event. The Management Committee then donates these to the homeless people (currently channelled through Cornerstone Contact Centre in Dandenong). Our aim is to expand this to a weekly exercise involving feeding the Homeless. i.e. Soup kitchen
- **Ad hoc charitable events:** Initiate more fundraising events like the Covid19 assistance program which raised funds in-excess of \$10k to aid the struggling international students and the Bushfire Fundraising dinner to assist communities impacted
- **Overseas charities:** Continue to identify and assist projects based in Sri Lanka similar to the assistance extended through our recent projects like the War Widows in Sri Lanka



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- Other communities: Celebrate our differences and also what binds us together as Australians in joint programs. We are in favour of renting out our community centre to others at nominal charges.
- Celebrating diversity: USMAA would like stock a small library, open to the public with literature on our religion, culture and traditions to educate the public, similar to 'open Mosque days'

Our current operating system of hiring the Mulgrave Community Centre for 10 times in a calendar year will not enable us to meet the needs of the various segments of our membership as detailed above. A Community Centre to call our own, which can be used by the different segments to host events and activities to meet the needs of each of our members is our dream. It will provide a safe haven for our youth, children, seniors, women and the mainstream membership to meet regularly without any restrictions.

Therefore, we humbly request you to assist us in locating a suitable Council owned land to lease where we could build a community centre or lease one of the Council's buildings for this purpose.

USMAA is willing to look at all types of properties, be it derelict or asbestos laden, where we could either renovate or build to our needs. If building, we have concept plans to occupy roughly a 300 sq. meter footprint for our purposes (15m by 20m).

Kindly visit our website www.USMAA.org.au > 'About us' to understand our:

- Vision - To positively represent the Victorian Sri Lankan – Australian Muslim community and to support our community to be upstanding Australian citizens
- Mission - Partner with other interfaith communities and Australian local/state/federal government agencies to promote intercultural relationships
- Values - We are part of the community :
 - > We are part of the Australian community and we endure together with Australia
 - > We appreciate and respect all cultures and ethnicities

or for any general community service activities we are involved in, be it the:

- Charities page
- Trades page
- Matrimonial page
- Obituaries page
- Mentorship program.
- New migrant and international student assistance program

USMAA is happy to sit with the Council and weigh in various options that would benefit the Council and us alike.

We look forward to a favourable response from you at your earliest convenience.
Thank you

Your sincerely,

Fajih Shams
President
MOB: 0432217913

CC:

- Hon Brian Little
- Hon Daniel Andrews
- Hon Jason Wood
- Hon Julian Hill



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