



Secretary's Report 2020/2021

The 2020/2021 Management Committee (MC) was elected at the AGM held on Sunday, 25 July 2020. The new team comprised the following members:

Title	Name
President	Falih Shums
Vice President	Rizan Abdeen
Secretary	Ruzna Shums
Assistant Secretary	Shazia Faleel
Treasurer	Seyad Azmaan
Assistant Treasurer	Faariq Furqan
Editor	Zafar Issadeen
Committee Members	Uzmaan Nazeem Naushad Usoof

Membership

Due to the financial constraints experienced by our Members during the COVID 19 pandemic, the MC decided to reduce the Family Membership fee, for this year only, from \$75 to \$50. In addition, following the resolution at the AGM 2020, all students on the USMAA Membership list were exempted from paying their subscriptions as a respite from the adverse financial impact of extended lockdowns in Melbourne.

This year our subscription-fee collection consisted of 68 family memberships, 8 pensioner-family memberships, 8 individual memberships, 2 pensioner-individual memberships and 6 student memberships (fee exempted). This amounts to a total of 86 membership payments for the year. I would like to welcome all new members and thank all our existing members for supporting this organisation.

Management Committee Meetings

The MC conducted a total of eight (8) meetings both via face-to-face and zoom.

In addition, the MC met as sub-groups (via zoom) on numerous occasions to discuss initiatives that were assigned to them e.g. website upgrade, mentorship initiative, Trades page, Matrimony service etc. These meetings often continued late into the night, sometimes finishing at 1 am.

The MC was also very active on the MC Discussion WhatsApp Group, utilising technology to make time-sensitive decisions in-between meeting dates.



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Date	Time	Team	Notes
31 July 2020	1830-1930	Committee	Inaugural meeting
5 Sept 2020	1930-2100	Committee	Plan for SGM, Virtual Spectacular and Debating workshop
3 Oct 2020	1845-2015	Committee	Finalise details for the Q & A session with Asst Minister Jason Wood
13 Dec 2020	1600-1800	Committee	Discuss the Beauty Tips and Hijab Draping event for the ladies and the Creative Writing Workshop for the kids
5 Jan 2021	2000-2100	Committee	Discuss a potential Australia Day family outdoor event (cancelled subsequently due to tightening of restrictions)
1 Feb 2021	1900-2030	Committee	Finalise details of the New Migrants and International Students initiative
9 Mar 2021	1900-2010	Committee	Finalise the Zakat al Fitr projects
5 Apr 2021	1400-1530	Committee	Decide on the events to be undertaken during Ramadan

Subcommittees

The Education Subcommittee organised the following useful information session:

- 8 Aug 2021: Panel Discussion - COVID 19: The Ground situation (via zoom)

The Positive Aging Subcommittee (PAS) was very active during the pandemic hosting five events as follows:

- 15 Sep 2020: Energy Simplified by the Consumer Policy Research Centre (via zoom)
- 20 Oct 2020: Centrelink Information Session (via zoom)
- 28 Feb 2021: Information session on the COVID Vaccination (via zoom)
- 11 Apr 2021: COVID Vaccination rollout (via zoom)
- 8 May 2021: 27th Night Recitals (@ Notting Hill Community Centre)

Furthermore, PAS was also successful in obtaining a \$2k grant aimed at providing coronavirus support for multicultural seniors. The funds were used to distribute gift hampers to the USMAA Seniors.

The Youth Subcommittee conducted an event, via zoom, titled 'Virtual Escape Room' on 12 Dec 2021 involving code breakers, brain teasers, puzzles and quizzes.



Events

The USMAA Management Committee hosted thirteen events both via zoom and face-to-face this financial year. Please refer to the USMAA newsletters, Facebook and website for more details and photos of the events.

The calendar of events included the following:

- 31 Jul 2020: Lecture by Sheikh Afeefuddin on 'Hajj and its benefits to our Ummah' (via zoom)
- 22 Aug 2020: Talk by Sheikh Alaa on 'The Hijri year, the Day of Ashura and its importance in Islam' followed by an enlightening Q & A session
- 12 Sep 2020: An SGM was convened to adopt the financial reports for 2019/20 (via zoom)
- 19 Sep 2020: A revamped Trivia Night complete with an online treasure hunt, brain teasers, Kahoot and live art titled 'Virtual Spectacular' (via zoom)
- 19 & 26 Sept 2020: Debating workshop spanning two days for primary school students titled 'Discover your voice' (via zoom)
- 3 Oct 2020: USMAA's inaugural Debating competition (via zoom)
- 7 Nov 2020: Q & A session with Hon. Jason Wood, Federal Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs. The event was attended by several high-profile Islamic organisations from VIC, NSW, QLD, SA, ACT, including an organisation from the Bangladeshi Community (via zoom)
- 5 Dec 2020: A beauty tips & tricks and hijab draping session catering to the USMAA ladies (via zoom)
- 9 & 10 Jan 2021: Two-day Creative Writing workshop for the USMAA kids followed by a short story competition (via zoom)
- 28 Mar 2021: A short talk on 'Preparing for Ramadan' by Sheikh Alaa (via zoom)
- 17 Apr 2021: First Ifthar (@ Mulgrave Community Centre)
- 1 May 2021: Second Ifthar (@ Mulgrave Community Centre)
- 22 May 2021: Eid ul Fitr dinner (@ Mulgrave Community Centre)

As a result of restrictions imposed by the government in relation to public gatherings and the requirement to maintain social distancing during the COVID19 pandemic, the Monash Council restricted the number of attendees for events at the Mulgrave Community Centre to 100 participants for the first ifthar and 120 attendees for the second ifthar and the Eid dinner.

The MC capped off the year with a successful Eid Dinner which was graciously attended by several dignitaries including Hon. Jason Wood (Federal Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs) and his chief of staff, Ranj Perera, Hon. Julian Hill (Federal Member for Bruce), Hon. Brian Little (Mayor of Monash), Hon. Kapila Fonseka (Consular General for Sri Lanka), Mrs Diana Perera (Consul for Sri Lanka), Bro Adel Salman (President of ICV) and Bro Ritzvie Mohideen (Vice President of ICV).



The kids were kept entertained with an arts and crafts activity.

The Eid Al Adha breakfast which was scheduled for 20 July 2021 had to be cancelled due to the imposition of a snap circuit-breaker lockdown following the outbreak in Maribyrnong, Victoria.

In addition, USMAA was also invited to attend many events organised by other organisations, some of the notable events included the following:

- Multi-cultural Round Table Discussion with Prime Minister (PM), Scott Morrison
- 'Meet the Community Leaders' organised by Asst Minister Jason Wood and presided by PM, Scott Morrison
- Monash Interfaith Gathering (MIG) Harmony Day celebrations: USMAA assisted in the setting up of the hall
- Australia Day Celebrations organised by the Ahamadiyya Muslim Community
- Ifthar organised by 'We Care Victoria : USMAA assisted in organising and executing this at the request of the Ranj Perera, Chief Advisor to Asst Minister Jason Wood

Charitable Initiatives

Following on the success of our first COVID19 Assistance Program, we relaunched the campaign to assist more International 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 \$5000 which was used to provide relief to several deserving students. Therefore, in total USMAA raised just over \$10,000 in tranche 1 and tranche 2 of our COVID Assistance Fundraising drive. Funds raised were used to facilitate the purchase of dry rations or for rent assistance of the impacted students who had reached out to USMAA directly.

USMAA donated 40 boxes of food rations worth \$1,000 to We Care Victoria which has been spearheading an initiative to distribute food hampers to the most vulnerable in society during the COVID lockdown period.

USMAA was able to source 20-30 food hampers from ICV every month for a few months (during the first and second lockdown in Melbourne) and distributed it to students and families affected by the pandemic.

This Ramadan, as part of the Zakat al Fitr, USMAA collected \$2,678 which was directed to the following four projects:

- 1) Distribution of food hampers to 70 financially struggling daily-wage earner families in Muttur, Sri Lanka.
- 2) Hosting three meals on Eid for the orphans at The Guardian Child Development Centre in Digana (39 orphans and 5 carers) and Hamdhaniya Arabic College in Anuradhapura (90 orphans).
- 3) Distribution of food hampers to 61 foster families of orphans in Kandy.



USMAA reached out to our Members to raise funds to assist with the purchase of life-saving medical equipment for the hospitals in Sri Lanka during the pandemic. USMAA also partnered with Sri Lanka Covid Aid, a multi-faith initiative, headed by Dr Lionel Bopage to raise funds to purchase PPE for the frontline workers in Sri Lankan hospitals. USMAA donated \$1,000 to these two initiatives (\$750 raised from the Members and \$250 from Members subscriptions).

General Initiatives

USMAA's greatest asset, our membership details, was migrated from the current basic excel spreadsheet to a world-renowned Salesforce database management system, which is free of charge for not-for-profit organisations.

The Janaza plot details, were also migrated to the Salesforce database, along with our newly created excel based Asset Register.

USMAA Matrimony Service had a soft launch in Dec 2020 and is currently free for all Members during the trial period. The USMAA website serves as a platform to help our youth find suitable life partners within the community. A Matrimony Service Subcommittee was formed consisting of Nizra Haniffa (chair) and Ruzna Shums to manage this project.

USMAA Mentorship Program was initiated to assist in connecting mentors and mentees, within USMAA, with the aim of guiding our youth in the right direction in terms of their career path, developing skills and shaping their future.

The USMAA New Migrant and International Student Assistance Program was introduced to lend a helping hand to new migrants and students from Sri Lanka with airport pick-up, assistance with basic set-up and arranging accommodation.

The following new pages were also added to the USMAA website this year:

- USMAA Trades page: to advertise a business or trade
- Obituary Notices page: Members can submit obituary notices using this page which will get published upon the approval of the ICT Manager
- Complaints page: to provide feedback directly to the MC
- Constitution Review page
- USMAA centre
- Event Dates and volunteering page
- Admin, Insurance & FAQ's page



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The USMAA newsletter was circulated every quarter showcasing the events undertaken together with photos and notifying of any upcoming events in the calendar.

It must be noted that the previous MC 2019/20 responded to the forced cremation issue as follows:

- USMAA, in collaboration with several Sri Lankan Muslim organisations in Australia, issued a joint letter on 20 April 2020 to His Excellency President Gotabaya Rajapaksa requesting his intervention regarding the cremation of Muslims who had passed away due to COVID19
- USMAA also sent a separate letter imploring the President to take immediate action to stop the cremation of said Muslims

Following the above, the current MC also undertook the following:

- Some USMAA Seniors and the USMAA President met with MPs Julian Hill, Andrew Giles and Senator Janet Rice to urge them to raise this issue with the relevant branches of the Australian government in order to facilitate diplomatic discussions with the Sri Lankan government. Senator Janet Rice raised the issue in the Federal Parliament as well
- USMAA penned letters to 10 MPs, both in the Victorian and Federal government, including Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, regarding this issue. The aforementioned parties acknowledged the letters and agreed to voice their concerns to the relevant authorities to generate diplomatic discussions between the two nations
- We reached out to the United Nations (through AAGSL) to intervene in this matter
- Some USMAA members participated in the motor parade protest organised by the Melbourne Human Rights Forum

Subsequent to the above, the MC decided to set-up a new Community and Sri Lankan Affairs Advisory Subcommittee to manage similar issues in the future.

In Jun/Jul 2021, USMAA joined hands with 'Friends of Lanka' to support their appeal to the Australian government to obtain Astrazeneca Vaccine doses for Sri Lanka.

With the intention of making the task of future MCs easier and more attractive, the following have been undertaken:

- Process manuals for Accounting (QuickBooks)/Treasurer's Manual, Website maintenance (WordPress) / ICT Mgr Manual and Communication (Mailchimp)/ Editor's Manual have been compiled for smooth sailing operations
- There are now 'Job Descriptions' for all MC members on the website, so that Members know what they sign up for
- "EoFY (End of Financial Year) Handover Duties for the Exiting MC" and a "Short guide to the New MC" documents have been created for a smooth transition and an easy take-over



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- An invoicing mechanism, together with a process manual, is now available for MCs to collect the annual membership fees. This allows for efficient subscription collection and will assist in keeping track of the financially current members
- There are clear, Vision, Mission and Value statements available so that a new MC will know what USMAA's primary direction is, but with the liberty to make tweaks to course-correct and align with changing times
- There are clear ongoing, short, medium and long-term strategic plans, so that multiple MCs can work towards the same goal
- Planning and execution information for events like the Islamic Day, Debating workshops and general events etc are stored in the website. Therefore, new MCs can just follow the script and make changes to their liking. The event manual compiled by the MC of 2018-19 is also available on SharePoint for reference
- Operational and strategic policies have been formulated on a wide variety of topics and published on the website so that any new MC will know where USMAA stands as an organisation and most importantly there is consistency in MC decision-making on any particular topic from one year to the next
- There are process-map information on how things are done (e.g. matrimony service), so that you do not need to reinvent the wheel or rely on exiting MCs
- An Asset Register has been created and maintained with photos of USMAA's small asset base. We now have a physical folder and also maintain a database in Salesforce
- A volunteer information section has been created on the website so that members can take turns (once a year at least) to help the MC with kitchen, hall and clean-up duties for hall-based events
- Standard menus and ingredient quantity information sheets are available on the website for MCs who plan to cook in-house to lower ticket prices (Note: as long as an USMAA member is the Chef, our public liability insurance covers any food related claims)
- Most of USMAA's history and AGM/SGM/MC meeting minutes are now saved on the website for new MCs to educate themselves. This is also USMAA's proud '30 Years of Heritage' page
- Information relating to all Subcommittees, their members and tenure expiry dates have been saved to the website for awareness and re-election purposes
- An "Admin, Insurance & FAQs" page on the website has been created to house relevant information
- Operational titles and email addresses have been setup for MC roles such as Finance Operations Mgr (Asst. Treasurer), Community Affairs Mgr (Asst. Secretary), Facility Mgr, Marketing Mgr, ICT Mgr and General Mgr (VP). MCs can mix and match these responsibilities with the Constitution-based titles like Committee Member, Vice President, etc
- A Constitution Review page has been setup on the website. This will house all the 'proposed' changes to the Constitution. Given that a Constitution should be amended every 3-5 years, if at all, and not yearly, this page will assist that Subcommittee
- There are now concept plans, Architect notes and an 'overall plan' to achieve our 'Dreamland': the USMAA Centre. Furthermore, USMAA has applied to five councils, seeking to lease a property or a land. We will have to negotiate a 'Peppercorn' lease



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(\$1 per year) as our members subs will not be sufficient to pay the rent and utilities. If constructing, we will need to apply for the next round of the “Multicultural Community Infrastructure fund – Large Stream” or a similar grant, IA

Grants

The USMAA Grants Committee was successful in attaining an in-kind grant for Monash Hall Hire totalling \$14,000 and a cash grant of \$2000 for the year 2021/2022. In addition, the Positive Aging Subcommittee has been awarded an in-kind hall grant of \$919.09 for the year 2021/2022.

It must be noted that this financial year 2020/21, USMAA also received a grant of \$75 a quarter for its Zoom membership.

Conclusion

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to the MC and their families for the time and effort that was invested, behind the scene, to ensure that this year was a productive and successful one for USMAA. Despite the pandemic, the MC not only delivered 13 events for the year but undertook several charitable and general initiatives as well. Some of the initiatives were time consuming like drafting process and operating manuals, documenting policies and procedures, migrating the current financial member details to the Salesforce database, uploading 30 years' worth of USMAA history to the website etc but they were undertaken to ensure the sustainability of this organisation.

My sincere appreciation also goes out to our Members who adapted to the changing times and embraced technology to actively participate in the zoom events.

USMAA also marked its 30-year anniversary in Dec 2020. Alhamdulillah. Due to the prevailing restrictions at the time, we were unable to celebrate this milestone.

May Allah reward everyone involved in making this organisation a strength to our Community over the last three decades and may He inspire the younger generation to emulate our Seniors and the past MCs in carrying this well into the future. Aameen.

Yours sincerely

Ruzna Shums
Secretary
USMAA