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Media Statement

Slander in Reporting on the Alma Road Community House Petition

- For Immediate Release -

In the past week a number of media outlets have reported on our petition against an application to change the use of Alma Road Community House in St Kilda East (Melbourne) into a place of assembly for up to 100 people, which would also benefit a group of Islamic worshippers currently using this house as part-time mosque for Friday prayers.

In their reporting journalists painted Q Society as “obscure”, “racist” and “Islamophobic”, publishing a number of false assumptions. We object to this form of knee-jerk ‘journalism’. In particular we ask the media to acknowledge and clarify in any future reports for their viewers and readers:

1.) Implied accusations our spokesperson is not a local but a Christian

While speaking to members of the press our deputy president, Mrs Vickie Janson, acts in her role as spokesperson for Q Society. She has never claimed to be involved as a local resident. As with most other organisations, our board members have different political affiliations and personal beliefs. The fact that Vickie is politically active in the Christian Democratic Party is irrelevant for the matter at hand. We trust being politically involved as Christian in Australia does not disqualify one from being involved in other matters outside one’s own place of residency. Likewise we assume your reporters adhere to different beliefs and work on matters outside their home communities. Q Society itself is not a localised organisation, but a secular and national group.

We are currently active in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, and will consider following up issues in any other place in Australia, if relevant to our aims and purposes. In pursuit of our objectives, we have taken up the “instant part-time mosque” issue in St Kilda on behalf of some residents and concerned supporters of Q Society.

2.) Slander and vilification of being an “obscure group” of “racists” and/or “Islamophobes” who are lobbying against Muslims praying.

We are not some “obscure group” of “racists” and “Islamophobes”. Q Society is formally incorporated as not-for-profit association and registered with the Department of Consumer Affairs and the ATO. We may be ‘the new kid on the block’, we may be just a grassroots and ‘volunteers-only’ group, but information about our organisation is readily accessible on the relevant websites. On request, we are quite willing to provide our statutory aims and purposes and further information concerning our organisation to anyone who asks. For those interested in objective, balanced and fair journalism, there is no need to resort to speculation or demeaning and defamatory rhetoric.



The aim of Q Society of Australia is to tell the truth about Islam and Sharia law as we see it: That Islam is a totalitarian, political and religious ideology, of which Sharia law is an integral part, and that the further spread of Islam and Sharia law threaten our free, egalitarian and democratic society. Many national and international political leaders have voiced exactly the same concern.

Opposing Islam is not racist since Islam is not an ethnicity, neither are Muslims members of an "Islamic race". Speaking against Communism or Marxism makes one no more "Marx-o-phobic" than it does make one "Islam-o-phobic" when opposing Islamism for Australia. This is simply slander.

In consequence, our objection to the expanding use of this small Community House in Melbourne's Jewish heartland as instant part-time mosque for up to 100 faithful, is not racist by any measure. The nationality, race or ethnicity of the people involved is immaterial and was never raised by us. Q Society is very much in favour of a multi-ethnic Australia. We are not petitioning against Muslims praying, neither do we have any concern with members of Australia's Islamic community peacefully gathering to worship in private, or in a designated place of worship. Peaceful assembly for worship is the right of all Australians and there are now many mosques in Melbourne for this purpose.

3.) Incorrect reporting on the petition text and underlying facts.

It was never claimed that this Islamic prayer group was linked to *Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah*, an extremist Islamic organisation promoting Sharia law. We simply noted that their prayer meeting was listed on this group's website. Regrettably, however, it is well-documented that worldwide, Friday sermons are often used to incite violence against non-believers. So it is hardly alarmist to acknowledge local residents' concern about this. It is evident that Friday prayers in the heart of Jewish Melbourne will inevitably create unease in a community already forced to employ security guards outside its schools and synagogues. It is a fact that foundational Islam contains many words fostering hatred of Jews and Christians, with the result that anti-Semitism and violence against Christian minorities is rife in the Islamic world.

While it is true the prayer group has received support from some Jewish groups, these are not representative of the whole of the Jewish community, but mostly progressive elements, who also support Palestinian causes either out of self-interest or a misplaced concern for "the Other".

Deborah Stone of the 'Anti-Defamation Committee' (ADC), proclaims "We at the ADC understand that by defending everyone's freedom we ensure a freer society for ourselves." But she fails to acknowledge that defending the freedom of intolerant Islam and Sharia ultimately threatens to destroy both her and our freedoms.



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Sandy Joffe, the executive officer of the group that manages the House, claimed that no mosque existed between Clayton and the city. But this is simply wrong, as there are mosques in Caulfield and Windsor. She also claimed the group met the assessment criteria – that the group was legal and non-discriminatory, their activities in keeping with the Victorian Human Rights Charter, and they didn't affect amenities of the area. Evidently, the group fails on most counts, as its meetings breach legal requirements, are discriminatory (men only and no other group allowed to use the House at this time), engage in ritual washings without ablution facilities and add to traffic congestion.

Questions concerning how many of the Islamic group are actually local residents, and how many of the up-to-100 future worshippers allowed (should the application be successful) will actually be locals, are yet to be asked by a more thoroughly researching member of the media.

Conclusion:

This petition is about one particular Islamic group at one particular location, which is clearly an inappropriate venue to use as a place of worship. It is a concern that Council is breaking the law by allowing the House to be illegally used as a place of worship without the relevant permits, also that they have ignored parking and OHS considerations in their eagerness to accommodate this group.

Whether you are interested in the matter, or simply value objective and balanced journalism, we suggest you actually read the petition as well as the document explaining the underlying issues. This is no simple matter and it requires more than a superficial glance to fully understand the situation and appreciate the ramifications. Also advised is that those supporting the use of the House as a prayer room read up on the concept of 'sacred places' in Islam.

Background information pertaining to the Alma Road Community House petition can be retrieved at http://www.qsociety.com.au/alma_road_petition.pdf while the petition itself is published at <http://www.gopetition.com/petition/42602.html> . Q Society website at <http://www.qsociety.org.au>

Please note those signatories appearing as "anonymous" on the petition website are visible to the administrators and will be included with their names in the finalised document. They simply opted to not have their names displayed for everyone to see on the web. Besides the online petition, there are members of the local community circulating the paper-version of the petition.

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