

RECEIVED
14 JUN 2006

BY:.....

13 June 2006

Mr Anton Block
President
Jewish Community Council of Victoria
306 Hawthorn Rd
Caulfield South 3162

Dear Mr Block

I am writing in response to your comments in *The Australian* newspaper regarding my suitability for public office. I am worried that you appear to have formed the view that I hold values that are in some way anti-Semitic or at odds with the values of multiculturalism. These allegations could not be further from the truth. I can assure you that recent media coverage has misrepresented and sensationalised my position and ignored the values that I hold dear.

In my role as President of the Alawi Islamic Association I have spoken and written extensively on behalf of the Alawi Community in Melbourne and indeed the broader Arabic communities. These activities have always been focused on assisting this community to play an active and constructive role in our multicultural society, a role that you no doubt fulfil within your own organisation.

In 2002 I participated in a letter writing campaign aimed at securing the dismissal of the Syrian Honorary Consul. The Honorary Consul was, in the opinion of many people, playing a very divisive and damaging role in the Syrian community in Victoria.

As part of this campaign I signed a standard form letter to the Syrian Government requesting his removal. I also signed a similar letter in my role as President of the Alawi Community Association. Around 500 people in Melbourne's Syrian community signed these form letters.

Unfortunately, those letters are now being read out of context to suggest that I am somehow disloyal to Australia or intolerant.

I can assure you I have a demonstrable commitment to multiculturalism and its values of tolerance, diversity and understanding. I have actively promoted these values within the broader community as well as within Melbourne's Alawi community. As part of my commitment to multiculturalism I have also acted as a Harmony Day Ambassador. In this role I was privileged to have the opportunity to speak to local school students about the value and importance of tolerance, diversity and understanding.

I deplore violence and, like you, look forward to the day when the pointless cycle of attack and counter attack in the Middle East is brought to an end. I support the Australian Labor Party's policy for a Two State Solution for a negotiated settlement between Israel and

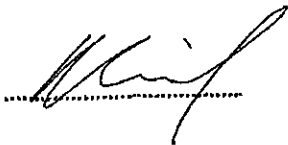
Palestine. Recent reports that I have somehow equated suicide bombers with martyrs are false and are based on an incorrect newspaper report from a number of years ago. Unfortunately, these rumours are being fuelled by an email campaign in some parts of the Jewish community. I have a long record of publicly denouncing all acts of terrorism and the targeting of civilians in armed conflicts. As an example of my stance against terrorism I have attached a public statement that I released on behalf of three major Islamic groups condemning all terrorist attacks following the September 11 bombings in New York and Washington.

It should go without saying that as a candidate for public office I will continue to do everything in my power to promote a tolerant democracy. Like many immigrants who have been blessed with citizenship, I take every opportunity to promote Australia's brand of multiculturalism when I travel abroad and hope that more countries in the Middle East will learn from our success story. I have always endeavoured to lead by example in terms of exercising my rights and responsibilities to participate in all aspects of Australian life.

If elected, I will represent and uphold the central values of multiculturalism and ethnic tolerance which are central to all that I do. I have spent the last 36 years of my life living in Australia, investing in Australia's future, creating employment for multicultural Australia and philanthropic activities for disadvantaged local groups. Without question, this is where my loyalties and values lie.

As a person who also holds a position of public responsibility, I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person to set the record straight.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Khalil Eideh', written over a dotted line.

Khalil Eideh

cc The Hon Steve Bracks, Premier of Victoria
 Hilary McMahon, CEO Jewish Community Council of Victoria

**ALAWI ISLAMIC ASSOCIATION
OF VICTORIA INC.**

No. A0023046Y



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**OPEN LETTER FROM
AUSTRALIAN ALAWI ISLAMIC COMMUNITY
CONDEMNING ALL TERRORIST ATTACKS**

The Australian Alawi Community unreservedly condemns the callous attacks on American civilians in New York and Washington. These attacks represent everything that we as Australians and we as Islamic communities have been working hard to counter in our vision for global peace and justice.

In an unprecedented joint statement, the Alawi Islamic Association (Victoria), the Moslem Alawi Society (NSW) and the Alawi Islamic Youth Movement wish to publicly express our profound disgust at such acts of murder.

With our own personal and collective experience in the Middle East, we are all too familiar with the ugly cycle of attacks and counter-attacks. We are all too familiar with the casualties in these atrocities who are invariably innocent civilians and the distortion of truth through provocative propaganda.

We are acutely aware of how our communities in Australia can so easily be rendered targets for blame, and stereotyped as collectively responsible for fanatics who pretend to act on behalf of all Muslims. Such individuals taint our identity, grossly misrepresent our beliefs, and never do justice to our own innocent families. We are acutely aware of our vulnerability to ill-informed racist attacks and scapegoating while official investigations are still pursuing those who are truly guilty.

We collectively pray alongside our fellow Australians to the same God for the souls of the civilians who perished in this atrocity. We pray that their loved ones are comforted by our deepest condolences. We pray that those responsible for this universally ungodly act to see that evil only fuels further evil. We pray that the American government is able to apprehend those responsible, and expose them for who they really are without implicating many innocent civilians who are wrongly associated with their ways. We pray that together we can stem these acts from their roots rather than prolong the cycle of attacks.

Our community has always opposed all loss of innocent lives. They are all somebody's child, spouse, parent, sibling and friend. They are all humans who had aspirations and achievements, whether they are American civilians or Arab civilians.

We declare that the loss of innocent lives is never justified, regardless of the government and its foreign policies which ostensibly represent its people.

The Australian Alawi Islamic community stands alongside all other Australians of genuine goodwill and who despise any acts which undermine the peace which we value with our lives.

Khalil Eideh,
on behalf of the three associations,