



Together for Humanity Foundation Annual Report July 2014 – June 2015



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- a Parent of primary schools participant in our program

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2015

I am pleased to report that 2014-2015 was another successful year for the Together for Humanity Foundation.

I acknowledge the National Director's Annual Report and the specific details it gives about our work. As his cover note states, we turned 13 years. The organisation is an expression of the vision and commitment of Rabbi Zalman Kastel and I applaud his thirst for harmony and intercultural understanding. His contribution goes beyond our programs or his advocacy for the Foundation because his presences in the public space, eg the aftermath of the tragic Lindt Café siege or this month's National Day of Unity, are powerful gestures of practical acceptance and respect for diversity in our society.

This year Together for Humanity effectively addressed the issue of ongoing sustainability. The decision to hold a fundraising dinner at Auburn with Dame Marie Bashir as special guest speaker was well justified both in terms of fundraising and our profile in that area and with Muslim communities. The Department of Social Services grant was the major injection for sustainability over the next two years. I thank Jeff Tuch for his care of our accounts. We do not exist for our own sake, of course, and the school programs, online resource usage, the intercultural resource workshop and the ongoing Intercultural Research Project with Deakin University are some of the examples of our continued endeavours. Our school programs rely heavily on the leadership and gifts of Donna Jacobs Sife and the volunteer presenters.

Finally, I acknowledge the contributions of our Board directors for their wise counsel and governance.



John McGrath
Chairman
21 October 2015

Note from the National Director – Rabbi Zalman Kastel

In May 2015 the Inclusive, Christian, Jewish and Muslim Together For Humanity Foundation turned 13 years old, we celebrated a “Bar Mitzvah” and ‘grew up’. We are mature and ready to have a great impact.

In May 2002, our first program was held at St Ives North Primary School. We invited students to join with people of all faiths and change the world! We told them we would make a quilt with their messages and hang it off the harbour bridge or the parliament. In March 2004, over 1,000 children sat on Macquarie Street as their messages covered the NSW Parliament House. They heard year 6 student, Simon Alperstien, declare that ‘children are real people with real dreams’. However at the time, we were not all that interested in the children’s dreams, we had our own vision about promoting “Goodness and Kindness” and embracing diversity.

Now as a more mature organisation, we are more focused on engaging children in drawing their own conclusions about how to respond to difference. We have secured a two year grant from the Commonwealth Government Department of Social Services (DSS) that will help us support teachers and parents and engage children more substantially in learning about diversity.

Our work in schools in 2014-2015 was led by Donna Jacobs Sife, assisted by a pool of dedicated people, especially Taha Allam, Greg Lake and Sheikh Ahmed Abdo who have all played a huge role. Our board has provided valuable guidance. Thank you Madenia Abdurahman – President, John McGrath – Chairman, Zubeda Raihman – Treasurer, Ruth Magid, Peter Stephinson, Tim Stern and Jana Wendt – Directors. Norma Allam, Syed Musavie and Maureen Singh, our interns have played a big part in our work. Ms. Raihman, Lina Daher and Dr. Jamal Rifi played a key role in our successful fundraising dinner. We also gratefully acknowledge financial support from the Minderoo Foundation of Andrew and Nicola Forest; our Patron Janet Holmes a Court; the NSW Government through Multicultural NSW; the Australian Government through DSS, the Dalwood Wylie Foundation; the Roth Charitable Foundation; and the John and Karen Kightley Foundation.

We are positioned well to contribute to meeting the need for greater embrace of “our brothers and sisters in humanity” with different beliefs to our own, and to affirm the “dignity of all humans” “made in the image of God”. I end with gratitude to God and all who contributed this year.



Rabbi Zalman Kastel
National Director
Together For Humanity

Introduction

This past year has been a particularly challenging one for interfaith relations, particularly for Muslims, Jews and Christians, key stakeholder communities of Together For Humanity. Violence perpetrated overseas against members of these three faiths has had repercussions in Australia. We saw an increase in tensions, hatred and tragically the Sydney Siege. In this context we had two main objectives: to **counter various prejudices in schools** and to **secure our ability to do so in the future**.

To realise these objectives, Together For Humanity continued work in seven main areas:

1. engaging students in interfaith based intercultural understanding programs in schools;
2. conducting intensive on-going programs with students from marginalised backgrounds that fostered a sense of belonging and preparation for participation in and contribution to the wider society;
3. maintaining unique online education resources;
4. providing teacher education;
5. contributing to research and policy relevant to diversity;
6. community engagement; and
7. fundraising.



Schools programs

Through our sessions run by our teams consisting of our lead presenters, casuals, religious leaders and volunteers in schools throughout NSW, 3946 teachers, students and community members were touched by our work. For many this was an opportunity to interact meaningfully with people from a background different to their own. Of these 2780 were students; some participated in a one hour presentation with a diverse team, some were part of an interschool programs of two to four days; others were students of Arabic Muslim, Aboriginal or Pacific Islander backgrounds who participated in more intensive on-going programs such as our fortnightly programs at Granville Boys High School and our four day full workshops on the Central Coast. Attendance figures for in school and other programs can be found at Appendix 1.

We continued to engage teachers with professional learning sessions. These were offered face-to-face such as a staff development program for 50 teachers at Macquarie Fields Primary and also through our three online courses. Our three on-line modules which are approved by NSW Institute of Teachers/Board of Studies help teachers to maintain their accreditation. To date 618 teachers have completed 1216 of our on-line courses.

School based sessions brought together students and teachers of various backgrounds to foster acceptance of difference relating to culture and beliefs. The project was mainly conducted in NSW primary and secondary schools, both public and private, with more intensive sessions conducted with secondary school students from marginalised background including Pacific Islanders, Arabic/Muslim, African, Indigenous and other backgrounds. The sessions gave students a sense of belonging and

enabled them to confidently interact with the broader Australian Community. We reached a wide range of locations throughout NSW in both face-to-face sessions and online. Areas we engaged with included, Camden/ Ingleburn area, Central Coast- Woy Woy, Eastern Suburbs, , Northern Beaches, North Shore, Orange, Ryde-Epping area, South Western Sydney, Sutherland Shire. See appendix for participating schools.

Students indicated that they had a whole new way of looking at different cultures and religions, which impacted their thinking and respect for people from other backgrounds. Students explored how the media portrays people from different backgrounds and concluded that they could make up their own minds. Students indicated that they made friends from different schools and realised how easy this was. They became more confident in approaching other students from different cultures and bonded with them. Student responses included:

Participating in the program helped us with confidence.

It changed what I thought about people from different faiths and cultures. They seem like us. Same hobbies same likes dislikes.

Best thing was meeting Cronulla and playing AFL, made some new friends. Staying in touch.

Teachers also saw positive changes in their students as a direct result of their participation in Together For Humanity workshops. Ms Valerie Frances of Brisbane Water Secondary College wrote:

I just thought you might like to know that 13 of our Aboriginal students have just been accepted into Universities for next year - 6 into UTS, 6 into Macquarie University and 1 into Academy of Interactive Entertainment. We normally have zero, or possibly one Aboriginal student proceed to University each year. We are very excited :-) I believe I was more successful with this process this year because of the closer relationship I developed with our students during our Together for Humanity program. With increased trust in me and each other, the students have been more receptive to taking the giant leap to apply for and attempt university studies.

We continued to bring together two similar, independent, faith based-schools (Arkana College and Mount Sinai College) with the aim of fostering a deeper understanding and respect of all faiths. Together For Humanity was able to continue to offer these sessions during times of overseas tensions. One student responded:

there is no need for a barrier between us regardless of what is happening overseas, we are all Australian citizens and should embrace learning about people that are different to us.



We held an interfaith joint community service day at the Big Kitchen where children from different cultural and faith backgrounds cooked together, shared a meal and delivered food to a residential centre for people who were homeless or in need of crisis accommodation.

One parent, whose child participated in an interfaith interschool program, wrote:

Hi, just have to share. I took Sean [names changed] to Botany pool today with Marc. They bumped into a kid Mohammad that they met at interfaith [interschool program that was delivered in partnership with TFH.] They spent the whole day together playing cricket and swimming. I couldn't get them away when we had to leave. It was so endearing. What a wonderful initiative interfaith is.



Responding to concerns about “alienation”

The degree of focus on extremism in the media is probably not terribly helpful, yet some youth, for whatever reason are unsure about their place in Australia. Our teams, which include Muslim Sheiks alongside other Jewish and Christian role models, have worked with minority youth, including Muslim teenagers to help them develop a sense of belonging in Australia. This includes exploring a complex understanding of their identity that includes identification with Australia and recognition that there is no need to choose between their religion and a positive attitude to participating in Australia. Through this work they have been able to develop an understanding of other cultures, as well as develop rapport and friendships with people of different faiths.

One of our participants, a 14 year old student from Punchbowl Boys high School reflected on the workshops he had attended:



I am a Muslim, Lebanese and an Australian. I participated in a Together For Humanity program at my school. This program was led by a Jewish Sheik, Rabbi Zalman Kastel, a Muslim Sheikh, Sheikh Ahmad Abdo, and Taha Allam, an ex-student of my school, and Christian Pastor Greg Lake.

After hearing a lot of stories...I started thinking and thanking God that I was born in this country and that my family and I didn't need to risk our lives to enter this beautiful country. I respect Australia a lot, I am proud to say that this is my country. As I have been taking a lot from Australia, I wish that someday I could repay it.

Sheikh Ahmed told a story about when he was in Year 8 he got bullied and one day when he was walking home a group of bullies started following him and saying that he would not reach home. They were threatening him. Sheikh Ahmed's parents said that they should report it to their local police station as it was getting out of hand. That day they reported it. After many years, he told us that on Thursday last week he was going to become a Police Commissioned officer. He is very proud of himself because he is repaying his country and the police for what they did for him when he was much younger.

...Before participating in the program I thought that all religions hated Islam. I hated it when I used to go to the city with my family, and my mother is 'scarved', people would give us the 'dirties', that is dirty looks. From their body language I inferred that they were telling us "why are you here, this is not where you belong." Now I know that not all religions or people who are not Muslim think about Muslims in a bad way, it is only some people...I hope that one day we will have another course with these people as I have learned many things from the,. Over these two days we learned about respect, communication, we had inspiration, I benefited in this course by knowing what I want to do in my life and how to treat other people.

Online Intercultural Understanding resource

Our Online Intercultural Understanding resource for student and teachers, **www.differencedifferently.edu.au**, continues to offer unique teacher modules that have been accredited by the NSW Institute of Teachers (BOSTES). In 2014-2015 the site recorded 30,347 unique users, an increase of 37% from the previous financial year's figure of 22,134. This figure is the number of single users who have accessed the site, but is not necessarily the number of users who have viewed the site. For example, a teacher may access the site during a class and show its resource content to 25 students. If we estimate that $\frac{1}{4}$ of visitors are teachers with a classroom of 25 children then we can estimate that we reached 189,669 students, teachers, parents and families in 2014/15.

Returning visitors declined from 35% to 30% and the duration of visits fell 21% from 7 minutes 6 seconds in 2013/14 to 5 minutes 43 seconds in 2014/15. While some content on the site has been updated, the majority of the content is the same as when the site was remodelled in January 2103. The total number of page-views since we launched the redeveloped resource in January 2013 is 652,709.

The website contains content designed specifically for the Australian Curriculum subjects of History, English, Geography and Civics and Citizenship. It includes a range of perspectives and voices from Aboriginal people, migrants, members of various faith communities as well as an atheist and an agnostic. The website has been updated and maintained throughout the year.

We continued to engage teachers with professional learning sessions, offered face- to-face and also through our three online courses, approved by NSW Institute of Teachers/Board of Studies, which help

teachers to maintain their accreditation. We reached 50 teachers directly through our workshops and more through our online resources. 945 users have registered for the online course.

Wider community programs and awareness raising



We engaged members of our stakeholder communities in program that we either organised or contributed to. These included working with: 656 parents from regional NSW and Sydney for the Parents Congress; 250 participants at the Nabi Akram Islamic Centre; and 60 adults and 12 children during the Limmud Jewish Festival of Ideas and in collaboration with other groups at Universities and other Auburn Mosque among others. These wider community sessions increased understanding beyond our schools program as well as centring Together For Humanity within this dialogue.

We also worked with the ABC TV to support their program Moral Compass on the topic of Blasphemy. Sheikh Wesam Charkawi and Rabbi Zalman Kastel contributed. Extensive coverage in the Australian Newspaper of our inter-school work has also contributed to greater awareness of our message.



Intercultural Leadership Workshop



In May, in conjunction with the Australian Afghan Hassanian Youth Association and with funding from Multicultural NSW and the Department of Social Services, we held a successful intercultural leadership workshop in Auburn. Participants developed their knowledge and skills relating to promoting harmony, intercultural understanding and sense of belonging for all. Two panels spoke at the

workshop: the first comprised speakers from different religious groups, including Zalman Kastel (Jewish Rabbi), Sheikh Zaid Alsalami (Shia Muslim), Sheikh Soner Coruhlu (Sunni Muslim), Pastor Greg Lake (Protestant), Father Patrick Mclerney (Catholic) and Michelle Brenner (Author, Mediator, Conflict Resolution Expert); while the second panel comprised speakers from the media, including Hugh Riminton (Journalist, Channel 10), Amber Danes Ungar (Founder, Bespoke Communications), Jane Jeffes (Executive Producer ABC Radio religion program) and Natasha Robinson (Journalist, The Australian). 103 people were present at the workshop and feedback indicated that more workshops like this should be run.

The Sydney Siege

The hostage taker aimed to turn Australians against each other. Tragically his crime ended two lives, but he utterly failed in his broader aim. Along with countless flowers Ken Johnson, the bereaved father of the murdered Tori Johnson, called on Together For Humanity to gather religious leaders for an interfaith prayer service for peace. We supported this symbolic effort and another at Lakemba Mosque at the request of Multicultural NSW. These gestures extended our reach and contributed to increased hope and good will amongst communities.



Social Media

Our Social Media profile has increased over the past year with more than 1,922 followers on Facebook 1,997 on Twitter. Creating relationships and dialogue through social media is an important part of our work and allows us to reach parts of the community beyond the classroom. A still image of interfaith prayer held during the Sydney siege went viral, reaching many tens of thousands of people. More videos have been uploaded to YouTube, further increasing awareness of the program. For example the Human Sound project clips have 354 views.

Public Policy

Our efforts on countering violent extremism approach with Dr Jamal Rifi further enhanced the relationship and dialogue between peoples of different faiths. We continued our advocacy with Dr Kevin Donnelly to include Intercultural Understanding within the Australian Curriculum.

We have worked with the University of Western Sydney, the University of Melbourne, the Victoria Department of Education and the Victoria Curriculum and Assessment Authority on a range of initiatives including research outlined below.

Research

Intercultural Understanding Project

We continued to support the Intercultural Understanding (ICU) Project conducted by Deakin University, which has developed a **staged, long-term strategy to improve intercultural understanding student outcomes and teacher quality**. Over the past two years the Project has been working with 12 partner schools to support school redesign for intercultural understanding. This has involved a range of activities, from the allocation of school mentors and professional development workshops to the collection and analysis of rich qualitative and quantitative data, much of which continued through 2014 and into 2015.

As a result of the professional development and research activities that have been conducted, two resources for schools were developed and three academic papers have been published. Together For Humanity will adapt our teachers' professional online learning and face-to-face courses to reflect the research. One of the exciting outcomes of the Deakin research is a tool that will enable teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses of their students as this relates to diversity.

In 2015 the project aimed to:

- code and analyse the collected qualitative and quantitative data;
- prepare visual representations of the findings in relation to geographical areas;
- write and disseminate a final report to schools about statistically significant school changes during the project;
- write and disseminate a consolidated report to Industry Partners with the findings from all analyses;
- prepare scholarly articles reporting on the research findings for peer-reviewed journals to contribute to knowledge about the facilitators and impediments of ICU;
- conduct a final round of interviews with 40 primary and 45 secondary students as part of the longitudinal study;
- support Industry Partners in strategies to disseminate the research findings through the media, conferences, and presentations to external stakeholders.

Sustainability for the future

Previous Federal Government grants were not available this financial year. We focused on the sustainability and financial viability of the organisation. We streamlined costs and utilised volunteers

better – our end of year surplus is \$14,563. We are now in a stronger position with the generous support of donors from all three faith communities and others. We have also received a \$210,000 grant from the Commonwealth Government, Department of Social Services to fund certain activities from March 2015 to June 2017.

Fundraising

We changed our approach to fundraising and for the first time we had a fundraising dinner in South-Western Sydney in Auburn. This was a very successful event that brought together a wide mix of people from Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Sikh and other communities. 240 attendees listened to Dame Marie Bashir, Craig Laundry MP and the Together For Humanity team talking about our work.

One touching moment on the night was when some Muslim and Jewish guests both rose at the same time to pray in another room. Arabic, Hebrew and Aramaic sounds filled the room in a wonderful symbolic expression of the spirit of harmony so evident on the night. We had a strong showing from the Sikh community for which we thank community leader Mr. Indarjit Khuman for his great efforts.

We raised \$60,134 on the night. We also saw quite a substantial contribution from the Muslim community which was matched by a donor from the Jewish community. The aim is to run these events annually.

Conclusion

The generous and much appreciated support of our donors, Board members, staff and volunteers has enabled us to have an impact in reaching our objectives of fostering acceptance and a sense of belonging for all as well as laying the groundwork for having a far greater impact in 2015-2016.

Zalman Kastel

National Director
Together for Humanity



Appendix 1: 2014-2015 Workshop Dates, Location and Attendance Figures

DATE	SCHOOL	Attendees
14/07/2014	Macquarie Fields Primary	50
23/07/2014	Granville Boys High School	20
28/07/2014	Turramurra Public School	100
6/08/2014	Granville Boys High School	(On-Going)
20/08/2014	Emanuel and Bass Hill high Interschool Program	50
27/08/2014	Granville Boys High School	(On-Going)
1-2/09/2014	Conobolas High School, Orange	230
2/09/2014	Epping West Public School	120
3/09/2014	Granville Boys High School	20
5/09/2014	Uniting Church Australia Reference group -Other Faiths	10
10/09/2014	Granville Boys High School	20
10/09/2014	Marie Bashir Primary School	41
11/09/2014	Macquarie Fields Primary	104
15/09/2014	St Marys Catholic School	80
17/09/2014	Cronulla High School and Granville Boys	40
29/09/2014	Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre	60
20/10/2014	Granville Boys High School	
12/11/2014	Emanuel and Bass Hill High School	50
14/11/2014	Cronulla High School prep for interschool	(On-Going)
17/11/2014	Granville Boys High School	20
19/11/2014	Cronulla and Granville Boys	0
24-26/11/14	Punchbowl Boys High School	20
27/11/2014	Brisbane Water Secondary College	20
1/12/2014	Granville Boys High School	20
15/12/2014	Granville Boys High School	20
4/02/2015	Heathcote high School	175
8/03/2015	NSW Parents Congress	666
11/03/2015	Whalan Public School	170
16/03/2015	Masada College, Ravenswood, Australian Islamic College of Sydney	100
19/03/2015	Epping West Primary School	400
19/03/2015	Regents Park Primary School	340
23/03/2015	St Francis Xavier Primary School	100
31/03/2015	Mt Sinai and Arkana	60
27/04/2015	Regents Park Primary School	80
27/04/2015	Granville Boys High School	40
5/05/2015	Regents Park Public	20
11/05/2015	Regents Park Public	80
11/05/2015	Granville Boys High School	40
25/05/2015	Regents Park Primary School	80
25/05/2015	Granville Boys High School	40
6/06/2015	Nabi Akram Islamic Centre	250
07/06/0215	Limmud Jewish Festival of ideas (UNSW)	72

16/06/2015	Mt Sinai and Arkana	60
16/06/2015	Auburn Gallipoli Mosque	60
17/06/2015	Jannali High School	128
22/06/2015	Regents Park Primary School	80
22/06/2015	Granville Boys High School	40
		3946