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Unemployment Project



An Investigation of the Employment Status of Muslims in Queensland

Presented to:

*Symposium- The Challenges and Opportunities of
Islam and the West: The Case of Australia*

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This research is supported and funded by Multicultural Affairs Queensland (MAQ) as part of the Queensland Government's Muslim Community Engagement Strategy to promote positive community relations with the Muslim Community.



Project aims:

- The aim of this project is to better understand the social circumstances of Muslim unemployment in Queensland and to develop strategies to address the identified shortcomings.

- **Project objectives (key areas):**
- to investigate the extent of Queensland Muslims' experiences of unemployment,
- to identify obstacles and needs for both employed and unemployed Muslims
- to recommend strategies for reducing unemployment among Queensland Muslims.

- **Employment supplies not only needed income, but satisfaction, social prestige, and a sense of personal identity.**
- **Unemployment can cause financial hardship social, cultural and psychological problems.**
- **Unemployment is not randomly distributed, rather disadvantages some groups more than others.**

- **Australian Muslims tend to be among the most disadvantaged.**
- **Research shows the unemployment rate of Australian Muslim women is over three times higher than Australian-born females from English speaking populations.**
- **Australian Muslims have a higher proportion of young people, with 67% under the age of 35 compared with 47% for the total population.**

In this research, we have used qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect relevant and necessary data for analysis and discussion. They include:

- **ABS Population and Housing Census of 1986, 1996, 2001 and 2006.**
- **Three sets of survey questionnaires for interviewing over 700 participants: Muslim and non-Muslims,**
- **Have conducted 10 various sized focus groups to collect qualitative data.**

- **Muslim population increased from 21,065 in 1971; to 109,523 in 1986; to 340,394 in 2006. Although the unemployment rate has also improved from 28.6 percent in 1986 to 10.9 in 2006, proportionately there has been only a slight improvement.**
- **The gap is still too large to accept. In 1986 the unemployment rate for the general population was 9.2 per cent: three times less than Muslim unemployment rates. Table 1 shows the unemployment rate of Muslims in 2006 in Queensland in comparative context.**

Table 1

Categories	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Queensland</i>	<i>Australia</i>
<i>Labour force</i>	7,981 53.8%	1,915,949 66.3%	9,607,987 64.6%
<i>Employed</i>	7,111 89.1%	1,824,999 95.3%	9,104,183 94.8%
<i>Unemployed</i>	870 10.9%	90,950 4.7%	50,3804 5.2%
<i>Not in the labour force</i>	6,846 46.2%	97,1831 33.6%	5,271,116 35.4%
Total	14,827	2,887,780	14,879,103

- **Table 1 indicates the unemployment rates for Muslims in Queensland is:**
- **2.3 times higher than the general population, and**
- **2.1 times higher than the national average.**
- **Table 2 identifies those who are facing the highest unemployment in Queensland.**

Table 2

<i>Post Codes</i>	<i>Employed</i>		<i>Unemployed</i>		<i>Not in Labour force</i>
	Number	per cent	Number	per cent	
4112 Kuraby	225	91.8%	20	8.2%	221 - 47.9%
4113 Eight Mile Plains	381	91.6%	35	8.4%	290 - 41.1%
4114 Kingston	160	81.6%	36	18.4%	290 - 59.6%
4116 Algester	266	88.0%	36	12.0%	186 - 38.1%
4122 Mansfield	233	87.6%	33	12.4%	239 - 47.3%
4215 Labrador	173	86.9%	26	13.1%	316 - 60.6%
Total	1438	88.5%	186	11.5%	1542 - 48.7%

- **ABS Population Census 2001 indicates that nearly one quarter (24%) of the population in the South Brisbane region were born overseas, compared with 16.9% for Queensland.**
- **11.9% were born in non-English speaking countries compared with 7.3% for the state.**
- **The unemployment rate varied significantly across the South Brisbane region.**

- **According to ABS Population Census, 15.8% of the population in the South Brisbane region who identified themselves as Muslims had completed a degree or higher, compared with 10.8% for Queensland overall.**
- **34.1% completed post school qualifications, compared with 32.3% for Queensland overall.**
- **Higher percentage of Muslims living in Australia attend university than the percentage in the population as a whole (ABS statistics).**

Issues identified include:

- Perceived and real racism,
- Perceived and real discrimination,
- Settlement needs,
- Lack of Muslim representation in government decision-making bodies,
- Language needs,
- Assistance with resume and job application procedures for Muslim migrants,
- Lack of relevant training opportunities.

- Networking, job experience in relevant fields, and promotion opportunities for Australian-born Muslims.
- Training needs
- Lack of confidence (particularly for female Muslims).
- Assistance to businesses, e.g. in tourism and property, in recruiting Queensland Muslims in tapping into recent surge in Muslims investments from the Middle East, Indian sub-continent, South Africa and Southeast Asia.

Strategies:

Unemployment is a complex issue and requires the development and implementation of a range of strategies at various levels. For this purpose following strategies has been considered.

- 1. Individual level**
- 2. Community level**
- 3. Business Sector**
- 4. Government policies**

At an individual level

Individual Muslims, Australian-born or migrant, may require the following needs:

- Settlement information and assistance for migrant Muslims,
- Recognition of overseas qualification (MM)
- Removing language barriers (MM)
- Resumes, job applications and selection criteria information and assistance.

- Registration in Professional Bodies
- Interview skills
- Job training education and experience
- Networking for initial job
- Confidence building (especially for female Muslims)
- Enhancing communication, interpersonal and teamwork skills
- Education on job retention and job promotion prospects
- “skill mismatch” for long-term-unemployed.

- Muslim community in Queensland can play a very positive role in providing support for Muslim job seekers. For example they could establish a “*Muslim Professional Association of Queensland*” to provide the following support:
- Providing guidance to students entering university for their field of study,
- Providing support in organising field-work/job placements for Muslim job seekers,
- Networking with recruitment agencies and government departments.



- Muslim business community can provide temporary, casual or part-time jobs for Muslim job-seekers as stepping-stones.
- Small business is identified as the 'backbone of Australia'. Out of over 780,000 non-agricultural businesses in Australia, more than 96 % are small business.

In reducing the unemployment rate of Muslims, the Australian government has decisive roles to play on the structural causes of ongoing unemployment such as:

- Job availability,
- Spatial mismatch, between where job seekers live and sources of employment,
- Skills mismatch, between job seekers and the needs of the labour market.

- At the individual level there is a great need for the engagement of the Muslim Employment Officers at face-to-face level.
- Our findings indicate that Muslim business community are supportive of the approach mentioned here. However, they require incentives and further valuable government support.

- Government need to adopt effective policies to address “Spatial mismatch” and “Skill mismatch”, between job seekers and the needs of the labour market.
- Engagement with Muslim communities is the most effective way in tackling Muslim unemployment.
- There is a need for further research to investigate the existing opportunities for Muslims in this context.