ISRA

ISLAMIC SCIENCES
AND RESEARCH ACADEMY

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2021

ISRA ACADEMY ACKNOWLEDGES ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES AS AUSTRALIA'S FIRST PEOPLES AND AS THE TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THE VARIOUS LANDS ON WHICH WE WORK AND VOLUNTEER.

WE PAY OUR RESPECT TO ELDERS PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE, AND EXTEND THAT RESPECT TO OTHER ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE.

Graduation

SCHOLARLY KNOWLEDGE COMMUNITY SPIRIT

VISION

Be the leading voice of Islam in Australia through Islamic tertiary education and community service.

MISSION

ISRA is a point of reference for Islamic education and community service. We combine the scholarly tradition of Islam with academic excellence. We foster the development and enrichment of the Australian Muslim identity in faith, knowledge and service.

Youth College

Eid Picnic

VALUES

Sincerity
in intention and action

Positive action
in every situation

Service
to God and humanity

Excellence
in practices and outcomes

Balance
in self, life and organisation

Consultation
with all stakeholders

Environment
care for the earth

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2021 HIGHLIGHTS

406 STUDENTS ACTIVELY ENROLLED IN ISRA UNIVERSITY COURSES

147 NEW STUDENT ENROLMENTS IN ISLAMIC STUDIES AND ARABIC UNIVERSITY COURSES

2 ISLAMIC CHAPLAINCY COURSES WITH 12 GRADUATES

19 YOUTH MENTORED BY LEADERS

LAUNCH OF GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN ISLAMIC PSYCHOLOGY

81 ONLINE COMMUNITY PROGRAMS TO 1500+ PEOPLE

PUBLISHED 22 ACADEMIC JOURNAL ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS, 10 MEDIA OPINION PIECES AND 2 MONOGRAPHS

13 PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS TO OVER 150 MUSLIM STUDENTS

IN-SERVICE TRAINING TO OVER 140 NON-MUSLIM TEACHERS IN NSW

99 NEW MUSLIMS MENTORED

46 YOUTH COLLEGE STUDENTS

47 SCHOOL TALKS TO OVER 2,700 NON-MUSLIM STUDENTS IN NSW

150+ QUR'AN ACADEMY STUDENTS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

I am humbly proud to present to you the Australian public community contributions and achievements of Islamic Sciences and Research Academy (ISRA) in 2021.

ISRA's university courses with Charles Sturt University continued strongly in 2021 with 147 new enrolments, including 2 PhD candidates. We also prepared and launched a pioneering new course, the Graduate Certificate in Islamic Psychology, the first full university award course in Islamic psychology in Western countries.

Research remained strong with ISRA's academic staff who have published a total of 34 works in the 2020-2021 period. The research on Australian Muslim youth continued to progress as well as the data collection and analysis for the 3rd Islamophobia in Australia report due for launch in 2022.

Due to the worsening COVID-19 pandemic and prolonged lockdowns across Australia, 2021 has been an even more challenging year. Recognising the need for connection and spiritual solace, ISRA organised and delivered a range of online educational and spiritual programs. These included online community courses, workshops, panel events, online children's activities and virtual Friday khutbahs during mosque closures. A total of 81 online programs/events were held in 2021. We temporarily moved to online only in our services to faith-based school through talks and in-service training intensives.

A temporary relief in Ramadan (April) allowed us to organise an *iftar* dinner bringing together Muslim and non-Muslim high school students. ISRA commenced new initiatives, including the first ABC Journalists' *Iftar* dinner to more than 20 journalists, producers and newsroom managers.

A new initiative, the ISRA southwest ladies volunteer team was established. The team organised courses and events for women in southwest Sydney to complement the existing men's team and events.

ISRA introduced another pioneering community initiative in Sydney – ISRA Children's Library. In a world where book reading is becoming rare, this initiative aims to foster love of learning and books in children.

ISRA invested in and developed its pioneering Islamic Chaplaincy course – the only accredited Islamic chaplaincy program. With lockdown restrictions limiting work in this field, we were still able to complete two courses in Sydney and Melbourne with 12 graduates. For more highlights of ISRA's 2021 community contribution and achievements, see the infographic in this annual activity report.

ISRA, with its strong staff and volunteers, continues to foster *scholarly knowledge and community spirit*.

Associate Professor
Mehmet Ozalp

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

All praises are for *Allah*, the Lord of all the worlds and realms, who also blessed me with the opportunity to serve Him as an ISRA volunteer.
Over the last 13 years ISRA has made major contributions not only to Australian-Muslim communities but to Australian society, particularly in the area of academia, research and community services by promoting peace and harmony.

By fostering the common Australian-Muslim identity, ISRA has welcomed volunteers and staff from diverse races and schools of thought, which has enriched ISRA as an organisation and enabled us to fulfil our Mission and Vision objectives. It has become a safe and pleasant volunteering hub for ladies, gentlemen, fathers, mothers, children and adolescents alike. ISRA has become a second home for many of us and our families, where we can find serenity and satisfaction by serving others, true friendship and constant opportunities to seek knowledge.

ISRA's staff and volunteers have pioneered many initiatives, such as organising mosque open days, interfaith dialogue, the studies religion courses in high schools and registering the incidence of Islamophobia and publishing widely read and acclaimed reports that have focused the attention of key stakeholders on the issues and what can be done to address the challenges. The strength of our organisation lies within our altruistic volunteering teams who determine the projects they want to conduct. These projects are coordinated through the collaboration and active support of project teams through regular consultation meetings to ensure a satisfactory outcome is achieved. One of the many benefits of this approach to project planning and completion is that the volunteers feel they belong to the organisation and proudly represent ISRA everywhere they go.

Naing Win

One of the volunteering duties given to me by ISRA's members is that of President of ISRA and Chairman of the Board. As President and Chairman I would like to briefly outline just some of the key activities on that ISRA's Board has been focusing on in recent years.

Recently ISRA progressed from an Incorporated Association to a Company Limited by Guarantee. As a result of this change, the Board implemented several changes to our Constitution to ensure good governance and business compliance processes were in place. This will guarantee our organisation will thrive and grow for many years to come. The Board of Directors spent many hours ensuring the new Constitution aligned with the current needs of the community before presenting to ISRA members at the AGM. As part of our normal operating processes, our directors dedicated their time, experience and expertise to ensure the projects and activities of ISRA are carried out in line with the Mission and Vision, as well as the organisation's core values. At the same time the Board has maintained its independence while fostering the creativity and passion of our volunteers and ensuring they are protected and respected at all times.

At the conclusion of my term as President and Chairman of the Board, I would like to leave behind an organisational structure and culture that is an accountable, transparent, peaceful and loving environment, where the collective wisdom of all can enrich us and our work can continue to prosper. I hope and pray to God that, along with our responsible Board members, our ethical, professional and dedicated CEO and his staff and the altruistic volunteers, I can continue to serve this beautiful organisation for many years to come, with utmost sincerity, then pass on this responsibility of serving His religion to the future generations. I humbly request my sisters and brothers-in-Islam to pray for me too.

DIRECTORS' REPORT

It is with humility and pride that the Directors of ISRA congratulate the management, staff and volunteers for their commitment, ability to adapt and focus on our key values, Mission and Vision, and deliver impactful results in a very challenging academic year. The Board is united in supporting the focus by the ISRA team on delivering world class Islamic studies education to our students, ensuring consistent support to our community was always available and continuing growth in the understanding of our faith and the teachings of our Prophet ﷺ.

In particular, the Board wants to recognise the growth in student enrolments in our courses supported by our team of outstanding academics who were able to adapt their teaching styles to the challenges the pandemic presented and still deliver consistent results for our students, their families and our community.

It was also pleasing to see a highly successful graduation ceremony conducted at the end of the academic year despite the challenges and limitations the pandemic presented. The Board wants to take this opportunity to congratulate every graduating student and thank them for studying with us.

The Board recognises the leadership provided by our President Dr Imran, our Head of School and Executive Director Associate Professor Mehmet Ozalp, our Course Director and Melbourne Centre Manager Associate Professor Zuleyha Keskin and our ISRA Sydney Centre Manager Ahmet Ozturk for their tireless work throughout the academic year.

The consistent focus on serving the needs to the Australian Muslim Community in Sydney, Southwest Sydney and Melbourne during these challenging times was another highlight of the year and the Directors want to express their sincere thanks and appreciation for the efforts of all staff, managers and volunteers who made it another year of amazing achievements for ISRA.

School Talk

Risala Symposium

The priority placed on the delivery of our core Mission of establishing ourselves as a point of reference for the Muslim community in Australia and wider Australian society while reflecting our values in our daily activities and decisions we make was greatly appreciated by all Directors.

In closing, the Directors wanted to recognise the focus placed on our future Vision by the leaders of ISRA, which not only targets our growth but also the strategic steps needed to ensure our positive transformation of individual lives and spiritual growth.

President: Naing Win
Director: Erhan Bozkurt
Director: Mouna Elmir
Director: Heather Fagan
Director: Ahmad Hassan
Director: Ahmad Helou
Director: Zeliha Karaer Baydogan
Director: Mehmet Ozalp
Director: David Purcell
Board Secretary: Ahmet Ozturk

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

The Centre for Islamic Studies and Civilisation (CISAC) is a collaboration between Charles Sturt University and ISRA. It offers accredited Islamic Studies courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

In 2021, 406 students were actively enrolled in ISRA university courses. The course distribution was:

- Bachelor of Islamic Studies: 225
- Bachelor of Islamic Studies (Honours): 6
- Master of Classical Arabic (Articulated Set): 65
- Master of Islamic Studies (Articulated Set): 91
- Master of Contemporary Islamic Studies (Articulated Set): 7
- Master of Islamic Studies (Research): 3
- PhD: 9

Student Enrolments

In 2021, ISRA maintained a strong record of new student enrolments, with 147 in total. The number of new enrolments in each course was:

- Bachelor of Islamic Studies: 75
- Master of Islamic Studies: 34
- Master of Classical Arabic: 29
- Master of Contemporary Islamic Studies: 4
- Bachelor of Islamic Studies (Honours): 3
- PhD: 2

Graduate Certificate in Islamic Psychology

The Graduate Certificate in Islamic Psychology was launched in 2021 by Dr. Bagus Riyono. It is the first course of its kind to be taught at postgraduate level in the West.

A panel discussion was held with renowned Islamic psychology scholars who discussed the topic of *Instilling the Spirit of Islam Back into Islam.* The demand for the course was evident through the strong interest of more than 500 registrations at the event. The panellists included:

- Hanan Dover – Founder of PsychCentral; Vice-President of International Association of Muslim Psychologists; Islamic Psychology Lecturer, ISRA and Charles Sturt University
- Professor Dr. G. Hussein Rassool – Professor of Islamic Psychology and Consultant, Riphah Institute of Clinical and Professional Psychology/ Centre for Islamic Psychology, Pakistan; Director of Studies, Department of Islamic Psychology, Psychotherapy and Counselling, Al Balagh Academy, UK
- Dr. Bagus Riyono – President, International Association of Muslim Psychologists Faculty of Psychology, University of Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

The first intake for the course will be in March 2022 and will be taught by Hanan Dover and Dr. Zuleyha Keskin.

Graduation

Graduate Certificate in Islam, Culture and Society

The Graduate Certificate in Islam, Culture and Society was launched in November 2021 by John Esposito, Director of Georgetown University, in a webinar discussing *Conflict and Cohesion: Islam-West Relations in the Last Two Decades*.

The course has been designed for non-Muslim students to develop cultural awareness about Islam and Muslims, with a focus on the Australian context. It provides students with the opportunity to understand, accommodate and interact with Muslim clients, customers, co-workers and fellow citizens. It assists them to analyse the popular culture and current affairs in relation to Islam and Muslims, including politics, extremism and radicalism, Islamic movements, women in Islam, anti-Muslim racism and far-right extremism, and allows them to obtain religious literacy about Islamic spirituality and worldviews considering their relationship with other major faith traditions and spiritual teachings.

This degree is unique among Australian universities offering Islamic studies because it presents an Islamic cultural awareness subject for the first time; provides cultural immersion and practical tips to effectively connect with Australian Muslims; engages students directly with the Muslim community; incorporates virtual study tours; and uses teaching staff who are community-oriented scholars and field-specific experts with years of community engagement experience.

Arabic Texts and Translation Society

The Arabic Texts and Translation Society offers graduates of the Master of Classical Arabic an opportunity to translate Arabic texts into English. They are currently translating a textbook based on stories of ethics and morals.

Research Outputs

CISAC staff published two monographs and 22 academic journal articles and book chapters. The journal articles were published in highly cited (Q1) level journals and the books were published by international commercial publishers, including wvw and Routledge. Academic knowledge was also taken to the public space through publishing 10 opinion pieces in Australian mainstream newspapers. The following are the publications from 2020-2021.

Book Publications

Keskin, Zuleyha. (2021). *Attaining inner peace in Islam: Said Nursi's perspective*. Singapore: Springer.

Porter, A., Poynting, S., Rawlinson, P., Ryan, E., Simpson, M., Walters, R., Cunneen, C., Gore, A., Beckley, A., Russell, E., Taylor, E., Kramer, R., & Rodas, A. (2020). *Crime, deviance and society: An introduction to sociological criminology*. India: Cambridge University Press.

Journal Articles and Book Chapter Publications

Ansari, M., & Coruh, H. (2020). The prophets as archetypes of peace in the Qur'an: The use and non-use of Isrā'īliyyāt sources in the story of Mūsa. In Anthony Rees (Ed.), *Things that make for peace: Traversing text and tradition in Christianity and Islam* (pp. 25-40). Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books.

Çoruh, H. (2020). Relationship between religion and science in Muslim modernism. *Theology and Science*, 18(1), 152. https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2019.1710355

Iner, D. (2021). Faith-inspired Muslim parents' school choices and attitudes in the cultural West and Australia. *Religions*, 12, 1.

Iner, D., & Baghdadi, A. (2020). Multilayered discrimination of Muslim women in workplace. In D. Marinova & S. Samani (Eds.), *Muslim women in the economy: Development, faith and globalisation* (pp. 130-145). London: Routledge.

Iner, D., & Baghdadi, A. (2021). Popularizing halal: Re-reading of halal under anti-halal debates and campaigns. In R. L. Bulls & M. Woodard (Eds.), *Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives* (pp. 747-765). New York: Palgrave.

Iner, D., & Korbatieh, S. (2021). Women's agency and Islamophobia. In G. Krayem & S. Carland (Eds.), *Muslim women and agency: An Australian context* (pp. 50-75). Boston: Brill.

Smith, C., & Iner, D. (2021). How the contemporary far-right have popularised their appeals: An analysis of far-right growth in the Australian context. *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies*, 6(1), 1.

Keskin, Z., & Ozalp, M. (2020). An Islamic approach to environmental protection and ecologically sustainable peace in the age of the Anthropocene. In J. Camilleri & D. Guess (Eds.), *Towards a just and ecologically sustainable peace: Navigating the great transition* (pp. 119-134). Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.

Keskin, Z., & Ozalp, M. (2021). Islamic studies in Australia's universities. *Religions*, 12(2), 99. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12020099

Ozalp, M., & Ćufurović, M. (2021). Religion, belonging, and active citizenship: A systematic review of literature on Muslim youth in Australia. *Religions*, 12(4), 237. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12040237

Martinot, B., & Ozalp, M. (2020). Conversion to Islam: Review of research conducted between 2000-2020 on Western and Australian converts to Islam. *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies*, 5(1), 21.

Poynting, S., & Briskman, L. (2020). Asylum seekers in the global context of xenophobia: Introduction to the special issue. *Journal of Sociology*, 56(1), 3.

Campion, K., & Poynting, S. (2021). International nets and national links: The global rise of the extreme right—Introduction to Special Issue. *Social Sciences*, 10(2), 61. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10020061

Poynting, S. (2020). Book review: We can't say we didn't know. *Media International Australia*, 177(1), 190. https://doi.177/1329878X20949947

Poynting, S. (2020). Book review: Louise Boon-Kuo, *Policing undocumented migrants: Law violence and responsibility. Journal of Sociology*, 56(1), NP1. https://doi.1177/1440783319879815

Poynting, S. (2020). 'Islamophobia kills'. But where does it come from? *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 9(2), 74.

Poynting, S. (2020). Review of *Liberal democracies and the torture of their citizens*, by C. Banham. *State Crime Journal*, 9(1), 129. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13169/statecrime.9.1.0129

Sertkaya, S. (2020). A prophetic stance against violence: Analysis of the Meccan period of Prophet Muhammad's life and the centrality of peace as a preferred method. In A. Rees (Ed.), *Things that make for peace: Traversing text and tradition in Christianity and Islam* (pp. 59-74). Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books.

Sertkaya, S., & Keskin, Z. (2020). A prophetic stance against violence: An analysis of the peaceful attitude of Prophet Muhammad during the Medinan period. *Religions*, 11(11),587. https://doi.org/10.3390rel11110587

Yucel, S. (2021). An Islamic therapy: A fear reducing holistic approach (FERHA). *Journal of Religion and Health*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10943-021-01286-7

Yucel, S., & Albayrak, I. (2021). Are online fatwas credible? A critical analysis of fifty fatwas on organ donation and transplantation. *Religions*, 12, 902. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12100902

Karakus, M., Ersozlu, A., Usak, M., & Yucel, S. (2021). Spirituality and well-being of children, adolescent, and adult students: A scientific mapping of the literature. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 60, 4296. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-021-01435-y

Media Articles

Çoruh, H. (2020, April 6). Theology, health and hygiene: How the Islamic tradition addresses the threat of Pandemics. *ABC Religion and Ethics*.

Çoruh, H. (2020, April 27). What to resist, and what to pursue, this Ramadan? This Ramadan: Resist sorrow; practice thankfulness. ***ABC Religion and Ethics***.

Çoruh, H., & Shah Idil, A. (2021, January 5). Islam's adaptation of virtue ethics: Bringing light to the challenges of a post-pandemic world. *ABC Religion and Ethics*.

Haveric, D. (2020). Islamic perspectives on human rights: A brief socio-historical overview. *ZADOK Papers*, S245, 1. https://researchoutput.csu.edu.au/en/publications/islamic-perspectives-on-human-rights-a-brief-socio-historical-ove

Poynting, S., Iner, D., Mason, G., Asquith, N., & Mason, R. (2021, March 15). Graffiti, arson, death threats: New research finds widespread violence against Australian mosques. *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/graffiti-arson-death-threats-new-research-finds-widespread-violence-against-australian-mosques-156843

Keskin, Z., & Ozalp, M. (2021, August 25). Explainer: What is shariah law and what version of it is the Taliban likely to implement? *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/explainer-what-is-shariah-law-and-what-version-of-it-is-the-taliban-likely-to-implement-166490

Ozalp, M. (2020, April 2). How coronavirus challenges Muslims' faith and changes their lives. *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/how-coronavirus-challenges-muslims-faith-and-changes-their-lives-133925

Ozalp, M. (2020, March 2). Turkey and Russia lock horns in Syria as fear of outright war escalates. *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/turkey-and-russia-lock-horns-in-syria-as-fear-of-outright-war-escalates-131830

Ozalp, M. (2020, September 18). In war-torn Syria, the coronavirus pandemic has brought its people to the brink of starvation. *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/in-war-torn-syria-the-coronavirus-pandemic-has-brought-its-people-to-the-brink-of-starvation-144794

Ozalp, M. (2020, October 27). Who will Muslim Americans vote for in the US elections? *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/who-will-muslim-americans-vote-for-in-the-us-elections-146854

Keskin, Z. (2020, September 30). Opinion: Why some Muslims embrace conspiracy theories about coronavirus. *ABC Religion and Ethics*. https://www.abc.net.au/religion/muslims-coronavirus-and-conspiracy-theories/12716984

CISAC's Research Page and Research Activities

The CISAC Research Page was established to create awareness of its research projects and activities - https://thinkspace.csu.edu.au/cisac/. This page includes CISAC staff's published articles and summaries of their research outputs. It also has summaries of CISAC students' high-quality essays.

The CISAC page offers academic research to provide the public with authentic and research-based information. It also gives a clear idea to future higher degree research students and collaborators about the scope and depth of research at CISAC.

Nine staff and five student articles are published on the CISAC research page under the digital articles section. The page also includes important resources for academia and public use, such as theory time seminars, how to write and engage with mainstream media workshops, and how to write digital article instructions.

JST456 Islam and Policing in the Modern World

ISRA continued to assist CSU Australian Graduate School of Policing and Security with the subject ISL456 Islam and Policing in the Modern World, a subject taken as an elective by Police and Army officers. ISRA provides the subject content, which includes topics such as beliefs and practices, history of the development of Islam, jihad, terrorism, shariah, different sects, women's issues and more. ISRA also runs the residential school, which this year was online due to COVID-19 restrictions.
The residential school is eight sessions covering topics including a virtual mosque tour and a youth panel. The students provided positive feedback and were appreciative of being able to discuss the topics with Muslim academics and adherents of the faith. This year, 10 students attended the residential school from various departments within the Police and Army.

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SCHOOL SERVICES

NSW School Talks Program

ISRA offers a range of school talks on various Islamic topics as excursions, incursions and online talks. Talks are mainly held in non-Muslim schools for the subjects Studies of Religion and Society and Culture, as well as providing general and specific talks on Islam tailored to teachers' requests. The talks provide students with an immersive and engaging learning experience that allows them to gain in-depth knowledge of the syllabus topics from contemporary Muslim adherents, who share their lived experiences from within the tradition. Speakers are trained to deliver engaging content and answer commonly asked questions. In 2021, 47 school talks were delivered with a reach of over 2,700 students. Unfortunately, this number is significantly less than previous years since many school talks were cancelled or rescheduled to 2022 due to COVID-19 restrictions.

NSW Studies of Religion in Focus Conference

Each year, ISRA runs the Studies of Religion in Focus Conference in partnership with non-Muslim school organisations for NSW teachers of the years 11 and 12 subject Studies of Religion. Around 150 teachers attend the conference each year. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the conference did not go ahead in 2021.

NSW Studies of Religion in-Services

In 2021, ISRA hosted two online teacher in-services in Terms 1 and 3, as in previous years. This provided a unique opportunity for teachers to cover the Islamic topics from the Studies of Religion syllabus with highly qualified Muslim presenters, as adherents of the faith. Over 140 teachers across NSW virtually attended these workshops, receiving accurate and updated resources to share with their students and schools.

NSW School Talks

Taste of Ramadan Iftar

NSW Studies of Religion *A Taste of Ramadan Iftar* Dinner

ISRA's Studies of Religion *A Taste of Ramadan Iftar* Dinner was hosted on 22 April 2021 at Malek Fahd Islamic School's Greenacre campus in partnership with the Association for Studies of Religion and Amity College. The primary focus of the event was to provide students with an experience and understanding of Ramadan. This was achieved through the shared experience of breaking the fast, observation of congregational prayer, talks from Muslim adherents and interaction with Muslim adherents at each table. Other highlights include Qur'an recitation, explanation of the movements of the ritual prayer and the Muslim call to prayer. A total of 192 people attended the event, which primarily included students and teachers from approximately 10 schools within NSW.

QLD Study of Religion in-Services

In 2021, ISRA collaborated with Brisbane Catholic Education to deliver online teacher in-services tailored to the Queensland subject Study of Religion. They ran on three occasions throughout the year and targeted the years 7-12 learning outcomes. This allowed teachers from all stages to gain an immersive learning experience and have their questions answered by trained Muslim speakers. Over 200 teachers attended the workshops and received resources on their allocated topics. These workshops have enabled teachers to apply accurate and relevant content in their teachings while simultaneously facilitating the study of Islam in Queensland schools.

Educational Services to High Schools

ISRA expanded its educational services for schools with majority Muslim students in 2021. Islamic talks and courses were customised and delivered based on the schools' needs. ISRA also delivered 13 personal development workshops to Student Leadership Councils, tailored to give the students theoretical and practical knowledge to fulfil their role as school leaders. The educational services contributed to Islamic and personal growth for over 150 students in various schools.

ONLINE PROGRAMS

As the lockdowns continued into 2021, ISRA was committed to provide online educational programs to the community. During the year, 81 online community programs were delivered with approximately 1,500 people in attendance. The online programs catered to different age groups, including children, youth and adults. Some of the highlights are described below.

Virtual Friday Sermons

ISRA delivered 15 virtual Friday sermons throughout the lockdown months while mosques were closed in NSW and VIC. The virtual sermons were a much-needed upliftment of spirituality, connecting to the spirit of *Jumuah*, giving the community weekly reminders in the absence of Friday prayers. A wide variety of speakers covered significant and relevant topics to the community. They were generally attended by more than 100 people or families each week.

ISRA officially launched its new website in 2021. The revamped website is more user friendly and easier to navigate: www.isra.org.au

Scholars' Corner

In the Scholars' Corner, held online on 23 September 2021, Dr. Mehmet Ozalp discussed the main ideas and arguments of the book *Transcendent God, rational world: A Māturīdī theology* with its author Dr. Ramon Harvey. The webinar attracted more than 50 people and facilitated in-depth discussion on Imam Māturīdī's contribution to Islamic theology.

Human Nature and Suffering Courses

Two impactful courses were run online, addressing some of the big questions about life. Both were presented by theologian Dr Mehmet Ozalp. The first four-week course was *Human Nature and Purpose of Life* and the second three-week course was *Good, Evil and Suffering*. Interest by the community was evident with more than 100 people attending each course.

Coping During Lockdown and Uncertainty Event

This important event was organised to address the impact of the lockdowns on individuals' mental health. The event was held on 31 July when NSW and VIC were in lockdown, with the pandemic affecting many people. The need for the event was evident with more than 150 people attending. The session was presented by psychologist and Islamic psychology lecturer Hanan Dover, who highlighted the world was going through collective trauma due to the pandemic. Hanan provided strategies for coping with uncertain times, incorporating Islamic teachings and practices into the strategies offered.

Eid Online

Melbourne Ladies *Halaqa*

The Melbourne onsite ladies *halaqas* (religious study gatherings) were moved online when the COVID-19 pandemic commenced and have continued for two years.

Every second month, a special guest focussed on a topic that was dear to their heart. This resulted in a diverse range of themes being addressed, including:

- *Women's connection with the Qur'an* by Mouna Elmir
- *Spiritual resilience* by Zeinab Mourad
- *Love your obstacles* by Sarifa Alonto Younes
- *Purifying the nafs: Why and how* by Zuleyha Keskin
- *Re-aligning with our purpose* by Maha Abdo
- *Setting spiritual goals* by Calisha Bennett

Arafah and *Eid* at Home

Arafah and Eid at Home, held on 19 and 20 July 2021, encouraged people to fast the day of *Arafah* (Islamic holy day) and join an online spiritual night filled with Qur'an recitation, *athkaar* (remembrance of God), reminders and *du'a* (supplication). The next morning, families celebrated another bittersweet *Eid al-Adha* (Muslim celebration) from their homes in lockdown with ISRA's online community, smiling and wishing a blessed *Eid* to the other 140 families who joined the program.

Online Children's Programs

ISRA recognised the lockdowns in 2021 posed major challenges for families, so rushed to provide online opportunities for the spiritual nourishment and general entertainment of children. Online programs were developed that catered for children aged 5-8 years and 9-12 years.

Some highlights included increased knowledge for the children, prizes for Kahoot! quiz winners, question time and children leaving the sessions expressing the desire to practice what they had learnt, such as treating people as Prophet Muhammad ﷺ did or initiating the *salaam* (greeting of peace) more among other Muslims.

ISRA conducted three online programs between July and October 2021, which were attended by around 250-300 children:

- *Hajj* (Islamic pilgrimage) workshop, which introduced children to the concept of *Hajj*. It also included children engaging in multiple guessing games as well as with physical activities, which reinforced their understanding of the components to *Hajj* such as *talbiyah* (prayer recited at *Hajj*).
- This was followed by an *Eid* workshop, which comprised an online celebration for all the children in lockdown. The children built their knowledge on the *sunnah* (practice of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ) of *Eid* through true/false and Kahoot! games, and indulged their creative sides by composing acrostic poems revolving around *Eid*.
- The final online program was designed for the school holidays on the *sirah* (biography of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ). In this workshop, children learnt about the character and communication abilities of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and their knowledge was tested through true/false, reflection activities and Kahoot! games. Finally, they made *sunnah* date balls with the ingredients loved by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Children's Library

Unpack Youth Series

This series aims to unpack difficult conversations concerning Muslims today through raw discussions, facilitated by a panel representing diverse individuals from the community. In 2021, the series covered two online events – *Spiritual Abuse and Pride* and *Patriarchy: Gender Roles and Islam* – attended by a total of 223 people. This series has created a safe space for young Australian Muslims to navigate pressing topics usually considered taboo. The openness around discussing uncomfortable issues has attracted a new audience to the online ISRA programs.

Risala Symposium

The annual *Risala* Symposium celebrates the life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, which this year was held online. The theme was *Resilience and Social Connection for Times of Hardship and Adversity.* It was delivered by a panel consisting of Dr. Mahsheed Ansari, Dr. Mohamed Ghilan and Sadeq Ansari. Over 180 people attended and a digital workbook was distributed during the event, providing participants with information and activities.

As part of the *Risala* Symposium campaign, two associated projects were also held. The *Salawat* Campaign aimed to send 1 million *salawat* (prayers and blessings to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ), before the *Risala* Symposium, which was achieved and even exceeded. The winners of the competition *Everyone's is Reading about Him* (see below) were also announced at the *Risala* Symposium.

"Everyone's is Reading about Him" Online *Sirah* Competition

Over 450 people of all ages made the most of the time spent at home during lockdown by getting closer to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ through "Everyone's is Reading About Him" online *Sirah* competition. Each of the three categories of primary school age, secondary school age and adults had a separate book on *sirah*, which was quizzed by taking the online exam on 24 October 2021. The online competition attracted people from different Australian states as well as international readers. The competition has no losers due to the knowledge gained and the top ranks in different categories were awarded in close to $5,000 worth of prizes. The reading competition is promising to grow in 2022 with partnerships with schools across Australia.

Shama'il Course and Reading Circle

The reading circle was organised to connect the community back to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Dr. Suleyman Sertkaya, whose expertise is Prophetic history and characteristics, took around 25 attendees each week through the famous *Shama'il* book by Imam Tirmidhi, along with commentary from various sources. This program will continue in 2022 with the aim to complete the whole book.

Calligraphy Course

The online Arabic calligraphy course was held on 18 and 19 September 2021, with two sessions held per day due to its popular demand. Taught by renowned calligraphy artist Shakeel Tariq, participants learned the skill of writing Arabic letters and words using markers and calligraphy pens. The 47 participants were provided a calligraphy textbook developed for the course and other materials.

Adelaide Online Event

An online event was organised for the Adelaide audience on *Seeking Sacred Knowledge in Modern Times.* The event was the result of a partnership between ISRA, McYESS (Multicultural Youth Education Support Services), Community Development, Education and Social Support Australia Inc. and the Islamic Cohesion Board of Australia. Along with ISRA's Dr. Mehmet Ozalp and Dr. Zuleyha Keskin, the event featured local Adelaide speakers Sheikh Helmi Bakhour (Imam of Adelaide Mosque) and Renee Taylor (Co-Founder, Community Development, Education and Social Support Australia Inc.). It was attended by around 120 people.

COMMUNITY COURSES

Islamic Chaplaincy Course

ISRA, in conjunction with the NSW College of Clinical and Pastoral Education (CPE), delivers the only CPE Islamic chaplaincy course available in Australia for the Muslim community. The course was held between July and November 2021 and provided education and training for 12 Sydney community leaders and individuals who serve the Muslim community in Australia. It will be offered onsite for Sydney and Melbourne residents at the respective ISRA centres in 2022.

Qur'anic Nights Course

ISRA Melbourne held weekly Qur'anic night classes for 10 weeks, which consisted of deep analysis and reflection by Surah Yusuf, with various exegesis sources used. Around 10 participants attended each week.

Southwest Sydney Ladies' Courses

With the growing Muslim community in southwest Sydney and requests for services to be provided by ISRA, an ISRA Southwest Ladies volunteer team was established in January 2021. Three Theology of the Qur'an courses were run and several unique presentations based on popular demand were also offered online during lockdown.

The first course *Does God Exist?* was offered in person before lockdown. Over 50 ladies registered and the weekly average attendance was 30-35 over the 10 weeks, demonstrating the strong demand for ISRA courses in southwest Sydney.

During lockdown, ISRA's southwest courses went online, averaging a weekly attendance of around 30 participants. November 2021 concluded the third and final online module.

Survey results showed 100% positive feedback, with 95% of participants giving the top score for relevance of the courses.

Southwest Sydney Ladies Theology Course

Mothers' Group Course

Mothers' Group Courses

The Mothers' Group's mission is to support parents to raise Muslim children to become Muslims of strong faith and to strengthen Muslim families. It aims to achieve this through solidifying family bonds, including marriage, as well as equipping mothers with Islamic knowledge and skills to raise Muslim children who love Allah, Islam and the Prophet ﷺ, and practice Islam according to the *sunnah*.
In 2021, the Mothers' Group ran four courses during the NSW school term: *Wisdom of the Prophets* (onsite and online), *Knowing and Loving Allah* (onsite and online), *Lessons from the Sirah* (online) and *Pearls of Wisdom* (online). Surveys showed positive feedback for the content, speakers and resources provided. The classes averaged around 15 attendees.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

ISRA Children's Library

The ISRA Children's Library (ICL) is situated in ISRA's Sydney branch in Auburn and first opened to members of the public in January 2021. The library provides Islamic themed books for children 0-17 years old and offers resources for children to learn about Islam in a fun and interactive way. It has received great community response, with many families borrowing books and signing up. Membership has been continuously growing.

The ICL Holiday Program was held in the January 2021 school holidays and was a huge success. Attended by 45 children, it was fully booked. Some of the fun activities included designing a book cover, making craft creations based on a story and a writing workshop with a talented author.

In addition, the library hosted mothers' groups and home-schooling groups. The program was aimed to provide children with an opportunity to explore the library and get involved in some creative Islamic activities. During the Sydney lockdown, the library was closed and resumed from December 2021 in time for the summer school holidays. The next holiday program will commence in January 2022.

Auburn Sisters' *Halaqa*

Around 15-20 Sydney ladies came together on Friday nights in a warm and friendly environment to cover a variety of topics such as purification of the heart, power of intention and belief, and the subconscious mind in achieving our spiritual and life goals. Monthly social events were also held, making the program more fun and relaxing for the sisters and their children.

New Muslims

ISRA's New to Islam Ladies Support Circle supports new Muslims, non-Muslims and newly practicing Muslims spiritually, socially and educationally. The Support Circle assists ladies in a friendly, supportive environment to learn about Islam and how to practice the rituals, while enjoying social events and emotional support. The Support Circle is run by new Muslims who understand the unique experiences and needs of those starting their journey.

ISRA's New to Islam Support Circle is one of the only programs of its kind for new Muslims in Sydney, offering ongoing support, workshops, mentoring, classes, social events, WhatsApp support groups, Ramadan programs and *iftars*, *Eid* programs and more.

40 Day Prayer Challenge

The first ever *40 Day Prayer Challenge* for new Muslims was run, with 20 ladies participating. They were provided weekly online check-ins and sent daily motivational messages. The ladies made goals to improve their prayers in various ways suitable to their level, from starting to pray or increasing *sunnah* prayers to increasing focus during prayer. Feedback was positive, with some of the highlights being achieved prayer goals, become closer to Allah and increased motivation through completing it together.

The prayer challenge ended with a beautiful celebration high tea to acknowledge the achievements of all the ladies, where they were given gifts.

Courses and Workshops

When lockdown commenced, online courses series began for new Muslims, starting with a workshop *How to Boost Spiritual and Mental Health during Lockdown*. This was followed by a four-week online series – *The Sahaba, their Life Struggles and how they came to Islam*, followed by *Islam 101*. This course ran for eight weeks, with each week covering one of Allah's Names, an Arabic term and two or three commonly asked questions in Islam. Classes were attended by an average of 10 ladies. Feedback from the ladies who attended was extremely positive with 100% commenting they would continue with the online classes post-lockdown.

A fasting workshop, followed by a social dinner, assisted new Muslims to learn the basic principles of fasting during Ramadan. It was a productive workshop with ladies being provided a platform to converse and openly raise questions. It was interactive and all attendees enjoyed and benefitted from the workshop. One participant even travelled from Newcastle to attend. Childcare was arranged for the attendees for an opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the experience. The workshop was followed by a dinner.

Social Events

Social events were regularly provided for the new Muslim sisters. During lockdown, an online games night was held, attended by 10 ladies, followed by a new Muslim post-lockdown social dinner attended by 10 ladies, then a picnic in Bicentennial Park attended by 11 ladies and their children.

The New Muslim Family *Iftar* was attended by 28 people. For many, it was the first social *iftar* they had attended since becoming Muslim. It was a great opportunity to unite families and provide New Muslim sisters with a sense of family and connection in this important month, as new Muslims often break their fast alone.

WhatsApp Groups

ISRA's New Muslims WhatsApp groups cater to the different needs of the ladies, from the social group for those wanting to participate only in social events and our two other groups for those wanting Islamic education and notification of ISRA's events. Each week, spiritual and motivational messages are sent to the ladies, as well as educating the ladies on important holy days in the Islamic calendar. Currently, there are 99 ladies across the groups.

New Muslim High Tea

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When I first accepted Islam in 2016, I had no clue of how to perform wudu or salah, what are the five pillars of Islam and everything or anything about Islam for that matter. Only with the help of the “New Reverts Program” at ISRA, I discovered most information that was needed for me to explore and learn further about my new-found religion. The sisters from the program were so warm, supportive and inviting that made me feel inclusive and belonging. I will always be grateful to Allah for have sent me the right people to help me be a better Muslim.

Noor Khadija

LARGE-SCALE PUBLIC EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Summer Family Camp

Summer Camp 2021

Over 100 people attended ISRA's three-day Summer Camp. It was a great opportunity for families to come together with the community to connect and recharge. It combined relaxation and rest, while boosting the spirit through Islamic discussions and workshops delivered by renowned speakers, teachers and scholars. Participants also enjoyed activities such as swimming, bushwalking, canoeing and more. Feedback was positive with participants getting a much-needed rest from the year and recharging for the year ahead physically, spiritually and mentally.

Community Picnic

The ISRA picnic was an important annual event for the community to gather and socialise, with prayer, lunch, sports and creative activities for men, women and children. The opportunity to relax and share the natural environment knitted close bonds as brothers and sisters, contributing to its overall success. The 300 attendees took home treasures in memories, prizes and feelings of *hamd* (praise) and *shukr* (thankfulness) for such blessed reminders.

Pre-Ramadan Workshop

A pre-Ramadan event – *Revive Your Ramadan* – was organised with a panel of four speakers, with over 100 attendees. The topics covered were maximising the spiritual benefit by physical preparation, the spiritual meaning and wisdom of fasting, jurisprudence and Q and A.

Eid Picnic

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Youth College

ISRA Youth College offers the youth of today the opportunity to become the leaders of tomorrow through weekend classes for years 6 to 12 across two Sydney campuses. In 2021, there were 46 students across the campuses. ISRA Youth College students are boys and girls in Prestons and Auburn campuses on Saturdays from 10.00am to 1.30pm. The classes run during school terms starting with the first Saturday of the term. Classes continued throughout the COVID restrictions and lockdowns while observing NSW health guidelines. Classes were held online via Zoom during the lockdowns. The classes comprise spiritual and religious discussions, Qur'an education (up to five students per class) and personal development/arts/sports for girls and sports and extracurricular activities for boys. Classes are followed by lunch together.

In the Qur'anic studies classes, trained teachers direct personalised attention and learning to every student at three levels of *tajweed* as well as *hifth* (memorisation). Islamic studies classes engage students in contemporary discussions, *tafseer* (exegesis) of Qur'anic verses, Prophetic stories as well as areas sensitive to their growth ranging from purity to mental and spiritual health. Youth College not only seeks to train and hone the minds of young Australian Muslims academically but also provides entertainment, enhances their love for recreation and builds their character. Activities such as horse-riding, Turkish *ebru* art, *iftars*, charity runs and weekly sports have been a custom of Youth College's bonding as a diverse family of young Muslims. The number of graduates from every *tajweed* level at Youth College each year stands at approximately 10-15 students across the Auburn and Prestons campuses.

Youth College strengthens and aids the students to become Islamic emblems, with recent opportunities to visit and care for seniors at the aged care facility Gallipoli Home, to donate and package food and essentials for the homeless in coordination with Brothers in Need as well as caring for their needs through a Mental Health First Aid course.

Muslim Leadership Program

The Muslim Leadership program pairs Muslim youth with a mentor to receive guidance on a project in a specific discipline. It combines the most important aspects of community building to develop and elevate youth who will undoubtedly contribute to the aspirations and advancement of the Australian Muslim community. The program includes leadership workshops in various fields to upskill the mentees, including Prophetic leadership, media training, social media engagement, government advocacy and mental health.

In 2021, 19 mentees completed the program, producing projects that included publishing more than five articles in major Australian newspapers, establishing a popular podcast and developing programs for adolescent mental health and children's reading – just to name a few. One meaningful achievement of the program was the confidence it gave one mentee to seek out friendships within the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and to organise an *iftar* at ISRA with journalists.

Southwest Sydney Brothers' Hub Talks

The Prestons Brothers' Hub is an initiative that commenced in 2020 with the aim of providing not just Islamic talks, but also a safe place for the male youth. To date, the Prestons Brothers' Hub has held weekly talks covering books and topics ranging from *Riyadh As-Saaliheen* to Imam Ghazali's *Ayyuhal Walad*. Pre-COVID, the Hub was consistently seeing numbers upwards of 20 people per week and is heading towards similar numbers post-lockdown.

Muslim Leadership Program

National Muslim Youth Summit Podcast

The NMYS podcast *Not Even Water*?! is a platform for young Australian Muslims to discuss issues that relate to living in Australia. The podcast covers a wide range of contemporary issues for Muslim youth living in Australia, debating topics about identity, dating and the best kebabs in Sydney. The podcast launched its first episode with a small audience from across the globe. The main aim of the podcast is to facilitate Muslim youth in voicing their opinions and ideas on issues they find relevant in a safe and open space.

Summer Internship Program

Eleven interns attended a range of training workshops covering essential Islamic knowledge, personal leadership and other skill-based programs. They were also paired with a mentor who guided them with hands-on experience in various professional fields, such as Islamic talks in schools, community projects, management, administration, social media, research, youth, Islamic education and Qur'an teaching. Interns received a certificate and reference letter at the completion of the internship.

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The 2021 ISRA Summer Internship was inspiring, educational and insightful, especially after a previous year spent with the development of COVID-19...There were many highlights within the workshops, networking and discussion where speakers and interns had their own insights and knowledge to share...This initiative showed the value that ISRA shows toward opinions and ideas from the youth. It allowed development in skills such as critical thinking and hands-on experience.

Baseerah Khalil

Summer Internship

QUR'AN ACADEMY

Qur’an Academy

ISRA’s Qur’an Academy seeks to replenish the practice of learning the Qur’an, the Book of Allah by fostering a community of ahlul Qur’an (the people of the Qur’an). Its classes are unique in their approach, being simple, easy to learn, small and taught by English speakers, with the majority of class time being practical. Classes vary from tajweed (the science of reading the Qur’an), ‘uloom (the foundational topics engendered by and through the Qur’an) as well as tafseer (Qur’anic meanings and exegesis). The Academy offers its programs online, which allows its reach to be all-encompassing and accessible to individuals from a variety of academic and personal backgrounds.

Teachers and Students

The team behind Qur’an Academy consider themselves incredibly blessed to be serving the Qur’an voluntarily, seeking the pleasure of Allah. This provides a strong ground upon which teachers are trained and new teachers are encouraged, which has created a unified team of approximately 15 dedicated staff and trainees. Even through the global pandemic, Qur’an Academy has stood as a successful and growing Qur’anic institute in Sydney for two years, opening its doors to over 150 students and of them 30+ graduates, by the Grace of Allah.

Qur’an Academy Teachers

Eid Picnic

RAMADAN PROGRAMS

ABC Iftar Dinner

In addition to the programs already mentioned, ISRA held the several during Ramadan.

ABC-MWLP Media *Iftar* Dinner

Born from the Muslim Women's Leadership Program in 2020, ISRA hosted a Ramadan *iftar* on 23 April gathering more than 20 ABC journalists, reporters and executives alongside emerging and long-standing Muslim leaders. The inaugural event, *A Night of Sharing*, involved a panel discussion and roundtable talks. While sharing a meal, the journalists and oft-stigmatised Muslim community discussed the structural change needed within the journalism industry and the importance of nuanced representation of Muslims. Through inspirations gained that night, four articles and TV programs were produced. The journalists' *iftar* will now become an annual event at ISRA.

Volunteers' *Iftar* Dinner

The annual ISRA volunteers' *iftar* was a night to acknowledge and celebrate the tireless efforts of the volunteers. The event was the first major ISRA face-to-face gathering after the COVID restrictions were lifted. Recent highlights of ISRA activities were shown on the night and every volunteer was reminded that ISRA is enriched by their contributions. An entertaining Kahoot! quiz had everyone guessing to which members belonged the unique anecdotes. Delicious desserts were served in conjunction with motivational speeches and the night finished with *tarawih* prayers in congregation. Over 160 people attended, which included volunteers and their families.

Men's *Itikaf*

The annual brother's *itikaf* was held at Sydney Madinah *Musallah* (prayer hall) in Chipping Norton, attended by 25 people. Children, youth and adults enjoyed spending time in the mosque in the last 10 nights of Ramadan praying, reciting Qur'an and engaging in spiritual talks. The *itikaf* connected the community with the only purpose of worshipping Allah and facilitated spiritual growth for all attendees.

Ladies' *Itikaf*

The sisters' three-day *itikaf* took place at one of the sister's houses over the last weekend of Ramadan. It was open for sisters to join any day/night of the program. Around 10-15 sisters were there daily. Collective *sahoor*, *iftars*, *dua* sessions and prayers connected them spiritually and socially.

Southwest Ladies' *Iftar* Dinner

The Southwest ladies' *iftar* dinner was attended by about 70 participants who enjoyed a delicious meal and socialising, as well as prayers together.

Youth College Girls' *Iftar* Dinners

Both campuses held iftar dinners that included a delicious dinner, games and fun conversations. The Auburn *iftar* was attended by students, parents and teachers. The Prestons iftar was hosted by the students with their teachers for their mothers. Thirty people attended and feedback was positive.

Volunteer's Iftar

WELFARE AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Ladies' Spiritual Nights

The *Isra* and *Miraj* Spiritual Night was the first spiritual night of 2021. It was a public event where more than 50 sisters attended. The program included Qur'an recitation, a short talk, prayers, *salawat* (prayers and blessings to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ) and *tasbih* (repetitive utterances in glorification of Allah).

Thirty ISRA volunteers came together for the *Shaban* spiritual night to commemorate this holy month, which Prophet Muhammad ﷺ spent fasting, praying and remembering Allah. Ladies prepared to make the most of the upcoming month of Ramadan. It was an in-house spiritual night where ISRA sisters started the night with a light *iftar*, followed by Qur'an recitation, a short talk, prayers, *salawat* and *tasbih*.

Hoping to observe *Laylatul Qadr*, "the night that is better than a thousand months," 27 ladies came together on the 27th night of Ramadan for iftar followed by Qur'an recitation, a spiritual talk, *dhikr*, *dua, salawat* and *tarawih* prayers offered in congregation.

Ladies' Reading Days

Reading days are mini retreats, where ISRA sisters start with breakfast, followed by multiple sessions of reading a selected book, with the aim to complete it in one day. After the allocated reading sessions, facilitated discussions take place about the book. Massage and facials are additional ways for sisters to enjoy the day.

The first reading day of the year took place in March 2021 at an ISRA volunteer's house. *Lessons from Surah Al-Kahf* by Yasir Qadhi was the chosen book. It was an amazing spiritual, intellectual and social event with 25 ladies in attendance.

Due to the lockdown, the second reading day scheduled for September was moved online. Ladies were encouraged to read the selected book for the Everyone's is Reading About Him competition, Muhammad, *Messenger of Allah: Ash-Shifa of Qadi 'Iyad*. Different presenters then introduced the chapters of the book, with a Q and A session after each. The 19 ladies who attended benefitted from the knowledge, spirituality and great preparation for the competition.

Ladies Spiritual Night

Men’s Hike
Barrenjoey Head Lighthouse

Men's Hiking Trips and Tent Camps

Outdoor activities were organised throughout 2021 to facilitate the community to immerse in God’s natural creation and rejuvenate the body, mind and soul. The Mt. Solitary one-night hiking trip in the Blue Mountains, one-day Wentworth Falls hike and Outdoor Tent Camp brought together more than 50 brothers and some children who enjoyed a time-out from technology and connected with each other without the need for gadgets.

Men’s Spiritual Night

The spiritual nights held during 2021 included the *Miraj* night at ISRA Sydney Centre and *Laylat al-Qadr* night at Sydney Madinah *Musallah* in Chipping Norton. These programs provided a platform for the community to spend special Islamic calendar events in collective worship and personal prayer. Close to 100 people attended and made the most of these nights, which included youth and adults.

ISLAMIC SCIENCES
AND RESEARCH ACADEMY

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