



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### ***National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies***

**22 January 2007**

The Australian Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, and the Hon Andrew Robb MP, Australian Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, today announced that a consortium comprising the University of Melbourne, Griffith University and University of Western Sydney will host the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies.

The Centre is a significant Australian Government supported initiative under the *National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security*. The Government has committed AUD8 million to support the establishment of the Centre.

The Centre will advance knowledge and understanding of Islam and showcase Australia's strengths in the field of Islamic studies. It will also play a leadership role in public debates on contemporary Islam.

Mr Robb said the consortium is well placed to build on the funding that the Australian Government has committed and establish a world-class centre.

"The Centre will provide tertiary accredited undergraduate and post-graduate qualifications. Courses – including subjects as diverse as architecture, art and commerce - will be open to any students who have an interest in aspects of the Islamic world," he said.

"The courses would provide many subjects relevant for aspiring Muslim religious and community leaders. Courses at the Centre will provide an important vehicle for the teaching of Islam in an Australian context, applying the usual academic rigour of the Australian university system," Mr Robb said.

"This will be particularly helpful to a broad range of young Australians who want to understand the role of religion in Australia. It will also help Muslim leaders and Islamic teachers understand the context within which Muslims practise their faith and celebrate their cultures," he said.

The National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies will deliver courses on campus in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane and eventually across Australia via distance education.

“The consortium members will establish strict governance arrangements for the Centre, including: a management board comprising academic and professional staff from the consortium universities; an academic advisory board overseeing the development and quality of the undergraduate teaching program; and a national community advisory board. The community advisory board will include Australian Government representation. The Centre will need to adhere to all requirements applying to Australian universities,” he said.

The negotiation of a funding agreement will include a requirement for the Centre to adhere to a clear set of objectives, against which it will report annually. Objectives will include that the Centre does not promote any organisations or teachings supportive of violence and terror.

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