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Toowoomba's first Islamic mosque opens its doors

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TOOWOOMBA'S first mosque has opened in a disused church after years of fundraising by the city's Muslim community.

Ownership of the former home of the Westside Christian Church on the corner of West and Stephen Sts has changed hands to the Islamic Society of Toowoomba.

Founding president Dr Shahjahan Khan hosted the mosque's first prayer session in the 2765sq m property last week ahead of an official opening planned for March 30.

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He said the purchase represented a "new bright chapter" for the city's Muslim community.

"I thank Toowoomba Regional Council and congratulate the city of Toowoomba for its inclusiveness," he said.

"May God bless our wonderful city of Toowoomba and guide its people to peace and prosperity."



Toowoomba's Muslim community meets for the first prayers held at the city's first mosque in South Toowoomba. Contributed

The former church was chosen for its central location and the fact the building faces Kaaba - a square stone building in the centre of the Great Mosque at Mecca.

Its zoning as a place of worship also simplified the transition.

Neighbours of the mosque were invited to a "meet and greet" afternoon tea to raise any issues they had with its opening.

"They are always welcome to talk to us about any problems - we want to be good neighbours," Dr Khan said.

Internal renovations are planned over the coming month ahead of full operations beginning in early-February.

The Islamic Society of Toowoomba has been meeting at the University of Southern Queensland since the group was established in 1994.

The property is believed to have cost \$900,000.



The city's Islamic community celebrates the opening last week.

The city's Islamic

Dr Shahjahan Khan's full commentary:

The recent steady growth of population and enhanced opportunities for work in Toowoomba, have attracted increased numbers of people to the Garden City of Australia.

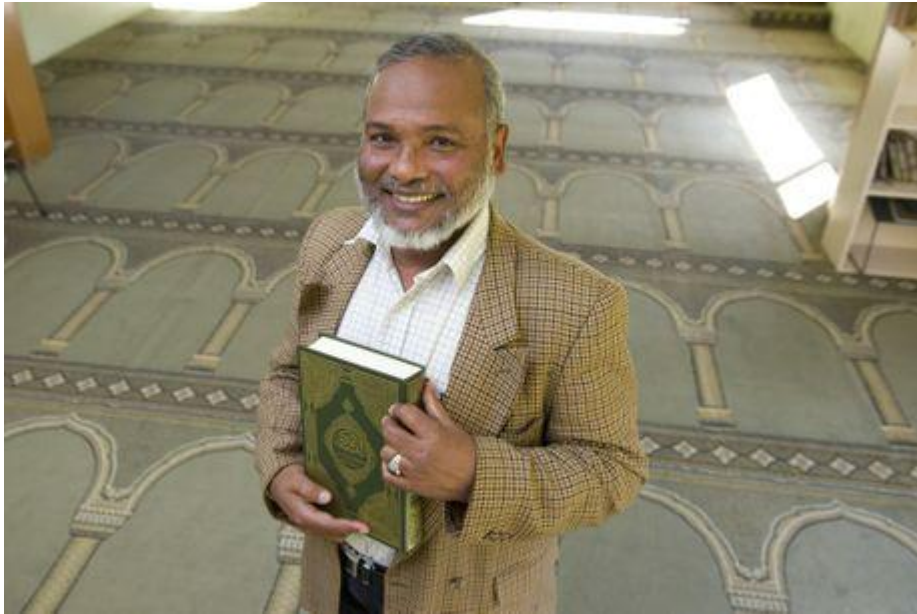
Muslims in Toowoomba are working in almost all leading professions including as university lecturers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, accountants, business managers, social workers and many others.

This natural growth of Muslims has created the obvious and expected social, religious and cultural needs for the community. A place of worship is a basic need for followers of any faith.

The Islamic Society of Toowoomba Inc, established in 1994, is a member of the Islamic Council of Queensland, and the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC), the peak body of Muslims in Australia.

Over the years, various efforts have been made to set up a mosque in Toowoomba with increased attempts in the last 2-3 years. Progress is currently underway to secure a property in Harristown as part of that ongoing effort.

This mosque will seek to serve the spiritual needs of the community as well as promote awareness, friendship and goodwill with all neighbours regardless of their faith.



Islamic Society of

Toowoomba founding president Dr Shahjahan Khan. Kevin Farmer

Muslims in the city have been active, and play a significant role, in the multi-faith and multicultural fabric of the society through numerous community engagements which have helped foster harmonious relationships with the followers of different churches and faiths in Toowoomba.

We have no doubt that a mosque in Toowoomba would make a significant positive addition to the cultural make-up and religious mosaic in the city. Furthermore, the mosque will directly contribute to Toowoomba's economy by attracting more businesses, tourism, professionals, and domestic and international students.

Many people, schools, organisations and businesses across Toowoomba and the Darling Downs have welcomed Muslim students from around the world into its community.

Among those has been the University of Southern Queensland which has supported the on-campus religious needs of different faith groups including Muslims.

While the University has been most generous in accommodating non-University worshippers to its Islamic Centre over the past decade, the growth in numbers has made it incumbent on the local community to support itself and develop and manage its own facilities.

We welcome the recent move by the Toowoomba Regional Council to be a refugee-friendly city in Australia.



The former Westside Christian Church on the corner of West and Stephen Sts has been bought by the Islamic Society of Toowoomba. Kevin Farmer

Experience suggests that the presence of a mosque in Toowoomba will attract more professionals to the city and enrich its ethnic and cultural diversity.

It will not only promote Toowoomba as a city of peaceful and harmonious living, but also help realise a recent initiative of different faith groups to declare Toowoomba as the City of Peace by the UNESCO.

The designated property for the first mosque in Toowoomba will remain as a place of worship, and the worshippers will worship the same Almighty God, the Lord of all prophets including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon all of them.

This will serve as a source of Divine inspiration, spiritual guidance, and revealed knowledge for the benefit of humanity. It will remain open to everyone interested in worshipping Allah or knowing about Islam and Muslims, followers of the second largest religion on earth.

I thank TRC and congratulate The City of Toowoomba for its inclusiveness.

We offer our very special thanks to every individual and institution that have been, and will be, involved in the process of establishing and maintaining this mosque with their inspiration and advice as well as providing spiritual, material, and financial contributions.

May God bless our wonderful city of Toowoomba and guide its people to peace and prosperity