

ANNUAL FUNDRAISING DINNER 2009 – GUEST SPEAKER WALEED ALY

Waleed Aly grew up in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, and is a former student of Wesley College. He studied Engineering and Law at the University of Melbourne where he graduated with honours. He is a lawyer and a journalist, as well as a board member and spokesperson for the Islamic Council of Victoria. His rise to prominence, however, has been as a young, articulate spokesperson for the Australian Muslim community, and is due to his considered commentary on human rights and multiculturalism within Australian society. His journalistic interests range more broadly.

Although Aly works as a commercial lawyer, he still finds time to devote to journalism. Aly's articles appear in newspapers all over Australia. He writes on topics ranging from politics and religion, to community and sport. A supporter of the Richmond Football Club, he has even written for the Australian Football League's *Footy Record*. His writing is much respected and in 2005 he won a Walkely Award Commendation for his work.

Aly is also a commentator on radio and television current affairs programs. He speaks on issues concerning Australia's Muslim community and the relationship between Islam and western values. Aly is a sought-after public speaker. He was one of 40 Australians selected as a youth leadership delegate to the Future Summit in Melbourne in 2005.

Aly's leadership is apparent through his writing and commentary. As an Australian and a Muslim, he is keenly aware of the role he plays in helping other Australians to think about Australia's multicultural identity, and the social and political sensitivities that this identity arouses. His work tackles these issues, often presenting them as the responsibilities of all Australians, and not as belonging to just one section of the community. When he delves into issues such as violence against women, promotes consideration of human rights, or pays tribute to mothers on Mother's Day, he gently emphasises and affirms the shared values which underpin the whole of the Australian community, while drawing on his religious and cultural background.

In August 2005, Aly was honoured by being asked to address the Australian Davos Connection's Leadership Retreat, where key issues facing Australia are considered. Aly spoke to an audience that included federal ministers, State premiers, chief executives from Australia's top 100 companies, as well as leading academics and community leaders. Whether addressing high-powered gatherings or local community groups, Waleed Aly's views on Islam and Australian multiculturalism are eagerly sought, and he is tireless in his attempts to create a better understanding about Islam and Muslims in the Australian community.