

**DR DZAVID HAVERIC**

## Reflections of a research associate at Museums Victoria

Museums Victoria is one of Australia's treasure-houses, cherishing a priceless collection and undertaking research of national and international significance across its history and technology, First Peoples and sciences departments. Among the collections managed by history and technology is the migration and cultural diversity collection, which reflects Victoria's history of immigration and cultural diffusion.

Until recently, however, relatively few items in the collection appeared to reflect Muslim communities and Islamic culture. Identifying relevant material in the collection — and further building it — is important for community wellbeing, engagement and the balanced representation of Victorian communities.

Hoping to contribute to the museum's collections and research in these areas, I joined Museums Victoria as a research associate in 2015, while an adjunct research fellow at Charles Sturt University.

It was both an honour and a challenge to undertake this work. I started from scratch — step by step, day by day, year by year — and gradually built my contribution to Museums Victoria's collections. Over time my work broadened to other museums, universities, libraries and communities.

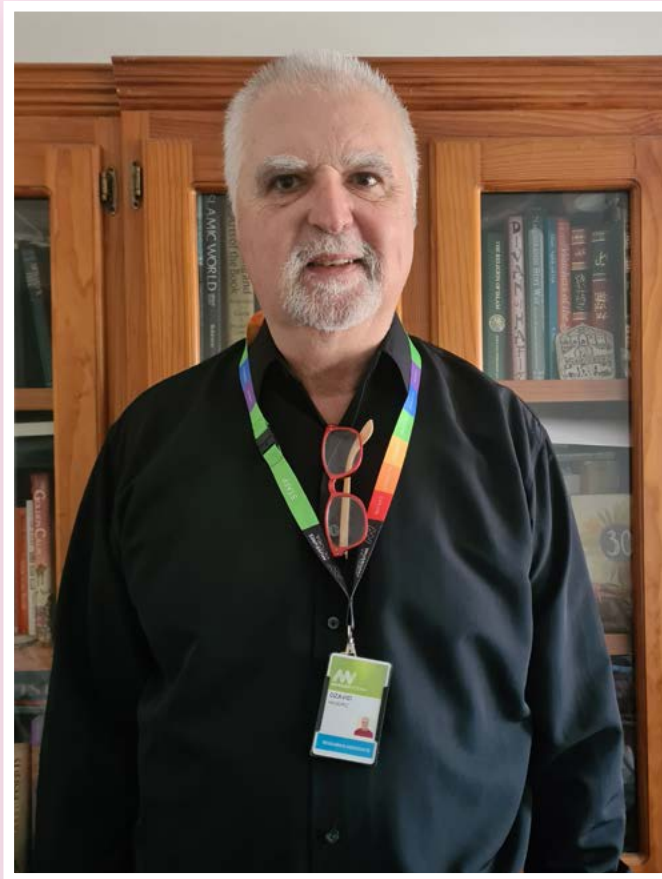
My project titled 'Muslims in Australia' identified material and stories that contributed to two of my books on the subject.<sup>1</sup> My later project, 'Muslims and their descendants in the Australian Military', evolved into a book on the history of Muslims in Australia's armed forces.<sup>2</sup>

These projects have made a nationally significant contribution to the historical and cultural understanding of Islam and Muslims in Australia. They underline the importance of originality, creativity, inclusivity, diversity and discovery in the Australian sociohistorical context — far beyond a merely theological interpretation.

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<sup>1</sup> Haveric, D. (2019). *History of Islam and Muslims in Australia*. Lambert Academic Publishing; Haveric, D. (2019). *Muslims making Australia home: Immigration and community building*. Melbourne University Publishing.

<sup>2</sup> Haveric, D. (2024). *A history of Muslims in the Australian military from 1885 to 1945*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.



**Figure 1:** Dr Dzavid Haveric, Geelong, 2025. Dr Dzavid Haveric; photographer: Aida Haveric.

My research at the museum has provided collaborative opportunities, including the identifying of historical collections for future acquisition, such as documents and images; the possibility of the museum becoming the repository for my projects' oral history collection; and expanding existing Collections Online records and narratives. Collectively, these outcomes promote understanding between Muslim and non-Muslim cultures and histories, and demonstrate the distinctiveness of the Islamic culture that is part of the cultural diversity of Australia.

During my research at the museum, I have maintained fruitful cooperation with Dr Moya McFadzean, senior curator of migration and cultural diversity and more recently with Deborah Tout-Smith, senior curator of home and community. I have relished opportunities to consult and share information with them, to display findings and to discuss my research, especially after field trips. I value their continuing curatorial interest and academic support.

In the museum, I have worked not only on stories, but also on valuable image and object records in the museum's EMu collection database. I have enjoyed being part of the museum's back-of-house team and interacting with history and technology department colleagues. Visiting exhibitions, attending tours and relaxing with colleagues in the café are other benefits in the life of the research associate.

## Muslims in Australia

At the time I started my research in 2015, there was no comprehensive history of Islam and Muslims in Australia, except for a couple of brief histories or popular accounts which focused on particular ethnic groups — most notably Christine Stevens's work on Afghan settlers in Australia.<sup>3</sup> An exception was a Museums Victoria travelling exhibition book, which covered aspects of the post-war multiethnic Muslim community.<sup>4</sup>

In 2015, my project 'History of Islam and Muslims in Australia' was funded by the Centre for Public and Contextual Theology at Charles Sturt University. My approach — from a sociohistorical viewpoint — embraced people of diverse ethnic backgrounds going back almost 1,000 years. The project spans the early Muslim exploration of Australia to the centuries-old visits by Macassan traders from Indonesia prior to the establishment of the Australian colonies. This period was followed by the arrival of Afghans and Indians to the Australian continent, until the mid-twentieth century when multiethnic Muslim immigration began. The research explored, for the first time, the history of Islam and Muslims in Australia.<sup>5</sup>

As this project deepened and broadened my knowledge about Muslims in Australia, I began to develop the concept for a museum-focused project. I approached the museum with the idea of a formal research relationship and within months was accepted as a research associate. I received valuable academic support from Dr Moya McFadzean, and at the same time developed relationships with Muslim community organisations and leading Muslim community representatives.

I was able to visit a range of community settings, such as mosques, Islamic centres, historical societies and social clubs, as well as state museums, libraries and archives, and I consulted with a range of scholars. The network I developed was very useful for building stories and understanding social and cultural contexts.

This work led me to my second research focus, developing into the book *Muslims making Australia home: immigration and community building*.<sup>6</sup> This work covers a significant gap in the history of Australia, particularly the history of Islam and Muslims in Australia from World War II to the 1980s. Multiethnicity and Muslim memories play a central feature in the work, which includes images, first-person remarks and archival data. In collaboration with the museum, significant information and photographs were selected as a focus for the 'Muslims in Australia' project.

I found that Muslims have long wanted to familiarise themselves with Australia, and also to familiarise Australia with them. The 'Muslims in Australia' project is intended to showcase the stories of Australian Muslims: who they are and what they stand for. In my book *Muslims making Australia home*, I state, 'There is no history of Islam in Australia without a history of Muslim communities; there is no history of these Muslim

3 Stevens, C. (2002). *Tin mosques and ghantowns: A history of Afghan camel drivers in Australia*. Paul Fitzsimons.

4 Jones, M. L., & Kazi, A. K. (1993). *An Australian pilgrimage: Muslims in Australia from the seventeenth century to the present*. Victoria Press in association with Museums Victoria.

5 Haveric, D. (2019). *History of Islam and Muslims in Australia*. Lambert Academic Publishing.

6 Haveric, D. (2019). *Muslims making Australia home: Immigration and community building*. Melbourne University Publishing.



**Figure 2:** Book launch, 2019. Islamic Museum of Australia; photographer: staff member of the Islamic Museum of Australia. © Islamic Museum of Australia.

*communities without the memories of Australian Muslims.*<sup>7</sup> Thus, the project preserves memories and photos from the Muslim past — memories shaped into stories that can be best understood in a multicultural context, since Australian Muslims share their cultural qualities with other Australians. Within Australia's culturally religious, pluralistic mosaic there can be no history of the Muslim faith that does not explore the universal values shared with other faiths and cultures.

Among a number of interviewees for the museum's image collection were Professor Abdul Kazi, of Pakistani origin and a leading Islamic scholar in Australia; Janeth Deen OAM, a *Begum* (Muslim woman of 'high rank') of Indian heritage, who I respectfully call my 'Australian Muslim community mother'; the scholar Kinda alSamara from Syria; and Sefkija Imamovic, a son of Bosnian Ishak Imamovic, who was the first Muslim *Kadi* (judge) in Australia and author of the very fine book *Outline of Islamic Doctrine*. Besides these interviews, which are now preserved in the collection, I was able to interview possibly the last surviving Indonesian Colombo Plan student in Australia, Denny Satria Daud, who is now in his 90s.<sup>8</sup>

With valuable images and immigration stories, Museums Victoria's online collection provides information about the experiences of people who pulled up their roots and came to Australia to start a new life. The collection now includes important stories of Muslim settlement, social integration and cohesion in the rich multicultural

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, pp. 93–94.

<sup>8</sup> McFadzean, M. (2019). Muslims in Australia Image Collection. Museums Victoria Collections <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/articles/16673>





**Figure 3:** Book launch, 2019. Islamic Museum of Australia; photographer: staff member of the Islamic Museum of Australia. © Islamic Museum of Australia.



**Figure 4:** Dr Dzavid Haveric in Renmark, SA, 2021. Dr Dzavid Haveric; photographer: Ray Hartigan, Chairman of the RSL Club, Renmark.



**Figure 5:** Dr Dzavid Haveric with Professor Peter Stanley, 2020. National Library of Australia; photographer: staff member of the National Library of Australia. © National Library of Australia.



**Figure 6:** Zada Brothers with their father Khan Zada. Shamroze and Janet Shamroze, the Broken Hill Mosque, 2021; photographer unknown.

landscape of Australia. It was particularly gratifying that the project outcomes were shared during an SBS Radio program in 2019 with Dr McFadzean.<sup>9</sup>

### Muslims and their descendants in the Australian military

Building on my work for the 'Muslims in Australia' project, I turned my focus to another under-researched field: Muslims and their descendants in the Australian military forces.

It is surprising to many Australians that Muslims and their descendants took part in Australian military expeditions in Sudan, in the Boer Wars and in both World Wars. My new project explored many historical sources for evidence of Australian Muslim service and confirmed that Muslims fought alongside other Australians for reasons of patriotism, loyalty and the opportunity to contribute to Australia. Their stories testify to their involvement in the rich military history of Australia.

My research and subsequent book *A history of Muslims in the Australian military from 1885 to 1945: Loyalty, patriotism, contribution*<sup>10</sup> was supported financially by the Australian Army History Unit, the Department of Defence, Charles Sturt University and the Multicultural Foundation of Australia. I received academic support from Dr Moya McFadzean and Deborah Tout-Smith, and scholars in the field, such as Professor Peter Stanley, also encouraged my work on this significant project.

After digging for dispersed and unidentified soldiers' data from sources including military records in the National Archives of Australia, the National Library of Australia, the Australian War Memorial, a number of Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL) clubs, army museums, historical societies and cemeteries, I found that Muslim fathers, brothers and sisters were involved in Australian military forces. They served in World War I in the 1st Australian Imperial Force (AIF), and in World War II in the Australian Army, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and the Merchant Navy (MN). For the first time in Australian history, I found Muslims of many different ethnic backgrounds, and also several women of Islamic background. This inspired me to write an article for the museum, now published on Collections Online, titled 'Anzac Day: an Australian Muslim Commemoration'.<sup>11</sup> In 2023, I was interviewed about my field trip experiences for the museum members publication, *Discover*.

The discovery of the Muslim heritage of Australian soldiers and their experience in the military has led to my current work, which is selecting and shaping stories and unique images for Museums Victoria's migration and cultural diversity collection. This project will continue to broaden the collection, enriching content for future generations across Australia and beyond.

9 Haveric, D., McFadzean, M. (2019, September 22). Muslims in Australia, arrival and settlement [Radio Broadcast]. SBS Bosnian. <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/bosnian/en/podcast-episode/muslims-in-australia-arrival-and-settlement-museum-victoria/pbtxbju9c>

10 Haveric, D. (2024). *A history of Muslims in the Australian military from 1885 to 1945: Loyalty, patriotism, contribution*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

11 Haveric, D. (2024). *Anzac Day: An Australian Muslim commemoration*. Museums Victoria Collections <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/articles/17701>