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MEDIA RELEASE

HARMONY DAY - A DAY TO REFLECT WITH PRIDE

Mr John Kiosoglous MBE KSA AE, Chairman of the South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission, urges all South Australians to take part in this year's Harmony Day activities on 21 March 2003.

"In these trying times we should all endeavour to set aside time to count our blessings and to appreciate that we live in a country that values and recognises the benefits of cultural diversity. Harmony Day is the perfect opportunity for all South Australians to do that and to extend their hands in friendship to each other", says Mr Kiosoglous.

"Multiculturalism is very much accepted as part of the Australian way of life. In making us more open to different points of view and more understanding and accepting of different religions and cultural practices, multiculturalism has shaped us into a world-wise, strong and unified nation".

Different religious groups have co-existed in South Australia, since the founding of the new colony. The "Afghan" cameleers who opened up the outback in the mid nineteenth century brought Islam to South Australia. They worshipped in a mud hut Mosque in Marree – the first to be built in Australia - before the Little Gilbert Street Mosque was built in Adelaide in 1889.

"I would ask the public to be mindful, particularly in the weeks to come, that South Australians of Middle Eastern origin or Islamic faith have the same rights as other South Australians. Many have fled persecution and cannot and should not be persecuted in this country for events in their countries of origin over which they have no control", says Mr Kiosoglous.