



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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More than 240 Muslim Women Gather in Christchurch for IWCNZ's 35th National Conference

More than 240 Muslim women from across Aotearoa New Zealand gathered in Christchurch for the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand's (IWCNZ) 35th National Conference, *Breaking Barriers – Women Leading with Faith and Purpose*. Held over three days, the conference reached full capacity and focused on addressing barriers that can impact the progress and development of Muslim women, while strengthening community, leadership, wellbeing, education, and participation.

Held at Riccarton Park Function Centre from 15–17 May 2026, the conference featured keynote speaker Ustazah Liyana Musfirah from Singapore alongside 27 New Zealand-based presenters delivering workshops, panel discussions, and keynote sessions across four concurrent streams. Topics included leadership, economic participation, identity, Islamophobia, parenting, mental health, self-development, Islamic history, media representation, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and holistic wellbeing.

Reflecting the theme of *Breaking Barriers*, sessions explored personal, social, spiritual, and structural barriers that can affect the development and participation of Muslim women. Through discussions, practical workshops, and shared experiences, the conference aimed to strengthen confidence, leadership, resilience, and capability across family, community, and professional settings.

Participant feedback highlighted the strong demand for spaces that support leadership, connections, wellbeing, and meaningful engagement for Muslim women across Aotearoa New Zealand. Many also reflected on the importance of being able to spend time in an environment where they felt understood and represented, without needing to explain their identity or lived experiences.

The conference also featured a Government and Community Expo, bringing together agencies, organisations, community-led organisations, authors, and small businesses to engage directly with Muslim women from across Aotearoa New Zealand. Participating agencies included the Ministry for Ethnic Communities, Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand Police, Inland Revenue, the Electoral Commission, and the Ministry of Education.

The expo created opportunities for attendees to access information, connect with services and resources, and engage with women leading initiatives and projects within their communities. As part of the programme, New Zealand Police also delivered a session on community safety, including reporting online harm, hate incidents, and concerning behaviour.

A formal dinner also included an awards ceremony recognising community contribution and leadership, with honours presented to grassroots community members, an emerging youth leader, and regional representatives for their service and contribution to community and national initiatives.

IWCNZ National Coordinator Munira Khanum said the conference reflected the continued growth and leadership of Muslim women across Aotearoa New Zealand.

“This conference brought together women from across New Zealand to strengthen leadership, to build and support connections, and to engage with issues affecting their lives and communities. The strong participation and expertise represented throughout the weekend shows both the demand for these spaces and the contribution Muslim women continue to make across New Zealand society.”

Community Development Lead Rand Alomar said the conference demonstrated the value of creating opportunities for engagement across communities and generations.

“Bringing together women from different regions, professions, and backgrounds creates opportunities to learn, build networks, strengthen relationships, and connect with others who share similar experiences. Those connections continue well beyond the conference itself and, over time, contribute to leadership development and stronger communities.”

The conference concluded with IWCNZ’s Annual General Meeting, with planning already underway for the 36th IWCNZ National Conference, expected to be held in the Waikato region in 2027.

Ends

For further media inquiries, you can email community@iwcnz.org.nz and your query will be forwarded to the appropriate team member to address.