



Diwan Al Dawla

DIWAN AL DAWLA
ABN 99 761 464 044

10 EAST MARKET ST
RICHMOND NSW 2753

www.aldawla.org
info@aldawla.org

William Pillon
Hawkesbury City Council
PO Box 146 WINDSOR NSW 2756
council@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au

Contact Dr Mustapha Kara-Ali
Phone 0402 85 85 68
Email mkaraali@aldawla.org

BY REGISTERED POST
and EMAIL

cc: Philip Khalifeh (Hawkesbury City Council)

30 June 2018

Dear Mr William Pillon,

Re: Your letter dated 10 April 2018 (Your Ref P20640)

A. DIWAN AL DAWLA

The Colo Wilderness site on 1855 Putty Road is a religious site that is held by the members of **Diwan Al Dawla** for the carrying out of religious activities of devotion, self-discipline, ritual baptism, inter-community prayers, contemplation and religious study. The site with its Colo River access serves as a reclusive place of worship that involves the practice of baptism in the free flowing river as a ritual of purification for prayer.

As a member of **Diwan Al Dawla** and its Imam, I wish to state that I am responsible for decisions in relation to work that is carried out at the site. Since the purchase of the site in 2017, it has been my initiative, as a spiritual leader, to cleanup, renovate and prepare the land for running the association's spiritual activities. As I previously laid out in my letter dated 16 March 2018, all such works that have been carried out are ancillary to running the spiritual activities and are thus taken to be the activities of the religious institution.

It is of utmost religious importance that **Diwan Al Dawla's** religious site be dealt with by practitioners of another religion or upholders of the religious symbols of another religion as an autonomous space that is free from outside intervention and free from the infringement

of coercive measures that tamper with our mode of worship and the exercise of our religious freedom.

Diwan Al Dawla as an unincorporated religious body that is recognised as a 'basic religious charity' is and must remain independent of entities, departments and agencies that uphold religious symbols, which contradict with our belief system, such as the NSW Government and its representatives.

B. NSW GOVERNMENT COAT OF ARMS AND ITS RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

The NSW Government upholds religious symbols in its Coat of Arms and its State Badge. According to the explanatory notes published by the designer of the NSW Coat of Arms, NSW Government Printer William Gullick, the oldest religious element in the design of the NSW Coat of Arms is the Red Cross of St. George on the shield. Gullick states that the Cross was used "in allusion to the old badge of the Colony, the Red Cross of St. George". He further states that "borne on the ordinary [i.e. Cross] are the four golden stars ... representative of the Southern Cross, with the central emblem of the Lion ... [which] was intended by the first designers to represent the "Lion in the South"". (William Gullick, *The New South Wales Coat of Arms With Notes on the Earlier Seals*, Government Printer: Sydney, 1907).

Gullick adds in an Appendix to his notes that "the legend of St. George came to us from the East. The Greek Church honors him as the Great Martyr Captain of the noble army of Martyrs. His cult in the East formed very early as Constantine the first Christian Roman Emperor built a church in his name about 323 AD only". He says, "There is also another legend of his appearing at the head of an army of the Seven Champions of Christendom – a celestial knight who won a great victory over a Moslem host". He adds "the cult of St. George was henceforward specially promoted in England by Richard Coeur de Lion who had invoked his name in the Crusade Wars in Palestine and since then at Coronations the plain white banner of St. George with its red cross is carried in the procession ... in token of Christian Knighthood". He ends the appendix on the Cross of St. George with the following lines, "With the memories entwined around in glorious history, may we ever keep the sentiment alive "*Under the Southern Cross*" [Gullick's italics]".

The four stars on the St. George Cross illustrate what is called the Southern Cross (an allusion reinforced by being placed on each arm of the St George's cross). Gullick placed a white cross on a blue field, then voiding the white cross with the red cross of St George, and the golden Southern Cross and the Lion in the South (an allusion to the Lion of Judah).

All three signs are blatant religious symbols that are tied to deep religious narratives and histories whose use by representatives of NSW Government departments, agencies and leaders is described in section 4(4) of the *State Arms, Symbols and Emblems Act 2004*.

C. VIOLATION OF DIWAN AL DAWLA'S RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Members of **Diwan Al Dawla** are faced with the problem that a government enforcement agency that portrays itself as a secularised entity is upholding blatant religious symbols while interfering with their religious practice by attempting to impose its own definition of

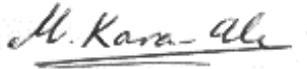
what constitutes the good and the moral in relation to the management and diligent care of the place where religious activities of **Diwan Al Dawla**'s members are carried out.

Accordingly, to be issued by an officer of Hawkesbury City Council with orders, directions, or requirements against the carrying out of **Diwan Al Dawla**'s common religious activities or what is ancillary to them is a serious violation of the religious freedom of **Diwan Al Dawla** and its practitioners.

I, therefore, reject any such attempt to violate the religious freedom of members of **Diwan Al Dawla** and condemn all letters that have been mailed to me in that regard. I further accuse Philip Khalifeh and William Pillon of showing contempt for our religious practice and of being dismissive of my elaborate request in that regard.

I reiterate, it is of utmost religious importance that **Diwan Al Dawla**'s religious site be dealt with by practitioners of another religion or upholders of the religious symbols of another religion, such as the representatives of NSW Government departments and agencies, as an autonomous space that is free from outside intervention and free from the infringement of coercive measures that meddle with our mode of spiritual worship and the exercise of our religious freedom.

Regards,



Dr Mustapha Kara-Ali
Imām, DIWAN AL DAWLA