

Almanar Consultancy

Creating Trade in Education

Almanar Consultancy is an independent Australian business committed to:

- Increasing and improving cultural interactions between Australia and the Arab countries.
- Improving commercial interactions between Australia and the Arab countries.
- Creating trade in all levels of education and vocational training between Australia and the Arab region.
- Assisting Arab clients to appreciate Australian expertise and capacity.

Almanar Consultancy provides Australian clients with market intelligence, strategic alliances and other critical services that enhance their product and their profile in the Arab region. Its services have proven value to clients who:

- are restricted in their ability, time, or staff capacity to pursue export projects,
- have allocated set time and budget parameters to a given export project,
- are inexperienced in the Arab countries or unfamiliar with Islamic culture,
- cannot travel to the Arab countries regularly or for protracted periods,
- are disconnected from other (Australian) service providers in the Arab region.

Dr Fiona Hill is the Director of Almanar Consultancy. Arab clients describe her as having a special understanding of the Islamic values, culture and business practice of the region, and a commitment to building long term relationships.

Australian clients value Fiona's understanding of the key issues that motivate Arab Muslim education and training consumers. They recognise her outstanding ability to navigate both the government and private sector in the Arab region, and her easy access to both the male and female domains.

All clients commend Almanar Consultancy's professionalism and active commitment to mutually agreed targets.

Almanar Consultancy Services

Almanar Consultancy assists clients to identify the product or project best suited to their target market, and offers full logistical support, including developing effective action plans.

Almanar Consultancy introduces, negotiates and liaises regularly with clients' counterparts in the target market, to reinforce and build relationships. We strive to add value to the client's product and to enhance their profile at every opportunity.

Almanar Consultancy provides:

- briefings, lectures and workshops,
- multimedia services,
- recruitment coaching,
- general consultancy.

Professional Development Briefings

Effective business planning and enduring cultural and commercial relations are founded on understanding and sensitivity to difference.

Almanar Consultancy provides Professional Development seminars, corporate briefings, and academic lectures about Islam and the Arab region that are valuable equally to business, education, health, and community service groups. Recent clients include:

- the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade,
- Asia Education Foundation,
- Victorian Association of TESOL & Multicultural Education,
- Monash University
- Department of Human Services,
- Middletons Lawyers.

Some recent briefings and lectures delivered by Almanar Consultancy are:

- “Cultural Protocols in the Emirate of Sharjah (UAE)” – briefing for the Monash University Faculty of Medicine, Nursing, & Health Sciences.
- “Contemporary Realities of Islam: the Middle East & South-East Asia” – briefing for the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, Middle East & Africa Section, and the Office of National Assessment (ONA), Canberra.
- “Islamic Eschatology” – lecture for an undergraduate program in the School of Historical Studies, Monash University.
- “History, Religion, and Culture of Iran” - briefing for the Curriculum Corporation, International Development, Melbourne.
- “The Fundamentals of Islam and its Law” – briefing for Middletons Lawyers, Melbourne.
- “The History and Significance of Islam in the World” – seminar for the Australia-

Asia New Leaders Program, Asialink Centre, Melbourne.

- “De-mystifying Islam” - Keynote Address at the Annual Victorian Indonesian Languages Teachers Association (VILTA) Conference, Melbourne.
- “Islam: Strategies for Understanding” – a briefing for ESL educators in the Victorian Association of TESOL and Multicultural Education.
- “A Whole of Government Response to Islamic Community Safety in the Western Metropolitan Region of Melbourne” - an observation and debrief conducted for the Department of Human Services, Western Metropolitan Region.
- “Understanding Islam: Strategies for Training Teachers” – workshop for the National Representatives of National Asian Languages & Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS), Asia Education Foundation, Melbourne.

Lecture Series

Almanar Consultancy has developed a series of lectures entitled **The Sense of Islam** which focuses on the history, philosophy, law, arts, aesthetic, and contemporary realities of Islam, with a different theme each year. The first theme in 2004 was the aesthetic genius of Islam. The second theme for 2005 is the feminine perspective in Islam.

Almanar Consultancy convenes the series which is hosted by the Asia Education Foundation at University of Melbourne. For further information see www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/cpp/events/forthcoming.html#islam

Multimedia Services

Almanar Consultancy creates resources about Islam and the cultural codes and business protocols of the Arab world, and provides services to the publishing industry.

Almanar Consultancy provides publishers with:

- extended criticism and improvement of proposed publications and other media about the Arab and/or Islamic world, particularly for the schools sector in Australia.
- reviews and improvements to media intended for a Muslim or Arab audience or market, both in Australia and overseas.

Almanar Consultancy has current experience in the design and preparation of text and electronic educational resources, working with schools, universities, Ministries of Education, and the private sector in Australia and in the Arab region.

Recent projects in this area include the following:

- Establishment and Project Management of the *Islamic World Discovery Project* (IWDP), an initiative to create multimedia resources on Islamic history, culture, arts and sciences for use in Australian primary and secondary schools.
- Extensively annotated bibliographies created for the Victorian Curriculum & Assessment Authority (VCCA) to support resources in the introduction of Victorian Certificate in Education (VCE) Islamic Studies in Victorian schools.
- Representation and logistical support in Australia for Dwalej Information Technology, an award-winning Saudi Arabian company focused on developing *e-learning* opportunities for students in the entire Arab region.
- Representation in Australia of Harf Information Technology, Saudi Arabia, which creates software resources on Islam for the global market.
- Extended criticism and improvement of a chapter about the Islamic Empire in an Intermediate Years school history text book published by John Wiley & Sons Australia (Jacaranda Press).
- Consultancy and representation for Harcourt Education Australia (formerly Reed-Heinemann Publishing Australia) and Eleanor Curtin Publishing of Early Learning & Literacy and Secondary School text and electronic media into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.
- Consultancy for English Gateways International and representation of their On-line English language learning courses in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- A published article about the experience of Australian Muslim learners of English as a Second Language (ESL), commissioned in 2003 by TESOL Islamia, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
- Consultancy and logistical support for Sustainability International, an Australian company creating an Arabic/English text, CD ROM and Web site on the **Environment & Sustainability** for use in Elementary through Intermediate curricula in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. This project incorporates the local school curriculum and retains the integrity of each country's cultural and physical realities. The project seeks financial sponsorship from the major industries and government associations, and works in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, so that the **Environment & Sustainability** curriculum can be provided free of charge to every school.

Recruitment Coaching

Almanar Consultancy provides intensive coaching to short-listed job applicants for work in the Arab region as they prepare for final interview. This service is of particular benefit to female work applicants, with a current 100% success rate for clients going into the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Consultancy

The breadth and variety of Almanar Consultancy services are reflected in some of the general consultancy projects undertaken in recent years, as follows:

- Consultancy to Woodside Energy (N.A.) Ltd. (an Australian oil and gas exploration company) in establishing major philanthropic contributions in Libya. Work for Woodside Energy includes creation of scoping documents and detailed reports, conduct of meetings and field excursions in Libya, logistical support of Australian visitors into Libya and Libyan visitors in Australia, briefing of Woodside management on relevant social and political issues, and cultural briefing of Woodside Energy employees.
- Project management of English Language Teacher Training Workshops in private and government schools in Dubai and Ras Al Khaimah (United Arab Emirates), for Melbourne Enterprises International (MEI). Work included research and development of the workshops, cold-calling to schools in the region and eliciting their support, arrangement and financial management of the delivery of the workshops, liaison with the Directorate of Education in each Emirate, and logistical support of the MEI trainers while in the United Arab Emirates.
- Representation of Eltham College, Melbourne, to private schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with a view to Sister School relationships. Representation involved meetings with Saudi private school owners and discussions with the Principals and staff of their schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- Logistical support for the Saudi Arabian Educational Directorate of Al Hasa in seeking Australian expertise in Quality Assurance and Strategic Planning. Support involved research and development of an itinerary in Melbourne for the Director of Al Hasa Educational District, and accompanying him to meetings.
- Representation, logistical support, and consultancy for the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners' GP Education (GPEA) in the delivery of Continuing Medical Education options to the General Health Authority of the United Arab Emirates and the Dubai Department of Health & Medical Services (DOHMS), and to the Ministry of Health in the Sultanate of Oman. Work included the creation of Market Development Plans, Business Plans, and final reports, as well as research and development of itineraries and meetings for the GPEA Managing Director, liaison with potential clients in the UAE and Oman, and direct representation in the United Arab Emirates to relevant DOHMS staff.

Recent Clients

- Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade
- Office of National Assessment, Australia
- Woodside Energy (North Africa) Ltd.
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (General Practice Education Australia P/L)
- Curriculum Corporation
- English Gateways International
- Middletons Lawyers
- Asia Education Foundation
- Asialink Centre, Australia
- Sustain Ability International P/L
- Victorian Association of TESOL & Multicultural Education (VATME)
- Victorian Indonesian Languages Teachers Association (VILTA)
- Victorian Curriculum & Assessment Authority (VCCA)
- Department of Human Services, Western Metropolitan Region of Melbourne
- Eltham College
- Box Hill College of TAFE (Technical & Further Education)
- University of Melbourne
- Melbourne University Private
- Monash University Accident Research Centre
- Monash University Faculty of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences
- RMIT University (International)
- Harcourt Education Australia (formerly Reed-Heinemann Publishing Australia)
- John Wiley & Sons Australia (Jacaranda Press)
- Dwalej Information Technology, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- Harf Information Technology, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- Prince Sultan College for Women, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- Uloom Consultancy, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Fee Structure

Almanar Consultancy assists Arab and Australian clients who are working within time and budget parameters. Almanar Consultancy consistently meets deadlines and budgets.

Contracts and fee structures are determined in close and ongoing consultation with the client, with opportunity for periodic review of performance and outcomes. Fees can be arranged on an hourly or daily rate, or an overall consultancy fee may be charged for an agreed duration and upon completion of agreed tasks.

Australian clients should be aware that the services of Almanar Consultancy can be claimed under the Export Market Development Grant (EMDG) scheme offered to Australian exporters by the Australian Government.

The Director

Dr Fiona Hill has been associated for over twenty years with the Arab region, including Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait and Libya.

Fiona holds a B.A. in Middle East Studies and a Doctorate in Anthropology from research in Syria. She has taught Islamic Studies, Arab cultural studies, and Anthropology at several Australian universities. She is a widely experienced teacher of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Australia.

Fiona is active in promoting inter-cultural and inter-religious understanding, as well as in assisting the transition of government policy into community practice. This is demonstrated in her professional career, some of which is outlined as follows:

- Senior Executive of **Australian Agency for Education & Training (AAET)**. Fiona co-founded and established the business in Australia and the Arab region, assisted in opening the Dubai office, and was responsible for designing and establishing the Scholarships Program for the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman and the Ministry of Higher Education in the United Arab Emirates.
- General Secretary and Executive Committee member of the **World Conference on Religion and Peace/Australia**, a United Nations affiliated NGO, where Fiona was responsible for national administration and for convening international and national inter-religious events, conferences and meetings.
- Independent Evaluator of an English/Arabic curriculum being trialled in a Melbourne secondary school, working in collaboration with the Language Testing Research Unit at the **University of Melbourne**.
- Independent Evaluator of the Master Tree Growers program run by the Department of Forestry at University of Melbourne and funded by the Myer Foundation.
- Founding Researcher for the **Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria (IWWCV)** 'Information and Cross-Cultural Training Kit on Muslim Women'.
- Lecturer and Author of Arab and Islamic Region Handbooks, and also tour guide for Syria, for **Australians Studying Abroad P/L**.
- Consultant to the **Victorian Department of State Development** in convening 'Employment Information Campaign' workshops for Arabic speaking Australians.
- Translator for the 'Research Project on Muslim Education in Australia' by the Department of Education, Policy & Management, **University of Melbourne**.
- Lecturer and Tutor in Islamic Studies, Arab Political Studies, and Anthropology at the University of Melbourne, Deakin University, LaTrobe University, Catholic Theological College, Yarra Theological College, and Council of Adult Education.

Fiona has also delivered numerous voluntary, unpaid lectures and talks about Islam and Syria to community groups and professional associations in Australia.

As a teacher of **English as a Foreign Language** (EFL), Fiona has taught at the International College of English, the International Language Centre, Hales College of English, Hawthorn Institute of Education, and Trinity College Foundation Studies (University of Melbourne) in the following subjects:

- English as a Foreign Language (EFL)
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS)
- English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS)
- English for Academic Purposes (EAP)
- English Consolidation
- English Writing Skills

Professional Associations

Dr Hill is an appointed Member of the Council for Australian-Arab Relations (CAAR) (www.dfat.gov.au/caar/), created jointly by the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Federal Minister for Trade to promote and improve relations between Australia and the countries of the Arab League.

Dr Fiona Hill served for several years on the Executive Committees of:

- Arabic Festival (*Mahrajan*),
- Australian Arabic Council (AAC),
- Commission for Living Faiths & Community Relations of the Victorian Council of Churches (VCC),
- World Conference on Religion and Peace/Australia (WCRP).

Dr Hill is an ordinary member of:

- Australia Arab Chamber of Commerce & Industry Inc. (AACCI)
www.austarab.com.au
- Australian Arabic Council (AAC) www.aac.org.au
- Independent Scholars Association of Australia (ISAA)
www.independentscholars.asn.au
- World Conference of Religions for Peace/Australia (WCRP)
www.wcrp.org.au

In Australia, Almanar Consultancy works with a variety of multilingual and multi-skilled freelance Associates according to specific projects. These Associates include professionals in community development, education, publishing, print journalism, graphic design, photography, and Human Resource management and development, as well as accredited interpreters and translators. Many of these Associates are Arabic speakers and have worked extensively in the Arab region.

Testimonials

“I am delighted to have discovered the Arab world, not only as a market-place but also as a fascinating cultural region, and I thank Dr Fiona Hill for this. We greatly depend on her as our chaperone on our visits to the region. Her special understanding of the region and her unique ability to navigate the government and business worlds has proven invaluable to the success of our venture. I know with certainty that our efforts to do business in the region without Dr Hill would have been wasted, and believe that her efforts have saved us years.”

Peter Broadbent, CEO, Sustain Ability International P/L

“Dr Hill's article on Muslim ESL learners in Australia, which recently featured in the TESOL Islamia Newsletter (2003), was warmly received. The article showed an intimate understanding of the key issues that Muslim learners face in an ESL environment. It's just precisely the sort of thing that TESOL in the Arabian Gulf region badly needs.”

Sohail Karmani, Director TESOL Islamia, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

“The most beneficial aspect of the professional development program delivered by Dr Fiona Hill to members of the Victorian Association of TESOL & Multicultural Education was a deeper understanding of Islam which leads to a broader understanding of students. We would like Fiona to continue to provide PD for VATME on this subject. Participants commented that it should be compulsory for all teachers.”

Anne Keary, Education Extension Officer, Victorian Association of TESOL & Multicultural Education (VATME)

"Fiona Hill's keynote address at the Studies of Asia Conference provided teachers with very clear pathways with which to deepen both their own and their students' understandings of Islam ... Her speech challenged existing knowledge and experiences within the audience and was rated very highly by participants... teachers will now teach with greater confidence and enthusiasm about this topic. "

Jill Wilson, Victorian Advisor, Asia Education Foundation

"Dr Hill's review and extensive comments on our Islamic World Middle History chapter being prepared for publication was thorough and very informative. She made useful and realistic suggestions for improvement, and worked to meet our deadlines. The quality and depth of the review was such that we will have no hesitation in using Dr Hill's services again. "

Sharon Ottery, NSW Publisher for School Division, John Wiley (Jacaranda Press)

“... Dr Hill's presentation was one of the most interesting and comprehensive Asialink has had the privilege of hosting. It was a rare treat to hear someone of her expertise deliver a thought provoking overview of Islam and highlight the general misunderstanding many Australians continue to hold...the audience remarked on her professional public speaking skills and in-depth understanding...”

Tom Parker, Manager Public Programs, Generation Asia, Asialink Centre

“Fiona Hill has expertly guided Reed-Heinemann through her understanding and informative advice on dealing with the tradition and culture of the Saudi people. She has at all times been very professional whilst having a communicative and pleasant approach.”

Kathy Hatzi, General Manager Harcourt Education Australia

Contact Details

Dr Fiona E. Hill
Director
Almanar Consultancy
P.O.Box 92 Elsternwick 3185
Victoria, Australia
fionaehill@netspace.net.au
fionaehill@hotmail.com
www.almanarconsultancy.com

Tel. +613-9533 5701
Fax +613-9533 5782
Mobile +61(0) 401081677