

Tim Watts MP attends Iftar dinner with local African traders and African community representatives



Iftar (Break Fast) dinners held during the fasting month of Ramadan, are great opportunities for Muslims to extend open arms to non-Muslim friends and colleagues, who often gain a new level of understanding of the spirituality and discipline of Muslim daily life. Moreover, the sharing of food is a very good way to transcend cultural and religious differences, especially in the context of fasting month.

The Station Restaurant was the venue for one of these inspiring occasions when AASBA organized a dinner in support of the election campaign for the local MP, the Hon. Tim Watts, Federal Labor Member for Gellibrand. Community representatives agreed to volunteer in the campaign and businesses made arrangements to display election posters in their shops.

If he is re-elected, Tim promised that he will do his best to bring the Victorian Government's Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade to speak to African traders at an AASBA Forum. Tim also briefly outlined the Australian Labor Party's policy in support of small business.

In their dialogue with Tim, the traders emphasized the need for capacity building and for finding ways and establishing processes to support the many newly emerging African small businesses. In view of vanishing employment opportunities in manufacturing within the Victorian economy, the strengthening of the small business sector is vital for the African Australian community, especially for youth. Tim mentioned partnering with institutions such as Victoria University to increase awareness of opportunities and socio-economic dynamics. He also suggested the strategy of forming partnerships with large corporations to facilitate AASBA's engagement in social enterprises.

The evening was co-sponsored by AASBA, the Station Restaurant and African Australian Multicultural Employment and Youth Services. All agreed there is nothing like an Iftar to enhance a sense of mutual purpose and enthusiasm.