

PREMIER'S MULTIFAITH LEADERS FORUM

JOINT STATEMENT- 18 November 2009

Victoria's faith leaders gathered today at a multifaith forum hosted by the Premier of Victoria. The forum discussed opportunities presented by Victoria's hosting of the upcoming Parliament of the World's Religions in December 2009 and our aspirations for the future of interfaith dialogue, social cohesion and harmony in Victoria. Our joint commitment is as follows:

- We commit to promote and embrace the Parliament of the World's Religions 2009 as an opportunity to:
 - bring together people from a range of religious and spiritual backgrounds to connect with each other in meaningful ways;
 - promote the unique richness of Victoria's multicultural and multifaith diversity and our open, respectful and harmonious society to the rest of the nation, as well as the international community;
 - engage with and give voice to the concerns of smaller religious communities, women, youth, the elderly and the disadvantaged and all who are less-heard in our communities;
 - continue the reconciliation process with Australian Aboriginal communities;
 - listen to the concerns and aspirations of Indigenous peoples from around the world;
 - foster greater understanding towards people of diverse faiths and religions and help nurture respectful citizens who are not easily swayed by false stereotypes or religious generalisations;
 - foster collaboration on socially just initiatives;
 - respect our differences; and
 - recognise our similarities and the fundamental principles that unite us.
- We commit to continue our discussions and collaborations, through the Multifaith Advisory Group and other forums, as faith leaders in order to develop greater understanding among Victoria's faith communities, and likewise we extend an offer of friendship and understanding to all Victorians.
- We remain united in our profound sorrow at the terrible destruction of life and property that occurred in our state during the bushfires of February 7th 2009. We continue to pray for those lost, and offer our assistance to all who have been affected. We pray that such tragedy and devastation will never be repeated and encourage all Victorians to continue to support each other during upcoming fire seasons.
- We agree to continue to come together at times of significant community need to communicate with and unite our communities in a common, shared response.
- We reaffirm that our communities are united in their shared commitment to the people, interests and future of Victoria and Australia, with a particular focus on supporting education and youth leadership.
- We encourage harmony and respect and reject all forms of violence and prejudice.
- We are proud to be Victorians and members of this harmonious, inclusive and respectful society where everyone is encouraged to speak their mind, practice their faith and celebrate their heritage free from vilification, harm, violence or persecution.
- We agree to pray for one another's communities and for all Victorians.

Anglican Diocese of Melbourne

Baha'i Council for Victoria

Baptist Union of Victoria

Board of Imams Victoria

Buddhist Council of Victoria

Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

Churches of Christ

Consulate-General of the Republic of Turkey

Council of Orthodox Synagogues of Victoria

Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils

Hindu Community Council of Victoria

Hindu Society of Victoria

Islamic Council of Victoria

Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria

Jewish Community Council of Victoria

Lutheran Church of Australia

Quang Minh Buddhist Temple

Rabbinical Council of Victoria

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Russian Orthodox Church

Salvation Army

Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Australia and New

Zealand

Seventh-day Adventist Church

Shiva Ashram

Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria

Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria (Craigieburn)

Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

Victorian Council of Churches

Parliament of the World's Religions 2009