



conference 2017

Hosted by: Faith Communities Council of Victoria in association with
Bendigo Intefaitth Council and City of Greater Bendigo

WORKSHOPS & PLENARY SESSIONS

Workshop 1: Religious Freedom and Social Cohesion

Location: Multipurpose Room, First Floor **Time:** 2:30 - 3:50pm

Religious freedom is fundamental to the Australian way of life and liberal democratic values. But the challenge of respecting religious freedom in a pluralistic, secular, multi-faith society is becoming more complex.

In Australia in 2017, a Sikh student with religious headwear has been excluded from a school on the grounds of maintaining a 'level playing field'; the construction of a Mosque in Bendigo has created upheaval in the community; Catholic priests are being asked to break the Seal of Confessional by reporting information divulged to them during confession; A local council has banned the construction of a Jewish synagogue in Bondi because it could be a terrorist target; Islamic women wearing head coverings are abused and intimidated and violent criminal acts done in the name of religion result in pressure being applied to Muslim leaders to re-state their commitment to peace.

Is there a zero-sum relationship between religious freedom and social cohesion? Does maintaining peace mean pushing religion into the private sphere? Does promoting harmony mean rejecting diversity? How can religious freedom be advanced in contemporary Australia while recognising the pluralistic nature of Australian society?

This workshop will examine the complex relations between freedom of religion and social cohesion in Australia and the world today.

Facilitator: Daniel Nellor | Advisor to the *Australian Humans Rights (Freedom of Religion) Commissioner, Mr Edward Santow.*

Panelists:

- Dr Julie Rudner, Senior Lecturer @ Latrobe University
- Manal Shehab, Community Engagement Officer @ Islamic Council of Victoria
- Jasbir Singh Suropada, Chairperson of Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria
- Father Andrew Fewings, Parish Priest @ Kennington Catholic Parish, Bendigo
- Gary Bouma AM, UNESCO Chair in Intercultural and Interreligious Relations - Asia Pacific, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Monash University



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Workshop 2: Educational Program for Schools - Understanding Religious Diversity

Location: Drama (Strategem) Studio, Ground Floor **Time:** 2:30 - 3:50pm

Three presenters of Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths will deliver a 90 minute interactive workshop that will challenge some of the typical stereotypes people may hold and demonstrates friendship and respect between people of different faiths and cultures.

In particular, the workshop will include:

- Comparing different faith traditions, the commonalities and differences
- Sharing of personal life experiences, beliefs and common values
- Linking issues of diversity and faith to belonging and community identity
- An interactive Question and Answer session

If you are a teacher, parent, student or member of community who would like to see how a multifaith educational program can be run in your school, this workshop is for you.

Facilitator: Ginette Everest | Executive Officer of *Jewish Christian Muslim Association of Australia (JCMA)*

Jewish Christian Muslim Association of Australia (JCMA) have been running school education programs since 2007. JCMA Workshops create a great opportunity to focus on some key ethical and social questions with students that align with key parts of the Victorian curriculum. There are a number of school programs to select from, or contact JCMA for a tailor made solution to your requirements. For more information see: www.jcma.org.au



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Workshop 3: Active bystander training to prevent Violence Against Women

Location: Dance Studio, Ground Floor **Time:** 2:30 - 3:50pm

This workshop will show you how to safely intervene as an active bystander to prevent violence against women.

In particular, the workshop will:

- Raise awareness of participants about the level of violence against women in our culture
- Challenge thinking by countering mainstream messages about gender, sex and violence
- Open dialogue by creating a safe environment for men and women to share their opinions and experiences about these issues
- Inspire leadership by empowering participants with concrete options to safely confront and interrupt abusive situations

This is a highly interactive facilitated workshop, not a lecture. Awareness raising is utilised to develop concrete options for participants to employ during a range of work or social situations – ranging from inappropriate comments to physical abuse.

Participants who complete the introductory workshop will be invited to participate in a full-day Active Bystander Training workshop.

Facilitator: Dr Ree Bodde | *Program Director, Think Prevent*

Think Prevent is a community leader in violence prevention. *Think Prevent* conducts training sessions with a wide-range of groups, and utilises an active bystander approach to prevention. For more information see: www.thinkprevent.com



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Workshop 4: Introductory Training Workshop for Emergencies Ministry

Location: Music Room **Time:** 2:30 - 3:50pm

The Victorian Council of Churches Emergencies Ministry is a multifaith, multicultural program seeking volunteers from various faith communities.

Volunteers do not need to be councillors, clergy or social workers – rather ordinary people with compassion and good listening skills who can offer emotional and psychological care with people affected by emergencies such as bushfires and floods.

Participants who complete the introductory workshop will be invited to participate in a full-day Emergencies Ministry Training workshop.

Facilitator: Michael Downing | *Regional Support Officer, Victorian Council of Churches Emergencies Ministry (VCCEM)*

The *Victorian Council of Churches* has responded to most State disasters and many local emergency events since 1977. Today, its *Emergencies Ministry* department provides outreach, psychological first aid, personal support and emotional spiritual care across the State of Victoria, and is part of the Victorian Government's emergency response plan. For more information see: www.vccem.org.au