



PROGRAM BOOKLET

2019 Victorian Interfaith Networks Conference

Sunday, 17th of November 2019

conference



Springvale City Hall: 397-405 Springvale Road, Springvale



Proudly supported by
City of Greater Dandenong



Welcome to the 2019 Victorian Interfaith Networks Conference, hosted by the Interfaith Network of the City of Greater Dandenong and the Faith Communities Council of Victoria (FCCV), and proudly supported by the City of Greater Dandenong.

This annual conference aims to help build the capacity and sustainability of existing multifaith and interfaith networks, bring people up-to-date with current matters, provide networking opportunities, and assist the hosting council and network to promote its work to the local community.

This year's conference keynote speech will be by **Fablice Manirakiza** who grew up as a child soldier in war-torn Burundi. In 2007 Fablice escaped his country, arriving in Australia as a refugee where he has established himself as a hip hop artist, presenter, actor, festival producer, curator and advocate for migrant and refugee communities.

Like Fablice, many others have been forced to flee to safety and seek asylum in Australia. But for some the words 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker' conjures up negative stereotypes. Misinformation and the political debate on border protection is overshadowing the positive contributions refugees make to society.

The conference will seek to address any misconceptions about refugees and asylum seekers and provide an opportunity for celebrating the courage and often unrecognised achievements of people who are inspirational role models and community leaders.

We would like to thank all the individuals, volunteers and organisations who helped organise this event, and would like to thank you for your participation.

Sincerely

Sandy Kouroupidis | Faith Communities Council of Victoria



12:00PM-1:25PM: REGISTRATION, NETWORKING & STANDS

Registration opens, networking opportunities, faith and community stands open for viewing. Lunch served from 12pm.

1:30PM-2:20PM: WELCOME & KEYNOTE SPEECH

- Aunty Di Kerr, Wurundjeri Tribe Elder: Welcome to Country
- Dave Dryden, Yorta Yorta man: Didgeridoo
- Ms. Khayshie Tilak Ramesh, Youth Commissioner of the Victorian Multicultural Commission
- Reverend Ian Smith, Faith Communities Council of Victoria
- Agnes Kean, President, Interfaith Network of the City of Greater Dandenong
- Mayor (or representative) of the City of Greater Dandenong



Keynote Speech on:

My faith and Refugee Journey

by *Fablice Manirakiza*, child soldier in war-torn Burundi and current advocate for migrant and refugee communities.

2:25PM-3:50PM: WORKSHOPS & PLENARY SESSIONS

- 1: Refugees and Asylum Seekers: A Celebration of Courage & Achievements
- 2: Voices of Youth: My Faith, My Generation
- 3: Performing Arts & Faith: a hands on experience!
- 4: Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme

4:00PM-4:30PM: CLOSING SESSION

Enjoy a performance from the 'Performing Arts & Faith' workshop, summary of the afternoon and concluding remarks.

LUNCH SERVED BY: FREE TO FEED

Free to Feed provides refugees and people seeking asylum with mentoring and training, a wage, transitions to other meaningful employment, and the opportunity to form genuine connections with new communities. See: www.freetofeed.org.au

Workshop 1 – Refugees & Asylum Seekers: A Celebration of Courage and Achievements

Australia has long provided refuge to those who have had to flee their country of origin and prides itself on being a cultural mosaic. But for some the words ‘refugee’ and ‘asylum seeker’ conjures up negative stereotypes. Misinformation and political debate on border protection is overshadowing the positive contributions refugees make to society.

This workshop will seek to address any misconceptions about refugees and asylum seekers and provide an opportunity for celebrating the courage and often unrecognised achievements of people who are inspirational role models and community leaders.

The workshop will also acknowledge their positive contributions in building a cohesive and prosperous city, counter negative portrayals and stereotypes and inspire attendees to collaborate on building connections with newly-arrived people.

Facilitator: Ms Dalal Smiley, Chief Executive Officer, Wellsprings for Women

Panellists:

Ms Be Ha – Be Ha escaped from Vietnam in 1979 with her family on a small fishing boat. The boat floated for a month, starved of food and water and fighting off deadly pirate attacks, before being rescued by a British cargo vessel.

Mr Simon Landid – Imprisoned and tortured by the Sudanese INF in 2001 for organising a bible exhibition at a University campus, Simon Landid managed to flee to Egypt where he sought asylum for three years.

Ms Nayran Tabiei – Forced to flee Syria with her husband and young daughter, Nayran travelled to Lebanon, then Thailand, and finally made the dangerous journey by boat to Australian waters in 2012.

Councillor Matthew Kirwan, City of Greater Dandenong, speaking on the ‘Back Your Neighbour’ campaign - backyourneighbour.com.au

Location: Supper Room 1, Springvale City Hall **Time:** 2:30- 3:50pm

Workshop 2 – Voices of Youth: My Faith, My Generation

Gone are the days of young people simply adopting the identity and faith of their family or community of origin without question. The youth of today are critically engaging with their faith tradition and making their own decisions.

Whether choosing to follow in their parents’ footsteps or forging their own path, the faith of today’s young person is one they have claimed for themselves.

This workshop will provide the opportunity to hear inspiring, original insights and opinions from young people on their faith, their world views and hopes for the future.

Facilitator: Mr Isaac Mead, Youth Pastor, The Salvation Army

Panellists:

Hindu/Secular: **Ms. Khayshie Tilak Ramesh**, co-founder and vice-president of Young People for Refugees in Bendigo, and current youth commissioner of the Victorian Multicultural Commission.

Baha’i: **Ms Claudia Roshan** is 20 years old and in the process of completing her Bachelor of Business at Monash University.

Christian: **Thomas Hmun** is from Chin state, Myanmar and is finishing off a Bachelors in Psychology hoping to get into social work with refugees and asylum seekers.

Islam: **Sajda Yakub** is a young Melbournian Muslim, finishing her studies in law, commerce, sociology and journalism - and volunteering in the youth committee of the Islamic Council of Victoria.

Sikh: **Prabjoth Singh** is a 25 year old graduate from Monash University with a Bachelors in Accounting, heavily involved in interfaith and is the Sikh representative for the Victoria Police Multifaith Youth Council.

Buddhist: **Amy Chu** is a Year 11 student studying at Nossal High school, who is involved with City of Greater Dandenong’s youth services and is passionate about promoting young people’s voice in the community.

Location: Supper Room 2, Springvale City Hall **Time:** 2:30- 3:50pm



Workshop 3 – Performing Arts and Faith: a hands on experience!

The performing arts play an important part in the expression of our faith. In particular, music and comedy have the capacity to engage with different elements of our being and to move us in various ways.

Join our multi-talented facilitators to create a short play that will connect faiths through light-hearted humour and music.

Please Note: This workshop has a capacity of 25 participants so arrive early to guarantee enrolment. Participants are encouraged to bring a costume and will perform their play to all conference delegates after their workshop.

Facilitators:

- **Justine Sless:** Jewish comedian, writer and former creative director of Melbourne Jewish Comedy Festival, who likes to create light-hearted irreverent humour.
- **Fabrice Manirakiza:** Former Victorian Young Achiever of the Year who shares his unique life's journey through music, hip-hop performance and dialogue.

Location: Stage, Springvale City Hall **Time:** 2:30- 3:50pm



Workshop 4 – Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct

From 1 January 2017, religious and faith-based organisations that provide services for children are required to comply with **Child Safe Standards**. These standards aim to drive cultural change in organisations so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in everyday thinking and practice. The standards are compulsory but not prescriptive. This allows religious organisations flexibility in how they implement the standards to meet the requirements.

From 1 January 2018, religious and faith-based organisations are required to comply with the **Reportable Conduct Scheme** and respond to allegations of reportable conduct, and misconduct that may include reportable conduct, made against their workers and volunteers, by investigating those allegations and reporting to the Commission for Children and Young People.

If you are part of a religious and faith-based organisation that is required by law to be compliant with **Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme**, this is an information session to support your knowledge and implementation. We all have an obligation to do the best we can to keep children safe from harm and abuse.

The workshop will include an interactive style discussion on practical case studies to illustrate the application of the Scheme.

Facilitator: Emily Sanders - Director, Regulation | Commission for Children and Young People

The Commission for Children and Young People is an independent statutory body that promotes improvement in policies and practices affecting the safety and wellbeing of Victorian children and young people. We have a particular focus on vulnerable children and young people. For more information see: www.ccyv.vic.gov.au

Location: Mayoral Room, Springvale City Hall **Time:** 2:30- 3:50pm

Stop cruel cuts
to support for
people seeking
asylum

BACK YOUR
NEIGHBOUR

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Back Your Neighbour Campaign

Since World War II, Australia has welcomed more than 800,000 people who've fled war and persecution. These people have contributed to our communities and our country on every level, from our culture to our sporting traditions, from medicine to the law, from science and research to our global reputation for excellence in the culinary arts.

Yet earlier this year, the federal government outlined a plan to cut support from up to 7,000 people who had come to Australia fleeing war and persecution. The scheme currently provides payments to asylum seekers living in the community while the federal government finalises their protection claim. Without these support programs, thousands of people seeking asylum will become homeless or destitute, forcing them to use already overstretched council and charity sector services.

We are calling on Australians to tell the federal government that we don't need to cut the SRSS (Status Resolution Support Services) program, that we don't need to put many people – who might otherwise become our doctors, nurses, lawyers, colleagues, friends and neighbours – out on the streets.

Because when we back our neighbours, they give back.

What are the campaign objectives?

The Back Your Neighbour Campaign, which was launched on 3 December 2018, has seen 22 Councils band together to ensure people who have fled persecution do not end up suffering homelessness or destitution as a result of the Federal Government cuts.

This campaign symbolises a unified approach with Councils from NSW and Victoria involved together with community ambassadors and advocates to have financial and support services reinstated for asylum seekers.

The objectives of the Back Your Neighbour campaign are for the:

1. Federal Government to ensure a liveable income for those awaiting the decision on their claim for asylum.
2. State and Territory Governments to follow suit with Victorian and Queensland Governments in providing interim funding to local services who are supporting individuals and families put at risk by SRSS cuts.
3. The Federal Government to provide adequate resources to fairly expedite the 'legacy caseload' of people seeking asylum so that their status is fully resolved.

For more information see: backyourneighbour.com.au

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**'World Famous'
Interfaith Bell Choir**

"MANY FAITHS, ONE PEOPLE"

The Interfaith Network [IFN] of the City of Greater Dandenong has been unique in the life of the City. Consisting of leaders of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish and Sikh faiths and their communities together with the spiritual organisations of the Sri Sathya Sai and the Brahma Kumaris, the IFN continues to work for peace, harmony and understanding in the City of Greater Dandenong - *the* most culturally diverse municipality in Australia.

For over 30 years, the oldest IFN in Australia has achieved many things with past activities drawing international and national recognition and much acclaim. The Network has been the recipient of a Premier's Award for its contribution to multicultural community harmony. It has been prominent in bringing faith traditions together in times of international stress and disaster via public gatherings, and continues to conduct its popular *Tours to Places of Worship*. It was also influential in working with the Dandenong hospital to create one of the first multifaith sacred spaces in a hospital.

The IFN attends the new Mayor's induction each year, offers prayers at fortnightly council meetings, holds Annual Gatherings of the IFN and the Greater Dandenong Combined Schools Group, annually hosts a breakfast in the United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week and hosts Talking Faith? Forums in partnership with the libraries. As well as meeting monthly, the IFN is the first IFN in Victoria to form an Interfaith Bell Choir and employ a part time IFN Development Officer.

Among its many activities over the years, the IFN has held a grassroots conference, launched a website and produced a 20th year celebratory calendar. It has also produced 2 short histories, a recipe book "*All Things Rice*" with local schools, as well as producing a DVD of its work. "*The Welcome Tours*", an uplifting documentary about refugees & asylum seekers visiting places of worship was produced and in partnership with council, a faith-based resource "*Promoting Equality & Respect: An Interfaith Collaboration on Preventing Family Violence*", referred to in the Royal Commission into Family Violence Report, was also produced. In this, its 30th year, the IFN has produced a Places of Worship Coffee Table Book titled: "*Many Faiths, One People*".



Baha'i Faith - Unity in Diversity

The oneness of humanity is the central principle of the Baha'i Faith. The Prophet-Founder of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'u'llah, said: 'The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens'. The diversity of the human family should be the cause of abiding love and harmony, 'as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord.' The Baha'i stand will include information on the Baha'i Faith and on our community-building activities, which include devotional gatherings, children's classes, the junior youth spiritual empowerment program and study circles. These activities are open to everyone.

Sikhism - Try on a Turban

Sikhism is the only religion in the world which requires its followers to tie a turban. Hence a turban is an article of faith. Turbans can be different colours, styles and types but they are not hats. Sikhs tie their turbans a new each day. Visit our stand and try on a Turban.

Islam - Arabic Calligraphy

Arabic calligraphy is considered the quintessential art form of the Islamic world. While some of the best examples of calligraphic writing make this art form appear effortless, each letter and diacritical mark is the result of painstaking measurements and multiple strokes. Visit our stand to have your name written in Arabic calligraphy.

Hinduism - Henna Painting (Mehendi) & Bindi

The art of applying henna to the hands and feet is known as Mehendi, and is traditionally used for Hindu festivals and celebrations as well as rites of passage. A bindi is a small red dot that symbolises the mystic third eye, the central point of the base of creation. Visit our stand and try on some henna painting and/or a bindi.

SisterWorks

SisterWorks is a not-for-profit social enterprise, based in Melbourne. Through work and entrepreneurship, SisterWorks' mission is to support women who are refugees, asylum seekers or migrants to improve their confidence, mental wellbeing and sense of belonging. SisterWorks' vision is an Australia where all migrant women are given the opportunities to become economically empowered. See: sisterworks.org.au

Victorian Council of Churches Emergencies Ministry (VCCEM)

The Victorian Council of churches emergencies ministry is a state wide relief and recovery partner and is activated following emergency events to provide personal support, psychological first and emotional spiritual care to affected people. We are a multi-faith, non-denominational organisation and have members from a number of religious and cultural groups including Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh and Hindu, trained to respond to all affected persons following emergencies in Victoria. Our mission is to provide Compassion in Times of crisis. See: vccem.org.au

The Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP)

The Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) is an independent statutory body that promotes improvement in policies and practices affecting the safety and wellbeing of Victorian children and young people. We have a particular focus on vulnerable children and young people. If you are part of a religious and faith-based organisation, visit our stand to learn more about what is required by your organisation under both the Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme: ccyp.vic.gov.au

Woggle Box - www.wogglebox.org.au

Woggle Box is a fresh look at breaking down misconceptions about refugees and people of faith in the privacy of a video booth. Wogglers can listen to unique stories from refugees and ask the Sheikh, the Rabbi or the Granthi (Sikh) questions you were afraid to ask about their respective religions. You can also play the interactive game, "Race Against Racism" or take the "How Racist Are You" survey! That's Woggle Box!!



History - In past years the Victorian Interfaith Networks Conference has been held in the following local government areas in association with local councils and interfaith networks:

	2011 - City of Port Phillip Sunday, 27th of Nov 2011 @ St. Kilda Town Hall Port Phillip Multifaith Network and City of Port Phillip
	2012 - City of Yarra Sunday, 28th of Oct 2012 @ Fitzroy Town Hall Yarra Interfaith Network and City of Yarra
	2013 - City of Moonee Valley Sunday, 24th of Nov 2013 @ Flemington Community Centre Moonee Valley Interfaith Network and City of Moonee Valley
	2014 - City of Monash Sunday, 23rd of Nov 2014 @ Mulgrave Community Centre Monash Interfaith Gathering and City of Monash
	2015 - City of Kingston Sunday, 22nd of Nov 2015 @ Kingston Town Hall Kingston Interfaith Network and City of Kingston
	2016 - City of Darebin Sunday, 13th of Nov 2016 @ Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre Darebin Interfaith Council and Darebin City Council
	2017 - City of Greater Bendigo Sunday, 12th of Nov 2017 @ Ulumbarra Theatre Bendigo Interfaith Council and City of Greater Bendigo
	2018 - City of Brimbank Sunday, 18th of Nov 2018 @ St. Albans Community Centre Brimbank & Maribyrnong Interfaith Network & City of Brimbank
	2019 - City of Greater Dandenong Sunday, 17th of Nov 2019 @ Springvale City Hall Interfaith Network of the City of Greater Dandenong and City of Greater Dandenong

Common STATEMENT of Faith Communities

We bring greetings from the faith communities to the Mayor, Councillors and people of Greater Dandenong.

We offer to the City of Greater Dandenong our common commitment to seek to live together in peace and goodwill.

We affirm our desire to promote respect and tolerance for the integrity of each other's beliefs, cultures and traditions. This desire arises not only from our common humanity but also from our being people of faith and people of prayer.

We recognise that as neighbours, we have responsibilities to the community, the world and ourselves. We therefore urge all citizens, both religious and non-religious, to put aside intolerance, prejudice and divisiveness, to attain peaceful and fruitful co-existence in our City.



17th November 2019

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Springvale Town Hall
City of Greater Dandenong





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Faith 
Communities
COUNCIL OF VICTORIA



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