



# conference

## **PROGRAM BOOKLET** **2016 Victorian Interfaith Networks** **Conference**

**Sunday 13 November 2016**

**12:00-4:30PM**

**Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre**

**Corner of Bell Street & St Georges Road, Preston VIC**



PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY:

**Darebin City Council**



# WELCOME



Welcome to the 2016 Victorian Interfaith Networks Conference proudly hosted by Darebin City Council and Darebin Interfaith Council, in association with the Faith Communities Council of Victoria.

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 keynote speech will be on **Faith and Social Inclusion**. Many faith communities require those that participate in community life to subscribe to a set of beliefs and doctrines. 'Believing' is a prerequisite to 'Belonging'. However, some that desperately desire to belong to a faith community, but have beliefs that differ only slightly, can be maligned and marginalised. This marginalisation can contribute to social isolation, physical and mental health problems.

Can a faith community justify exclusion? Can a faith community hold opposing beliefs in tension, but still foster a sense of belonging? Are factions and community divisions the only way forward? And how do we care for the real, hurting people that are often caught in the middle of these debates?

We would like to thank all the individuals, volunteers and organisations who helped organise this event, in particular the Darebin Interfaith Council Working Group, staff at City of Darebin and the Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre.

We also like to thank you for your participation.

Sincerely

Sandy Kouroupidis

Multifaith Officer, Faith Communities Council of Victoria



# SCHEDULE

## 12:00PM-1:25PM: REGISTRATION, NETWORKING & LUNCH

Registration opens, networking opportunities, lunch served, faith and community stands open for viewing (see pages 10-13), and art exhibitions on display (see page 6)

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

Welcome to Country. Welcome from the Faith Communities Council of Victoria, City of Darebin and Victorian Multicultural Commission. Keynote Speech on **Faith and Social Inclusion** by **Rev Matt Glover**: *Executive Officer, Spiritual Care Australia & Director, MGA Counselling*

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

1. Faith, Compassion and Justice
  2. Voices of Youth: Faith, Interfaith and Multiculturalism
  3. Faith, Sexuality and Gender Diversity
  4. "Say NO to Racism" - Bystander Training
- (see pages 4-5 for more information)

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

Summary of workshops, honorary recognitions (see page 7), announcement of 2017 VINC host city and concluding remarks.



*Lunch provided by the Asylum Seekers Resource Centre Catering*



# WORKSHOPS & PLENARY SESSIONS

## Workshop 1 – Faith, Compassion and Justice

Each religion teaches ethical and moral precepts. How does your faith promote compassion and the seeking of justice? How does your faith seek the good for all people? How does your faith limit or impede your impulse to care?

Points to be discussed:

- Faith and ethics
- Diversity of views in each community
- The challenge of change over time
- Who determines goodness/evil? And how?
- What constitutes justice? Fairness? Must caring be deserved?

**Facilitator:** Gary Bouma AM, UNESCO Chair in Intercultural and Interreligious Relations - Asia Pacific, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Monash University

**Location:** Grevillea Room

## Workshop 2 – Voices of Youth: Faith, Interfaith and Multiculturalism

This workshop will provide inspiring, original insights and opinions from young people on faith, interfaith and multiculturalism. Discussion on:

- **Faith:** What is the religion or faith of your family? What are some of the practices/ rituals/ traditions/values that you enjoy and find meaningful in the way that your family engages with your religion? Do you think you will continue the practices of your family in the same way when you have your family? Do you think you will do things differently? How? Why?
- **Interfaith:** What does the term 'interfaith dialogue' mean to you? Have you had any interfaith dialogue experiences, either formally or informally? Were these positive or negative experiences? Describe and explain. Do you think they were meaningful experiences for those involved? Why or why not? Would you like to participate in more interfaith dialogue experiences? Why or why not? Do you think that interfaith dialogue is a worthwhile endeavour? If so, what would you like it to look like?
- **Multiculturalism:** How would you explain what multiculturalism means? How might an ideal multicultural society look like? What would you like it to look like? What might be the relationship between an ideal multicultural society and interfaith dialogue? Can we have a well-functioning multicultural society without interfaith dialogue?

**Facilitator:** Frances Prince, Multicultural & Interfaith Liaison Officer of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria and Coordinator of Teacher Development @ Mt. Scopus Memorial College.

**Location:** Theatre



### Workshop 3 – Faith, Sexuality & Gender Diversity

This workshop will feature experts, faith leaders and people of diverse faiths, to explore the intersections of faith, sexuality and gender diversity. From a base of human dignity and respect, the panel will explore themes such as:

- What obstacles do religious individuals and communities face in embracing gender diversity?
- Can a faith community justify exclusion? Can a faith community hold opposing beliefs in tension, but still foster a sense of belonging?
- Can faith communities play a role in promoting the inclusion of, and elimination of discrimination against, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people?

**Facilitator:** Luke Gahan (Researcher, La Trobe University and Editor of the book *Heaven Bent: Australian lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex experiences of faith, religion and spirituality*)

**Location:** Jacaranda Room

### Workshop 4 – “Say NO to Racism” Bystander Training

The Say NO to Racism training package encourages and enables participants to take safe and constructive action against racism. The training covers interpersonal racism and its impacts, barriers to bystander action, the potential of bystander anti-racism and practical skills and tools to help people take action.

At this workshop, the facilitators of Say NO to Racism will provide a snapshot of the full-day training program. Participants of the workshop will be introduced to the strategies used in the training package for constructive and safe bystander action against racism. The workshop will provide information on the social barriers to bystander action and their relevance to faith-based communities. Furthermore, participants will have the chance to practice the strategies and get a sense of how they can be used in real life.

Polykala facilitators use experiential learning to encourage participants to learn and reflect while doing the activities. This approach allows participants to put themselves in a realistic situation to overcome barriers and practice the tools and language required for safe and constructive bystander intervention.

Participants who complete an introductory workshop will be invited to participate in a full-day Say NO to Racism bystander training workshop (currently scheduled to be held on Monday, November 21st from 9:30am-4:30pm)

**Facilitators:** Ananth Gopal, Tom Henderson & Dure de Winter | Polykala

Polykala is a leadership training organisation run by Harvard-trained facilitators.

**Location:** Acacia Room



# ART EXHIBITIONS

## Journeys of Hope: the Art of Seeking Asylum



The "Journeys of Hope" exhibition has emerged from the gently reflective process of spiritual care and art therapy at Baptcare Sanctuary, a supported transitional housing program for people seeking asylum provided by Baptcare. Residents of Sanctuary represent eighteen nationalities, five religions and multiple forms of non-religious and post-religious spirituality.

Sanctuary recognises that all people have a spirituality through which they make meaning, shape purpose and build relationship. Trauma challenges, interrupts and changes human spirituality. Art is a form of creative spiritual nurture that provides some people seeking asylum with a means of making meaning and reconstructing the capacity to relate with others and with their environment. **Location:** Foyer

## Disability and Faith: Exclusion and Embrace



The exhibited artworks are by artists living with intellectual disability and provides a means to explore both the inner self and the physical and spiritual worlds, and to express this experience beyond the limits of what may be possible with verbal language. A number of these artworks, created within Araluen's "Art Connects" program, were originally entered in a three day multifaith art exhibition on 'Exclusion and Embrace - Disability, Justice and Spirituality' (21-23 August 2016 @ Jasper Hotel, Melbourne) acknowledging the struggles and joys found in the experience of disability and faith.

**Location:** Outside Grevillea and Jacaranda Rooms

## Welcome to Country: Words by Aunty Joy Murphy-Artwork by Lisa Kennedy



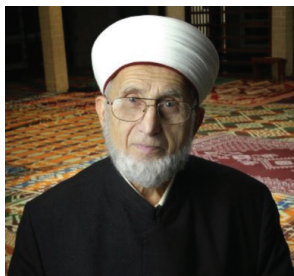
This exhibition is the original artworks for a book called Welcome To Country by Aunty Joy Murphy, senior Wurundjeri Elder, to be published by Walker books and launched in Readings Bookshop in August 2016. The artworks are by Lisa Kennedy, Trawlwoolway artist and story teller. The paintings accompany the words spoken by Aunty Joy when she Welcomes people to Country. They tell the story of the Welcome Ceremony as a continuous living connection to Country. **Location:** Exhibition Space



# HONOURARY RECOGNITIONS

The Darebin Interfaith Council and City of Darebin would like to acknowledge the contribution of **Sheikh Fehmi Imam** and **Reverend Ian Smith** to interfaith dialogue and community harmony within the City of Darebin and surrounding areas:

## Skeikh Fehmi Imam



Sheikh Fehmi Imam, one of the senior Muslim leaders of Australia, passed away at age 88 on Saturday 24th of September 2016. He was the Imam of Omar Bin El-Khattab Mosque (Preston Mosque) for decades and served as the Grand Mufti of Australia from June 2007 to September 2011.

Sheikh Fehmi Imam's leadership led to the development of an interfaith movement in the City of Darebin, and he was a founding member of the Darebin Interfaith Council.

He was also inspirational in expanding interfaith collaboration in Melbourne.

Sheikh Fehmi Imam served as a board member on the Muslim Community Reference Group, an advisory board established by the Howard Government from 2005 to 2006. He was given an Order of Australia award by the government for his services to multiculturalism, the Muslim community and multifaith understanding.

## Reverend Ian Smith

Rev. Ian Smith has been in pastoral ministry with Churches of Christ for over 30 years, with all his ministries having been in Melbourne's northern and western suburbs.

Representing the Churches of Christ, he has been active at the Victorian Council of Churches since 1991, serving various positions, including commission chair, executive member, and a term as president.

Ian also has thirty years of experience in cross cultural dialogue and interfaith collaboration. Between 2000 and 2014 he was involved in local church leadership and wider community engagement in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. In this period he was a founding member and served as chair of the Darebin Interfaith Council for 8 years and also became the inaugural chair of the Northern Intercultural and Interfaith Network (NIIN), organisations that bring together faith and cultural communities from across Melbourne's northern suburbs to dialogue and work together collaborately.





*On the eve of International Day of People with Disability, December 3, the Faith Communities Council of Victoria has issued the following statement:*

As representatives of many religious traditions and different faiths, we stand together in affirming that all people have gifts and contributions that enliven and strengthen the community to which they belong and seek to ensure that people with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate in the faith community of their choice.

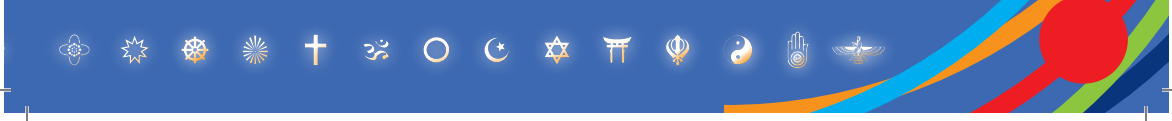
The Council recognises the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2006) which states discrimination should not occur on the basis of religion amongst other factors. Furthermore, the Australian Disability Discrimination Act 1992, (DDA) makes it unlawful to discriminate against people on the basis of disability.

For people with disabilities, and their families and carers, participation and belonging have at times been problematic because of a range of architectural, cultural and theological factors.

People with disabilities request the following from faith communities:





- 
- (i) their physical and sensory needs are addressed in order to be present at times of worship and social activity
  - (ii) they experience a sense of unconditional welcome and belonging and are not treated differently on account of disability and
  - (iii) they be consulted as to their particular participation in the life of their faith community.

Across the state, the Faith Communities Council of Victoria shares the call that faith communities and faith leaders play their part in ensuring that people marginalised by disability experience a sense of welcome and social inclusion, based on the principles of justice, equality and love.

*Faith Communities Council of Victoria (FCCV) is comprised of the following peak bodies: Baha'i Community of Victoria, Brahma Kumaris Australia, Buddhist Council of Victoria, Hindu Council of Australia (Vic), Islamic Council of Victoria, Jewish Community Council of Victoria, Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria and Victorian Council of Churches.*

### *Promoting a Harmonious Multifaith Victoria*

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# FAITH STANDS

## Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Victoria - Hand Painted Spiritual Items

Lead by the Creator Spirit we are a community of hope and memory committed to Truth & Reconciliation. A Sacred place that offers support, Spirituality Cultural awareness and care that models Practical Reconciliation. Inspired by the Gospel, we are committed to the dignity of each person to open hospitality, to truth telling about dispossession and to be a place of connection. We work for Reconciliation in partnership with those who believe that there can be an alternative to the present order. We produce local Aboriginal hand painted spiritual items to support our outreach and pastoral care programs. Visit our stand for more information.

## Baha'i - Virtues

Virtues is the theme of the Baha'i stand. Virtues are referred to in the Scriptures and Holy Writings of many faiths and are frequently referred to in Baha'i Writings. They educate us as to qualities to strive for in our own lives and as a way to better our communities. The Baha'i stand will also include an introduction to the Baha'i faith, and the founding prophet, Baha'u'llah. Information regarding our core activities, devotional meetings, children's classes, the junior youth program and study circles will also be available. These activities are open to everyone.

## Buddhism - Buddhist Symbols

As Buddhism has spread around the world, a number of symbols have become synonymous with the religion. Symbols vary depending on the tradition (ie Theravada, Mahayana, Tibetan, Zen etc) but some are more universally recognised - the Buddha's statue, the Dharma Wheel, the Bodhi tree, the Lotus flower, the Buddha's footprints, the Buddhist flag and so on. Come and visit our stand and learn more about some of the symbols associated with Buddhism.

## Christianity - Christian Icons

An icon is not just a picture, more like a window. The viewer connects with the spiritual world beyond the icon. Communication is two-way. The icon bears a timeless message for the viewer, who offers a personal response. A prayer dialogue ensues. The invisible God took human form in Jesus. An icon re-presents Jesus to us. Christ is pictured in Biblical events and in saints who embody Christ. Icons are personal, though stylised to express spiritual meaning beyond the physical appearance. They aid prayer. Visit our stand and see our icons.



## Hinduism - Try on a Bindi and Henna Painting

Throughout India, a bindi (a small red dot) symbolises the mystic third eye, the central point of the base of creation. When visiting a temple, it is common for the priest to mark men, women and children with a bindi on the forehead. A bindi can also be a social symbol, worn by married women very similar to western wedding bands. Over time, bindis have become popular fashion accessories for girls and women of all ages and come in a variety of styles and colours. Visit our stand and try on a bindi together with some henna painting.

## Islam - Beliefs and Practices

A genuine curiosity exists among the general public about the beliefs and practices of Muslims. Every fasting Muslim has fielded multiple questions about Ramadan and the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca generates equal fascination. Praying five times daily, Islamic dress, role of women in Islam, Halal food and Muslim festivals are among the topics explored at our stall. Our stand will aim to showcase the rich artistic heritage and historical contributions of Muslims in Australia and abroad, offering fascinating insights into the Australian Muslim experience. Conference participants are encouraged to come by and discover, explore and decipher the beautiful Islamic faith.

## Judaism - Jewish Symbols

This display will feature Hebrew texts and religious objects associated with the synagogue and celebrations in the home. Included will be: old, decorative and contemporary prayer books, biblical manuscripts and texts, objects associated with synagogue and home observance of Jewish holidays, including the New Year, Passover and the Sabbath. There will also be velvet covers and silver ornamentations used with the scrolls of the Jewish bible in the synagogue. Visit our stand for more information.

## 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. Sikh turbans become a part of a Sikh's body and are usually removed only in the privacy of the house. A turban is a sign of royalty, a figure of stoic courage, an emblem of dignity and self-respect, a mark of charity and a figure of purity. Visit our stand and try on a Turban.



# COMMUNITY STANDS

## Disability and Multifaith - Exclusion and Embrace

*Disability, Justice and Spirituality* was the name of a recent 3 day multi-faith conference held in Melbourne. The conference was a great opportunity for people to share stories and explore with a range of presenters why it is that people with disabilities and family members are infrequently present within all faith communities. Why is this so? Visit the stand organised by the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, the auspicing body of the conference, and find out why.

## Victorian Cooperative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups (VICSEG)

*Achieving Child Safe Standards in Ethnic and Multifaith Community Organizations:* Important information about new legislation from the Commission for Children and Young People. The Victorian Government now requires professional and voluntary organizations, sporting clubs and associations which have contact with children to implement New Child Safe Standards by 01/01/17. The Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) and the Victorian Cooperative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups (VICSEG) have been selected by the Commission for Children and Young People to work with the leadership of ethnic and multifaith community organizations to meet the new laws supporting children's safety. Visit our stand for more information.

## 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. Visit our stand to find out how you can be involved.

## Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health

The Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health (CEH) is a unique agency that provides specialist information, training and support on cultural diversity and wellbeing. We work to ensure that everyone in Australia has access to vital health services and information. Where people cannot access services due to cultural, language or educational barriers, we support services to engage and inform communities better about their health. CEH has over 21 years of experience and is a leader in Australia in cultural competence. Visit our stand for more information.



## Jewish Community Council of Victoria: LGBTI & Jewish

The LGBTI Service Directory promotes social inclusion & understanding of LGBTI people in the Jewish community and addresses homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and intersex exclusion. At its core, its about showing that intolerance, vilification & abuse based on sexual orientation or gender identity are not acceptable; being LGBTI and Jewish are not mutually exclusive. Visit our stand to find out more information.

## Progressive Atheists Incorporated

An organisation of like-minded individuals who want to affect a progressive social transformation within their local community. Our purposes include seeking to act in solidarity with others who share our commitment to voicing issues affecting atheists, women, minorities, people with disabilities, people who identify as LGBTI, seniors, youth, other species and the environment; to strive for a secular society that grants personal and political freedom from religion, whilst retaining personal freedom of religion and personal freedom of conscience, and; to create a safe and inclusive environment within which people are encouraged to discuss their ideas honestly, debate social and cultural values, develop ethics, promote social justice and contribute to universal human rights.

## Darebin City Council

The Darebin City Council promotes and advocates for social justice and equity through its Equity and Diversity Unit. It works with community agencies, groups and other tiers of government to progress Council's understanding and response to Darebin's diverse community. Key portfolios in this area include affordable housing, human rights, EGM gambling and working with identified groups including faith, Aboriginal, multicultural, women and sex, sexuality and gender diverse communities.


The Darebin City Council also works with a range of external partners to develop policy and implement projects which aim to address disadvantage and improve health and outcomes for the Darebin community. This work is coordinated by Darebin City Council's Community Health and Wellbeing Unit, with a particular focus on areas and communities which experience health inequity. Key portfolios in this area include health promotion and planning, community safety and crime prevention, preventing violence against women, addressing food insecurity, supporting emergency relief, supporting Darebin schools and place based community development programs.



# Victorian Interfaith Networks Conference

**About** - The Victorian Interfaith Networks Conference (VINC) aims to help build the capacity and sustainability of existing multifaith/interfaith networks, bring people up-to-date with current multifaith/interfaith matters, provide networking opportunities, and assist the hosting interfaith network/council to promote its work to the local community.

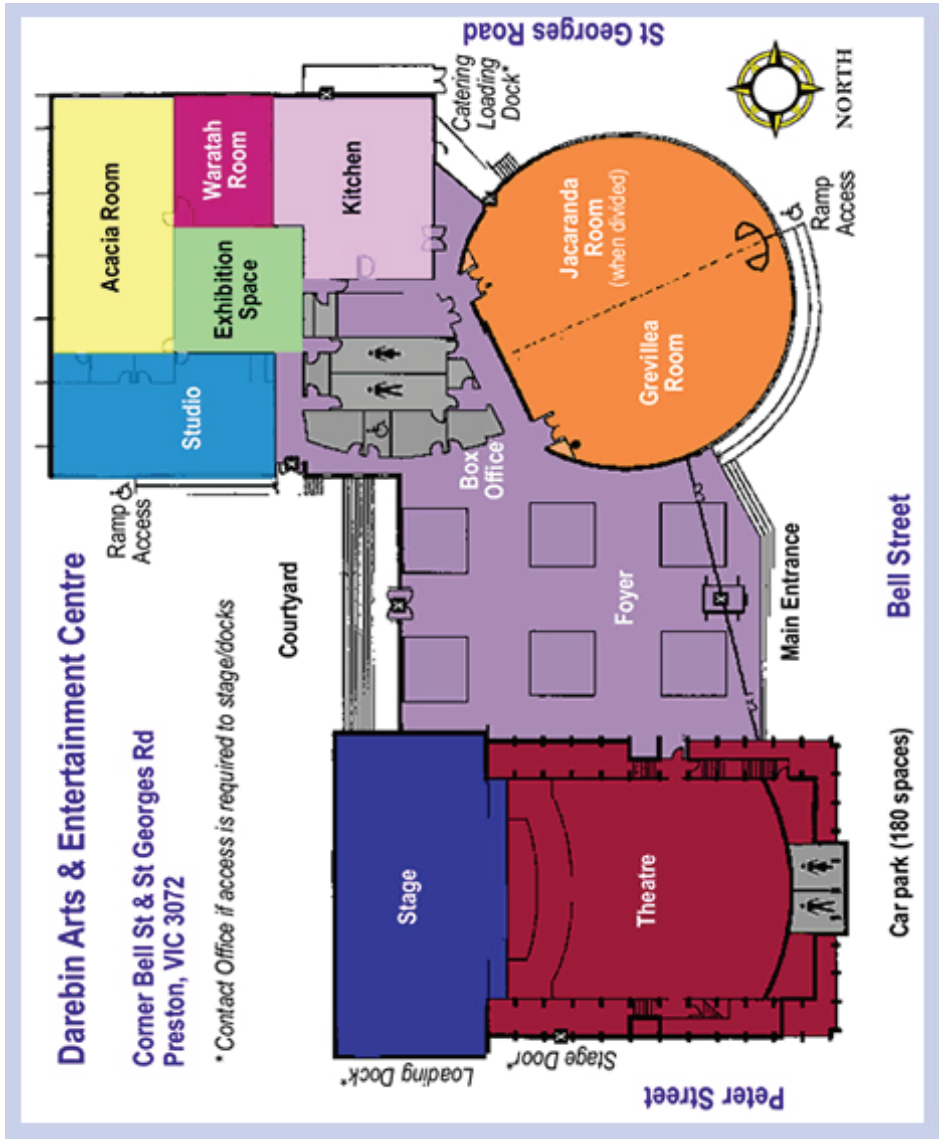
**History** - In past years, the Victorian Interfaith Networks has been held in the following local government areas in association with local councils and networks:

	<p><b>2011- City of Port Phillip</b>                  Sunday, 27th of Nov 2011 @ St. Kilda Town Hall                  Port Phillip Multifait Network and City of Port Phillip</p>
	<p><b>2012 - City of Yarra</b>                  Sunday, 28th of Oct 2012 @ Fitzroy Town Hall                  Yarra Interfaith Network and City of Yarra</p>
	<p><b>2013 - City of Moonee Valley</b>                  Sunday, 24th of Nov 2013 @ Flemington Community Centre                  Moonee Valley Interfaith Network and City of Moonee Valley</p>
	<p><b>2014 - City of Monash</b>                  Sunday, 23rd of Nov 2014 @ Mulgrave Community Centre                  Monash Interfaith Gathering and City of Monash</p>
	<p><b>2015 - City of Kingston</b>                  Sunday, 22nd of Nov 2015 @ Kingston Town Hall                  Kingston Interfaith Network and City of Kingston</p>
	<p><b>2016 - City of Darebin</b>                  Sunday, 13th of Nov 2016 @ Darebin Arts &amp; Entertainment Centre                  Darebin Interfaith Council and Darebin City Council</p>

***The 2017 host city and local interfaith network will be announced at the conclusion of the conference.***



# FLOOR PLAN





# PROGRAM BOOKLET 2016 Victorian Interfaith Networks Conference

*Sunday 13 November 2016*



Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre  
Corner of Bell Street & St Georges Road, Preston

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY:

Darebin City Council



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