



**BOROONDARA  
INTERFAITH  
NETWORK**



**BOROONDARA**  
*City of Harmony*

## Faith, Expression and Learning

**Wednesday 18 May 2011**

**6.30 - 8.30pm**

**Ashburton Library, 154 High St, Ashburton**

All community members are welcome to this free event. Bookings are essential. To book call City of Boroondara Library Service on 9278 4666 or go to [Boroondaralibraryevents.eventbrite.com](http://Boroondaralibraryevents.eventbrite.com)

## Presenter Biographies

### Michael McGirr

Michael McGirr was born in 1961. He is the author of the best-selling *Things You Get For Free*, a comedy about travelling in Europe with his mother. He is also responsible for *Bypass: The Story of a Road*, a quirky biography of Australia's main street, the Hume Highway. *Bypass* is currently a Year 12 English text in Victoria.

The heart of *Bypass* is a bike ride that Michael, not the fittest man on the road, made from Sydney to Melbourne with the ever-patient Jenny, now his wife and more patient than ever. By the end of the book, they were expecting their first child. *The Lost Art of Sleep* takes the story further. It was inspired by the arrival of twins not long after Michael and Jenny's first little boy. Suddenly there were five in the bed. This meant that Michael, who was used to, after 20 years in the priesthood, long nights on bad mattresses now had a great mattress but only short nights.

Michael McGirr has been a regular columnist and reviewer for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age* and *The Canberra Times* and a presenter on ABC radio. He has also been editor of *Australian Catholics* and publisher of *Eureka Street* and fiction editor of *Meanjin*. At the moment, he is a secondary school teacher in Melbourne where he lives near a port with his wife and three children who want to be pirates.

### Hanifa Deen

Hanifa Deen is a Melbourne-based award-winning author and social commentator of Pakistani-Muslim ancestry who writes narrative non-fiction. She has held a number of high profile positions including Hearing Commissioner with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission; Deputy Commissioner of the Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission of WA, and was a director on the Board of SBS for five years.

Hanifa Deen was born in the gold mining town of Kalgoorlie WA and blames all that desert air for turning her into a 'Muslim maverick'. Five generations of the Deen family 'belong' to Australia going back to both her grandfathers who came out from what is today Pakistan in the 1890s, before the White Australia Policy of the era closed the doors for nearly eighty years.

Hanifa is proud of her Muslim childhood and adolescence, but speaks out against what she sees as fundamentalist ideologies on both sides of the religious divide. She is also a feminist and a great believer in the capacity of women to reinvent themselves and is particularly fond of disobedient women in history, literature and real life: she began her career as a high school teacher (English and History), taught English as a foreign language for seven years in (West) Germany at a boys' high school before returning to Australia where she became active in ethnic affairs and human rights at both a community and, finally, at a professional level in the public service. Feeling that an irreverent tongue was better suited to writing than a career in the public service and concerned that years of churning out 'Yes, Minister' memos and reports was turning her into a writer of turgid prose, Hanifa turned to full time writing fourteen years ago.

### Constant Mews

Although born in Britain, Constant received his later secondary education and did initial university studies in history (BA and MA) in Auckland, New Zealand. Subsequently, he did doctoral study at the University of Oxford, UK, followed by five years (1980-1985) teaching British civilisation at the Université de Paris III, while pursuing his own studies in medieval thought (focusing on Peter Abelard) in connection with Jean Jolivet, at the Ecole pratique des hautes études en sciences religieuses. This was followed as two years as a Leverhulme research fellow at the University of Sheffield, UK, working with Prof. David Luscombe, on editing the writings of Peter Abelard.

Constant came to Australia in July 1987, when he took up a position at Monash University as Lecturer in the Dept of History. Since then he has become involved in developing the Centre for Studies in Religion and Theology and in promoting studies in religion more generally, with a strong interest in interfaith work. He has had spells of study at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, in 1990 and 2000, and has also taught in Paris, at the Ecole pratique des hautes études (Ve section) and in the Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales.