



*Make a World of Difference:
Hearing each other, Healing the earth*

Parliament of the World's Religions

WORKING TOWARD SUSTAINABLE INTERFAITH RELATIONSHIPS IN MELBOURNE

THE LEGACY OF THE PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS MELBOURNE,
DECEMBER 2009

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Acknowledgements

The author warmly acknowledges all participants and colleagues who contributed information to this report; Reverend Dirk Ficca, Executive Director of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, for supporting, valuing and providing the impetus for the development of this report; the Parliament's Legacy and Evaluation Sub-committee who helped to guide the development of this research; Emma Bridgland and Molly-Rose Elkins-Ryan who provided administrative support; Kim Lear and Carolyn McSwiney for their volunteer support; Alex Butler and Helen Heath Community Organizers, Professor Des Cahill Australian Program Director, and Professor Gary Bouma Chair of the Board of Management PWR Melbourne who provided the academic foundation on which the research approach was developed.



Preface

It has been an honour and pleasure to work with a highly collegial and collaborative Board of Directors to oversee the management of the delivery of the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne, 2009. This highly diverse group with a wide range of skills settled issues, confronted challenges and in the end were key players in the delivery of a world class interreligious event that has transformed the lives of many and has left a legacy of enhanced commitment to and energy for promoting healthy respectful relations among religious groups in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia and beyond.

When asked to sum-up the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009, I report that I both experienced and have heard so many reports of occasions when interactions went from polite to authentic. When this happened people shared deeply, learned about the complexities and richness of others and came away more comfortable with both them selves and the other, more prepared to trust and filled with the joy of genuine encounter.

This was made possible by a fine team of both paid and unpaid staff, volunteers and others. Again a richly diverse group of people embodied and made palpable the values of the Parliament of the World's Religions 2009 in the way they worked with each other. We had a fine group of Patrons, led by our Patron-in-Chief Professor David de Kretser, Governor of Victoria. The continuing support of a very active Advisory Council, which functioned as our Community Reference Group, ensured that the voices of local groups were heard and messages could be communicated to a host of related organizations.

The support of the Victorian Government through the Victorian Multicultural Commission was inestimable. Their willingness to commit funds triggered funding from Commonwealth Government and the City of Melbourne. All three levels of Government took active supportive roles in the over three years of work preparing for the Parliament of the World's Religions 2009. This was wholehearted support and deeply appreciated. The Parliament of the World's Religions 2009 would not have happened without them.

Fundraising proved frustrating and a learning experience. Getting past the name of the event took huge amounts of energy. Americans may think of a parliament as a safe place to speak, but such a thought leaves Australians laughing like kookaburras. And then there was the issue of 'religion' and why should either governments or corporations fund such an event. Many expected riots in the street or other unseemly behavior. For a number of potential funders, the Parliament of the World's Religions 2009 was difficult to grasp as a 'brand' or a 'product'. For many, it was not possible to make a case for some unspecified interreligious event. The fact that the program was not available until a few months before the event hampered both efforts in both fundraising and securing registrations. Both organizing teams – in Melbourne and Chicago – struggled to meet earlier deadlines, in the face of the daunting challenge to put together an ambitious and complex program.

As it turned out the program was brilliant. The program team, ably led by Professor Des Cahill, joined with their CPWR counterparts labored long and hard to produce a program, a program book and the event itself. This called for dogged determination, creative engineering and pastoral watchfulness. The only complaint was that there was too much to choose from. The fact that 6,500 people attended, presented, performed or volunteered at the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 is a great outcome, particularly given the impact of the Global Financial Crisis, the rise to near parity of the US Dollar, and the lack of funds for advertising.

The new Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre worked sublimely. The large hall was perfect for plenaries and concerts. The high quality of the environment, appointments, wonderful outlook and flexibility of facilities combined to make the experience memorable. The centre contributed greatly to the quality feel of the event. The Parliament of the World's Religions approach is unique in welcoming all people, those of faith and spirit as well as those who are uncertain or are atheists. The only condition is that people respect each other.

The Parliament of the World's Religions 2009 was no exception, welcoming people from over 200 religious groups. Small groups were greatly lifted by the welcome and respect they received. Their response was to ask: What do we do for others? How can we take part in the larger society? From feelings of alienation and rejection, the experience of the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 produced healing, integration and well-being.

Hats off to those who volunteered their services to ensure the arts and culture side of Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 was excellent. We are deeply indebted to the professional and sacrificial contributions of Cultural Infusion. Media coverage of the Parliament of the World's Religions 2009 was beyond expectations and certainly exceeded that experienced by previous Parliaments. Again we are indebted to Porter-Novelli for their guidance, training and expertise.

Bringing this all together was the team from arinex (formerly The Meeting Planners). Giving way beyond the call of duty, they gave advice, kept the accounts in order, and in the most friendly and professional way did all the things you would ever hope a professional conference organizer would do. They certainly put paid to the ideas of some that this sort of event could be managed by amateurs. And in all of this the most important single person was Local Director Janetta Stones without whom there would have been no bid, no careful preparation and no Parliament of the World's Religions 2009. She actively and continuously facilitated relationships between Chicago and Melbourne, managed a team of workers, smoothed feathers needing smoothing and occasionally ruffling those that needed stirring into action.

Gary D Bouma FAICD

Chair Board of Management PWR M 2009 Inc



Contents

Title Page
Acknowledgements Page
Preface
Contents Page
Executive Summary

1. Background

- 1.1 The Parliament of the World's Religions' Beginnings
- 1.2 Aim and objectives of the Parliament of the World's Religions
- 1.3 Outcomes at the Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago, 1993
- 1.4 Outcomes at the Parliament of the World's Religions, Cape Town, 1999
- 1.5 Outcomes at the Parliament of the World's Religions, Barcelona, 2004

2. Rationale for Melbourne's bid for the Parliament of the World's Religions 2009

- 2.1 Planning and Preparing for the Melbourne Parliament
- 2.2 History of interfaith activity in Melbourne (as it relates to the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009)
- 2.3 Victoria and Interfaith, 2009
- 2.4 Interfaith funding (prior to the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009)

3. Introduction

- 3.1 About the Parliament of the World's Religions, Melbourne 2009
- 3.2 About this report
- 3.3 What happened at the 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009
 - 3.3.1 Issues impacting on the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009

4. Approach to Data Collection

- 4.1 Rationale
- 4.2 Data Collection Methods
- 4.3 Acknowledging the difference: working with each target group
- 4.4 Data Analysis
- 4.5 Limitations of this report

5. Suggestions

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Potential legacy initiatives
 - 5.2.1 Interfaith and Faith Group
 - 5.2.2 Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous People Group
 - 5.2.3 Young People Group

- 5.3 **Implementing potential legacy initiatives**
 - 5.3.1 Interfaith and Faith Group
 - 5.3.2 Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous People Group
 - 5.3.3 Young People Group
- 5.4 **Anticipation of Impact of the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009**
 - 5.4.1 Interfaith and Faith Group
 - 5.4.2 Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous People Group
 - 5.4.3 Young People Group
- 5.5 **Working with the three target groups**
 - 5.5.1 Interfaith and Faith Group
 - 5.5.2 Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous People Group
 - 5.5.3 Young People Group
- 5.6 **Interfaith in Victoria: Diversity and Difference**
 - 5.6.1 Diversity of Interfaith Networks and Faith Groups
 - 5.6.2 Contributing to community
 - 5.6.3 Identifying and creating sustainable partnerships with Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous people
 - 5.6.4 Level of involvement in the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009
 - 5.6.5 Access to the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009
- 6 **Conclusion**
- 7 **Appendices**
- 8 **Reference List**



Executive Summary

The Parliament of the World's Religions is a global interfaith event which originated in Chicago in 1893 and now takes place once every five years in a different city of the world. The Parliament is a popular event, open to interested people of all (or no) faiths. The fifth Parliament was held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre over seven evenings and six days from December 3 to December 9 2009. During this time, 6500 participants from 83 countries were able to take part in a choice of 450 diverse programs ranging from spiritual observances and panel discussions to keynote addresses by spiritual leaders through to cultural performances and visual art exhibitions.

Melbourne was chosen as the host for the 2009 Parliament after a bid team, consisting of representatives of faith communities, academic experts and government presented a formal proposal to the Chicago based Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions (CPWR), the nonsectarian, not-for-profit organisation which is responsible for the ongoing staging of the event. The bid team was then reconstituted as the Parliament of the World's Religions – Melbourne (PWR-M), the local co-host of the 2009 Parliament.

Both CPWR and PWR Melbourne 2009 Limited recognised the value of gathering and documenting information and ideas from a wide variety of people involved in every stage of the process of staging the Melbourne event. This had not been possible during previous Parliaments, and it was hoped that this new process would ensure that the enormous energy exerted by local communities to support the hosting of the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne would not dissipate once the event left Melbourne, but would instead provide the basis for planning and stimulating future local interfaith activity.

In keeping with the spirit of learning, the report provides a reflection of the journey of the Melbourne Parliament. Over a period of 6 months, from June 2009 to December 2009, semi structured interviews were conducted with individuals participating in the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 from a wide variety of backgrounds. The interviews covered the following areas: interfaith interests, the attraction of the 2009 Parliament event and its programs (e.g. religious, cultural and social), the perceived impact and value of attending, potential legacy initiatives that could be implemented in the community and other benefits or obstacles.

In recruiting potential interviewees, three target groups were identified. These were: a general grouping made up of interested people from faith communities and/or interfaith groups and networks (referred to in this report as the Interfaith and Faith Group); Australian Aboriginal people and Indigenous people from Australia only (the Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous People Group); and young people aged between 18 and 30 (the Young People Group). These two latter target groups were selected because the inclusion of Indigenous people and young people in the 2009 Parliament had been prioritised by both CPWR and PWR-M.

This document reports on input collected from these three target groups on principles for interfaith engagement and dialogue, ways in which to support different groups to engage, and potential legacy initiatives. This information has been set out according to the following themes, which reflect the core concerns expressed by each of the groups:

Interfaith and Faith Groups

- Environmental initiatives
- Partnership initiatives
- Social justice and human rights activities
- Sustaining interfaith activity in the local community

Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous People

- Promoting Indigenous reconciliation and forgiveness
- Celebrating and valuing culture
- Community capacity building
- Australian Aboriginal history and education in schools

Young People

- Taking Action
- Interfaith Education
- Behind the Scenes
- Community Building
- Partnership Opportunities

The report does not present recommendations, rather findings and key themes based on the research methodology. It provided the best opportunity to respond flexibly, sensitively and responsibly to the broad range of participants contributing and sharing their ideas and knowledge, largely about interfaith engagement. Participants in the legacy discussions were very conscious of the value of interfaith dialogue – its potential to further strengthen social cohesion in Victoria's multicultural and multi-faith community.

Participants also acknowledged that much interfaith dialogue and activity in Victoria has occurred in response to community distress, violence and natural disaster and that it remains difficult to engage people in interfaith dialogue and activity when 'everything is O.K.' in society.

It was highlighted in the legacy discussions that in order for future interfaith activity and dialogue to be sustainable, it needs to be supported by resources and a legislative framework, as well as a whole of community framework to help the community come together to work on projects on a state and national level - to 'do things'.

There were two unforeseen major variables affecting the 2009 Parliament - the Global Financial Crisis and a lack of corporate sponsorship. These did not have a significant negative impact on the event which was recorded as an overwhelmingly positive achievement for Melbourne and its faith communities

The limitations of the report are clearly outlined. It is nevertheless an important first report on potential legacy initiatives from the 2009 Melbourne Parliament of the World's Religions, and on opportunities for sustained interfaith engagement within the local community. It is hoped that the report will stimulate discussion and planning initiatives among faith communities, interfaith groups, Aboriginal communities, reconciliation groups, government and non government organisations.

1. Background

1.1 The Parliament of the World's Religions

In 1893, Chicago, "the great city of the west", hosted the inaugural Parliament of the World's Religions. Held in association with the Colombian Exposition - a World's Fair, held to celebrate the 400th arrival of Columbus's arrival in the Americas. The Parliament of the World's Religions was the first global interfaith event where religious and faith leaders from eastern and western spiritualities met and engaged in formal dialogue.

According to Charles Bonney, President of the Columbian Exposition and who had conceived the idea of the Parliament of the World's Religions, its original mission was to:

'...Unite all religions against all irreligion...to present to the world...the substantial unity of many religions in the good deeds of the religious life'¹

An address given by the famous Hindu religious teacher Swami Vivekananda at the concluding session of the Parliament of the World's Religions however, surpassed Bonney's original expectation. Swami Vivekananda emphasised the need for religious growth and the recognition of religious difference. His closing address urged participants in the Parliament of the World's Religions to express their differences, 'making general harmony the sweeter', and concluded to rapt applause that the Parliament of the World's Religions 'has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any Church in the world'²

The Parliament of the World's Religions 1893 was limited to 10 religions - Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Shintoism, Taoism and Zoroastrianism. Those practicing Indigenous or Earth Centered Religions and newer religions such as Sikhism and the Baha'I faith were not invited to attend the event. Nowadays, the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions does not seek to define religion or spirituality, and welcomes all interested people as participants. This is a cause of concern to some groups.

After the success of the first Parliament of the World's Religions, it was hoped another event would be held at Benares in India, but this did not occur and the Parliament of the World's Religions remained dormant for the next 100 years.

It was not until 1988, when meetings were held by interested religious leaders, academics and local organisers in Chicago that planning began to convene a one-off centenary celebration of the Parliament of the World's Religions 1893. During this time, the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions was formed and incorporated as a non-profit organisation.

The idea of staging a regular Parliament of the World's Religions event was not raised until 18 months after the centenary celebration of the Parliament of the World's Religions 1893 had concluded. It was proposed by participants of the centenary celebration that a Parliament of the World's Religions should be an on-going event, dedicated to extending the spirit and legacy of that first 1893 event; to be hosted by the Council of a Parliament for the World's Religions and partnering city.

¹ Seager, R. Hughes (ed.) 'The Dawn of Religious Pluralism; Voices from the World's Parliament of Religions', 1983, Illinois, Open Court

² *Ibid*

1.2 Aim and objectives of the Parliament of the World's Religions

Each Parliament of the World's Religions must seek to continue the tradition of promoting interreligious harmony, of respecting and being enriched by the unique resources of each religious tradition, and in doing so work towards the vision and objectives of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions. The vision of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions is for a just, peaceful and sustainable world, in which:

- Religious and spiritual communities live in harmony and contribute to a better world from their riches of wisdom and compassion
- Religious and cultural fears and hatreds are replaced with understanding and respect
- People everywhere come to know and care for their neighbours
- The richness of human and religious diversity is woven into the fabric of communal, civil, societal and global life
- The world's most powerful and influential institutions move beyond narrow self-interest to realise common good
- The earth and all life is cherished, protected, healed and restored
- All people commit to living out their highest values and aspirations

Since 1993, a Parliament of the World's Religions has been hosted in partnership with the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions in 1999 in Cape Town, South Africa, in Barcelona, Spain in 2004, and most recently in 2009, in partnership with Melbourne, Australia.

1.3 Outcomes of the Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago, 1993

At the Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago 1993, religious and spiritual responses to critical issues were explored through the provocative statement '*Towards a Global Ethic*' which has been mainly drafted by the Swiss Catholic theologian Hans Kung. This statement was endorsed by nearly 200 religious and spiritual leaders from around the world and drew attention to issues of:

- Non-violence and respect for life
- Solidarity and a just economic order
- Tolerance and a life of truthfulness and equal rights, and
- Partnerships between men and women

1.4 Outcomes of the Parliament of the World's Religions, Cape Town, 1999

At the Parliament of the World's Religions, Cape Town, 1999, participants were provided with the opportunity to witness first hand the role that religion and spirituality had played in ending the system of apartheid that prevailed until 1990. The theme of the event was 'A New Day Dawning', and was supported by the following sub-themes:

- Encountering religion and spirituality
- Making connections
- Offering gifts of service
- Embracing South Africa, and
- Calling for creative engagement

A keynote document, entitled '*A Call to our Guiding Institutions*', invited religion, government, business, education and the media to build new, reliable, and more imaginative partnerships towards the shaping of a better world.

1.5 Outcomes of the Parliament of the World's Religions, Barcelona, 2004

In 2004, the Parliament was held at the site of Barcelona's Universal Forum of Culture in partnership with the Universal Forum of Cultures – Barcelona 2004, and the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia. This was the first time the location for a Parliament of the World's Religions had been chosen through a selective bid process.

The Parliament of the World's Religions Barcelona 2004 aimed to engage participants with its theme, 'Pathways to Peace: The Wisdom of Listening, the Power of Commitment' and in doing so, centered around six goals which were to:

- Deepen spirituality and experience personal transformation
- Recognise the humanity of all and broaden our sense of community
- Foster mutual understanding and respect
- Learn to live in harmony in the midst of diversity
- Seek peace, justice and sustainability
- Actively work for a better world



2. Rationale for Melbourne's Bid for the Parliament of the World's Religions 2009

In the lands of the Wurrundjerri people and the Kulin Nations, and with a population from more than 200 nations, speaking more than 200 languages and dialects and following more than 120 faith traditions, Melbourne welcomed the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions to collectively host the Parliament of the World's Religions as it sought to continue to empower a vibrant and healthy multicultural and multifaith society³.

Melbourne entered the bidding process to host the Parliament of the World's Religions in 2006 with wide-ranging support from community members, stakeholders, Federal and State Governments, and the City of Melbourne. In its bid documents to host the Parliament of the World's Religions 2009, Melbourne recognised the multifaceted impact globalisation and religion has had on its community⁴.

The underlying objective of hosting the Parliament of the World's Religions in Melbourne was to project religion onto the local, national, regional and world stages as a positive force for the wellbeing of people, their families, their culture and their nations. It also acknowledged that religion has, either directly or indirectly, at times been culpable for episodes and moments that have not been good for the world.

The Bid Team argued that with its existing grassroots interfaith activity and vibrant multicultural profile, Melbourne had the ability to show-case religious and cultural diversity at its finest while also acknowledging the sometimes negative reality of inequality, fears for safety, and discrimination experienced by members of its community. In acknowledging the complexity of Melbourne's society, the Bid Team stated Melbourne is a city that has demonstrated best practice on issues affecting the community, such as connecting religion and globalisation, including managing and regulating religious and cultural diversity. The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions recognised Melbourne's capacity to partner with, and host an international world-class event catering to an estimated 8000 local and international visitors.

2.1 Planning and Preparing for the Melbourne Parliament

After Melbourne was awarded conditional funding to host the Parliament of the World's Religions 2009 (pending the balance of the event budget being raised), the Bid Team needed to put certain planning processes in place.

The first task was to establish a Board of Management. This largely consisted of members of the original Bid Team plus representatives of the State and Federal Governments in recognition of their financial investments. After financial and legal advice, it was identified that this group needed to become incorporated in order to handle all the known and unknown requirements and matters of governance leading up to the event in a responsible, professional and transparent manner. PWR Melbourne 2009 Limited was established, with the directors in most instances being members of the board of management. A memorandum Of Understanding was then developed between the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago and PWR Melbourne 2009 Limited.

At the same time, several professional conference organisers were invited to present proposals to the Board and The Meeting Planners (to be later rebadged as Arinex) was successful.

³ Victorian Multicultural Commission, March 2009, Victoria's Multicultural Policy, *All of Us*, p 6

⁴ For further information on the rationale for bidding to host the PWR, see appendix 1

The Meeting Planners had been involved in a pro bono capacity via the Melbourne Convention and Visitors Bureau during the bid process. Fortunately, a component of the City of Melbourne funding support was in the form of accommodation and The Hub in Docklands from July 2007 to the end of 2009.

Janetta Stones, formerly of the Melbourne Convention and Visitors Bureau, was appointed as Local Director in March 2007 after being one of the guiding forces in Melbourne's selection.

July 2007 saw five full time Community Organisers appointed, followed in 2008 by a Program Associate, Youth Community Organiser, Admin Coordinator, two part time Volunteer Coordinators and a Research Officer in 2009.

In tandem with the development of the office, board and staff, the vital role of community involvement was also a top priority. Of the 16-18 committees and working groups needed, the first and most important was the Advisory Council. This group also evolved from some of the original members of the Bid Team, plus a broad group from various religious, spiritual and community groups. These people were representatives of, not representatives for, their specific groups. Everyone was welcome. Those who could not attend the monthly meetings were all sent minutes. These meetings were invaluable to the local staff, Board and staff from Chicago in gauging and incorporating local thoughts, suggestions and ideas to inform the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009

The committees were also populated with members of the Advisory Council and local community groups where possible. Probably the most important aspect of community involvement in the development of the event came via the work of the Community Organisers and their focus groups and interviews. Feedback from these face-to-face meetings influenced the themes, the program elements and what the community as a whole and various groups individually wanted to see at the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 and just as importantly, ongoing and post-event legacy activities.

2.2 History of Interfaith in Melbourne (as it relates to the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009)

'Interfaith' describes the coming together of people of different faiths or religions for various purposes⁵.

In Australia, Interfaith activity did not exist organisationally until the early 1970s when Religions for Peace Australia (RfP), the Australian chapter of the international interfaith organisation; the World Conference of Religions and Peace (WCRP) was founded.

More recently, in 2004, the Australian Partnership of Religious Organisations (APRO) was established, partly as a result of the DIMIA, now called the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) -sponsored a 2004 study, *Religion, Cultural Diversity and Safeguarding Australia* and partly as a result of lobbying by Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA).

RfP and APRO are the only two interfaith organisations that claim to have national coverage, but in each case not full coverage throughout Australia. RfP has represented Australia at all global assemblies of the WCRP and at the assemblies of the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace.

⁵ Mohebbi, Parisa, June 2005, *The 'Interfaith Movement in Australia and Perth, Western Australia, Over the Last Decade*, Chapter 1, p3

In 1989, WCRP Australia (now RfP) successfully placed a bid to host the Fifth World Assembly at Monash University, Victoria, attended by 600 delegates from 60 countries. Legacies of this assembly were limited, however outcomes of the assembly did contribute to funding being made available from the State Government for the then WCRP Australia for a further 6 years. This support was short-lived, and by the late 1990s, interest in interfaith activity began to wane, and the organisation began to struggle⁶.

The somewhat sudden emergence of local interfaith networks in Victoria has primarily occurred in response to instability in communities at both a global and local level. Large scale conflict and crisis around the world such as September 11, the 'War on Terror', the Bali, London and Madrid bombings, the Boxing Day Tsunami, and the plight of asylum seekers in Australia are all examples of triggers for community and government alike which have influenced the establishment of local interfaith networks in Victoria.

In the wake of September 11 in 2001 and the terrorist attacks in Bali which killed almost 100 Australians, interfaith networks were seen as a means of promoting security and social cohesion, and as a possible antidote to home-grown terrorism⁷. In response to this, WCRP Australia was rejuvenated. Almost overnight governments at State and Federal level became involved in support for interfaith activities at school based levels. They commissioned numerous reports including *Religion, Cultural Diversity and Safeguarding Australia* (2004), and the accompanying monographs, *Islam in Australia* (2004) and *Constructing a Local Multifaith Network* (2004), as well as promoting community and educational initiatives⁸.

The multicultural and interfaith lobbies which had remained separate until this time cooperated, leading to the formation of APRO in 2004, under the aegis of the FECCA, and linking into international interfaith organisations in a major way⁹.

2.3 Victoria and Interfaith, 2009

Despite the lack of attention and recognition given to the religious diversity of Australia historically by the Australian government up until the early years of the new millennium, the Victorian Multicultural Commission explains that interfaith initiatives and interfaith dialogue have now become a crucial element of identity. They promoted social cohesion, and peace-keeping across communities in Victoria and Australia. It is now recognised by the State Government that multi-faith, religious activity and interfaith dialogue should be linked to multicultural affairs, rather than just cultural and linguistic diversity within Australia's multi-faith and secular society.

There are currently 16 Local Interfaith Networks operating in local government areas of Melbourne and Victoria. These can be described as a series of small, under-funded, passionate community-based hubs of interreligious, committed people. They work for peace, social cohesion, and interreligious harmony with crucial support from some universities and assorted Commonwealth and Victorian State Government departments and commissions. Many of the networks have emerged primarily in response to conflict and tragedy at both a global and local level.

There are also bilateral and trilateral dialogue partnerships which most importantly include the Council for Christians and Jews and the Jewish Christian Muslim Association which coordinates dialogue between the three 'Abrahamic' faiths in Melbourne.

⁶ Cahill, Desmond, 2009, 'Ecumenical and Multifaith Australia', *The Encyclopaedia of Religion in Australia* p 5.

⁷ *Ibid* p 5.

⁸ Cahill, Desmond, 2009, 'Ecumenical and Multifaith Australia' *The Encyclopaedia of Religion in Australia* p 5.

⁹ Cahill, Desmond, *Ibid* p 6.

Many religious groups also have their own interfaith units to specialise in the interfaith aspect of their work. Similarly, there are interfaith groups operating in Melbourne that focus on particular subject matter. For example, GreenFaith Australia is a newly formed grass-roots interfaith organisation that brings together people from different faith communities and spiritualities to respond to ecological problems faced by society¹⁰.

The Faith Community of Springvale was the first interfaith network to be established in Victoria. Its first meeting was held on May 10th 1989, and it has since been renamed the City of Greater Dandenong Interfaith Network. It is considered to be a model for developing interfaith networks to aspire to and emerged in response to crime involving members of the local Asian community and the resulting negative impact of media publicity on Indo-Chinese youth and on the wider community. Supported by the Greater Dandenong Council, the interfaith network sought to restore relationships between communities by looking at positive factors linking communities rather than the negative factors keeping them apart, striving to achieve their vision of 'Many Faiths, One People'¹¹. As is the case with many interfaith networks; as a member of the Ballarat Interfaith Network explains, 'people want[ed] to talk with others about matters that matter'.

A representative of the Manningham Interfaith Network acknowledges that establishing the network was in response to a service following the Boxing Day Tsunami. He similarly recognises that the development of interfaith networks has often been in response to community distress, violence and natural disaster, observing '...it is very difficult to maintain energy with the underlying issues of harmony and education when everything is O.K in society! It takes a lot of energy from people to maintain on-going interest [in interfaith networks]...'

Like local faith groups and interfaith networks operating in Melbourne and regional Victoria, the Commonwealth Government and State Governments sought to respond to violent events occurring throughout the world. The Victorian Multicultural Commission explains that the events of September 11 in 2001, the Bali bombings in October 2002, and the London and Madrid bombing events and the ensuing violence and discrimination against Islamic people were all instances that provided impetus for funding to promote interfaith and multifaith dialogue and activities from a local, regional and state-wide perspective. The Victorian Multicultural Commission recognised the need for a whole-of-community framework, resources and funding to promote harmony at a local level and that while diversity continues to provide considerable benefits to Victoria, its complexity also brings some challenges that require proactive management to ensure world events do not negatively impact on the harmony of the local community.

2.4 Interfaith funding (prior to the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009)

In 2007, the Victorian Multicultural Commission began its 'Promoting Harmony' initiative. It provided, \$6m in multifaith and interfaith grant funding to the Victorian community. The initiative aimed to promote social cohesion, address racial vilification and support media campaigns, advisory groups and partnerships with the Commonwealth Government. It also provided engagement with peak faith organisations to address misconceptions about faith and spirituality in the wider community, and to engage youth participation and leadership in interfaith networks and activities.

¹⁰ GreenFaith Australia website www.greenfaithaustralia.org

¹¹ City of Greater Dandenong Interfaith Network, *Many Faiths, One People*, p 4.

By funding 'whole-of community' multi-faith and religious dialogue, and by encouraging collaboration, clarification and understanding of religious diversity on a foundation of goodwill and leadership, the State Government hopes to foster unity, equality and human rights and minimise the undermining of its cultural and religious diversity.

The Victorian Multicultural Commission suggested that the Parliament of the World's Religions has been a driver and provided support for renewed momentum and energy for interfaith activities within communities as new interfaith groups emerged to apply for grants to support 2009 Pre-Parliament events. One participant in the newly emerging interfaith activity has observed the positive affect that external funding has had on the local interfaith community: 'suddenly there is support money around!' He ponders, however, what will happen when resources are focused to another area; '... some groups will gain momentum, and move forward, others might stop...'

To sustain interfaith dialogue and activity now and in the future, the Victorian Multicultural Commission has identified that interfaith dialogue and activity needs a legislative framework and resources, as well as a whole of community framework to help interfaith groups, faith groups and the general community come together to work on projects on a state and national level to 'do things'. As the Victorian Multicultural Commission states. 'lots can be generated at community level in an atmosphere of support, goodwill, and leadership'.



3. The Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009

3.1 Introduction

The Parliament of the World's Religions is the world's largest interfaith gathering and is hosted by the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago. The Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 brought spiritual, religious, academic, and political leaders together with people of faith, spirituality and goodwill from more than 80 countries around the world for 7 days at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre from 3 -9 December.

The theme of the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 was **'Make a World of Difference: Hearing each other, Healing the Earth'**¹². This theme aimed to reflect the need which had been expressed at local consultations by diverse groups of people for religious and spiritual communities and all people of goodwill to act on their concerns for the environment, peace, and for overcoming poverty.

The logistics of the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 were managed by *arinex*, a professional conference organiser. From the early stages of developing a bid document in 2005, to running and hosting the event itself in 2009, diverse communities were consistently and actively engaged in the Parliament.

The Melbourne Board of Management oversaw the appointment of 16-18 sub-committees and working groups to inform the on-going development of the Melbourne Parliament and to ensure that the event stayed connected to the local community. Local and international Pre-Parliament events were held in 78 locations around the world to foster support for the upcoming Parliament and also to provide another opportunity for community involvement in the development of, and participation in the event.

Over 200 faiths and 83 countries were represented at the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009. The total number of participants, including volunteers, staff and presenters was 6282. To see the percentage of participants identifying with a religious or spiritual tradition please refer to Table 1 in Appendix 5.

3.2 About this report

In the lead up to the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009, it was recognised that information and input needed to be captured from key groups in the community including representatives of faith communities and interfaith groups, Australian Aboriginal people and Australian Indigenous people, and young people from Melbourne and regional Victoria. It was intended that data collected from members of these 'target groups' should inform the learnings, potential legacy initiatives and implementation strategies to promote on-going interfaith dialogue and activity after the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 had concluded. This report also provides a number of reflections and suggestions which could be discussed, debated and shared by future researchers, conference planners, Parliament of the World's Religions organisers and host cities in further developing this exciting event into the future. This document also provides interfaith and faith groups and interested parties in Melbourne and surrounding areas with a rich foundation on which to further sustain an engaged network of interfaith activity.

¹² See appendix 2 for further information on the major subthemes of the 2009 Parliament

This was the first time in the history of the Parliament of the World's Religions that this information was required to be sourced, analysed and presented. In keeping with the spirit of shared learnings and the journey of interfaith dialogue, the report provides a reflection¹³ of the experiences of Parliament participants. It also details PWR Melbourne 2009 Limited Board of Management and key target groups as well as potential legacy initiatives, the impact of the event, and related information which could inform future engagement prior to the next Parliament of the World's Religions. The following material is presented in this report:

- The processes and methodologies used to identify and capture information
- Themes drawn from discussions with individuals and groups
- Potential legacy initiative findings and implementation strategies as identified by 'target group' and relevant sub-theme
- Suggestions of 'target groups' relating to promoting on-going interfaith dialogue and activity in Melbourne and regional Victoria

For the purposes of this report, 'legacy' refers to the potential initiatives and opportunities that could be implemented by groups, organisations, or institutions as a result of participation in the 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions. Legacy initiatives must be consistent with the mission and vision of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions. This report also describes principles and frameworks of support to promote interfaith dialogue and activities as identified by participants engaging in legacy discussions.

The report provides a wealth of information from a range of participants over the life of the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009. The material collated and analysed within this report needs to be considered in the context of the limitations of the data collection methods. Whilst the development of the report had a number of constraints, it should be read in the spirit of sharing a unique opportunity to capture dialogue from a broad range of stakeholders coming together to explore interfaith legacy opportunities.

3.3 What happened at the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009

The Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 met its expectations of staging a world-class interfaith event, highlighting the positive nature of religion and interfaith dialogue and activity; its positive contribution to global, regional and local difficulties.

As one participant in the legacy discussions commented after the Parliament concluded, 'it [the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009] generated enormous enthusiasm as a memorable event for participants. Inasmuch as the event was overwhelming to people attending, it was even more overwhelming for people with little or no experience of an international interfaith conference – much of the Australian interfaith community' and corporate Australia. As Amy Coote, Business Development Manager of *arinex*, the PWR M 2009 Limited's professional conference organiser explains:

'...We began this relationship with the same approach that we have had in the past with all our conferences. We soon discovered that with all of our years of experience, strong infrastructure and well established management team, this journey would take us down a new path...Working on the 2009 Parliament has taught arinex how to approach community focused events and also how to successfully manage such a large event with so many intricacies and details that we would never have expected when embarking on this journey. The local and international office staff of the Parliament said to the core team at arinex that 'the Parliament is not just an event, it is an experience'. The entire team at arinex now agrees that it was not just an experience, but an experience of a lifetime'.

¹³ See Appendix 3 for reflections on the journey to hosting the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009

The Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 consisted of 450 programs¹⁴. The array, quality and quantity of presenters, speakers and participants enabled people from Australia and overseas to be able to hear, network and dialogue with people not normally gathered together in a safe, welcoming environment. As a representative of the Australian Multicultural Foundation commented:

'The Parliament of the World's Religions Conference provided the Australian Multicultural Foundation a most unique opportunity through meeting people from different faiths and cultures from around the world. In particular, discussions that took place between the Australian Multicultural Foundation, the National Centre for Excellence in Islamic Studies, Tariq Ramadan, Muslim Scholar from Oxford University, and Imam Rauf Faisel, Cordoba Initiative New York, were most productive future partnerships. If it wasn't for the Parliament of the World's Religions, it would have been highly unlikely to engage with so many people in one place at the same time'.

Indeed, some participants at the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 commented that they would have liked more opportunity to focus on interactive discussions; others commented that they would have liked to participate in even more events than was on offer, and to have seen a greater amount of content in the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 Program Book.

Contrary to negative predications made by skeptics of interfaith in Melbourne, the Parliament was a peaceful interfaith event. PWR Melbourne 2009 Limited did not however, back away from potentially sensitive and difficult issues where these were relevant to the objectives and themes of the Parliament including for example, Baha'is in Iran, conflict between Israel and Palestinians, homosexuality and religion and women and religious leadership. It provided global publicity for Melbourne not only during the Parliament event and immediate aftermath, but also during the local and international Pre-Parliament events.

3.3.1 Issues impacting on the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009

The impact of the Global Financial Crisis on all countries, including Australia, but especially on Europe and America negatively influenced the expected number of participants attending the Parliament. Despite offering a diverse range of pricing and ticketing options, potential participants stated they could not afford to attend the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009. Potential Australian participants especially, were at odds with the idea of having to pay to hear participants of their own faith or spirituality present at the Parliament.

Despite registration prices for the Parliament being pitched at no more than 1/5th of the cost of professional conferences, many potential participants in Australia could not afford to attend the event. The Parliament outreach efforts were targeted at a broad range of people in terms of income; ranging from reasonably well-off people in the established religious communities to newly arrived migrant and refugee communities with very low income levels. Even though the cost of the Parliament was minimal compared to other professional conferences, this does represent a mismatch between the Parliament's community development role, its marketing role and the capacity of local community at the time of the event.

¹⁴ For more information on the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 Program please see Appendix 4

The Parliament found it difficult to attract expected sponsorship from the Australian corporate community, and as a result original expectations of the event had to be scaled down. In particular, the Parliament could not offer many scholarships or reduced rates to people in need. As one patron observed, 'it is very different from corporate Australia, compared to America's corporate environment to openly support and fund a religious event'. Indeed, supporting events like the Parliament of the World's Religions was seen by the corporate community in Australia to be the responsibility of government, with many potential corporate funders of the event not wanting to become involved with religion.

More generally, understanding of what the Parliament was, and its objectives, was a low priority in the Australian community despite widespread outreach efforts. The fact that the Parliament had no brand awareness or product to promote until very late in the development of the event meant that many potential funders and participants saw it as an obscure religious event. There was little awareness that its themes of global peace, social cohesion, climate change, global poverty and reconciliation were relevant to all people, regardless of religion or spirituality.

The Parliament also overlapped the UN Climate Change Conference being held in Copenhagen. This limited the availability of eminent speakers such as Mary Robinson to participate in the Melbourne event.



4. Approach to Data Collection

The data to inform this report was drawn from participants from three research target groups:

- People from faith communities and interfaith groups
- Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous People
- Young People

Each group had a number of participants who were representative of their community or age group/ gender.

The size of the three sample groups sample sized varied. This was largely due to the following factors:

- Number of individuals willing to participate
- Number of groups accessible and willing to participate (before, during and after the Parliament
- Number of age/gender cohorts represented from either groups/individuals

4.1 Rationale

For the first time, the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions and PWR Melbourne 2009 engaged in legacy discussions with the local community in Melbourne and regional Victoria to promote the sustainability of engagement in interfaith dialogue and activity after the Parliament concluded. It was therefore necessary to discuss with local people interested in engaging with the Parliament and legacy discussions about what they imagined the future of local interfaith dialogue and activity to be once the Parliament concluded. The objective of undertaking legacy discussions was to:

- Encourage religious and spiritual communities in Victoria, and other relevant Australian institutions and organisations to consider ways of initiating or enhancing their engagement with interfaith dialogue and collaboration following the 2009 Parliament event.
- To document the visions, aspirations, interests and commitments of these various constituencies as they undertake this process of consideration
- To inform potential legacy initiatives of the 2009 Parliament which could be implemented in the future Interfaith groups and faith communities, Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous people and young people were actively and specifically engaged in legacy discussions, having been identified as key participants and contributors to the Parliament by the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions and the PWR Melbourne 2009 Limited because:
- Young people represent the next generation of an ageing interfaith community. If interfaith dialogue and activity is to be sustainable it must remain or become relevant to young people and cater to their interests and needs
- The C PWR aimed to engage in processes of achieving harmony on a local and global scale. In the wake and hype of Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's Apology to the Stolen Generations, the 2009 Parliament aimed to continue the process of reconciliation and sought to highlight the strong role religious and faith groups can play in bringing about reconciliation and social justice for Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous communities.

Due to the diversity of participants engaging in legacy discussions, relationships were developed respectfully, being sensitive and flexible to the needs of participants. On many occasions discussions needed to sustain a reactive engagement process in order to be beneficial to the participant while also

adding value to the legacy discussions and capturing useful information. Engagement in the legacy discussions was therefore based primarily on a participatory approach. Opportunity was given to participate, and participants self-selected their degrees of involvement at various stages. The legacy discussions placed significant value on people's willingness to respond. The legacy discussions are from a very personal perspective; to learn, promote peace and make diverse friendships and lasting networks. In saying this however, participants engaging in the legacy discussions all voiced on-going broad concerns. They ranged from equality for men and women, human rights and social justice, the need to promote peace and religious dialogue and overarching concerns for the sustainability of the environment. The discussions and data collected therefore sought to reflect 'matters that matter' to participants. They sought to engage in the human, political, cultural and social contextual aspects of potential legacy initiatives. The perceived impact of the Parliament on local communities and principles was to explore and implement interfaith engagement.

4.2 Data Collection Methods

The approach to the research component of the project was informed by previous work completed by the Parliament's Community Organisers. It was designed to actively engage with three target research groups: the Interfaith and Faith Group, the Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous People Group and the Young People Group via consecutive cycles of action, reflection, and consideration over 5 stages of data collection including:

- Pre-Parliament Questionnaire Survey (Completed August 2009 – November 2009)
- Pre-Parliament Focus Group with the Parliament Advisory Committee
- On-site Surveys during the Parliament (Completed December 3-9th 2009)
- Focus Group sessions completed at the Parliament (December 3-9th 2009)
- Post-Parliament Focus Group with the Parliament Advisory Committee (Completed 15th December)

The Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous People Group and the Young People Group were engaged separately in legacy discussions throughout the five research stages. It was assumed that the Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous Group and the Young People Group would reveal different memories of experience and belonging (to interfaith and faith communities now, and in the past) and that information from these groups would present different pathways of future interfaith direction compared to interfaith groups and faith traditions operating in the Melbourne community.

The reporting of legacy discussions does not seek to disregard the differences between interfaith and single faith groups and organisations when grouping them together under the title 'Interfaith and Faith Group'. Instead the title of this target group aims to draw together key findings which are relevant to both interfaith networks and faith traditions in creating positive interfaith dialogue and activity in the future.

Although participation in semi-structured interviews to inform legacy discussion was at the discretion of the individual, consideration was given to the gender balance of participants, the number of participants engaging in discussions and the representation of diverse faith groups, young people and Indigenous people.

Constant effort was made to reach a representative sample of views during the various stages of legacy discussions. Participants engaging in the discussions were, however slightly oriented towards women. This was an outcome of the difficulties of engaging with people particularly during the Parliament itself. The most difficult part of the data collection process proved to be convincing people to comment and engage with the discussions while not taking away from their experience at the Parliament. In this case, more women than men agreed to take part in the legacy discussions.

For further information on research methods please refer to appendix 5.

4.3 Acknowledging the difference: working with each target group

It is important to acknowledge the different processes required to work with the Interfaith and Faith Group, the Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous People Group and the Young People Group when participating in the legacy discussions and when engaging in interfaith dialogue and activity. To successfully engage with the three target groups, flexible and sensitive ways of engaging in legacy discussions were required. It was not appropriate for example, to engage in one blanket research method and in many instances methods of working with the different groups were guided by discussion with the legacy discussion participant. The diversity of methods used to engage with the research target groups illustrates the multiple impacts the Parliament had on communities in Melbourne and regional Victoria and particularly with Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous people. Homogeneity doesn't always work in interfaith, nor by cultural group or age

4.4 Data Analysis

Legacy discussions were conducted with representatives identifying with key target groups – interfaith and faith groups, Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous people and young people.

Data collection was undertaken before, during and after the Parliament and sought to clarify and build on visions for potential legacies of the event and future interfaith dialogue in their local community. As such, the data collected reflects numerous factors associated with, and outside of the Parliament event occurring on both a global and local scale. For example, factors associated with the potential legacy initiatives of the 2009 Parliament include: access to the Parliament, the scale and size of the event, the timeline for research available, community involvement in the development of the Parliament, empowerment of young people involved in the Parliament and media representations of faith and spirituality in Victoria and Australia.

Because of the broad scope of data collected, qualitative and comparative analysis of data was undertaken to give value to the divergent collection of experiences and concerns of the target groups engaging in the research. Key themes were developed to illustrate shared understandings of principles to explore engagement strategies, to support interfaith dialogue and activity at a local level, and potential legacy initiatives and implementation strategies.

Data was collected, identified and themed from three target research groups as identified by the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions and PWR Melbourne 2009 Limited. As previously explained, the target research groups include the:

- Interfaith and Faith Group
- Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous People Group
- Young People Group

These target groups identified common issues and themes relevant to them, and are grouped under the following headings:

- Potential legacy initiatives
- Principles for exploring interfaith engagement
- Implementation strategies including supporting groups in interfaith dialogue and activity
- Findings related to promoting on-going interfaith dialogue and activity in Melbourne and regional Victoria.

4.5 Limitations of this Report

In developing the first legacy report from the Parliament, the following limitations have been identified that need to be considered by readers in interpreting the findings and the material presented in this document.

- Whilst the legacy discussions gave participants the opportunity to comment on the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009, interfaith issues and local interfaith activity, this was from a personal perspective at a point in time
- The limitations of collecting information from such a diverse group using a number of methods, the timeframe in which the information was collected, along with the fact that this report was completed by one researcher while also undertaking a range of tasks to support the Parliament
- A common knowledge base for participants engaging in the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 was assumed; for example, that they knew and understood what the Parliament actually was. This proved not to be the case, and community members therefore found it very difficult to imagine the impacts and legacies of the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 because many had never been involved in an international conference before, and had never participated in previous Parliaments of the World's Religions or interfaith dialogue on an international scale before
- Engaging with the Parliament's Youth Sub-Committee to participate in on-going legacy discussions proved to be difficult despite numerous attempts to engage over informal dinners, organised focus group sessions and networking sessions and the preparation of case studies. The short amount of time to engage in discussions with young people and for many the largely new experience of contributing and affecting the outcome of the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 proved to be limiting to the legacy discussions
- In the timeline available for data collection to inform the legacy discussions of the Parliament there was little or no time for relationship building before the legacy research began, (important with Young People and with the Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous community) and there was almost no time available for follow-up research after the event
- It was important to document the process of legacy as it occurred during the Parliament. However because of the nature of the event – its scale, the complexity and size of the event and venue - the research could not be carried out as intended and had to remain flexible and reactive
- It is important for the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions and the hosting city to facilitate positive and supportive partnerships before and during the event. Barriers experienced in accessing Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous participants during the Parliament negatively impacted the collection of data.
- Research could be improved with a larger sample of people from interfaith and faith groups, more Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous people participating in the event and a longer research timeline to engage and form relationships with community

5. Suggestions

5.1 Introduction

The legacy discussions were aimed to promote and enable equitable participation of different groups interested in participating in the Parliament and represent the views of both men and women who were active in the event - those who might be affected or impacted by potential learnings or opportunities arising out the event. As well as the Interfaith and Faith Group, an Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous People Group and a Young People Group were actively and specifically engaged in legacy discussions because:

- Young people represent the next generation of an ageing interfaith community. If interfaith dialogue and activity is to be sustainable, it must remain or become relevant to young people and cater to their interests and needs
- The Parliament aimed to continue the process of reconciliation and sought to highlight the strong role religious and faith groups can play in bringing about reconciliation and social justice for Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous communities

The findings of the legacy discussions represent the outcomes with the Interfaith and Faith Group, the Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous People Group and the Young People Group that occurred before, during and after the Parliament. Within these groups, findings of these discussions have been themed under the following titles:

- Potential legacy initiatives
- Principles for exploring interfaith engagement
- Implementation strategies including supporting groups in interfaith dialogue and activity
- Findings related to promoting on-going interfaith dialogue and activity in Melbourne and regional Victoria

When viewed collectively, the potential legacy initiatives represent a starting point to support further development of interfaith dialogue and activity in communities and organisations. The remaining themes offer support in implementing initiatives with the groups and are connected to important issues perceived to be impacting on the community now, on a local and global scale, as determined by the specifically targeted research groups.

The findings of the legacy discussions are not weighted, as not all religious and faith groups were included in the discussions, and because the aim of the legacy discussions was to find out how communities would like to move forward by participating in relevant activities after the Parliament concluded, rather than rating what the 'best' potential legacy initiative might be for particular groups.

Legacy discussions with the targeted research participants have indicated that in the future, people already associating with interfaith groups and faith groups would like to expand their networks and further the aims of the Parliament and local interfaith networks via partnership opportunities with other organisations. As the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions cannot implement outcomes or legacy initiatives from the Parliament, it is necessary for local interfaith networks and organisations interested in continuing the legacy initiatives to partner with organisations to support interfaith initiatives in the future. The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions is not an ongoing international interfaith organisation and does not have local structures to support interfaith activity. Likewise, PWR Melbourne 2009 Ltd was established and incorporated to only run the Parliament of the World's Religions event in Melbourne. The production and publication of this legacy report is PWR Melbourne 2009 Ltd's final substantive action.

5.2 Potential Legacy Initiatives

The data below represents a snap-shot of what each group participating in the legacy discussions would like to see occurring in their own community after the Parliament of the World's Religions has concluded. The suggested potential legacy initiatives are directed by key sub-themes specific to data collected from each research group.

5.2.1 Interfaith and Faith Group

Environmental Legacy Initiatives

Suggested future environmental legacy initiatives include:

- "Perm-a-culture community gardens"
- "Greening places of worship"
- Group volunteering to assist in the rehabilitation, and environmental clean-up of areas experiencing environmental degradation due to bushfires, for example
- Environmental education initiatives for interfaith and faith groups to achieve environmentally sustainable solutions in the long term

Partnership Initiatives

Partnership opportunities to promote:

- "Reconciliation initiatives with both Australian Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people"
- Community capacity building between interfaith groups, social justice and environmental groups, media outlets, arts and cultural bodies to create a broader framework for exploring unity
- "Understanding that goes beyond formal interfaith dialogue"
- Performance opportunities for young people
- Programs to initiate and facilitate connections with Aboriginal and Indigenous communities
- Further funding opportunities to support interfaith groups
- Whole-of-community policy framework and legislation to build interfaith projects at a State and National level
- Engaging with groups who are not active or aware of interfaith dialogue and activity
- Raising the profile of interfaith groups:
 - Interfaith engagement with human rights and social justice
 - Interfaith education initiatives and opportunities for interfaith dialogue within schools
 - On-going celebration of Melbourne's interfaith community

Social Justice and Human Rights activities:

Proposed social justice and human rights legacy initiatives include:

- Interfaith work dealing with outcomes reached at the Parliament
- Reconciliation with Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous communities
- "Engaging with the positive common goals of humanity, looking at similarity rather than difference"
- Education in schools including Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous and Immigrant stories
- Policies, including anti-discrimination in all institutions to promote awareness and participation of all faith groups

- “Interfaith cooperation and religious pluralism are normalised in all sectors”
- Engaging people with religion and social justice issues regardless of their own belief using social mediums including external programs in schools, re-vamping religious education and cultural history, and developing agreed values
- “Interfaith Networks need to prepare themselves for negative events and disasters that occur in the world”
- Allowing people to define how they would like to be represented in interfaith conversation
- Taking the time to sit and listen to each other, to build relationships
- Community capacity building for disadvantaged and marginalised communities

Sustaining Interfaith Activity in the local community:

Interfaith activity in the local community could include:

- Engaging with young people, using the Parliament’s Youth Program as a guide to inform future interfaith dialogue and activities at a local level
- Engaging in larger service projects that benefit more people
- Regular interfaith social events such as ‘Interfaith Evenings’ where people of diverse faiths can join a particular faith service and dinner
- Promoting the benefits of interfaith dialogue and activity, and local interfaith events
- Providing a foundation for continuing friendship
- More activities to bring together different faiths or religions, sharing a meal, and participating in service projects linked to the environment, working towards sustainability
- Participating in reflection workshops around actions taken, rather than deciding to take ‘shared action’
- *Experience* Interfaith through open talking sessions and engagement opportunities
- Education across ethnicity and religious beliefs by providing experiences
- Funding for minority groups including women, Indigenous, refugee and religious groups
- Support opportunities for core funding to expand and develop interfaith activity:
 - Develop Pre-Parliament events for 2014
 - Construct a permanent physical reminder of the Melbourne 2009 Parliament
 - Provide web access to key Parliament material

5.2.2 Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous People Group

Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous legacy discussion participants highlighted the need to take time to develop any initiatives, ‘to throw ideas out there and see what opportunities grow so that reconciliation has value’

The following ideas were identified that could potentially develop into initiatives:

- “Promote forgiveness between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people”
- A celebration of, and recognition of the traditional owners of the land
- Support and advocacy for the human rights of Indigenous communities
- Promote Australian Aboriginal history in schools as a tool for reconciliation
- Partnership opportunities with peak faith and interfaith bodies
- “Return of church property to Aboriginal people”
- “Bringing Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people together with food”



5.2.3 Young People Group

Taking Action

The proposed legacy initiatives below are informed by the strong desire for activity found among the Young People Group:

- Using sport as a tool for interfaith dialogue and understanding
- Inter-religious gardening
- To celebrate and to have fun, to be interactive!
- Meditation workshops
- Theatre workshops, dance and sporting workshops during interfaith events and future Parliaments of the World's Religions
- On-going musical events, festivals and forums that incorporate interfaith dialogue
- Working to promote environmental sustainability through an interfaith network – for example group volunteering to work to clean up fire damaged areas
- Connecting with the Muslim community in particular, to forge an example of peaceful relations

Education

The legacy initiatives below are informed by the need expressed by the Young People group for greater awareness of interfaith dialogue and activity:

- "Develop interfaith children's books, children's cartoons, or workshops teaching interfaith family values"
- Interfaith education across ethnicity and religion
- Excursions to places of worship, including Indigenous and immigrant stories and places of significance
- "Raising awareness of interfaith networks and opportunities for dialogue in schools"
- "Raising awareness of what interfaith means for the general community"
- "Education so that individuals can be more informed in their own religion and participate more fully in interfaith dialogue and activity"

Behind the Scenes

The legacy initiatives below are informed by young people wanting to be involved in all areas of interfaith networks, dialogue, activity and events:

- Recognition of young people's ability to play key roles in interfaith events (for example to host an event, provide entertainment and hold key speaking positions)
- "To work for the preservation of older faiths, advocating for them on their behalf"
- "Develop interfaith activities in which young people are key constituents, promote young peoples' involvement in interfaith so that it becomes mainstream, eventually there would be no 'Youth Program'"
- Create a place for young people to go where they can make new friends, contacts, networks and where they can 'chill out'".
- "Support newly emerging interfaith groups such as 'InerAction' [and interfaith activities in which young people are a key constituent, making 'Young People' mainstream" (InterAction is a newly formed multifaith youth network)

Community Building

The legacy initiatives proposed below seek to support interfaith groups engaging in dialogue and activity with the general community and building sustainable positive relationships between faith communities:

- Service projects with other faith groups
- "Develop a Youth Network or 'Y-net' to integrate all faiths within a wider network to engage with society and government, to support the implementation of projects within the community"
- Charity and volunteer work - serving the community for the benefit of the community
- "Assist students at Ballarat University to start and run their own interfaith network"
- Interfaith dialogue with the older generations – '...I think this is where the most friction is!'
- "Continuing friendship resulting from engagement in interfaith dialogue and activity"
- "Connect with the Muslim community in particular and forge an example of peaceful relations"
- "Look at those who are yet to be involved in interfaith dialogue or interfaith work"
- Faith communities hosting regular interfaith evenings of service and dinner
- "Networking opportunities for young people including conferences, talks, social occasions, and mentorship opportunities"

Partnership Opportunities

Partnership opportunities proposed to support engagement of interfaith dialogue and activity and potential legacy initiatives included:

- Partnership opportunities with international interfaith programs and organisations
- Working together with other groups on issues of environmental sustainability and 'how to take care of the world'
- Engaging in partnership opportunities that are based on world issues such as poverty, climate change, women's rights, focusing on the Millennium Development Goals
- Partnerships with youth groups
- Annual interfaith youth forums with representatives from New Zealand, Australia and Asia

5.3 Implementing potential legacy initiatives

The following section concerns the implementation of potential legacy initiatives. Proposed implementation strategies are specific to the target group participating in the research: Interfaith and Faith Group, Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous People Group and Young People Group. To implement the potential legacy initiatives, legacy discussion participants have highlighted that it is important to first establish a supportive framework to enable dialogue, and then to develop principles through which activities can be further explored or implemented.

5.3.1 Interfaith and Faith Group

Supporting Interfaith and Faith Groups in future dialogue and activity

It is necessary for local interfaith networks, faith groups and organisations interested in continuing the legacy of the Parliament to partner with other organisations to support, expand and further the aims of interfaith initiatives in the future.

Principles for exploring Interfaith Engagement with Interfaith and Faith Groups

Interfaith and faith groups identified the following principles in which should be followed when exploring opportunities for interfaith engagement:

- Mutual respect. “You don’t have to agree but you have to sincerely respect the other person as somebody who listens to God”
- To be prepared to listen with empathy. “To allow people to explain and *live* their particular faith”
- To be reflective about your own beliefs and engagement in interfaith dialogue
- A willingness to learn
- To have humility, to recognise that you don’t have all the answers before you begin a conversation
- To engage in open and frank discussion
- Positive leadership. “choosing the people who lead the dialogue is incredibly important – you can have all sorts of tools, but it is hard to teach an old dog new tricks”
- Acceptance rather than “tolerance” of ‘the other’
- Finding a commonality of humanity, values and ethical frameworks
- Making interfaith open and relaxed
- Time. ‘To have a decent amount of time to get to the depth of interfaith’
- Interfaith dialogue that focuses on practical cooperation, collaboration and action
- To value and respect all religions and spiritualities
- To understand the person. Identity includes ‘faith, culture and background’
- Presence and accessibility – “you have to be available, and the location of the interfaith dialogue taking place needs to be accessible”

5.3.2 Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous People Group

Supporting Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous people in future dialogue and activity

Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous people engaging in the legacy research called for statewide coordination, driving, monitoring, reviewing, goodwill and good intentions to develop an Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous peak body to coordinate partnership opportunities on behalf of Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous communities with other groups and organisations, including interfaith groups.

To support future dialogue and activity the Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous People Group insisted the general community ‘stand up’ for Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous people by not tolerating racism, and by providing advocacy and support to promote human rights and social justice. They also invited faith and interfaith groups to give Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous people the opportunity to participate; to invite Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous people to be involved, in ways that are suitable and accessible to them. As they said; ‘it’s *where* you create something that allows people to come together”.

Principles for exploring interfaith engagement with Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous people and Reconciliation Groups

Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous people and people associated with Reconciliation Groups identified the following principles to follow when exploring opportunities for engagement:

- ❑ Faith groups recognising the value in working with Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous people and reconciliation groups
- ❑ Tools are required to help facilitate conversations with Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous communities and reconciliation groups 'someone needs to make the connections easier'. That is, to know who to contact, to know the correct protocols of engagement, and to facilitate positive relationships
- ❑ Faith groups need to take the initiative in reaching out to Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous communities
- ❑ Initial engagement with Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous communities and faith groups needs to focus on projects which will build community capacity including the development and cementing of protocols for ongoing interfaith activity
- ❑ Provide cultural education to faith groups about Australia's Indigenous history
- ❑ Respect. 'to be committed and honest with yourself, to understand the past, and to be balanced and non judgmental'
- ❑ Be a good communicator
- ❑ Learning language, valuing peoples' cultures and valuing peoples' words

5.3.3 Young People Group

Supporting Young People in future dialogue and activity

The interfaith community can support young people to be engaged in interfaith by:

- ❑ Publicising opportunities for young people to be involved in interfaith dialogue and activity in schools – 'religion should be an open topic all the time, it's about living with each other!'
- ❑ Developing further opportunities for dialogue, seminars and education programs on the concept of interfaith on an ongoing basis
- ❑ Providing scholarships and sponsoring for young people to participate in interfaith events at a local and international level
- ❑ Interfaith events acknowledging the material needs of young people and therefore providing discounts to all young people, not just 'students', and providing meals and accommodation if required
- ❑ Providing opportunities for regular interfaith gatherings incorporating social justice, culture and entertainment
- ❑ Providing leadership opportunities for young people; ensuring young people are involved in decision making processes of interfaith groups and faith groups
- ❑ Providing mentoring opportunities and support to young people interested in developing an interfaith group or event
- ❑ Providing opportunities for young people to perform, speak and generally be involved in interfaith events on an on-going basis
- ❑ Developing an international youth interfaith conference
- ❑ Developing an interfaith youth network online
- ❑ Developing a Mission Statement to support young people and work together towards common goals
- ❑ Providing media training for young people and support in managing the media
- ❑ Facilitating networking opportunities for young people

Principles for exploring engagement with Young People

Young People identified the following principles to follow when exploring opportunities for interfaith engagement with them:

- "Interfaith dialogue should occur in a place where you can understand and deal with conflict rather than avoid it. To be able to talk about real issues, the elephants in the room – for example Israel and Palestine, friction in the community or issues that are keeping communities apart"
- As a collective group, engage in action via service projects and promote friendship
- Act towards a common goal first before engaging in dialogue, 'it's scary when you're just presented with a subject'
- "Interfaith dialogue should take place in a safe, relaxed and peaceful environment, where people can freely ask questions, answer questions, and be heard"
- Engage with interesting speakers, celebrities, events and festivals and use them as catalysts for promoting interfaith dialogue to young people
- "Explore options for using social media to engage with young people"
- Partner Interfaith dialogue with food and sport 'full-stop'
- "Empower young people to be involved in all aspects of interfaith dialogue, and do not marginalise 'youth interfaith' so that it becomes a tokenistic endeavor"
- "Integrate interfaith dialogue with wider issues in society"
- Invite young people to be involved in interfaith dialogue, and focus on what young people would like to do. In order for interfaith to be valuable to young people, it needs to cater to their needs. This could include for example, "pitching conferences to appropriate academic levels and engaging in action"
- "Reflect the values of interfaith networks with the values of young people today" [or explain further what those values are]

5.4 Anticipation of Impact of the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009

Many interfaith and faith groups reported that the Parliament was already having an impact on Melbourne's interfaith groups well before the event itself, because many had received funding from the State Government to support their engagement in interfaith dialogue and activity, and the development of Pre- Parliament events. Participants in the legacy discussions did, however vary in their estimation of the impact of the Parliament on local interfaith groups. As one participant observed before the event began, 'the Parliament is just another drop. The impact will depend if your glass is half-full, or half-empty'.

Lack of support from some faith groups in engaging with the Parliament can be attributed partly to their lukewarm encouragement for interfaith dialogue generally, but also to a lack of understanding and information about the forthcoming event. Questions about the likely impact of the Parliament were often met with uncertainty and indifference as participants found it difficult to answer on behalf of communities that *might* be impacted on, either positively or negatively. A typical response before the event began, was that having the Parliament in Melbourne would not 'not change the support, goodwill, collaboration or ideas' already being generated by local interfaith groups.

The lack of information proved to be a key factor leading to uncertainty about the impact of the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009. As one legacy discussion participant stated, '...If I had understood 18 months ago what I do now, the event would have had more of an impact...' Instead, the 'PWR Melbourne 2009 Limited evolved as the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 evolved' and as Porter

Novelli explained, the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 'lacked a brand and lacked an evidence base from previous Parliaments'¹⁵. As such, the visibility and accessibility of the Parliament proved to be a concern of participants engaging in legacy discussions, who reasoned that 'the interfaith conversation at the Parliament ...could become trapped to just one audience [the interfaith audience]...' and therefore limit the impact of the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009.

5.4.1 Interfaith and Faith Group

Legacy discussion participants involved in interfaith dialogue and activity were very forthright about their expectations of the Parliament and its perceived impact on local communities. For example, one legacy discussion participant stated, 'it would be a mistake for the Parliament to have a mission beyond the event itself [because] it creates an artificial community'. Another legacy discussion participant concluded that having the Parliament in Melbourne 'is not going to change our world, we can keep doing our [interfaith work] without the Parliament'.

Within the varied responses to the perceived impact of the Parliament, and despite a lack of information leading up to the event, participants in the legacy discussions expressed their overall support for the 2009 Parliament taking place in Melbourne, and agreed that the Parliament did offer opportunities to promote and elevate core social cohesion, understanding and respect for the diversity of the 'other'. They were also excited about the opportunity the Parliament brought to Melbourne and embraced the Parliament with enthusiasm, hopeful that there would 'be nothing mundane about the Parliament...it is such a unique opportunity to be exposed to such diversity, practice and thought, we can all be enriched by that, we have to be!'

The most talked about impact was the expected opportunities for networking with local and international visitors to Melbourne, of making friends (seen as the most important and longest lasting legacy), and for the Parliament in all its diversity 'to spill-over into our city', making 'religion more discussed and accepted in a society that is increasingly secularist'. As one person commented, 'the impact will be the memory we have...the event is positive because it takes people out of the odd-box and puts religions and people into the mainstream'.

5.4.2 Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous People Group

Members of the Indigenous community in particular, could not imagine how there would be any impact on their community because there was little engagement with community on a local level, and therefore no profile of the Parliament: 'offers are not being picked up by the community to participate in ceremonies or workshops'. Despite this lack of participation and knowledge of the event, the Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous People Group did however hope that the Parliament would 'place people within the historical context of the realities faced by Indigenous communities...' and suggested that 'any [legacy] activity is good!'

¹⁵ Porter Novelli, Parliament of the World's Religions 2009 Melbourne Evaluation Report 2009, p 3

5.4.3 Young People Group

Young people involved in the pre-Parliament legacy discussions were receptive to the 2009 Parliament's aim and objectives and reported that the Parliament was 'already getting peoples' attention' because 'it has demonstrated the importance of interfaith and this is likely to affect future interactions with those of different faith backgrounds'. Although young people said they 'were not sure how many people knew about the Parliament', they did perceive the impact of the Parliament to be positive creating more cooperation and more awareness about interfaith and its value –including its ability to build strong networks, more contacts from diverse faith groups, and contribute to more trust between faith groups and the general community

5.5 Working with the Three Target Groups

The Interfaith and Faith Group, The Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous People Group and the Young People Group involved in the legacy discussions all participated in interfaith dialogue and activity for different reasons. They highlighted the need for the structure of interfaith networks and interfaith dialogue opportunities. They further needed to reflect the needs and values of the particular people or groups involved while drawing attention to the need for interfaith dialogue to purposefully bring communities together on 'common issues' as well as being a place for learning, listening and affirming the legitimacy of faith and spirituality. The Young People Group and The Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous People Group in particular explained that in some instances, people identifying with these groups need to be specifically invited and welcomed to participate in dialogue.

5.5.1 Interfaith and Faith Group

Interfaith and faith groups participating in the legacy discussions were very conscious of the value of interfaith dialogue - its potential to bring about community harmony and its ability promote social cohesion in Victoria's multicultural and multi-faith community; its capacity of 'making connections...so if issues come up, there is a way of talking about [them]'.

Participants emphasised the ability of interfaith dialogue to 'affirm the legitimacy of each faith...without compromising the legitimacy of others', and to demonstrate that 'faith communities can work together, not just have sensational clashes of civilisations'. As one legacy discussion participant stated:

'the premise of [interfaith dialogue] should not be that there is a problem that we have to solve; loving each other because we hate each other – this attitude is stagnant, attracts the same types of people and marginalises people in a structured and formal way.'

In order to promote interfaith dialogue to the wider community and make it sustainable, legacy discussion participants drew attention to the need for interfaith dialogue to purposefully bring communities together on 'common issues' as well as being a place for learning, listening and affirming the legitimacy of faith. But for interfaith dialogue to be valuable, 'it has to have a point', and therefore has to be relevant to people who are not involved in interfaith or faith as such, and continue to motivate and engage those people who already participate in interfaith dialogue and activity.

A key theme that emerged repeatedly in the legacy discussions was that interfaith dialogue needs to have enough time to be responsive to the needs of the world, for example reconciliation and poverty; but also enough time to be responsive to the needs in peoples' lives, of therefore engaging personally and on a local level and sharing commonalities of life in order to 'build a community' rather than just shallow sharing of religious similarities or differences. Interfaith dialogue should be about everyday life: of collaboration and supporting local networks to help people understand humanity, and of promoting friendships across religious and faith boundaries.

It became clear during this discussion about successful engagement in, and factors to support interfaith dialogue, that the reason or 'wisdom' behind being involved in interfaith dialogue is different for everyone. Diverse processes and 'methods' are therefore required to meet the needs of participants engaging in interfaith dialogue, and to fulfill the motivation in calling for the engagement. There is still fear surrounding interfaith dialogue and what this means for many people. Faith and religious groups engaging in interfaith dialogue need to have confidence when participating in dialogue: that they feel safe; that they will not be proselytized, and that they have trust in the assurance that they will not be 'forced to buy' and that they will be accepted rather ridiculed.

5.5.2 Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous People Group

In order to connect with Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous people successfully, the Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous People Group urged those wanting to engage in interfaith dialogue or dialogue for reconciliation to respect and recognise that different approaches are required when working with Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous people than with non-Indigenous people. In order to achieve successful engagement with community, the cultural diversity of Aboriginal and Indigenous communities in Australia needs to be taken into account. Time needs to be taken to talk with Indigenous communities to create trust and to learn where people come from, to show value to language, culture and reconciliation. As one person from the Australian Aboriginal and Australian Indigenous People Group stated, engaging takes energy; to maintain contact and is about respect: 'to be committed and honest, to understand the past, and to be balanced and non-judgmental'. It is important to consider the process of engaging with Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous people, 'to take culture seriously', to 'take time to talk and create trust' and explain 'what you are trying to achieve and why you are doing it'. As one Australian Indigenous participant stated in regards to working with non-Indigenous people: at the moment, 'the receiver isn't on'.

5.5.3 Young People

Young People engaging in legacy discussions before during and after the 2009 Parliament were very keen to be involved in future interfaith activity:

- 'We are very inspired'
- 'I would like to be involved in anything at the moment'
- 'I would like to be a part of anything and everything'
- 'I want to experience MORE activities'

In the Pre-Parliament legacy discussions with the Faith and Interfaith Group, a key component of proposed future interfaith activity was to either start engaging, or engage more with young people in appropriate interfaith dialogue and activity. Many faith groups did not know how to go about this, and believed that young people were not particularly interested in engaging in interfaith dialogue, that they are the 'lazy generation' and 'not particularly with it'.

Legacy discussions with young people before, during and after the Parliament of the World's Religions 2009 Melbourne, however, revealed that from their perspective the issue is more about the structure of general interfaith groups - their objectives and their activities, rather than the fact that young people, as 'children of technology' are inherently difficult to engage with and therefore do not recognise the value of interfaith dialogue and activity.

On the contrary, many young people participating in legacy discussions had been involved in interfaith work for years. They are engaged in interfaith dialogue and activity through their local interfaith networks, via family connections or diverse friendships, or because of their specific involvement in faith leadership programs. Many other young people who were attending the Parliament were participating in an interfaith event for the first time, and 'had no idea that any such groups or organisations existed!' They did however recognize that the Parliament provided a 'pretty big opportunity to get to know about different religions, it's not often they are all in one place at one time!'

Young people participating in the 2009 Parliament recognised the importance of its themes, the value of learning about other religions, and also that the Parliament as a great first step in getting involved in interfaith dialogue; a 'momentous occasion for any person who is spiritually inclined – to come together and move forward'.

The legacy discussions with the Young People Group before during and after the Parliament made it very apparent that *interested* young people are, and would like to continue to be involved in interfaith dialogue in the future. What is important, as one young person involved in legacy discussions commented is:

"That future action needs to look at those who haven't been involved or haven't participated...How to reach those who may find interfaith too confronting or antagonistic to their own belief, or most of all those who consider themselves to be secular. Wider involvement will lead to greater reconciliation...otherwise it's a bit like preaching to the converted –those who recognise the wisdom of interfaith"

There are multiple factors that contribute to the successful engagement of young people in interfaith dialogue and activity. These include not only having interesting or exciting initiatives to engage in, but also providing access to young people. As one young person commented, 'young people want to be involved, they just don't have the resources...'it is impossible to think young people could afford this type of event'.

Successful engagement with young people and interfaith dialogue starts with the advertising of events 'so there is more awareness of the stuff going on'; education about what interfaith means to quell fear of the unknown ; and sponsorship and funding opportunities to empower young people to be involved and to actually give young people the opportunity to attend interfaith events.

5.6 Interfaith in Victoria: Diversity and Difference

It became clear during the legacy discussions that interfaith activity and dialogue in Melbourne and surrounding areas was very active during the lead-up, but was not limited to the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009. The following summary provides some insight into the diversity and difference of interfaith networks and faith groups and organisations operating in and surrounding Melbourne.

5.6.1 Diversity of interfaith networks and faith groups

There is a great diversity in levels of activity taking place in interfaith networks and faith groups. Interfaith networks and faith groups based in Victoria are active at local, state and national levels, for example, partnering with international interfaith initiatives such as the *Face to Faith*, part of the Tony Blair Foundation, or working internationally with developing communities. Other faith groups within Melbourne are extremely small however, and in terms of community, have not participated in any interfaith activity before the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009.

5.6.2 Contributing to community

Faith groups and interfaith groups and organisations participating in legacy discussions indicated that interfaith activity and dialogue involves connecting and contributing to the community, and is linked to social justice and human rights. For example, the Brotherhood of St Laurence was 'founded as Anglican organisation, but is open to all faiths and walks of life, and intentionally engages with multi-faith groups because of their connection to refugees and re-settlement issues'. There is therefore an overlying character of interfaith and relational dialogue underlying the organisation based around capacity and community building.

It is clear from completed legacy discussions that for some groups, the Parliament generated renewed momentum for interfaith dialogue in the local community prior to the event beginning. Many people from interfaith groups and faith groups in Melbourne were however not aware the Parliament organization would not be following through on any outcomes reached at the event once it had concluded; that energy to promote interfaith activity and dialogue emanating from conversations at the Parliament would need to be driven and supported by local community, rather than the PWR Melbourne 2009 Limited or the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions. The local community assumed the PWR Melbourne 2009 Limited would be able to drive local initiatives, and were not ready to imagine how initiatives or outcomes from the Parliament might roll out in their local interfaith groups and networks.

5.6.3 Identifying and creating sustainable partnerships with Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous People

Despite social justice and human rights being at the top of the list of objectives for many interfaith and faith groups, and reconciliation and Indigenous spirituality being a key theme of the Parliament, only a small proportion of faith and interfaith groups participating in the legacy discussions had partnered with reconciliation groups or Australian Aboriginal or Australian Indigenous people. Many who had worked with Australian Aboriginal or Australian Indigenous people had done so with remote communities or communities from interstate, or had only connected briefly with local communities during key calendar dates such as Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC (the acronym originally standing for National Aborigines and Islanders Day

Observance Committee) week. Only one interfaith network included the example of touring Aboriginal Places of Significance in their tours of Places of Worship, and only one participant in the legacy discussions recognised the importance of partnering in 'storytelling' with Indigenous communities as a form of 'beneficial exchange':

'It allows us to develop sensitivities and commonalities...careful not to be paternalistic...to look at peoples narratives, to give people the opportunity to tell their stories as religious people, creating appreciation and ways of breaking down barriers...for some people this is a cathartic experience and makes them human'.

Interfaith and faith groups reported that they would like to partner with Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous people now and in the future, but did not know how to do this because 'it is hard to find a good network to be part of', or could not find 'on-going ways' to engage.

5.6.4 Level of involvement in the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009

For some interfaith groups, having the Parliament in Melbourne has raised energy levels and expectations of what community groups can achieve. Many people have stated that they would like to continue and expand on their interfaith activity once the Parliament has concluded in Melbourne - to raise the profile of interfaith dialogue and activity. Other faith groups reported being worn out by the Parliament, even before the event had begun. As one person explained, 'There is an inherent problem because only liberal people by and large believe in interfaith understanding, and this is a small subset of people'.

Despite support for the Parliament from diverse faith groups and interfaith networks in Victoria and Australia, with some faith groups even considering interfaith be 'our industry', other faith groups were 'not sold on the interfaith idea' and chose not to be heavily involved in the Parliament. As one faith group commented, 'it is a delicate decision to be involved in the Parliament...there is a level of fear that if we mix with, and dialogue with other religions, our beliefs will be watered down...There is fear because it [the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009] is raising peoples' insecurities about their own faith'.

Members of local interfaith groups in Melbourne were involved in the Parliament to varying degrees. Some were involved in the bidding process and preparing programs, while others supported the event by volunteering their time during the development of the Parliament, holding Pre-Parliament events, and during the event itself. Members of the Melbourne interfaith community hosted participants of the Parliament in their homes, and held fundraising events to raise awareness of the Parliament and to provide much needed financial support for the event.

5.6.5 Access to the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009

Interfaith groups and faith groups were concerned about the cost of attending the Parliament, and highlighted the divisive impact the affordability of the event had on faith and interfaith communities. They argued 'it is more important for people to go [to the Parliament], to encourage people to want to work together, rather than to separate people into those who can afford to attend the event, and those who cannot afford to go'.

Indeed money or lack of it proved to be a major hurdle for the Parliament. As one faith member commented; 'the amount of money needed to be raised from the community creates difficulty for the event, as the Parliament is not high on their agenda' because 'it's a stretch to do it [interfaith dialogue and activity] even in your own tradition'. As many people in the interfaith community had never heard about the Parliament before Melbourne won the bid to host the event, the underlying reasons for the cost of staging the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 proved to be unimaginable and disconcerting to some faith and interfaith groups.



6. Conclusion

This legacy report, and the research which underpins it, indicates that the experience of hosting the 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions has generally been positive for all those who have been involved, and for the development of interfaith dialogue and activity in Melbourne.

Melbourne and Australia were showcased; the new Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre demonstrated its capacity to stage a world class international event; and it was heralded as the best organised Parliament to date, generating enthusiasm and memorable events across the seven major subthemes of its program, engaging with people of faith and spirituality, young people and Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous people from around the world.

Almost everyone who took part in the legacy research was pleased that Melbourne had been selected as the host city for the Parliament and felt that it would accelerate the level and intensity of local interfaith activity into the future. Moreover, most interviewees saw themselves as playing an active role in this process. Although it was often difficult for people (especially for those being interviewed before or during the Parliament event) to define precisely the legacies that they hoped to see emerging from the Parliament, there were some clear themes and directions which emerged from the research. Moreover, it was also possible to discern differences in emphasis and focus between the three research target groups. The proposals and principles generated across and within these three groups will be valuable planning tools for use by local faith communities, interfaith groups and networks, Aboriginal communities and reconciliation groups, government and non government organisations working in relevant fields such as social justice, poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability. The report also provides a number of reflections and learnings which could be discussed, debated and shared by future researchers, conference planners, Parliament of the World's Religions organisers and host cities in further developing this exciting event into the future.

The themes of potential legacy initiatives identified by target groups engaging in the legacy discussions are outlined below.

Interfaith and Faith Group

- Environmental initiatives
- Partnership initiatives
- Social justice and human rights activities
- Sustaining interfaith activity in the local community

Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous People Group

- Promoting Indigenous reconciliation and forgiveness
- Celebrating and valuing culture
- Community capacity building
- Australian Aboriginal history and education in schools

Young People Group

- Taking Action
- Interfaith education
- Behind the Scenes
- Community Building
- Partnership Opportunities

While there are many positive achievements and aspirations which emerged from the research and are documented in this report, it should be noted that there were also some unforeseen circumstances and obstacles experienced. These include:

Attendance at the event, and consequently income, was negatively impacted by the Global Financial Crisis', Sponsorship from the corporate community in Melbourne/Australia was not at the level that was anticipated; Media/marketing of this prestigious event was not sufficient to reach the anticipated level of awareness of the event

Caution is suggested in drawing detailed conclusions from much of the information contained this report. It is a first attempt to describe some of the immediate impacts on Melbourne's faith communities and interfaith groups of bidding successfully to host the 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions, of taking part in the planning and preparations, and of participating in the event itself. The report should be considered as a series of learnings and as a rich source of ideas for discussion in considering the next steps to be taken in further developing a cohesive and multifaith community. The author hopes that this initial report will stimulate additional research into the longer term outcomes of the 2009 Melbourne Parliament of the World's Religions and interfaith engagement more generally.





*Make a World of Difference:
Hearing each other, Healing the earth*

Parliament of the World's Religions



APPENDICES



Appendix 1: Rationale for bidding to host the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009

In its bid documents, Melbourne recognised the multifaceted impact globalisation and religion has had on its community in its proposal to host the 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions:

- That religion is at, or is close to the core of the identity of its multicultural citizens
- That 'home' has a transient meaning or no meaning at all for many people, including Australian Indigenous people due to persecution and conflict
- That religiously inspired Islamic terrorism has shaken and disturbed citizens at a global, regional and local level
- That after September 11, multicultural and multi-faith agendas were brought together and pushed forward
- That because of its multifaith and multicultural environment, and after September 11, Australia and Melbourne has developed strategies that could be studied and usefully applied in other parts of the world
- That the Parliament should be held in the Asia-Pacific Basin, home of two-thirds of the world's population, where interreligious tensions are present but controlled
- The Parliament offers an opportunity for young people to have a more positive appreciation of the social wealth of religious faiths and their activities, including their struggle for social justice in many contexts
- Recognizing that Australia continues to be unable to address the needs of its Aboriginal communities. The Parliament hopes to offer a new perspective of reconciliation and highlight Aboriginal spiritualities
- The Parliament is an opportune moment for issues of global warming and environmental degradation to be placed within a religious framework
- The Parliament offers an opportunity to focus on the moral and religious perspective of illegal entry and asylum seeking which have become major issues for Australia

Appendix 2: Supporting the theme of the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009

The theme of the Parliament '**Make a World of Difference: Hearing each other, Healing the earth**' was supported by 7 major subthemes of programming that focused on different aspects of the 2009 Parliament.

The seven subthemes were:

- | | |
|---|--|
| □ Healing the Earth with Care and Concern | □ Building Peace in the Pursuit of Justice |
| □ Indigenous people | □ Creating Social Cohesion in Village and City |
| □ Overcoming poverty in an Unequal World | □ Sharing Wisdom in the Search for Inner Peace |
| □ Securing Food and Water for All People | |

The framework of major 7 major subthemes was also supported by program clusters which aimed to enrich the Parliament and emerged around several diverse topic areas. Program clusters included:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| □ Local and Global Interreligious Movements | □ Partner Cities Network |
| □ Islam in the Global Context | □ Women in Leadership |
| □ Young People | □ Family |
| □ Media and Religion | □ Interreligious Education |
| □ Human Rights | □ Peace Building |
| □ Nuclear Non-Proliferation | □ Disaster Relief |

Appendix 3: Reflections on the journey of hosting the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009

The following excerpts were taken from PWR Melbourne 2009 Limited board members, staff and key stakeholders.

"The Parliament of the World's Religions held in Melbourne in December 2009 provided a unique opportunity to meet, hear and interact with people of all faiths. I particularly appreciated the opportunity to hear the various religious speakers from overseas who brought different perspectives on issues affecting our faith communities here in Melbourne..."

'...It takes much more than an event or series of events to develop genuine interfaith dialogue in the community... it takes a very skilled surgeon, or in other words an expert facilitator to make sure that peoples' emotional wounds do heal and that interfaith and intrafaith does not kill them but makes them stronger"

"...hopefully we can continue to do interfaith work together" "...It is important to recognise that the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 was possible only because of the strong support of the local faith communities and the various levels of government within Australia"

'When I first heard of this event I was quite skeptical. As I did not know much about it, and it sounded like just another talkfest...' "...I was extremely pleased that the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 could be held in Melbourne to give Australians many interesting and inspirational experiences that we would otherwise not have '

'...it was a great learning experience'

'...I had an opportunity to listen to and speak with some of the exceptional Islamic presenters...I had an opportunity to experience observances which gave me a greater understanding of the relationship between the history and current practice of Judaism.... Observing the contrast between Australian and international Indigenous communities that helped me understand Australian Aboriginal issues better. '

'...being able to have discussions with Aboriginal people...meeting international presenters who were either deeply committed to their particular issues or extremely competent in their field.'

'Overall the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne was an exceptional learning experience which sadly is not easily available within Australia except for events like this one'.

'While life changing is such a hackneyed and over used term for something like this, my involvement with the Parliament was just that.'

'... I now look at people in the street differently, have more interest in a wider variety of media reports, and even consider my selection of overseas holiday destinations through new eyes.'

My highlight was on the wonderfully sunny Melbourne afternoon as thousands streamed off the bridge after lining up behind the quickly produced sign to be taken to Copenhagen; Protect the earth, it's the only we have. With a scene resembling a school break-up, groups were forming everywhere on the steps, in the sunshine and all around the Convention Centre. No one wanted to leave. New friendships were cemented, promises to keep in touch were made and there was a feeling of happiness all around. And the vision of so much colorful clothing intermingled was a sight not quickly forgotten'.

'Being involved in the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009 has given me a much greater understanding of the depth and complexity of religious and spiritual life in Australia, and of the ways in which different traditions interact (or in some cases don't interact) with each other and with the broader society. I am now curious to learn more about some of the religions and spiritualities that I have encountered, including Aboriginal spirituality. I have gained a deeper appreciation of the diversity of my own tradition, and some new ideas about how organizations can develop their capacity further and contribute to the wellbeing of our entire community. I have also met some wonderful people through the Parliament whom I hope will continue to be friends and/or colleagues into the future.'

...While formal interfaith activity and organisation is important and essential, it is even more important for people to communicate and cooperate across religious, ethnic and other boundaries through the arts, literature, sport, education, community organizations, politics, friendship and marriage. We are fortunate to live in a society where this is possible, and the Parliament has provided many models and ideas which people can build on'.

'...Its legacy will live on.'

TWAS BESIDE THE FLOWING RIVER

In memory of Shantilal Somaiya*

By Professor Desmond Cahill

'Twas in multicultural Melbourne
beside the flowing river in its tranquil peace
in a land, beautiful and blessed
in the deadly aftermath of Black Saturday
in the shadow of greedy bankers,
the Parliament of spiritualities and faiths,
people of many lands came to a land of many peoples,
in the mystery of divine togetherness,
different in traditions and cultures and languages,
from 83 countries, more than 200 faiths,
the mainstream and the minority,
the indigenous and the esoteric
to the beating of the Tantrayana drums
reverberating in the cavernous convention centre,
the sacred music, the sacred dance, the sacred art
the mandala destroyed at its most beautiful,
differences there had to be, debate there had to be,
in respectful acceptance of the other,
overflowing with the wisdom of the ages
the silence and stillness of the observances
in the transcendence of the divine
the feminine and the masculine
hearing each other and healing the earth,
the depth of reconciliation, the virtue of persuasion,
we record the vibrancy of the sacred concerts
we celebrate the fellowship of humanity
.....until the next Parliament.

**The great Indian philanthropist, Shantilal Somaiya (1938 – 2010), devout Hindu and ardent admirer of Swami Vivekananda, collapsed several minutes after the Opening Ceremony of the Melbourne Parliament. He never recovered from the subsequent brain surgery and died peacefully in his sleep in a Melbourne hospital one month later, far from his beloved Mumbai and far from his beloved wife. Among the many teaching and research institutes he founded was the key one in Hindu and Sanskrit Studies which has played a key role in nurturing interfaith relations, especially the Hindu-Vatican relationship.*

Appendix 5: Percentage of people identifying with a religious tradition when attending the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009

Table 1: Percentage of religions or spiritualities represented at the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009

Total number of participants: 4587

Total number of participants who specified Religion / Tradition: 2586

Anglican	2%
Bahá'í	2%
Brahma Kumaris	1%
Buddhist	8%
Catholic	12%
Christian:	26%
Anglican , Christian Catholic, Lutheran, Protestant, Presbyterian, Christian Scientist, Progressive, Christian Orthodox	
Hindu	5%
Indigenous	1%
Interfaith	4%
Islam	3%
Jain	1%
Judaism	5%
Lutheran	1%
Muslim	2%
New Thought	3%
Pagan	1%
Religious Science	2%
Sikh	4%
Spiritual	1%
Sufi	1%
Unitarian	1%
United Church	1%
Unity	1%
Other:	13%
	100%
Celtic Mysticism, Divine Science, Evolutionary Enlightenment, Integral Spirituality, Mystical, Nature Religion, Ringatu, Santo Daime, Science of Mind, Scientology, Secular Humanism, Self Enquiry, Shamanism, Shinto, Sri Sathya Sai Organisation, Sukyo Mahikari. Tantric, Tantric Kashmir Shavaism, Te Haahi Ringatu, The essence of all religions, The Urantia Book, Theosophist, Theravada, Unificationist, Universal, Universalist Unitarian, Urban Mysticism, Vaishnava, Vedanta, Vedic, World, Yoga, Yoga Vedanta, Yogic, Zarathushtra, Zarthusti, Zoroastrian.	

Appendix 5: Structure of the 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions Program

Plenary Sessions

The 2009 Parliament consisted of 7 Evening Plenary Sessions. Each plenary occasion aimed to celebrate the key subthemes of the Parliament and included an opening and closing plenary, Communities Night, International Plenary, Sacred Music Concert, Youth Plenary, and Melbourne Plenary.

Intrareligious Sessions

Intrareligious sessions were held during the Parliament to give religious and spiritual communities the opportunity to express their values, vibrancy and commitments. Many of the sessions included combined panels, to all for multiple voices from each religious tradition and to express a variety of perspectives from different geographic locations.

Programs focused on:

- A basic understanding of religious and spiritual communities, as well as the teachings, practices, and dynamics of their traditions;
- Resources and rationales from within the religious and spiritual communities and movements for dialogue, engagement and cooperation
- Tools for intrareligious reflection and dialogue

Interreligious Sessions

The interreligious sessions at the Parliament features a wide variety of programs focusing on:

- Structured opportunities for interreligious encounter and dialogue
- Sharing the convictions and motivations for engaging with each other and the world
- Innovative methodologies for interreligious encounter, dialogue and cooperation

Engagement Sessions

The Parliament's engagement sessions featured a wide variety of programs focusing on:

- Building capacity for religious and spiritual people, communities and organisations to collaborate with guiding institutions in service to a peaceful, just and sustainable future
- Examples of successful programs and best practice that address critical issues around the world
- Creative approaches and tools for effective dialogue and collaboration

Symposia

The Parliament symposia offered an opportunity for people of faith, spirit and goodwill to interactively focus in depth on a variety of important issues with leading international scholars and practitioners. All Symposia events were closely related to the 2009 Parliament theme, 'Hearing each other, Healing the earth,' and focused on matters of urgent concern to religious and spiritual communities around the world.

Participants were encouraged to attend all sessions linked to particular symposia as they built on each other over the course of the Parliament

Symposia topics included:

- **Religion and Ecology:** presented in partnership with the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University, the symposium dedicated itself to bringing religions' symbolic insights to bear on supporting a vibrant earth community. More than just a call to action, this symposium focused on both practical action and spiritual motivation to mobilize and sustain environmental efforts
- **Connection to Copenhagen:** in view of the overlap of the international Copenhagen Climate Change Conference and the 2009 Parliament, participants at the Parliament were invited to consider the latest analysis of the ecological ramifications of climate change, to explore the emerging models seeking to address it, and mobilise religious and spiritual communities in calling for clear-headed and courageous responses to this threat to the community.
- **Poverty and Development:** presented with support of Mr. Haruhisa Handa, the Asian Faiths Development Dialogue, the International Shinto Foundation and the World Faiths Development Dialogue, the Poverty and Development Symposium explored how religious and spiritual communities are meeting the many dimensions of contemporary poverty. The symposium's sessions explored the historic shifts from charity and compassion to respect, rights and equity as drivers of social justice, as well as practical approaches of fostering education, health, and opportunities for the impoverished.
- **War and the Role of Religion in a Just and Sustainable World:** Presented in partnership with the Global Ethics and Religion Forum, experts in this symposium addressed the need for a revised and complete ethics of war and peace for a just world. The multi-religious panels explored some of the most salient ways in which the role of religious and spiritual traditions in just war thinking intersect with, and can be brought to bear upon important dimensions of human and planetary sustainability.
- **Sacred Sites, Sacred Solidarity:** This symposium brought together representatives of many diverse traditions, as well as international and non-governmental organisations to present interdisciplinary perspectives on the mutual respect for and care of sacred sites. Practical ways for interested parties to join with existing initiatives and ways to expand those efforts were explored.
- **Science and Religion:** Presented in partnership with the International Society for Science and Religion, this symposium consisted of workshops to examine compassion as an essential principle of interest for diverse traditions and scientific disciplines alike, and facilitated real-world strategies for making change for humanity and for the earth.
- **Educating Religious Leaders for a Multi-Religious World:** Presented with support of the Henry Luce Foundation, and coordinating with 15 theological institutions to explore ways to increase education for interreligious leadership in North American theological schools, this symposium was designed to answer the key question: 'How might seminaries foster significant teaching/learning opportunities for the development of a new generation of leaders equipped to serve in the challenging milieu of today's multicultural, multi-religious world?
- **Enhancing Religious Leadership for the future:** Presented in partnership with the Elijah Interfaith Institute, this symposium was based on previous gatherings and papers prepared to discuss the future of religious leadership. The discussions and workshops focused on several questions such as: What is the goal of religious and spiritual leadership? What challenges have leaders always faced or are facing today? How should future leaders be trained?
- **Australian Schools: Educators and Students:** Providing a major professional opportunity for teachers involved in religious and intercultural studies, world religions, values and conflict resolution studies, this symposium offered teachers of all educational levels the opportunity to hear from educators of many religious and spiritual traditions as they shared their diverse experiences and expertise.
- **Voices of Latin America:** An interactive symposium in Spanish, which offered opportunities to network and examine interreligious challenges that are particular to Latin America. The goals of this symposium were twofold: to develop better communication among the interreligious communities of Latin America and, to connect the communities individually and collectively with the global Parliament.

Special Events

Special events at the Parliament offered a unique opportunity to showcase the global interreligious movement. Events included:

- A private Indigenous Reception for all international Indigenous speakers, their spouses, Indigenous peoples in the community, local dignitaries, affiliated boards and staff of the Parliament of the World's Religions.
- A special event called 'Landscape of Faith: Sharing Wisdom for a New Vision of Community' presented in partnership with the Temple of Understanding to provide a context for community building by addressing the challenges of prejudice, injustice and alienation from the earth while weaving the possibility of transformation through the arts
- The 'Paul Carus Award' was presented at the International Plenary of the 2009 Parliament by the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions for Outstanding Contributions to the Interreligious Movement. The award celebrates the power of interreligious action to effect change around the world to Interfaith and was presented to Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) who maintain a number of humanitarian projects, its most public activity being in the area of conflict resolution, broadly representing numerous regions and religions on the African continent.
- The International Partner Cities and 2009 Ambassadors Reception was an invitation only event to honor legacy Partner Cities, 2009 Parliament Ambassadors and Pre-Parliament Events hosts
- The Indigenous Assembly was an invitation only working session. Hosted by the Indigenous Australian Planning Committee of Melbourne, the event provided a forum for Indigenous representatives from several countries to discuss common issues and strategise on ways to address these issues.
- The Parliament held a special assembly called The 'Convocation of Hindu Spirit Leaders' which included a number of the most outstanding spiritual leaders in India. Beginning with Vedic chanting, prayers, meditation and music, these morning observances were followed by eminent speakers speaking on universal themes, as well as current issues, education, and the environment.

Intrareligious Sessions

A broad variety of religious and spiritual traditions was included in this opportunity to express values, vibrancy and commitments. To allow for multiple voices to be heard, combined panels were used to express a variety of perspectives from different geographic locations.

Regional Sessions

Bringing together individuals of diverse personal and geographic backgrounds, the Parliament hoped to foster a broader understanding of religious diversity. The sessions aimed to showcase the voices, worldviews, cultures and religious and spiritual traditions that may go unheard.

Observances

Participants of the 2009 Parliament were offered the opportunity to deepen their own spirituality, and get to know other people. A wide range of services including for example, Eastern, Western, traditional, creative, theistic, atheistic was offered between 8 am- 9 am during the Parliament.

Films

At the 2009 Parliament films provided a vivid way to tell stories and gain new perspectives and understanding. Developed in collaboration with the Hartley Film Foundation and Auburn Media, the presentation of films included the best of current documentaries on the world's religious and spiritual traditions and films also related to the Parliament themes.

Performances

Including musical and performance styles from around the world, across diverse religious and spiritual traditions and including contemporary music, theatre performances, multi-art-form concert performances and dancing.

Open Space

The Parliament offered a time for planned encounter called Open Space. Open Space provided a time for flexible, informal encounters at the Parliament, to extend conversations that were begun earlier in the day around shared interests, or to explore unfamiliar topics. Participants at the Parliament could be involved in already hosted discussion groups or individual, or could begin or host their own discussion group.

Appendix 5: Research Methods

The legacy discussions and research was completed in five stages to provide ongoing opportunity for people to participate in the development of potential legacy initiatives of the Melbourne 2009 Parliament.

An action research framework was used to underpin the approach to the research component of the project.

A series of semi-structured interviews was undertaken with three target groups. The groups were interviewed prior to, during and after the event. The main focus was to engage the groups around their perspective of 'legacy'.

Stage 1: Pre-Parliament Questionnaire Survey

Completed August 2009 – November 2009

The Pre-Parliament Questionnaire sought to engage with community members already involved in the development of the 2009 Melbourne Parliament. Those community members and stakeholders who had previously indicated their interest in the Parliament as directed by the Parliament's Community Organisers, and who identified with faith or spiritual groups, environmental groups, Indigenous communities or those who could be classified as a Young Person aged 18-30 years, were invited to participate in the Pre-Parliament legacy and evaluation discussions before the 2009 Melbourne Parliament began.

The Pre-Parliament Questionnaire Survey consisted of open-ended questions designed to encourage interviewees to express their views and identity. In general, the idea was to meet, talk and listen at a location of the participants choosing. For a copy of the research questions see Table 2.

Data was recorded by the researcher during the discussion session, and then transcribed and forwarded to the participant upon completion to allow for further comment, reflection and verification.

The Pre-Parliament questionnaire engaged with over 22 community and stakeholder groups beginning in June 2009 and concluding in November 2009.

Table 2 indicates the groups that participated and informed the Pre-Parliament legacy and evaluation research. The research did not seek to engage with the same number of participants from different faith traditions as engagement and completion of the questionnaire was at the discretion of the participant, it did however seek to engage with both men and women where possible

Group	Dates visited	Total survey participants
Seventh Day Adventist	September 2009	1 male
Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous	August – November 2009	2 men 2 women
Anglican	September – November 2009	3 males
Baha'i	August and September 2009	2 females
Baptists	September 2009	1 female
Brahma Kumaris	September 2009	3 females
Buddhism	September 2009	1 male 3 females
Catholicism	August – October 2009	4 males 1 female
Churches of Christ	September 2009	1 male 1 female
Ethiopian Orthodox	August 2009	1 male
Government including Local Council and State Departments	September 2009	2 females
Hindu	September 2009	2 females
Interfaith Networks	August – November 2009	3 males 4 females
Jainism	August 2009	1 male
Judaism	August- October 2009	3 males 1 female
Lutheran	September	1 female
Muslim	September	2 males 1 female
Non- Government Organisations including, environmental and social justice groups	August – November 2009	2 males 3 females
Quaker	August and November 2009	2 females
Sikhism	October 2009	2 males
Volunteers	November – December 2009	1 male 3 females
Young people	November 2009	4 males 6 females
PWR M BOM	September – November 2009	4 males 2 females
PWR M Patrons	October – November 2009	3 males
Reconciliation Group	October and November 2009	1 male 1 female

Stage 2: Pre-Parliament Focus Group with the Parliament Advisory Committee

The Parliament's Advisory Committee was formed before Melbourne won the bid for the 2009 Parliament. Interest in the Parliament snowballed from this original interest group, attracting people from diverse faiths and backgrounds.

The first legacy focus group session was held prior to the Parliament opening in Melbourne. It sought to engage with how people perceived the Parliament, and asked participants to imagine what legacy initiatives might arise out of the Parliament, and if the Parliament would, in any case, have an impact on the interfaith community in Melbourne and surrounding areas.

Key discussion points of the first legacy focus group session included:

- How interfaith groups can link in and support reconciliation with Aboriginal groups
- What community-based and community-owned legacy initiatives are envisaged to occur 6-12 months after the Parliament has concluded
- Whether or not the Parliament would cause communities and groups to change and or evolve their interfaith practices.

Stage 3: On-site Surveys during the Parliament

(Completed December 3-9th 2009)

The primary aim of the on-site surveys was to further engage with Young People and Australian Indigenous people attending the 2009 Parliament. These two groups were identified as being key participants and contributors to the 2009 Melbourne Parliament by the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions because:

- Young people represent the next generation of an ageing interfaith community. If interfaith dialogue and activity is to be sustainable it must remain or become relevant to young people and cater to their interests and needs
- The Parliament aimed to engage in processes of achieving harmony on a local and global scale. In the wake and hype of Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's Apology to the Stolen Generations, the 2009 Parliament aimed to continue the process of reconciliation and sought to highlight the strong role religious and faith groups can play in bringing about reconciliation and social justice for Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous communities.

The aim of the legacy research with Young People was therefore to:

- Find out how Young People aged 18- 30 years would like to be actively engaged in interfaith dialogue and initiatives in the future
- Find out what are appropriate and attractive Interfaith activities for young people to engage in
- To help facilitate a link between young people interested in interfaith activities and interfaith groups and organisations

Young people were interviewed by roving surveyors during the Parliament at random. It was expected 60 surveys would be completed with Young people during the event only 47 were completed due to unforeseen circumstances experienced at the Parliament. Data was recorded during the completion of the survey by the interviewer.

For a copy of interview survey questions completed with young people during the Parliament see Table 3.

The aim of completing on-site surveys with Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous people attending the Parliament was to:

- Find out what the aspirations of the Australian Aboriginal participants of the Melbourne 2009 Parliament were in achieving self determination (meaning dignity, freewill, politically, socially, wellbeing and economic)
- Help clarify (for future potential facilitation) a link between Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous people and religious and spiritual communities to provide meaningful support to achieve objectives of self determination and social justice

Interview questions were used to engage Australian Aboriginal people attending the Parliament to collect stories, descriptions, experiences and values. For a copy of interview discussion questions see Table 3.

Indigenous participants were also provided with their own space for discussion. An invitation only Indigenous Assembly was held during the Parliament with Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous and Indigenous people from around the world which the researcher sat in on. At the conclusion of the assembly, an 'Indigenous Statement' was released. For a copy of this statement, see Appendix 6.

Note: The general interfaith community attending the Parliament was engaged in research surveys by Colmar Brunton, contracted by Department of Industry and Innovation as part of the government's triple bottom line impact assessment of the 2009 Parliament.

Stage 4: Focus Group sessions completed at the Parliament

(December 3-9th 2009)

'The After Party' Focus Group with Young People

Two focus group sessions were held to further engage with young people interested in interfaith dialogue, networks and activities, and future legacy initiatives of the Parliament called *The After Party 1* and *The After Party 2*.

The aim of *The After Party 1* was to:

- Share experiences of interfaith work
- Identify the best ways to engage with young people and interfaith activity
- Develop a realistic wishlist of the different types of Interfaith organisations or projects that participants would like to be involved in
- Allow time for general discussion about interfaith organisations, and how young people can get involved

The After Party 2 was designed to carry on from discussions held in the previous session. Key areas of conversation included:

- How to facilitate and maintain involvement – what processes can you use to engage with young people in interfaith activity
- Different approaches and factors for effective interfaith activity
- How participants might implement their interfaith 'wishlist' (discussed during the previous session)
- How to provide an opportunity for participants to network with people from other countries and their own

Both focus group sessions were held during 'Open Space' time allocated during the Parliament, and were advertised in the Parliament's Program Book. Participation in these sessions was therefore informal, and was not constrained to just young people, although they were the target audience.

Legacy and Melbourne – Focus Group

Two focus group sessions were held during the Open Space Sessions of the Parliament to engage with people interested in the legacy of the 2009 Parliament.

The focus group sessions were open to all participants of the Parliament and those people who were engaged in Pre-Parliament Legacy discussions.

The Legacy and Melbourne focus group sessions were designed to provide feedback to the interfaith community on preliminary pre-parliament research findings.

The aim of the Legacy and Melbourne focus groups was to:

- Provide further opportunity for participants and members of interfaith and faith groups to engage with each other
- To share what activities and interfaith dialogue is occurring in their own communities
- To discuss hopes for the future of interfaith and what the next steps are in achieving legacy initiatives in Melbourne arising out of the Parliament.

The focus group sessions were designed to build on information and research already collected; the Pre-Parliament legacy research informed the first focus group session, and this first focus group session then informed the second and final focus group session held during the 2009 Parliament.

Stage 5: Post-Parliament Focus Group with the Advisory Committee (15th December 2009)

The post-Parliament focus group session was the second legacy focus group with the Advisory Committee and the last opportunity for its members to engage in legacy discussions. The aim of this session was to:

- Provide members with a chance to de-brief from the 2009 Parliament event
- Reflect on how the event impacted on them and their own faith or interfaith group
- To brainstorm what the legacy of the Parliament meant for different faith and religious groups in Melbourne
- Discuss how energy could be maintained and harnessed for future interfaith dialogue and activity in Melbourne

Table 3: Legacy Survey Questions

Legacy Discussion Questions

Stage 1: Pre-Parliament Interview Questions

Target group: Interfaith and Faith Group

Were you involved in Interfaith Activity before learning about the Parliament of the World's Religions? If so, how?

Has the purpose and nature of your group's activities changes over time? If so how?

From your experience, what are the most important factors for effective reconciliation and/ or interfaith dialogue and activity?

Has YOU/R group been involved in activities leading up to the Parliament of the World's Religion's Conference? (Activities could include for example: representatives on committees, publicizing the parliament, program submissions, off-site events, official Pre-Parliament Events, volunteering and home-stay activities)

[For groups already involved in interfaith activity]: Do you think the nature and activities of your group will change in any way as a result of the Parliament?

(Changes could include for example: more interfaith activity in your local area, the development of stronger interfaith networks across locations, more varied partnerships with other organizations)

[For groups not currently involved in interfaith activity]: Do you think your group will become involved in interfaith / reconciliation activities after attending the Parliament?

What type of interfaith legacy activities would you like to be involved in after the Parliament of the World's Religions has finished?

Looking further into the future, what interfaith/ reconciliation activities would you like to see your group participating in 6-12 months after the Parliament has concluded?

Finally, what interfaith/ reconciliation activities would you like to see occurring in your community 2-5 years after the Parliament has concluded?

Stage 3: On-site surveys during the Parliament

Target group: Young People

Why have you decided to attend the 09 Parliament of the World's Religions?

Are you involved in Inter-faith activity at the moment? If yes, what type of Interfaith Activity are you involved in?

In the future, what type of Interfaith activities would you like to be involved in? (Think about who you would like to connect with, what activities you would like to participate in and where you would like to do this?

How do you think Interfaith communities can attract young people to become more involved in Interfaith dialogue and activity?

How can the international inter-religious movement support young people to be involved in Interfaith dialogue and activity?

Target group: Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous Participants

What are your aspirations in achieving autonomy and social justice in your community/ for yourself?
(meaning dignity, freewill, fatalism, determinism and agency, politically, socially, wellbeing, economic)

How can religious communities actively support Indigenous people in achieving autonomy?

How can multi-faith communities actively support Indigenous people in achieving autonomy?

How can the international religious movement (both individual religions and interfaith groups collectively) support the goals of Indigenous people in achieving self determination?

How can international religious communities be linked in to support Indigenous people in their goals for self-determination?

Stage 4: Focus Group Sessions completed at the Parliament ' The After Party Session 1 & 2'

Session 1:	<p>Target group: Young People</p> <p>Introduction – reason for the session and outline of the program Presentation 1 – Multifaith Multicultural Youth Network Presentation 2 – Faith Acts Fellowship Presentation 3 – United Religious Initiative Presentation 4 – Young Women’s Interfaith Network Presentation 5 – Centre for Multicultural Youth Presentation 6 – Interfaith Youth Corps Presentation 7 – ‘Interaction’ Lessons learned / beginnings – What worked, what didn’t work, what were the gaps, what are examples of this? Creating a realistic wish list – what kind of interfaith organization / project would you like to be involved in? Question to individuals – What is your idea and where are you located?</p>
Session 2:	<p>Target group: Young People</p> <p>Introduction of sessions and recap of session 1 Facilitating maintaining involvement; elements that successfully engage and drive young people in interfaith work from different parts of the world Implementing opportunities for interfaith dialogue and activity with young people</p>

Appendix 6: Indigenous Statement

The following excerpt of the 'Indigenous Statement' represents the important issues raised during the 'Indigenous Assembly' at the Parliament of the World's Religions Melbourne 2009, and should be read as a support document to the potential legacy initiatives described by the Australian Aboriginal and Indigenous People Group. Information in the Indigenous Statement is on behalf of all Indigenous people who attended the Parliament

With great respect, we listened and we heard the wisdom and spiritual teaching of the many wonderful and magnificent religions gathered here this week and for this we are indeed very grateful.

International Indigenous Peoples, and Aborigines, we met together to talk of issues important to us and these statements are the results of our discussions and meeting.

On the many panels and workshops our leaders raised pertinent issues that face our communities. For these critical concerns we humbly ask members of the Parliament and the inter-faith community and communities gathered here today for your prayers, your political support and your resources to assist us in advancing constructive strategies for the attainment or redress of the following important matters.

- I. Climate Change and its far reaching impacts on our Peoples and homelands—for this we all need immediate action.
- II. The Freedom to exercise our indigenous religious beliefs and the eradication of discrimination and intolerance.
- III. Protection of Sacred Places used for prayer and ceremonies. At these special places Minister to us and we Minister to the earth and heal her sacred soul,
- IV. The critical need to strengthen and continue our unique culture and languages,
- V. The Return of the bones of our ancestors and our sacred items.
- VI. The critical need to stop contaminating Indigenous land with mining and nuclear waste; this is taking a toll on our health and well being.
- VII. The immediate adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and
- VIII. To repudiate and disavow the dehumanizing Doctrine of Christian Discovery.

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