

Knox Inter-Faith Network: Overview of History and Recent Activities

Source: Knox Inter-Faith Network Executive Committee, 6 June 2008

The Knox Inter-Faith Network was established under a constitution approved in October 2002. It aims to encourage better understanding of religious communities in Knox, so that these communities can co-exist peacefully and productively with each other and the broader community.

It does this through a program of dialogue, education and visitation, involving:

- Opportunities to discuss matters of common concern in an open and friendly environment.
- Informative presentations by member communities about the basic tenets of their faith.
- Tours of places of worship in the City of Knox to learn about their significant aspects.

A March 2002 Strategic Planning Meeting of the Knox City Council triggered the formation of the Network, in response to the events of 11th September 2001. The original vision of promoting compassion, tolerance, understanding and mutual respect in the face of this global event has been preserved. The initial idea of Council, a Multifaith / Family day or other inclusive event, was first discussed by 15 interested people in May 2002. This idea was explored and expanded through subsequent meetings, some of which involved representatives of the City of Greater Dandenong Interfaith Network, until the Knox Inter-faith Network was formally established in October 2002.

Membership of the Knox Inter-Faith Network is open to any religious body or faith community present in the City of Knox. Membership currently includes the Muslim, Hindu and Sikh faiths, along with various Christian communities. The Network is independent of the City of Knox, although it operates with its ongoing support. This includes provision of facilities for our meetings, attendance by some Councillors at our meetings and monetary support from its Community Development Fund to help create our web-site (www.knoxinterfaith.org.au) and to print our 2008 brochure (*Many Faiths, One Country - An Introduction to Some of the Faith Communities in the City of Knox*).

Our education and dialogue program has covered many topics. We have heard about the basic principles and practices of their faith from every member of the Network, as well as from guests from other faith communities. We have run sessions comparing aspects of our different faiths, such as:

- Ø comparing Judaism and Islam (October 2004)
- Ø our understanding of God (October 2005)
- Ø how to gain forgiveness (April 2006)
- Ø our different religious festivals (August 2006)
- Ø the role of women in faith communities (October 2006)
- Ø tolerance of other faiths/religions and the right of freedom of worship (June & August 2007)

We have engaged in community building activities through education and action. Sensitive to concerns from members of various faith communities, particularly the Muslim community, we hosted presentations to the Knox community by the Victoria Police (in June 2006) and the Australian Federal Police (in February 2008) on their role in counter-terrorism activities. We thank both Police Forces for their valuable time and their energetic and informative presentations. Network members have taken part in several working bees to help maintain the grounds at the Retirement Village run by ISOMER (the Islamic Society of Melbourne Eastern Region) on behalf of the broader community. We have also shared with the ISOMER community's *Eid* celebrations at the end of Ramadan.

Our meetings are normally held at 7:30pm on the first Monday of even-numbered months (February, April, June, August, October and December) at the Knox City Council chambers, 511 Burwood Hwy, Wantirna South. Check our web-site for details at: <http://www.knoxinterfaith.org.au/events.htm>

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