



MEDIA RELEASE
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Faith in Melbourne – That's the spirit

Melbourne's newly launched Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre will host the largest and most diverse multifaith gathering of religious and spiritual leaders in the world this year from 3-9 December.

The event, held by the Parliament of the World's Religions, provides an opportunity for Melbourne to demonstrate its commitment to diversity, peace, sustainability and reconciliation, on a truly international stage.

It will also inject more than \$75 million into the Victorian economy.

Chair of the 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions Professor Gary Bouma, said thousands of guests from 80 countries will attend, making this the largest convention in Australia this year.

"The 2009 Parliament will turn worldwide attention to Melbourne as a destination city with international appeal, following past Parliaments in Barcelona (2004), Cape Town (1999), and Chicago (1993)," Mr Bouma said.

"Melbourne is an ideal place to hold the largest interreligious gathering, because of its cultural and religious diversity and social cohesion.

"This Parliament will provide opportunity for the world's religious and spiritual communities and their leaders to discuss and explore peace, diversity and sustainability in the context of interreligious understanding and cooperation.

"And this important discussion will showcase the new Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, the centrepiece of the new \$1.4 billion precinct along the Yarra."

The theme for this year's Parliament is *Make a World of Difference: Hearing each other, Healing the earth*. Over 500 programs will feature lectures, dialogues, workshops, symposia, performances and exhibits, with participation and delivery by renowned spiritual, religious, civic, academic and political leaders, from Australia and overseas.

The Parliament of the World's Religions 2009 is supported by the State Government of Victoria, the Commonwealth Government of Australia, and the City of Melbourne, as well as individual, religious and corporate donors.

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The Patrons for this year's Parliament include a selection of pre-eminent Australians including:

Patron-in-Chief

- Professor David de Kretser AC, Governor of Victoria

Patrons

- Tim Costello, Chief Executive Officer, World Vision
- Ibrahim Dellal AM, President of Selimiye Foundation
- Sheikh Fehmi Naji El-Imam, AM, Islamic Society of Victoria
- The Most Reverend Dr. Philip Freier , Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne
- Rabbi Ralph Genende, Executive Member, Rabbinical Council of Victoria, Caulfield Hebrew Congregation
- The Hon Sir James Gobbo, AC, CVO, QC, Chairman, Australian Multicultural Foundation
- Reverend Professor James Haire, AM, DD, Executive Director, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture
- The Most Reverend Denis Hart , Roman Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne
- Rabbi John Levi, AM, DD, LLD, PHD, Deputy President, Executive Council of Australian Jewry
- Simon McKeon, Executive Chairman, Macquarie Bank - Melbourne Office
- Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, AC, DBE
- Prof Joy Murphy Wandin, AO, Senior Woman of the Wurundjeri People
- Susan Pascoe, AM, Chair, Australian National Commission for UNESCO
- Senior Venerable Thich Phuoc Tan, AM, Abbot Quang Minh Buddhist Temple

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