

Islamic Council of Victoria  
المجلس الاسلامي في فيكتوريا



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To Whom It May Concern

The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne, a non-profit organisation, was founded by Reverend Helen Summers in 2000, to promote understanding and respect among the world's religious and spiritual communities. Helen Summers and her colleagues established a strong relationship with the Islamic Council of Victoria, especially with the now retired, former Mufti of Australia, Sheikh Fehmi El-Imam who participated in many of the interfaith programs organised by The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne. Helen Summers is a Christian (Anglican) and the first Australian to be ordained an interfaith minister.

An important project Helen initiated in 2003 was, *A Shining Example: The Golden Age of Spain, pre 1492*, with students from King Khalid College and Bialek College reading poetry in Arabic and Hebrew respectively, with music from the Three Traditions (Jewish, Christian and Islamic) and a Narration written by Helen and performed by a leading Australian actor, Charles 'Bud' Tingwell. The event was repeated in 2004 for the Jewish Festival of Music.

Other events which highlighted Islamic art and culture were: *The Rumi Concert* in 2007 and *Breaking the Veils: Women Artists from the Islamic World*, a collection of 64 artworks by 51 women from 21 Islamic countries, which The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne brought to Australia from the National Gallery of Jordan. Local Muslim women artists were invited by Helen to bring their artwork to the gallery and so began a relationship with Ms Nur Shkembi who later became the Arts Officer for the Islamic Council of Victoria. Nur and Helen have collaborated on many projects together, especially during the Parliament of the World's Religions (2009) when Helen was Chair of the Arts and Culture Committee. Nur and Helen and other committee members were responsible for the Sacred Music Concert, five art exhibitions and over 100 performances.

In 2011, The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne, invited the then Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser, AC, to officially Launch the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW), in Queen's Hall, Parliament House, Melbourne.

The Islamic Council of Victoria has supported The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne in hosting this annual event, together with Religions for Peace, the Australian Multicultural Foundation and the Faith Communities Council. This year The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne launched a DVD on 'Harmony' at Parliament House, which was screened twice a day and at random times, on the Big Screen at Federation Square, from February 1 to February 8th. Federation Square is the Meeting Place in Melbourne, thus the messages of the World Interfaith Harmony Week, was disseminated to the wider community. Again the Islamic Council of Victoria supported Helen Summers in this endeavour through our members, arts officer, Nur Shkembi and graphic artist, Mark Pedersen.

I support The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne in competing for this Prize. Please feel free to contact myself directly on 0430 545 800 or [nail.aykan@icv.org.au](mailto:nail.aykan@icv.org.au) for all further enquiries.

Regards

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