



# Victorian Council of Churches

(Inc.A0036552E)

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16<sup>th</sup> February 2015

To Whom it may Concern,

I write to commend the Interfaith Centre of Melbourne and the Rev Helen Summers in particular on both the initiative of developing the World Interfaith Harmony Week luncheons as well as the wonderful leadership that she and her team gives to interfaith more broadly within victoria.

Helen Summers is Australia's first Interfaith Minister. Her own religious tradition is Anglican. She was ordained in the Cathedral of St John the Divine in New York in 1997 and on her return to Australia she founded The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne in 2000.

There is no religious institution that financially supports the work of interfaith ministers. All members of The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne, including Reverend Helen Summers, work on a voluntary basis, so to develop, plan and then host this event annually is an enormous undertaking that is well done and very much appreciated.

This years event was entitled: *One Planet, Many Faiths: Putting Peace into Practice* and grew out of an awareness of the need for such an event in Melbourne, Australia like other Western communities we are witnessing growing anti-semitism and Islamophobia especially after the siege and deaths in Sydney. Our current Federal Government's policies are not necessarily bringing the community together and so events such as the harmony luncheon are of critical importance.

The event brought over 100 leaders from Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Sikh and many other traditions together with the four speakers giving practical suggestions from their faiths and encouraging the audience to reflect on ones own faith and put into practice. A video of the talks will be on The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne's website and on YouTube for the public to view.

Sponsorship of the catering and venue of this years Luncheon was given by the Faith Communities Council of Victoria, the Islamic Council of Victoria, the Jewish Community Council of Victoria, Religions for Peace, the Victorian Council of Churches and the Victorian Multicultural Council. This list in itself shows the diversity and reach that these lunches have within our Victorian Communities.

Yours Truly,

Rev Ian Smith  
Executive Officer  
Victorian Council of Churches