

EVENT REPORT:

Mayoral Event for World Interfaith Harmony Week 2021 in Wellington, NZ



Wellington Interfaith Council



WORLD INTERFAITH



HARMONY WEEK

The background of interfaith in New Zealand



The Wellington Interfaith Council was the first interfaith council established in Aotearoa New Zealand.

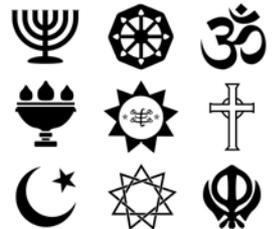
In the last 20 years, we have seen a national network of approximately 20 active interfaith councils across all major regions in the country.



Our response to 15 March 2019

Interfaith councils across New Zealand were at forefront of organising gatherings and meetings to show solidarity to our fellow Muslim communities following the 15 March 2019 terrorist attacks.

The Wellington Interfaith Council has engaged with government enquiries, reports, forums and and grass roots initiatives (including the Royal Commission of Inquiry) to address the issues of hate and discrimination that exists in our wider communities.



2021 WIHW event: Mayoral Morning Tea

During February 2021, the Wellington Interfaith Council (WIFC) observed World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW) with two events - a launch, and then this morning tea. Hosted by His Worship, Andy Foster, Mayor of Wellington, the event brought together faith leaders and religious clergy from across the region.

The Wellington City Council has been working with the WIFC to create opportunities to increase the visibility of interfaith in the council's activities.

WIFC has been invited to open key council meetings with an interfaith prayer, and also have members attend citizenship ceremonies.

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HARMONY WEEK



Interfaith prayer to open the event, by Dr. Pushpa Wood

Mayoral event: What we set out to do

1 | Raise awareness of World Interfaith Harmony Week

Share the aims, theme and origins of the World Interfaith Harmony Week with the Mayor, city councillors - as well as with other faith leaders and religious clergy who attend.

2 | Brief the Mayor of Wellington on the diversity of faiths

Share and explain the range of faiths across the Wellington region to the Mayor and city council members. Give examples of how our faith communities work, and how we can work in harmony to support the growth of social cohesion in Wellington.

3 | Bring faith leaders and religious clergy together to network

Share more about the Wellington Interfaith Council with the leaders of faith communities. Encourage interfaith dialogue at the leadership level across religions in Wellington.

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Mayor welcomes faith leaders and religious clergy to his office



**Mayor Andy Foster
addresses the faith leaders
and religious clergy**



Launch event: Key components

Held on Friday 5 February 2021, this event was an invite-only event, hosted by the Mayor of Wellington in his office in Wellington Central.

Interfaith prayer. A prayer was shared by a Life Member of the WIFC, and opened this auspicious event, the first interfaith event this council has hosted.

Network and dialogue. The intimate invite-only event attracted faith leaders - some who had never met - from across the region.

Briefing the Mayor. The event was a chance to brief the Mayor and city councillors on the diversity of faiths within religious groups. It provided insights on the numerous amount of spaces of worship, types of faiths and denominations, and share more about the context of their faith, people and practice in the city today.

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HARMONY WEEK

Mayor hosts
morning tea for
World Interfaith
Harmony Week.



Mayor of Wellington

5 February · 🌐



This morning I hosted members of the [Wellington Interfaith Community](#) and the clergy to announce the new initiatives we have between [Wellington City Council](#) and the Interfaith Community.

Just to name a few, the Wellington Interfaith Community have representation at all Citizenship Ceremonies, once a month a representative will say a prayer (of varying faith) at the start of Council Meetings and there will be a park bench installed at Trelissick Park to commemorate their second anniversary (mid-March 2021).



Facebook post from the Mayor's office, and event invite from the Mayor's office

Mayor of Wellington, Andy Foster invites you to:

Morning tea to acknowledge World Interfaith Harmony Week 2021

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HARMONY WEEK

Friday 5th February 2021, 10am-11am
Mayors Office, 113 The Terrace
(please head to Level 16 reception on arrival)

RSVP to Maddie at
mayoral.events@wcc.govt.nz
or 027 786 2846
by Monday 1 February.

Proudly associated with the Wellington Interfaith Council



Launch event: Logistics

During WIHW, New Zealand was in a COVID alert level 1, meaning we did not need to practice social distancing, or wear face masks during the week.

Location. Hosted at the Mayor's office in Wellington, invites were distributed by his office, with support from the Wellington Interfaith Council for the invite design and invitation list.

Time. The event was held at 10am, and ended at 11am.

The format of the event included informal networking, an interfaith prayer, address from the Mayor, and then presentations from different some religious groups: Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh.

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HARMONY WEEK



Faith groups brief the Mayor

Launch event: Key successes

1. **Representation from a number of faith and religious denominations.** Many new religious leaders attended this event, which supports further interfaith dialogue to be held in Wellington
2. **Acknowledgement of our faith leaders by the Mayor of Wellington.** Support for the work of faith communities by the Mayor, and announcement of initiatives - interfaith prayers at Council meetings; presence at Citizenship Ceremonies and investigating denominational prayer space at new library.
3. **New membership.** New interest has been sparked by this event from the leaders invited.
4. **Awareness.** Broader understanding of interfaith with the Mayor and city councillors.
5. **Interest from other city councils.** The Mayor of Lower Hutt connected with the WIFC, and invited members of the WIFC to meet with him the following month, and understand our work and what connections we could support in the wider region.

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HARMONY WEEK



Social media
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His Worship, Andy Foster, Mayor of Wellington
with faith leaders and religious clergy.



