



Interfaith Network
Of The City of Greater Dandenong

37th Annual Signing of **The Common Statement**

Growing our Interfaith Community Together

Wednesday 20th August 2025



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ABN: 90 860 737 620

Address: Level 1, 39 Clow Street, Dandenong

Phone Number: (03) 8774 7662

Email: administration@interfaithnetwork.org.au





Interfaith Network
Of The City of Greater Dandenong

Acknowledgement of Country

The Interfaith Network of the City of Greater Dandenong acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we serve, work, worship and live. We acknowledge their continuing connection to land, waters, and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures, and Elders past and present.





Interfaith Network
Of The City of Greater Dandenong

Apologies

Name	Position and/or Identified Faith
Cassandra Fernando MP	Federal Members for Holt
Claire O'Neil MP	Federal Member for Hotham
Mark Dreyfus MP	Federal Member for Isaacs
Sofie Felton MP	Electorate Officer at State Parliament of Victoria
Tim Richardson MP	State Member for Mordialloc
Sonya Kilkeny MP	State Member for Carrum District
Gabrielle Williams MP	State Member for Dandenong
John Pesutto MP	Member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly
Rabbi Yaakov Glasman	St. Kilda Hebrew Congregation
Reverend Graeme Peters	St. James Anglican Church Dandenong
Imran Furkan	IFN Executive Committee Member
Jasbir Singh Suropada	IFN Executive Committee Member



Interfaith Network
Of The City of Greater Dandenong

Attendees

Name	Position and/or Identified Faith
Mehtap Williams	IFN Executive Committee President
Anita Davine	IFN Executive Committee Vice President
Father Jean Mawal	IFN Executive Committee Member
Pannasobhana Thero	IFN Executive Committee Member
Venerable Bodhicitta	IFN Executive Committee Member
Livia Carusi	IFN Executive Officer
Paris Sard	IFN Community Education Officer
Lilian Poke	IFN Administration Officer
Christos Kastaniotis	Mission Australia, Community Chaplain, Dandenong
Venerable Then Sen Abbott	President, Wat Khmer Temple (Khmer Buddhist Centre and Khmer Society)
Julian Hill MP	Federal Member for Bruce
Eden Foster MP	State Member for Mulgrave
Belinda Wilson MP	State Member for Narre Warren North
Kamlavathi Reddy	Monash Interfaith Group



Interfaith Network
Of The City of Greater Dandenong

Attendees

Name	Position and/or Identified Faith
Rachel Payne, MP	State Member for South-Eastern Metropolitan Region
Lee Tarlamis, OAM, MP	State Member for South-Eastern Metropolitan Region
Laura Buchanan	Community Member
Jacque Weatherill	Chief Executive Officer of The City of Greater Dandenong
Agnes Kean	Bahá'í
Venerable Then Sen	Abbott and President, Wat Khmer Temple, Springvale South
Be Ha, OAM, JP	Buddhism
Sister Jacqueline Russell	Brahma Kumaris
Sister Nancy	Brahma Kumaris
Sister Vani	Brahma Kumaris
Jaswinder Singh	Sikh Volunteers Australia
Cr Sophie Tan	Deputy Mayor Cr Sophie Tan
Diane Dickson	Community Member
Joanne Hopkins	Australian Federal Police, Community Liaison Team Southern Command



Interfaith Network
Of The City of Greater Dandenong

Attendees

Name	Position and/or Identified Faith
Jackie Celrestin Corentin	Resurrection Parish Keysborough
Father Bruce Duncan	Catholicism
Janice Clear	Monash Interfaith Group
Michelle Channon	Monash Interfaith Group
Rienzie Machado	Catholicism
Deacon Peter Shouzhen Wang	Catholicism
Ursula Aruma	Sri Sathya Sai International Organisation
Kham Seng	Sri Sathya Sai International Organisation
Sister Nina	Sri Sathya Sai International Organisation
Gisela Rankin	St Johns German Lutheran Church
Pastor Peter Demuth	St Johns German Lutheran Church
Thurai Vinay	Hinduism
Rathi Vinay	Hinduism
Dr Laassiri Abdallah	Wisdom Centre for Religious Studies and Intercultural Dialogue
Katherine Fitzpatrick	Australian Federal Police, Community Liaison Team Southern Command



Interfaith Network
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Attendees

Name	Position and/or Identified Faith
Ali El Metahry	Muslim
Wasanthi Kasthuriarachchi	Community Member
Helen Heath	IFN Member
Colin Heath	Community Member
Maree Walker	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
Neville Walker	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
Roz Blades OAM	Jewish
Kanaha Sabapathy	The International Society for Krishna Consciousness
Bhakta Dasa	The International Society for Krishna Consciousness
Imam Abdurrahman Sahin	Keysborough Turkish Islamic & Cultural Centre
Imam Salih Dogan	Muslim
Anne Muslin	Bahá'í
Mr Leng Chaitwatanatorn	Taoism
Murray Lobley	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints



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A Brief History of The Interfaith Network

1989

The origins of the Interfaith Network (IFN) of the City of Greater Dandenong can be traced back to 1988. The then city of Springvale embarked upon a 2 year Access and Equity Project with the goal to establish a proposal for a community relations strategy, aimed at promoting harmonious relations among Springvales diverse communities.

This community effort resulted in the first meeting of Faith Communities of Springvale on May 10th, 1989. Following the drafting of the Common Statement, the first Annual Gathering took place at the Springvale Supper Room on August 21st 1989. The Faith Leaders took the signed Common Statement and presented it at the Council Meeting to the then Mayor, Cr Noelle Trembath.

This event formalised the annual signing of the Common Statement and symbolises what has become an evolving and strong collaboration between religious and spiritual communities, the City of Greater Dandenong and our wider community.



2025

In 2025, the IFN continues the legacy of its founding members towards our shared vision of "Many Faiths, One People."

Based in Dandenong, governed by an elected Executive Committee, and supported by a small staffing and volunteering team, the activities of the IFN include:

- Regular members meetings,
- Membership support services including weekly messages of hope, coordination of fortnightly City of Greater Dandenong prayers
- A calendar of events open to members and non-members, including events for national harmony week, the Annual Signing of the Common Statement, and by invitation, the Annual Interfaith School Gathering
- Creation of and availability of Interfaith tools and resources
- Public speaking engagements in a number spaces, including, Interfaith Dialogue, Values Led leadership
- Collaborations and partnerships across the community on shared issues and,
- The highly successful Places of Worship Tours initiative





Welcome Message

Mehtap Williams, IFN President

It is with sincere warmth and deep respect that I welcome you to the 2025 Annual Signing of The Common Statement, a meaningful tradition that has united the Interfaith Network and the City of Greater Dandenong since August 21st, 1989.

Through the signing of the Common Statement, we as a community offer a heart felt commitment to:

- Live together in peace and goodwill,
- Honour the integrity of each other's beliefs, cultures, and traditions and,
- Encourage all peoples, religious and non-religious alike to stand against intolerance and division, and to work towards harmony, peace and mutual understanding.

May this year's signing inspire all of us to continue walking the path of peace, harmony and inclusion.



Order of Proceedings

Time	Proceedings	Led by
9:00am	Guest arrival, registration and light refreshments served	Lilian Poke, IFN Administration Officer
9:25am	Opening and housekeeping	Livia Carusi, IFN Executive Officer
9:30am	Welcome to Country	Uncle Mark Brown, Bunurong Elder, Senior Cultural Heritage Officer at the Bunurong Land Council
9:45am	Lighting of "Many Faiths, One People" Candle	Venerable Pannasobhana Thero, IFN Executive Committee Member Cr Sophie Tan, (Noble Park Ward) Deputy Mayor of The City of Greater Dandenong
9:50am	Welcome	Sophie Tan, (Noble Park Ward) Deputy Mayor of The City of Greater Dandenong
9:55am	Official Welcome	Mehtap Williams, IFN President
10:05am	Our Shared Lived Expression of the Common Statement Common Statement Reflection	Facilitator Livia Carusi, IFN Executive Officer Paris Sard, IFN Community Education Officer



Order of Proceedings

	Reading of The Common Statement (Please stand and read together in unity)	
10:45am	Presentation of Common Statement to Jim Memeti (Dandenong Ward), Mayor of The City of Greater Dandenong and Cr Sophie Tan (Noble Park Ward), Deputy Mayor of The City of Greater Dandenong	Mehtap Williams, IFN President
11:00am	Presentation of the 'Many Faiths, One People' Candle	Paris Sard, IFN Community Education Officer
11:05am	Closing Reflection	Anita Davine, IFN Vice President
11:10am	Closing Remarks	Livia Carusi, IFN Executive Officer
11:15am	I am Australian song (Please stand and sing together in unity)	All
11:20am	Morning tea served	City of Greater Dandenong Staff
12:00pm	Event Closed	



The Common Statement



'We bring greetings from the faith communities to the Mayor, Councillors,
and people of Greater Dandenong.

We offer to the City of Greater Dandenong our common commitment to seek
to live together in peace and goodwill.

We affirm our desire to promote respect and tolerance for the integrity of
each other's beliefs, cultures, and traditions.

This desire arises not only from our common humanity but also from our
being people of faith and people of prayer.

We recognise that as neighbours, we have responsibilities to the community,
the world and ourselves.

We therefore urge all citizens, both religious and non-religious, to put aside
intolerance, prejudice, and divisiveness, to attain peaceful and fruitful co-
existence in our City'.



I am Australian Lyrics



(1987 - Bruce Woodley, The Seekers and Dobe Newton, The Bushwackers)

I came from the dreamtime from the dusty red soil plains
I am the ancient heart, the keeper of the flame
I stood upon the rocky shore, I watched the tall ships come
For forty thousand years I'd been the first Australian.

I came upon the prison ship bowed down by iron chains.
I cleared the land, endured the lash and waited for the rains.
I'm a settler. I'm a farmer's wife on a dry and barren run
A convict then a free man I became Australian.

I'm the daughter of a digger who sought the mother lode
The girl became a woman on the long and dusty road
I'm a child of the depression, I saw the good times come
I'm a bushy, I'm a battler I am Australian

(Chorus)

We are one, but we are many
And from all the lands on earth we come
We share a dream and sing with one voice:
I am, you are, we are Australian
I am, you are, we are Australian.

I'm a teller of stories, I'm a singer of songs
I am Albert Namatjira, I paint the ghostly gums
I am Clancy on his horse

I'm the hot wind from the desert, I'm the black soil of the plains
I'm the mountains and the valleys, I'm the drought and flooding rains
I am the rock, I am the sky The rivers when they run
The spirit of this great land, I am Australian

(Repeat Chorus)



Closing Reflection

Led by Anita Davine, IFN Vice President.

Our coming together today is testament of our commitment to seek to live together in peace and good will.

Science and first nations people remind us that everything in our universe is relational and interconnected. With this in mind, the communities represented in our IFN'S vision of Many Faiths, One people in collaboration with the Council of the City of Greater Dandenong calls us to be pilgrims of hope.



In our desire to promote respect and tolerance for the integrity of each other's beliefs, cultures and traditions, let us together as servant leaders continue to work to bring about the values that unite us.

Let us take the time to discern daily what the Common Statement asks of us personally and collectively in our families, work places and public spaces.

May we, together, use our amazing gift of imagination to create a unified, compassionate, just and peaceful community, and be a model for other communities who see a suffering humanity in today's world.

"God of many names, source of all freedom, this day is bright with the memory of those who declared that life and liberty are your gifts to every human person. Help us to continue a good work begun long ago. Make our vision clear and our will strong; that we will find true liberty only in human solidarity and justice, only in the honour that belongs to every life on earth. Turn our hearts toward the family of nations, to understand the ways of others, to offer friendship, and to find safety only in the common good of all. Amen."



Meet the IFN Staffing Team



Livia Carusi, Executive Officer

Liv, our Executive Officer, has worked in the community services sector for nearly 30 years, focusing on homelessness, advocacy, and policy reform. She holds qualifications in political science, sociology, urban research, public policy, and theology. Passionate about social justice, Liv believes that connection and collaboration can create meaningful change in both communities and individual lives.



Lilian Poke, Administration Officer

Lilian's work history for many years was in supportive roles in law. Together with the skills Lilian has gained from her working life and her Christian faith, she is delighted to serve within the Interfaith Network, getting to know and value people from other faiths and working with staff and Executive Committee members to bring people together within the City of Greater Dandenong "Many Faiths, One People".



Paris Sard, Community Education Officer

Paris Sard has been actively working in the community for the past eight years, supporting and educating New Muslims. Currently completing a Bachelor of Islamic Studies, she brings a professional background in risk and compliance to her role as Community Education Officer. Her commitment to fostering understanding across different faiths highlights the importance of interfaith dialogue in building inclusive communities.



Meet the IFN Executive Committee



Mehtap Williams – IFN President

Mehtap has a broad background in community services, banking, and IT, and is passionate about interfaith understanding. As a Muslim married to a Christian, she brings personal insight to her work with IFN. She's held roles at ASRC, Berry Street, and AMES, and is also a qualified NAATI interpreter. Outside work, she enjoys community volunteering, politics, and exploring different cultures.



Anita Davine – IFN Vice President

Anita comes from a strong background in education, with over 45 years of experience. Since retiring from teaching, she's become actively involved in the Interfaith Network, Stillness Meditation Therapy, and Ignatian Spirituality work both locally and overseas. Anita has a Catholic background and brings warmth, wisdom, and a genuine passion for connecting people and creating spaces for reflection and shared learning.



Vivek Shah – IFN Treasurer

Vivek is a Chartered Accountant and CPA with solid experience in auditing across public, private, and not-for-profit sectors. He's currently a Senior Auditor at one of Melbourne's top firms and has previously worked at Deloitte and Moore Australia. He brings a strong eye for detail, a clear sense of structure, and a deep understanding of financial systems all of which he brings to his role at IFN to support its financial health and transparency.



Rev Fr Jean Mawal – IFN Executive Member

Fr Jean is the Parish Priest at St Paul's Antiochian Orthodox Church in Dandenong and has been a long-standing member of the Interfaith Network, including serving as President in the past. A devoted family man with three children, Fr Jean plays a key role in his local faith community and continues to support IFN's mission of peace and understanding across Dandenong.



Imran Furkan – IFN Executive Member

Imran is a strategic advisor and CEO of Tresync, with experience advising boards and executives across industries like IT, finance, media, and professional services. He has worked throughout the Asia-Pacific region and is known for connecting people and ideas, and for his passion for collaboration across sectors and communities. Imran's broad expertise helps strengthen IFN's vision and direction.



Meet the IFN Executive Committee



Loreto Cannon – IFN Executive Member

Loreto has a rich background in teaching, leadership, and theology, with a strong focus on working with young people and migrant communities. Currently an Assistant Principal at Killester College in Springvale, she's deeply committed to building bridges across faiths through education and community work. Loreto's approach is shaped by her involvement in the Catholic Church, social outreach, and her travels to over 30 countries.



Jasbir Singh Suropada – IFN Executive Member

Jasbir is the Chair of the Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria and a passionate advocate for family safety and multicultural inclusion. He has worked extensively in Singapore as a counsellor supporting families in crisis and now leads Sikh Australian Support for Family Violence. Jasbir sits on a number of advisory and multifaith councils across Victoria, and his calm, compassionate approach makes a real impact in the community.



Venerable Pannasobhana Thero – IFN Executive Member

Venerable Pannasobhana Thero is a Sri Lankan-born monk who was once a doctor and medical administrator before taking on full-time chaplaincy and spiritual care roles in Australia. He now supports individuals across hospitals, schools, and community settings, offering both emotional and spiritual guidance. He's travelled to more than 50 countries sharing teachings on compassion, meditation, and healing, with a calm and deeply thoughtful presence.

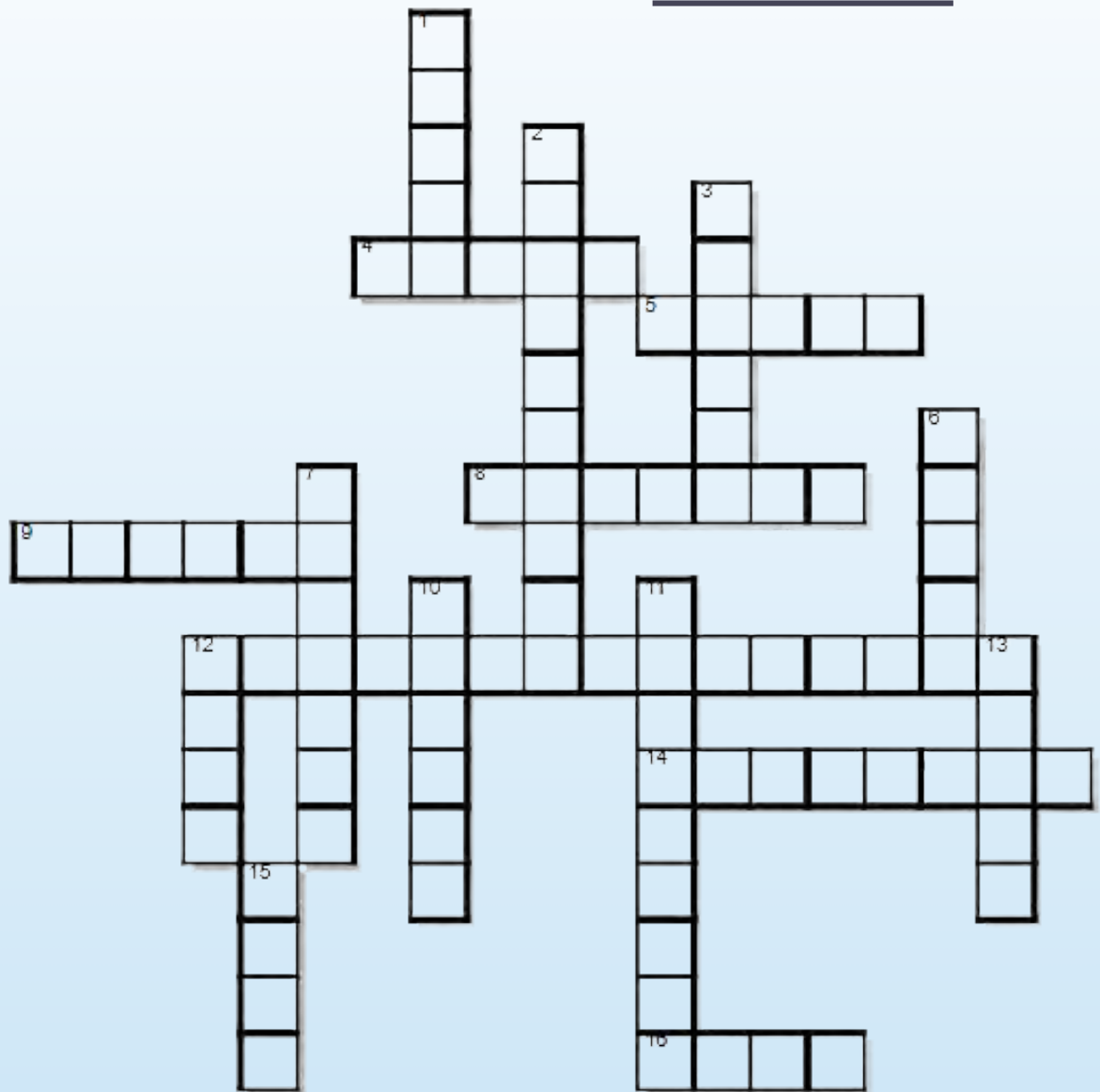


Venerable Bhikkhuni Bodhicitta – IFN Executive Member

Venerable Bodhicitta is the founder of the International Centre for Inner Peace and Happiness in Melbourne and a Buddhist Chaplain at RMIT. Originally trained as a medical scientist, she later ordained as a Buddhist nun in India and Sri Lanka. She has over 35 years of experience teaching meditation and stress management, and is widely respected for her focus on selflessness and inner peace. Venerable continues to lead retreats, talks, and workshops across Australia and internationally.



Interfaith Network Crossword



ACROSS

- 4 The sacred text of Christianity
- 5 A shared goal among all religious communities in the IFN
- 8 A key value in interfaith dialogue
- 9 A concept meaning duty or truth in Hinduism and Buddhism
- 12 The signed agreement that began the IFN
- 14 Open communication between religions is called interfaith ____
- 16 A spiritual teacher in Sikhism and Hinduism

DOWN

- 1 A Jewish religious leader
- 2 The people who help lead IFN tours
- 3 The first Mayor who received the signed Common Statement
- 6 The holy book of Islam
- 7 Peaceful coexistence between different faiths
- 10 A place of worship for Muslims
- 11 The city where the IFN is based
- 12 The street the IFN office is located on ____ Street
- 13 The IFN regularly runs Places of Worship ____
- 15 The year the Interfaith Network began



Interfaith Network
Of The City of Greater Dandenong

Get Involved!



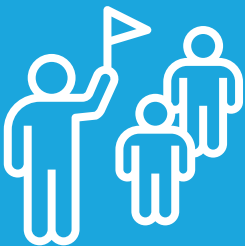
Become an IFN Member

Support the work of the Interfaith Network by becoming a member. Members are invited to attend regular meetings, stay updated on interfaith activities, contribute ideas, and connect with others who value respect, diversity, and community harmony.



Become an IFN Volunteer

Play an active role in promoting understanding by volunteering. You can assist as a guide on Places of Worship Tours, help run school programs, or support events like the Annual Interfaith School Gathering. Training and ongoing support are provided.



Join a Public Tour

Experience firsthand the rich religious and cultural diversity of Greater Dandenong by joining a public tour. These guided visits take you inside local places of worship where you can hear from faith representatives, ask questions, and learn about different beliefs in a respectful and welcoming environment.



Get Involved with the Interfaith Network!

Become a Member, sign up as a Volunteer, or join a Public Places of Worship Tour, just scan the QR code next to each section using your phone's camera.

Alternatively, you can access all of these options on our website:
<https://interfaithnetwork.org.au/>



Interfaith Network Crossword Answers

Answers:

Across

- 4. Bible – The sacred text of Christianity
- 5. Peace – A shared goal among all religious communities in the IFN
- 8. Respect – A key value in interfaith dialogue
- 9. Dharma – A concept meaning duty or truth in Hinduism and Buddhism
- 12. Common Statement – The signed agreement that began the IFN
- 14. Dialogue – Open communication between religions is called interfaith ____
- 16. Guru – A spiritual teacher in Sikhism and Hinduism

Down

- 1. Rabbi – A Jewish religious leader
- 2. Volunteers – The people who help lead IFN tours
- 3. Noelle – The first Mayor who received the signed Common Statement
- 4. Quran – The holy book of Islam
- 5. Harmony – Peaceful coexistence between different faiths
- 6. Mosque – A place of worship for Muslims
- 7. Dandenong – The city where the IFN is based
- 8. Clow – The street the IFN office is located on ____ Street
- 9. Tours – The IFN regularly runs Places of Worship ____
- 10. 1989 – The year the Interfaith Network began



Thank You

Your presence and support continue to strengthen the spirit of unity, respect, and shared understanding that the Interfaith Network stands for. Together, we honour the commitment made in 1989 and carry it forward with renewed dedication to building harmony across our diverse community.

Contact Information :

 Phone Number: (03) 8774 7662

 Website: www.interfaithnetwork.org.au

 Address: Level 1, 39 Clow Street, Dandenong, 3175, VIC.



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