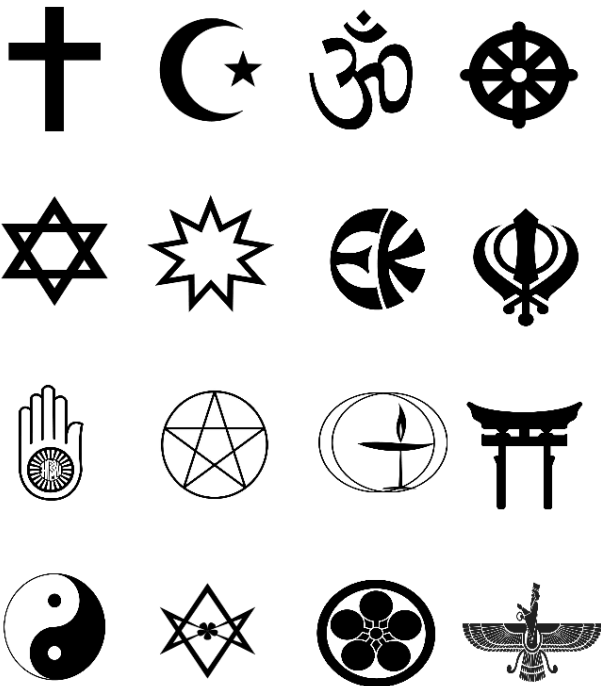


By : Surinder Jain.

What is RfP

Religions for Peace (RfP) is an organization representing religious leaders of different faiths in Australia and includes Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Bahai faith. Hindu Council of Australia has been a member, represented by its director Vijai Singhal for over a decade now. According to RfP founder, this Interfaith forum is different from others. Apart from meetings and speeches, it tries to connect individual faith leaders together in a bond of friendship which is best manifested by leaders of different faiths become personal friends. She cited as an example of a christian member whose daughter's wedding was attended by and blessed by Muslims, Jews and from other faiths.



RfP held a meeting on 19th November 2018 to discuss various issues.

Anti-Hate laws in NSW

High on its agenda was an anti-hate and anti-discrimination law being considered by the state of NSW. Phillip Ruddock, former Attorney General of Australia and now Mayor of Hornsby shire has held wide consultations with community and submitted a report. Ian Lacey, a lawyer explained to members that Australian constitution in 1901 has included a clause on freedom of religions which means that :

1. Government can not establish a religion
2. Government can not enforce a religion
3. Government can not stop a religion and
4. Government can not ask for a religious qualifications for a job

This, he explained, provides freedom of religion to all Australians.

Various states like Victoria and Queensland have enacted Vilification or anti-hate laws which are not working very well. He feared that NSW should not follow their path and instead enact a robust law like that in Britain which

1. Allows people to criticize a religion but
2. Does not allow adherents of a religion to be discriminated

He further explained that stopping people from criticizing religions can have the opposite effect of becoming a blasphemy law. We all know how some fundamentalists regimes have enacted blasphemy laws and have used them to prosecute and impose a certain religion.

Jatayu earth centre

Robert from Vedanta society explained his recent visit to India and a “Jatayu earth centre” being established there.

Parliament of World’s Religions

Father Patrick and Rachelle Kahn who recently returned from Parliament of World’s Religions held in Toronto briefed about their impressions of the visit. The first Parliament was held in 1893 where **Swami Vivekanand** had given his first now world famous address starting with “Brothers and Sisters” instead of the usual “Ladies and Gentlemen” salutation of the time.



Parliament of World’s Religions 1893 - courtesy Wikipedia

The next Parliament was held a 100 years later in 1993 and is now an annual affair. The representation was very wide spread with 7,500 people, from 80 countries, 222 religions and over 500 workshops. However, the depth of religious fervor was very shallow.

Eat Less Meat

Mr Vijai Singhal explained to everyone about Eat Less Meat project in which Hindu Council has joined with ARRCC (Australian Religious Response to Climate Change).

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