



Media Statement

April 6, 2005

WOMEN'S INTERFAITH NETWORK – HISTORIC EVENT AT GOV'T HOUSE: "PATHS TO PEACE THROUGH FRIENDSHIP"

Women representing nine different faiths will gather for an historic ceremony at NSW Government House on April 14 to promote understanding and tolerance between the various religions.

The interfaith group, known as the **Women's Interfaith Network (WIN)** is convened by Mrs Josie Lacey OAM, an active leader of the Jewish community and interfaith advisor of Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia.

WIN comprises representatives of Aboriginal, Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh and Christian communities.

Christian faiths include Anglican, Catholic, Uniting Church and Quakers. Also attending will be representatives of the Armenian, Greek Orthodox and Coptic Christians.

The April 14 function runs from 10.30 to 12.30. It is expected to be attended by up to 160 people and would be hosted by NSW Minister for Women, Ms Sandra Nori.

WIN brings together women of different faith traditions to:

- Promote understanding; respect and harmony among followers of different religions;
- Work together as a sign of solidarity among committed people; and
- Encourage other women to initiate other similar local groups.

At the Government House event, members of WIN would:

- Showcase their respective religions;
- Aboriginal Elders will perform a "Welcome to Country";
- Baha'i with a devotional songs;
- Buddhists with chanting;
- Christians will be represented by a group of Sudanese refugees singing a mass, Hindus Vedic songs;
- Islamic children's choir;
- Jewish acapella liturgical music; and
- Sikh giving a temple performance.

WIN's core members were gathered together five years ago. (It was officially launched in March 22, 2001 at NSW Parliament.)

Mrs Lacey said: "Our challenge is for members to be confident in their own faiths, and rejoice and celebrate our differences.

"WIN is multi-cultural as well as inter-religious, including most ethnic groups. Most of our members are prominent women within their own faith.

"Our aim is to encourage mutual understanding and learning about the ideals of various religious groups, through personal relationships of co-operation and discussion.

"We also work to encourage joint advocacy by representatives of the different religious groups to address common social concerns, to provide resources and to eliminate religious prejudice and discrimination.

"Too many wars have been fought in the name of God and religion.

"One way to overcome division is through dialogue and that is what WIN provides."

The core WIN chapter is based in Sydney, but it encourages other women to form similar ones. It requires the chapter contain at least three different religious groups who are willing to adopt the aims and principles. They include:

- Respect for other religions.
- Encouragement of mutual understanding and learning about the ideals of various religious groups, through personal relationships of co-operation and discussion
- Rejection of all proselytising
- Working to eliminate religious prejudice and discrimination.
- Encouragement of joint advocacy by representatives of the different religious groups to address common social concerns and
- Spreading the ideal of harmony between religions as widely as possible by creating a network of women's inter-faith groups with similar aims and programs.

WIN officers are Zubeyda Rahman from the Muslim Community is Honorary Secretary and Norma Anet; Honorary Treasurer from the Rama Krishna Vedanta Hindu Association.

Similar women's interfaith networks operate in Toronto and London.

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