

Waikato Inter Faith Council Annual Report, February 2008

Since the last National Interfaith Forum, the Council's life and its contribution to inter-faith understanding has involved participating in the Museum's exhibition, endorsing and promoting the National Statement on Religious Diversity, meeting with the HCC over the Cemetery issues and producing a Wifco pamphlet.

At last year's AGM we heard from Karen Morrison-Hume of Anglican Action about the need for people of all faiths and persuasions to work collaboratively in helping to create a society in Aotearoa that is free of poverty and violence. She challenged us to build momentum for change by being compassionate, as well as astute in our social analysis.

It was useful to re-examine our purpose and constitution at the May meeting. At the July meeting WIFCo also formally endorsed the National Statement of Religious Diversity.

During the year, the Hamilton City Council proposed a review of its cemeteries bylaw. There was concern that space would not be made for separate burial of some faith-community members. WIFCo supported the provision of separate burial spaces during the initial phase of consultation. Many members also attended a public consultation meeting, in order to support some faith-communities. The result is that the bylaw may not need to be changed in order to accommodate particular requirements. The initiative taken by Sylvie Bolstaad demonstrates what strength we can add to the voice of one religious group or individual wanting change and justice.

Sylvie was also responsible for the creative work to design the attractive WIFCo pamphlet, which is now being distributed around Hamilton.

Other important interfaith activity included the Waikato Museum's 'Keeping Faith' exhibition. The exhibition provides personal insight into the lives of 9 families and the way that faith affects their lives. It is an interactive exhibition that has been enjoyed by many. As part of the exhibition, four seminars were organised on: the National Statement of Religious Diversity; education about religions in schools; religious themes in art; and the future of New Zealand. Member of WIFCo spoke at these seminars.

In the coming year, the 'God Talk' series at the Anglican Cathedral focuses on 'knowing our (religious) neighbours'. This is another excellent initiative, a sort of Waikato equivalent to TVNZ 'My God'.