

## Building trust, understanding and friendship



*'I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the Building Bridges program. I have loved the fact that we have been encouraged to ask questions about other people's faiths and values and we've learnt respectful ways to ask these questions. I have made so many friends from all different faiths, cultures and backgrounds. I really enjoyed our group discussions... and I feel my knowledge in my faith has increased greatly because I have been able to verbalise what my beliefs are. Thank you!!'*

– Kiara

## For further information:

**Web:** [www.buildingbridges.org.au](http://www.buildingbridges.org.au)  
**Email:** [info@buildingbridges.org.au](mailto:info@buildingbridges.org.au)  
**Mobile:** 0400 436 430 (Tim McCowan)

The Building Bridges program is outlined in the 'Talking Faiths' section of the Immigration Museum website:  
<http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/talking-faiths/building-bridges/>



Building Bridges is hosted by the WellSpring Centre, an ecumenical centre of spirituality and prayer in Ashburton, Melbourne

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The Building Bridges program is grateful for the support of the Victorian Multicultural Commission

# Building Bridges



through

## Interfaith Dialogue in Schools

## ***Building Bridges through Interfaith Dialogue in Schools***

An opportunity for young people in Years Ten and Eleven from different schools to share their experiences of their faith and values with each other, over five sessions in the year.

Melbourne is a cosmopolitan city of diverse cultures, religions and peoples living side by side. Yet often we don't understand or appreciate the differences in each other's lives and beliefs.

This program seeks to address this lack of connection. It gives students a chance to learn from each other for greater understanding and respect, and in the process learn a great deal about themselves.

### **Students:**



- ◆ Share over food, laughter and discussions
- ◆ Visit each other's school campus
- ◆ Listen to each other's experiences, faiths and values
- ◆ Form friendships over games and diverse learning experiences
- ◆ Develop skills for good dialogue with those with different cultures, faith or values
- ◆ Learn about different faiths and cultures from actual practitioners, not just theories from the religious leaders
- ◆ Create art and multimedia of what they learn

### **You can be involved if...**

- ◆ you're a student in Year Ten or Eleven
- ◆ you attend one of the participating schools
- ◆ you want to share and learn from those with different cultures, faiths and values from you
- ◆ you are available for the sessions

### **The sessions:**

- 1** Each of the five sessions begins with an ice-breaker game, followed by a vegetarian meal (usually pizza and drinks).
- 2** We then have a creative activity to learn an important skill in building bridges with those who are different to us.
- 3** Then students move into small single-gender groups to share personal experiences that have shaped their life or faith or values with each other.
- 4** Finally there is time for feedback on the night and information about the next session.

*Each school is represented on the steering committee, and hosts one session. Costs for the program are shared amongst the schools. Students are responsible for their conduct at all times, and their transport to and from each session, in association with their school representative.*



**Director:** Dr Tim McCowan has worked in building bridges between communities of diverse cultures, religious beliefs and values in Australia, North America and the Philippines. He is the Director of Reconciliation at the WellSpring Centre.

**Facilitators:** Several experienced and trained youth leaders help facilitate the activities and sharing in small groups.

**Session Dates** are decided early in the school year, by the schools of their region. Further details can be found on the Building Bridges website (see overleaf).

All sessions run for two hours either during or after school hours, with each session being held at one of the schools in that region, in rotation.

