

# Community and religions unite for peace service



Faith representatives with Pittwater Mayor Cr Jacqueline Townsend (second left) and State MP Jonathan O'Dea (back row, second left)

Representatives of seven faiths joined with community leaders and local residents at a service for the International Day of Peace at the Bahá'í Temple in Sydney on the evening of Saturday, 28 September 2013.

The Temple was specially illuminated for the occasion, its light spreading to the eucalyptus bushland that forms its backdrop.

Members of the Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish, and Zoroastrian communities read extracts from their sacred scriptures, with the readings interspersed by songs of worship from the Temple choir.

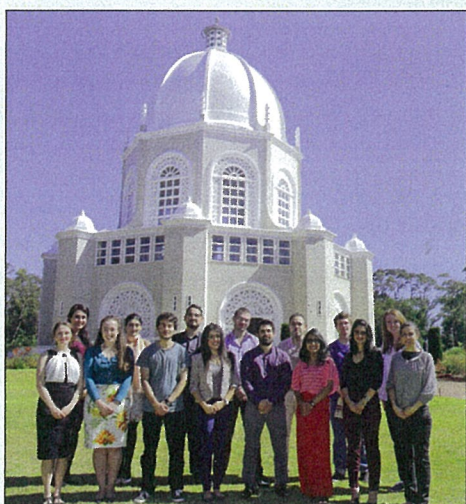
Among the guests were the State MP for Davidson, Jonathan O'Dea, and the Mayor of Pittwater, Cr Jacqueline Townsend. Also attending were members of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia, Dr Arini Beaumaris and Professor Fariborz Moshirian.

Youth from diverse backgrounds attended an interfaith and intercultural event at the Bahá'í Temple in Sydney on Sunday, 25 August 2013.

The youth came from the Bahá'í, Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities.

Individuals without any religious allegiance also accepted the invitation to experience a service at the Temple and to learn more about each other.

The Australian Bahá'í Community and the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies jointly organised the event.



In her introduction at a reception before the service, the MC, Venus Khalessi, addressed the theme of the evening, drawing from "The Promise of World Peace", a statement issued by the international governing body of the Bahá'í Faith, the Universal House of Justice.

"Peace is not just the mere absence of war but a state of being governed by spiritual principles," said Ms Khalessi, the Director of Public Information for the Australian Bahá'í Community.

## Mutual Understanding

Mr O'Dea MP, who was representing the Minister of Citizenship and Communities, Victor Dominello, said the shared experience of the interfaith service further strengthens the community both locally and in the wider sense.

"It promotes mutual understanding and provides an opportunity for us to learn from each other's experience," Mr O'Dea said.

"What the Bahá'í community admirably does is try to look for commonalities rather than differences and I commend them on that."

Cr Townsend backed a call by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to teach children tolerance and mutual respect and to invest in schools and teachers to build a fair and inclusive world.

"Our community is made whole by the sum of its parts -- each of us, our cultures, our faiths, our heritage, our life experiences, form our make-up," she said.

Cr Townsend said it was fortunate that one of seven Bahá'í temples in the world was in Ingleside.

"The Bahá'í Temple is a place where we can unite in worship regardless of our faith and our heritage."

Scheduling arrangements meant that the event was held a week after the official International Day of Peace.

The readers were:

- Bahá'í Faith: Dr Arini Beaumaris and Prof Fariborz Moshirian
- Buddhism: Mr Sach Mohotti
- Christianity: Ms Ashleigh Green
- Hinduism: Prof Nihal Agar
- Islam: Ms Asma Yusra
- Judaism: Ms Lynda Ben-Menashe
- Zoroastrianism: Mr Minoo Batliwalla