Wollongong barbecue open to all religions, cultures

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Bilal Mosque acting president Gary Ismail and Dean of St Francis Xavier Cathedral Father Ron Peters are organising a barbecue for people of all faiths on November 20. Picture: KIRK GILMOUR

Whether you're Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist or atheist, the Illawarra People for Peace would love to see you at their free community barbecue on November 20.

The free halal barbecue, featuring shared food platters and drinks, will be held on the lawn at the rear of St Francis Xavier Cathedral, Harbour Street, Wollongong from 5pm-8pm.

The event is being organised by the Illawarra People for Peace, made up of representatives of Wollongong's Omar and Bilal mosques, the Catholic Church, Uniting and Congregational churches, Harry Sprintz from the Jewish community, Illawarra Muslim Aid, Affinity Intercultural Foundation, Amity College Shellharbour and Wollongong Diocese Catholic Schools. Federal MPs Stephen Jones and Sharon Bird are also backing the barbecue.

Its aim is to bring people of different faiths and cultures together to share a meal, foster greater understanding and friendship.

Malaysian-born Jesuit priest Father Aloysious Mowe, who is fluent in the Koran, will be the guest speaker at 6pm.

"The main purpose is to get people from the various communities to mix and there's no better way than over a sausage and some gozleme," Dean of St Francis Xavier Cathedral Father Ron Peters said.

"We're hoping that simple title people for peace appeals to everybody and it can build from the Illawarra to other places.

Islamic Society Illawarra (Bilal Mosque) acting president Gary Ismail said the forum was growing and maybe it could become national.

"We'll continue to have monthly meetings and keep doing exercises which will help to boost unity, friendship, build bridges and keep that harmony in the community," he said.

The barbecue was partly motivated by the negative backlash against Muslims due to events overseas.