



## INTERFAITH NETWORK INC. CITY OF GREATER DANDENONG



### PROCESSES AND STRUCTURES

The Network was previously known as *The Faith Communities of the City of Springvale* (from 1989) and of *Dandenong* (since Council amalgamation in 1995). The title *Interfaith Network* has evolved as being the preferred title.

In May 2003, the Interfaith Network became incorporated (Interfaith Network Inc.).

*Interfaith* indicates a development in understanding and relationships between members, while *Network* describes the process and dynamic of the group.

#### Who are the members?

Local faith leaders and faith representatives of faith communities, who support the ideals of the “Common Statement” and sign it, belong to the Network. The faith leaders and faith representatives attend meetings, contribute to the development of the Network, assist in planning and participate in activities of the Network. After participating as *observers*, faith leaders and faith representatives may formalise their community membership by signing the “Common Statement” at the Annual Gathering.

*Observers*, to become an initial member of the Network, must attend at least five meetings between Annual Gatherings to be eligible to sign the Common Statement. The exception to this is where a pre-existing faith community belonging to the Network has had a change of faith leader.

The “Common Statement” is as follows:

*“We bring greetings from the faith communities to the Mayor, Councillors and people of Greater Dandenong.*

*We offer to the City of Greater Dandenong our common commitment to seek to live together in peace and goodwill.*

*We affirm our desire to promote respect and tolerance for the integrity of each other's beliefs, cultures and traditions. This desire arises not only from our common humanity but also from our being people of faith and people of prayer.*

*We recognise that as neighbours, we have responsibilities to the community, the world and ourselves. We therefore urge all citizens, both religious and non-religious, to put aside intolerance, prejudice and divisiveness, to attain peaceful and fruitful co-existence in our City."*

Members may also consist of individuals who make application for membership. The Executive will determine eligibility criteria.

Individuals may join the Network as observers on a permanent basis or attend meetings or events when involved in projects with an interfaith component.

Currently the Network has a policy not to charge membership fees. This will be reviewed on an annual basis.

### **Friends of the Network**

Friends of the Network are people who agree with and support all the principles of the Common Statement, but do not belong to or follow a particular faith or spiritual tradition. Friends support the Network and all its activities; they attend meetings but do not have a vote. Friends attend the Annual Gathering and sign a "Common Commitment" that upholds all the principles of the Common Statement but without reference to a particular faith or spiritual tradition. Friends must attend at least five meetings between Annual Gatherings to be eligible to sign the Common Commitment.

The "Common Commitment" is as follows:

*"We bring greetings to the Mayor, Councillors and people of Greater Dandenong.*

*We offer to the City of Greater Dandenong our common commitment to seek to live together in peace and goodwill.*

*We affirm our desire to respect the integrity of other's beliefs, cultures and traditions. This desire arises from our common humanity.*

*We recognise that as neighbours, we have responsibilities to the community, the world and ourselves. We therefore urge all citizens, both*

*religious and non-religious, to put aside intolerance, prejudice and divisiveness, to attain peaceful and fruitful co-existence in our City.”*

## **Representation**

The Network generally operates out of a consensus model. If, however, a vote is required, each member has one vote.

We, the members of the Network, recognise:

- The local nature of the Network. First and foremost a community relations initiative dependent on the understanding and goodwill of the participants;
- The wider nature and benefit of the Network as a model for other civic and religious bodies that can be adapted to local needs of communities;
- The encouragement to the faith traditions themselves that we can talk and listen to one another;
- The example to their governing bodies of the advantages and blessings associated with such dialogue at this time in our human and global history, nationally and internationally;
- The witness to what can happen locally, nationally and internationally.

## **Partnership between the Network and the City of Greater Dandenong Council**

The partnership consists of equal partners:

- The Network;
- The City of Greater Dandenong Council.

Each partner is independent and quite able to hold and express views not necessarily the same as those held or expressed by the other.

When either partner is speaking on behalf of the partnership, or on behalf of either partner, certain protocols will be followed.

Each partner can only speak on behalf of the other, after agreement between the President of the Network and the Mayor of the City of Greater Dandenong or a senior member of staff.

A report on the Network will be presented to Council before the Mayoral Induction. This will be done to demonstrate the work of the Network for the previous year. Council will be asked to formally endorse the partnership for the coming year. The commitment is given by the Network through the “Common Statement” at the Mayoral induction.

**The Executive operates outside the general meetings.**

**The Executive includes:**

President  
Vice President  
Secretary  
Treasurer  
2 Ordinary Members  
IFN Development Worker/Officer [Ex officio]

### **Preamble**

In its beginnings the IFN was one of just a handful of interfaith networks. Its scope and reach was wider than the local City of Greater Dandenong community providing a model and leadership to others wishing to establish a similar network. With the growth and establishment of local interfaith/multifaith networks across many municipalities, the IFN's focus and work now centres on the City of Greater Dandenong. To support this focus and within reason, IFN Executive Members should be drawn from within the local area.

As the leader and spokesperson in the local community for the City of Greater Dandenong IFN, the President and the Vice President must, wherever at all possible, live and/or work in the City of Greater Dandenong and be a signatory to the Common Statement.

### **President**

The President is a member of the Network and in this role reflects the views of the Network.

The President takes a leadership role for the Network:

- In promoting the aims of the Network as spelled out in the "Common Statement", with the support of the IFN Development Worker;
- At Network events (e.g. the Induction of the Mayor, reconciliation events and the Annual Gathering of the Network);
- In representing the Network when invited;
- As spokesperson for the Network, reporting back to Network meetings;
- Directing the preparation of media releases, with support from the IFN Development Worker;
- Directing the preparation and updating of information and educational materials, with support from the IFN Development Worker;
- By keeping in contact with leaders who are unable to attend Network meetings;

- By welcoming faith leaders and communities who do not yet belong to the Network;
- In consultation with the Executive, developing the direction and initiatives of the Network;
- By consulting with the Executive on financial issues regarding the Network;
- Chairing the Executive meetings of the Network;
- By drawing up the agenda for Network meetings together with the IFN Development Worker;
- Facilitating decision making at Network meetings;
- In presenting a report to Network meetings;
- In delegating an alternative representative as needed.

### **Vice President**

The Vice President is a member of the Network and in this role represents the President when requested by the President.

### **Secretary**

The Secretary is a member of the Network.

The role of the Secretary is to:

- Act as administrative secretary to the Network;
- Together with the IFN Development Worker, convene Network meetings including Special Meetings;
- Take the minutes at all Network meetings;
- Together with the IFN Development Worker, carry out administrative and follow up tasks relating to the minutes, educational publications and media releases of the Network;
- Maintain and co-ordinate all administrative aspects of membership;
- Together with the IFN Development Worker, maintain an up-to-date contact list for the Network, including details of membership registrations;
- Receive and deal with the correspondence;
- Receive nominations and proxies from members for the Annual General Meeting;
- Together with the Executive, each year at the Executive Meeting immediately prior to the AGM, initiate the appointment of a Returning Officer from the Membership. The Returning Officer must not be a current Executive Member, a candidate for election or an employee;
- Inform the Registrar of Consumer Affairs of any changes to the name, or rules or address of the Network;

- Within one month from the date of the AGM, lodge an Annual Statement with the Registrar of Consumer Affairs;
- Inform the Registrar of Consumer Affairs of any changes to the appointment or details of the Secretary;

### **Treasurer**

The Treasurer is a member of the Network.

The role of the Treasurer is to:

- Advise on financial issues;
- Consult with the Executive of the Network on all financial matters including insurances;
- Keep proper books of accounts for all income and expenses;
- Open any bank accounts as appropriate for the running of the financial affairs of the fund;
- Present a report to Network meetings;
- Report the financial position of the Network at the Network's AGM;
- Receive any grants from Council and/or Government and be responsible for its acquittal.

### **Ordinary Members (4)**

The four ordinary members of the Executive are members of the Network.

The role of an ordinary member is to:

- Broaden the scope of discussion by being a part of the Executive;
- Receive delegated tasks as appropriate;
- Have an opportunity to understudy the roles of Office Bearers.

Where possible and practical, the Executive should be made up of Network members representing different faith communities **and in accordance with the Rules of the Interfaith Network of the City of greater Dandenong Incorporated.**

### **IFN Development Worker**

The IFN Development Worker is employed by the IFN and is an Ex-Officio member of the Network Executive.

The role of the IFN Development Worker is to:

- Support the President and the Executive in developing the direction and implementing the initiatives of the Network in promoting the aims of the Network as spelled out in the "Common Statement";

- Together with the Secretary, convene Network meetings including Special Meetings;
- Draw up the agenda for Network meetings together with the President;
- Together with the Secretary, carry out administrative and follow up tasks relating to the minutes, educational publications and media releases of the Network;
- Work with the Executive to ensure necessary administrative action is carried through;
- Together with the Secretary, maintain an up-to-date contact list for the Network;
- Be a first point of contact for any Network enquiries, referring people onto the appropriate Executive or Network members;
- Advise on fundraising issues with regard to the Network;
- Be a first point of contact for the Council with the Network, including where a joint understanding, policy or statement is required;
- Present a report to Network meetings;
- Attend and support Network events (e.g., the Induction of the Mayor, reconciliation events and the Annual Gathering of the Network);
- Represent the Network when required or delegated to do so;
- Support the President with the preparation of media releases;
- Keep in contact with leaders who are unable to attend Network meetings;
- Welcome faith leaders and communities who do not yet belong to the Network;
- In consultation with the President, coordinate the prayer roster for Council meetings;
- Coordinate and organise all Tours to Places of Worship requested of the Network;
- In consultation with the Executive, plan, develop and deliver the Faith Leaders Annual Gathering, the Schools Annual Gathering, the Annual Interfaith Breakfast, the Biennial Strategic Planning Day Retreat and the occasional Talking Faiths Forums;
- ~~In co-operation with the CHALLENGE Family Violence Project, plan, develop and deliver a faith-based family violence prevention resource;~~
- Co-ordinate the update of the Network's website as needed.

### **Council Representative**

The Council Representative is a member of Council staff. Certain Council roles may be empowered to serve as the Council Representative, rather than a specific member of Council staff. Different members of Council staff may share the responsibility to serve as Council Representative, but only

one member of Council staff may serve as the Council Representative at a given Network meeting.

The role of the Council Representative is to:

- Be a first point of Contact for the Network with Council, including where a joint understanding, policy or statement is required;
- Carry out administrative and follow up tasks on behalf of the Council;
- Advise on administrative and financial issues from a Council perspective;
- As endorsement of the partnership with Council, attend the meetings and the AGM of the Network;
- When invited by the Executive or as the need arises, attend Executive meetings;
- Assist with any article in Council's magazine *The City*.

### **Election Process of President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and the **Four** Ordinary Members**

1. To ensure an open and democratic process of election for the positions of President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and the **four** Ordinary Members voting will be conducted by secret ballot by the Executive appointed Returning Officer with due sensitivity to the nature of the group;
2. Elections will be held annually for President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and the **four** Ordinary Members. A person shall not serve in one role for more than three consecutive years except under exceptional circumstances as determined at an AGM;
3. Nominations for the positions will be called for in the June and July meetings;
4. Elections will take place at a full meeting of the Network at its August meeting;
5. A hand over of leadership responsibilities for the Network will occur at the Annual Gathering.

### **Working Groups**

Working Groups will be convened as necessary and for a specific purpose.

### **Co-Option**

Network members may be co-opted as needed.



## **Amending the Processes and Structures**

These Processes and Structures may be amended from time to time by a motion adopted by a majority of members present at a general meeting.