

Community builds bridges

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THE NSW Jewish War Memorial last Monday played host to the third meeting this year of the National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews.

Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council's director of international and community affairs and Dialogue co-chair Jeremy Jones told *The AJN* that following on from previous Dialogue meetings which discussed the role of women in Christianity and Judaism respectively, Monday's meeting looked at women in Islam.

"Representatives of the Muslim community made presentations to do with the history of Islam and women in the early days ... right through to modern day experiences of Muslim women in Australia in terms of challenges and achievements, both internal and external," Jones said.

"Also it was a very good opportunity, within the close environment of a dialogue amongst people who have established a good relationship of respect, trust and understanding, to be able to talk about contemporary political and social issues."

Executive Council of Australian Jewry executive director Peter Wertheim along with other prominent Jewish community representatives rounded out the Jewish delegation.

Earlier this month, in a separate bridge-building exercise, Jones also joined an interfaith panel at the Multicultural Eid Festival and Fair at Fairfield Showground. Jones said the atmosphere at the festival was unified and positive.

"Nobody cared whether you were Shia or Sunni, or a Jew, or a Christian, or of no belief whatsoever," he said.

"People were all just enjoying the positive vibe of multicultural Australia."

And while the message was one of choosing unity over racism, Jones said it wasn't done in a political way.

“We were living counter-racism by positive engagement,” he said, “Going there and expressing friendship, and sitting with people and talking and laughing with them.”

GARETH NARUNSKY

Representatives of the Christian, Muslim and Jewish faiths joined together at the NSW Jewish War Memorial.