

Double “Chai” for ground-breaking Dialogue group

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The Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims & Jews has held its 36th meeting, at The Emanuel Synagogue, Woollahra, Sydney.



Delegates

As Rabbi Jeremy Lawrence told the delegates from the National Council of Churches of Australia, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, 18 translates a Chai, or “life”, and is a significant number for Jewish people.

Jeremy Jones, who has been the co-chair for the Jewish community delegation since the Dialogue’s first meeting, noted how the relationship had matured with the breadth and depth of the discussions reflecting the overwhelming positive outcomes of the process.

“We have not just discussed respective views on theological subjects such as prophets and prophecy, on public policy matters such as immigration and education, but on issues which are of central concern if we really are to understand each other such as Jihad, Zionism, the Trinity, martyrdom, attitudes to conversion and whether or not it is ever permissible to not tell the truth”, Jeremy Jones said.

The November 2013 meeting was the third in the series on “Questions and Answers”, and included consideration of Christian and Muslim theology and Israel as a Jewish homeland, beliefs relating to what happens after death, the terms Judaism, Hebrew, Israelite and Yid, and much more.

Rabbi Jeffrey Kamins, who hosted the Dialogue, outlined sources for understanding Jewish beliefs relating to the nature of souls, and ECAJ representatives Peter Wertheim and Julie Nathan contributed textual and historical background on a range of subjects.

Josie Lacey, who has participated in most of the dialogues, was not present at the meeting as she was en route to representing Australia at the International Religions for Peace meeting in Vienna, while another long-term participant, Peta Pellach, who now lives in Jerusalem, sent

regards to the meeting through the Christian Co-Chair Tara Curlewis, who she had seen at the World Council of Churches meeting held this month in South Korea.

While more than 15 Jewish people have participated in one or more of the delegations since the first formal session in 2002, there has been continuity as well as renewal, as Rabbi Kamins and Jeremy Jones were part of the first delegation which also included Rabbi Raymond Apple and Peta Pellach. Sister Patricia Madigan representing the Catholic Church and the NCCA and Sheikh Amin Hady, the Muslim Co-Chair and Imam of Zetland Mosque, also were at the first of thirty six Dialogues and many in between.

The Australian National Dialogue is “internationally respected and admired”.

“It is unique, for the constituencies served by the participating organisations, the high level representation of peak bodies, the range of subjects discussed and honest and genuine sharing of information and opinions, and the way a number of other significant interfaith initiatives have been auspiced, inspired or empowered by it”, Jeremy Jones concluded