

Youth parliament focuses on racism, climate change

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Participants in the Youth PoWR (Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations)

More than 200 young people participated in this year's Youth Parliament of the World's Religions (PoWR) in Sydney on August 20, the Columban Mission Institute's Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations reports.

Now in its third year, Youth PoWR is a multi-faith initiative of the Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations. It brings together young people from diverse religions – Aboriginal, Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism – and secular society. The event is planned, organised and hosted by youth.

The venue was Santa Sabina College in Strathfield, where people aged 17-35 engaged with each other on the practical implications of this year's theme, "Light in Dark Times".

In a video message from Chicago, Rev Dr Larry Greenfield, Executive Director of PoWR, had a positive and encouraging message for the participants. Dr Greenfield said he was keen to listen and learn from this gathering of Australian youth from different religions, and extended an invitation to join him and others from around the world at next year's PoWR to be held in November in Toronto, Canada.

The program featured talks and performances expressing compassion and justice in artistic form, and great engagement of the young people with each other.

The program included speakers from four faiths: Leonard Choy (Buddhism), Rabbi Nicole Roberts (Judaism), Matin Gouniai (Baha'i) and Sourosh Cina (Islam). There were performances from Hope Uniting Band (Christian), Natyanivedan Indian Dance School (Hindu) and Shaheedi Faujan Gatka Akhara (Sikh).

Participants gathered in small groups and considered a range of issues. Racism and discrimination, and climate change and the environment emerged as the two most important issues on the day.

Through meeting, discussing and agreeing on shared commitments, the members of Youth PoWR demonstrated how young people from different religions can model harmonious interreligious living for the rest of the world to emulate.