



Media Release  
Monday 6 November 2006

## Melbourne to host world's largest multi-faith event

The Board of Trustees of the Council for the Parliament of the World's Religions (CPWR) has selected Melbourne, Australia as the preferred city to host the 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions (PWR) event, the world's largest multi-faith gathering.

Sandra Chipchase, CEO, Melbourne Convention + Visitors Bureau (MCVB) said that the selection of Melbourne is subject to the completion of the financial plan, the final stage of the bid process.

"We are delighted that the CPWR Board has chosen Melbourne as its preferred city to host this important multi-faith event," Ms Chipchase said.

"The Bureau has worked closely with the City of Melbourne, the Victorian State Government and Federal Government to secure this major event for Victoria. Melbourne will now secure private sector support to add to the financial commitments from governments in order to deliver the event."

The PWR is expected to bring 10,000 visitors to Melbourne and inject more than \$75 million into the Victorian economy. It will run for 8 days during early December 2009 and will include more than 400 programs and performances relating to spiritual practice, religious identity, and intra and inter-religious dialogue.

First held in Chicago in 1893, the PWR brings together the world's religious and spiritual leaders and their followers to attend a series of conferences, congresses and debates where peace, diversity and sustainability is discussed and explored. It is run the CPWR, a US based interreligious organisation that cultivates harmony between the world's religious and spiritual communities, fosters their engagement with the world to achieve a vision of a peaceful, just and sustainable world.

The Reverend Dirk Ficca, executive director of the CPWR said that Melbourne could expect to receive worldwide attention during PWR 2009.

"In today's world, there is a clear need for interfaith understanding, cooperation and for conflict mitigation of religiously inspired violence and terrorism," said Reverend Ficca. "Recent world events highlight the need to support religious moderation in the defusing of religious extremism. Without peace between the religions, there cannot be peace in the world."

The head of Melbourne's winning bid committee and Australia's representative on the World Conference of Religions for Peace, RMIT's Professor Des Cahill, said religion and spirituality is now at the centre stage in Australian and across the world.

"It is a credit to its multicultural and interfaith climate that the world's religious leaders and their faith communities have chosen Melbourne for such an important event. It is like winning the Olympic Games of religion and spirituality," he added.

Sandra Chipchase said the event will put the spotlight on Melbourne as a multicultural city and demonstrate how different faith communities can operate in harmony.

MCVB announced recently that Amway Greater China had also chosen Melbourne for its incentive and training conference for 10,000 people in 2008. The Bureau has also helped secure 12 events for the new convention centre due for completion in 2009."

Ends