

LOCAL NEWS

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The Commission for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations,
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane.

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Project Abraham

On Sunday 10 September approximately 200 people attended the Project Abraham seminar at the Gold Coast Arts Centre at Bundall. Project Abraham is a conversation between Jews, Christians and Muslims, exploring the commonalities that they share as the three Abrahamic religions. Project Abraham is a federally funded *Living in Harmony* initiative through the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.

The Project has been travelling around Australia and the Gold Coast forum is the first Queensland event. Chief Justice Paul de Jersey opened the forum and the topic of conversation was "Eating at Abraham's Table". Participants in the forum were Rabbi Uri Thernal, OAM, of Temple Shalom representing the Jewish faith; Bishop Ron Williams, representing the Christian faith; and Imam Imraan Hussain of the Gold Coast Mosque, representing the Muslim faith.

Question time followed the talks. Because of the large number of questions that were not able to be answered in the time allowed, it is anticipated that further dialogue sessions will be held around specific topics in the near future.

After the forum, an educational display was opened at the Gold Coast Civic Centre. Over the following two weeks schools were invited to attend educational seminars where representatives of each of the three Abrahamic traditions were on hand to answer questions.

The Gold Coast City Council and the steering committee worked very hard for months before, leading up to the forum and display. Steering committee members were Deb Cox and Anne Dowse from the Gold Coast City Council, Rabbi Uri Thernal, Imam Imraan Hussain, Athar Shah (head of the Gold Coast Islamic Council), Rev. Gerry Hefferan (St Mary's Catholic Community, Oxenford), Rev. Duncan Macleod (Pacific Parks Uniting Church) and Rev. Lyn Dunn (Deacon at Gold Coast North Anglican Church).

As part of Project Abraham the steering committee are to undertake a project, to take the dialogue between the three traditions out into the community. As their project, they have decided upon Tourism with one component being hospitality. Increasing number of overseas visitors have difficulty in finding out about appropriate food, times and places of religious services, access to prayer rooms, etc. The Chamber of Commerce and other appropriate stakeholders will be invited to join the project.

Rev. Lyn Dunn Gold Coast North Anglican Church

A follow-up to the first very successful Project Abraham Forum was held on Sunday, 12 November at the Nerang Bicentennial Community Centre. This time the topic was *Peacemaking ...perspectives*.

The audience was addressed by Rabbi Uri Thernal, Imam Imraan Hussain and Mr Tony Kitchen of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, who spoke on Peace Studies in an educational context.

The Steering Committee is planning three further activities next year, so mark your calendars for Sundays 18 March, 22 July and 28 October 2007. Details will be available closer to the dates (Editor)

Quotable Quote:

***"The Enemies of Ecumenism are
Suspicion
Inertia
And Impatience"***

***H.E. Cormac Cardinal Murphy- O'Connor
Archbishop of Westminster
at the Francis Rush Centre, Brisbane.
Saturday, 2 September 2006***