



### UNESCO PARIS



In early March, members from our Toowoomba team had the privilege of representing our community at UNESCO in Paris as part of the International Conference for World Harmony. Held on 9–10 March 2026, the conference centred on the theme “The Role of Women in Promoting Peace”.

Organised by the Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Madagascar to UNESCO, the World Buddhist Organization, the Amitabha Buddhist Association, and the Master Chin Kung Association for Peace and Harmony Development, the conference brought together voices from across the globe committed to advancing peace through dialogue, understanding and collaboration. Our Toowoomba Interfaith Working Group delegation was honoured to contribute to this global conversation by presenting the “Toowoomba Model”—a reflection of the many years of grassroots, relationship-based work led by the Multi-Faith Multicultural Centre (MMC) and supported by our broader community.

The presentation highlighted how sustained interfaith engagement, cultural inclusivity and community-driven initiatives have helped shape Toowoomba into a place where peace is not just an aspiration, but an ongoing, lived practice. This work has only been possible because of the trust, commitment and generosity of our community members, and we were proud to share these collective efforts on an international stage.

A particularly meaningful aspect of the conference was the opportunity to listen to and learn from an inspiring range of women leaders, scholars and practitioners. Their contributions underscored that peacebuilding is not neutral—it is shaped by whose voices are heard and whose experiences are centred. The discussions highlighted the critical role women play not only as participants in peace processes, but as leaders, innovators, and agents of structural change—challenging traditional power dynamics and expanding the ways peace can be imagined and sustained across communities.



Building on these reflections, we also acknowledge the many women within our own community whose leadership continues to shape peacebuilding in Toowoomba, including Evelyn Ray (Deputy Chair, Toowoomba Interfaith Working Group), Fatemeh (Secretary, TIWG), Melissa (Voices of Faith and podcast contributor), Dr Uma (Chairperson, Toowoomba Peace Group), Sarwan (Founding Member, TIWG), Susan O'Hara (member of the Bahá'í Assembly and TIWG), Carrie (Project Manager, TYP.G), and Jessica (Secretary, MMC), whose contributions reflect the strength, depth and diversity of women's leadership in our local context.

Outside of the conference program, delegates also spent some time in Paris, taking in the city's rich cultural and historical landscape—an opportunity to reflect and connect before beginning the journey home. Travelling back to Australia via Singapore, the team experienced a quieter but equally meaningful moment of cultural exchange. A simple breakfast at a local food court offered a glimpse into everyday life, while Mr Haniff joined local worshippers for Friday prayers at a nearby mosque. The scene was vibrant and deeply communal, with the larger mosque nearby able to accommodate up to 5,000 people—another reminder of the diversity and shared humanity that underpin our global connections.

Looking back, the journey remains a source of deep gratitude for the opportunity to represent Toowoomba, for the friendships formed, and for the shared commitment to building peace across cultures and contexts. It was truly an honour and a privilege to stand alongside global partners and contribute our local story to a broader movement for harmony.

The experience continues to affirm that peace begins in community, and that Toowoomba remains a place where it is actively built, nurtured and sustained.

### MEETING WITH MAYOR

In 2025, Toowoomba was officially recognised as an International City of Peace. Since receiving this honour, the Peace Committee, under the leadership of Dr Uma, has been meeting with community groups and individuals to gather insights on how we can move forward together in building a more harmonious and connected city.

This recognition has been more than a milestone and has served as a meaningful source of motivation for us to continue the work with renewed energy and purpose. It affirms what has already been built within our community while also reminding us that peace is an ongoing, collective responsibility requiring sustained effort, collaboration and care.





# PURE LAND LEARNING COLLEGE ASSOCIATION INC. MULTI-FAITH MULTICULTURAL CENTRE

EVERYONE MATTERS - TOOWOOMBA, A MODEL CITY OF PEACE & HARMONY



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Pictured here is the committee in discussion with our Mayor, exploring future plans and key action items to strengthen peace initiatives across our region. These conversations are focused not only on maintaining momentum, but also on identifying practical and inclusive ways to deepen engagement across different sectors of the community.



As we continue this journey, we remain committed to turning ideas into action and ensuring that this recognition translates into lasting, positive change for Toowoomba.

## TYP.G

Members of the Toowoomba Youth Peace Group (TYP.G) met with representatives Hannah and Binyamin from UN Youth Queensland on 22 March to learn from each other's models and explore potential opportunities for collaboration.



TYP.G looks forward to incorporating what has been learned from this dialogue into its work for the year ahead—strengthening its initiatives, exploring new ideas and continuing to create opportunities for young people in Toowoomba to connect, lead and contribute to a more cohesive community.

The meeting concluded on a warm note, with the group sharing lunch together and continuing their exchange in a spirit of friendship and connection.

## TOOWOOMBA HOSPICE

The relationship between Toowoomba Hospice and the Pure Land Learning College Association dates back to early 2003. Since then, we have continued to connect and support one another, strengthening the bonds between our organisations. The Hospice is a true icon in our community, known for its compassionate work under the leadership of Graham Barron and supported by a dedicated team of staff and volunteers.



On 26 March, Pure Land and its volunteers were warmly invited to afternoon tea with the Hospice's management, staff and volunteers. We are grateful for the kind hospitality and the generous spread of cookies.

Gatherings like this remind us of the importance of connection, shared values and community spirit, and ensure our relationship continues to grow stronger into the future.

## SAVE THE DATE!

### International Peace Conference

The Multi-faith Multicultural Centre of Toowoomba will be holding our annual International Peace Conference on **29th August**. This important event will bring together voices from across faiths, cultures and communities to reflect, share and work collectively towards peace, understanding and social harmony. Further details will be shared in the coming months.