

Steve Kamper

Minister for Small Business
Minister for Lands and Property
Minister for Multiculturalism
Minister for Sport



Media Release

NSW Faith Affairs Council starts work

Wednesday, 15 November 2023

The NSW Government today confirmed the first 19 members of the NSW Faith Affairs Council.

Delivering on a key election commitment by the Minns Government, the Council has been established as a consultative mechanism to provide advice on priorities and emerging trends, the impacts of government policy on faith communities, and enhancing community harmony, security and well-being.

The NSW Faith Affairs Council aims to improve the Government's understanding and competency in relation to religious communities and people of faith in New South Wales.

Minister for Multiculturalism Steve Kamper invited 12 of the largest religious affiliations in New South Wales to begin shaping the Council's scope and forward agenda. The 12 candidates put forward by the largest religious affiliations needed to receive nominations from two other religious groups.

Representatives from Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh and Jewish communities will sit alongside representatives from the main Christian denominations in driving the work of the council.

Representatives were selected on their ability to not only represent this respective religious communities but on their commitment to inter-faith cooperation and inclusion, they include:

- Reverend Dr Michael Stead – Anglican
- Associate Professor Gawaine Powell Davies – Buddhism
- Mr Surinder Jain – Hinduism
- Mr Darshan Singh Gill – Sikhism
- Mr David Ossip – Judaism
- Imam Shadi Alsuleiman – Islam
- Father Christophorous Krikelis – Greek Orthodox
- Reverend Dr Steve Bartlett – Baptist
- Reverend Ralph Esthersby – Pentecostal
- Reverend Dr Manas Gosh – Uniting
- Reverend Dr Kamal Weerakoon – Presbyterian
- Ms Monica Doumit – Catholicism

Previously, the Government had committed to four additional representatives being recruited through an open application process, however due to the calibre of the candidacy the Minister has decided to expand this number to seven.

These appointments include:

- Mr Darren Bark – Better Balanced Futures
- Rev Bill Crews AM – Ashfield Parish Mission
- Mr Murray Norman – ICCOREIS
- Rev Heather Topp – Buddhist Council of NSW & The Temple of New Seminary in New York
- Ms Katherine Xavier – Catholic Diocese of Parramatta
- Mrs Monica Chahoud – Melkite Catholic Eparchy of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania
- Dr Ali Al Samail – Australian Ahl Al Bait Islamic Centre

The first meeting will take place on 1 December. At this meeting a chairperson will be elected by the members of the Faith Affairs Council.

NSW Minister for Multiculturalism Steve Kamper said:

“The Faith Affairs Council provides us with a path forward through the challenging issues facing our multifaith communities.”

“Formalising a way to collaborate and engage on faith-based matters shows the NSW Government’s commitment to listen to and deliver improved outcomes for all our religious communities.”

“We are a better government when we listen. The NSW Faith Affairs Council will help us to identify opportunities and initiatives for enhanced collaboration and ongoing dialogue between the NSW Government and religious communities in NSW.”

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