

DRIVING SOCIAL INNOVATION IN PLACE AND COMMUNITY

2025 City North Activation Program

BUILDING BRIDGES: INTERFAITH RELATIONSHIPS

Building Bridges: Interfaith Relationships

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Project Summary

The *Building Bridges Project* celebrated the multiculturalism of the City North Precinct, bringing people of different faiths and cultures together to foster connection and respond positively to growing societal division and tension.

A series of Interfaith and Intercultural luncheons were held, enabling attendees to gather and converse while sharing food. These conversations helped break down barriers and inspired participants to gain a deeper understanding of one another and their faiths.

The Project focused on establishing safe spaces around City North to foster connection, dialogue and trust within the Precinct's multicultural community. Utilising these inclusive spaces allows people from different backgrounds to come together and engage with one another over food and conversation. These luncheons served as practical demonstrations that show there are more commonalities than differences between faiths and cultural groups, thus creating bonds within the City North community and beyond.

The Project was made up of a team from the RMIT Business and Human Rights Centre (BHRIGHT) and led in partnership with the Institute of Community Directors Australia (ICDA).

Key Project Activities, Milestones & Deliverables

Between September and November 2025, the Project ran six successful one-hour luncheons for three different groups: RMIT students, RMIT staff, and people working in the not-for-profit sector in Melbourne. With up to 30 participants attending each session, members led conversations that encouraged attendees to share their traditions, beliefs and human experiences.

Each luncheon focused on a different element of faith, culture and traditions, intending to stimulate conversation and dialogue. Luncheons with RMIT students and staff were held in the City North Precinct, and community sector luncheons were held within the 'Our Community Hub' in North Melbourne. The Hub was the chosen location for this session as it is where ICDA and other not-for-profits are co-located and operates as an accessible space for different groups. Free coffee vouchers were also provided to luncheon attendees, and all were encouraged to continue engaging with fellow participants post the event.

"In all my time at RMIT, this was the single best event I've ever attended. Thank you for organising this. We need to do more things like this. It's so special."

Participant, RMIT Staff Interfaith Luncheon

"Wow. This was incredible, I had never spoken to so many RMIT students from different faiths before."

Participant, RMIT Student Interfaith Luncheon



To ensure the Project was culturally and religiously sensitive to all potential participants, catering was provided by local restaurants, predominantly small, family-run businesses or social enterprises, enabling a variety of cuisines to be showcased.

Project Impact

A survey was distributed to all registered participants. The Project activities received overwhelmingly positive feedback and support from those who took part across all three groups and were considered meaningful events by many attendees. Project members also saw the building of genuine connections between participants of different faiths and cultures who attended, and crucially, most participants reported they would return for future similar sessions.

The Project achieved its purpose of creating welcoming spaces for positive conversation and sharing, aiding the formation of connections between faiths and cultures. It also highlighted a gap in safe, welcoming and informal spaces for inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue. Importantly, it also demonstrated a strong desire and motivation within the City North multicultural community to have interactions and conversations that celebrate diversity and commonality.

Future Planning

The Project demonstrates the importance of initiatives that create opportunities for building trust, understanding, and social cohesion within multicultural societies. With sufficient support, the activities initiated by the Project could be permanently established and expanded, especially within the RMIT community of students and staff. The luncheons are a proactive way to strengthen the bonds between colleagues and local communities.

Activities like those delivered by the Project build resilient social systems and improve levels of trust and respect that can be employed in times of hardship and tension.

Aside from focusing on the RMIT University community, the Project team aims to seek further opportunities to bring activities such as inter-faith luncheons to the broader Melbourne community, including the corporate sector. Funding will be pursued to extend and expand the Project, including via national and local government, and philanthropic support. Project findings and methodology will also be published to contribute to scholarly work on inter-faith dialogue.



"Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I drove 45 minutes each way to be here. It's so important we do these types of events, but I didn't find anyone else doing this."

Participant, Community Sector Interfaith Luncheon

City North is such a vibrant and dynamic place, the demographic is hugely multicultural.

We need to acknowledge that and address it in constructive ways, but also we can celebrate it.

The *Building Bridges: Interfaith Relationships* team acknowledge and thank the following contributors:

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For more information on the City North Social Innovation Precinct,
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