

## CCCMR Report to the Region of Oceania

03 November 2021

### Introduction by Patrick McInerney

As reported previously, a ‘flood’ in late September rendered our former downstairs office a ‘construction site’. On 2 October, the former IfM staff came and cleared out their vacated upstairs offices. They and a diocesan official helped Ryan and I move most of our items – filing cabinets, files, books, stores – out of the old, downstairs office to our ‘new’, upstairs, street-level offices. Ryan moved our kitchenette supplies on the 14 October. Konica moved our printer on the same day, and the diocesan IT guy patched the cabling over to our new offices. We were now ready to move in for work whenever lockdown lifted!

The diocese has invited tenders for renovation of the water-damaged areas and hopes to have it completed by mid-November. The diocese will provide hot desks in that space and the rest of the building for *ad hoc* use by diocesan staff, especially when presenting workshops and seminars in the downstairs “Gathering Space” (which we can also book).

For all 4 of us on the CCCMR staff, Thursday 28 October was our first day back at work after lockdown and in the new offices, and the first time to meet Sam Cherian face-to-face, even though she has been working with us for the past two months! We plan to have regular office attendance 3 days a week—Tuesdays to Thursdays— from 1 November onwards.

We now occupy 3 spacious offices, a meeting room/kitchenette, and a corridor with library shelves. It is a bigger area than previously, with no increase in rent. I acknowledge also that during the lockdown the chancery only charged 50% rent. We like the new space very much and find it very conducive for work. As sole tenants in the building, we are responsible for COVID-safety plans, QR code and checking vaccination status of visitors, all of which is now in place. Today we held our first Centre meeting in the new office. You are welcome to visit any time!



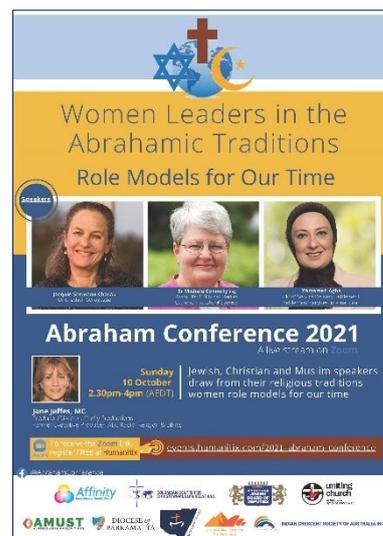
### Interfaith E-Bulletin by Patrick McInerney

At Maha Shawky’s initiative, we prepared and invited articles for an e-bulletin. The first Columban *Interfaith E-Bulletin* was published by CMC on 30 September: <https://bit.ly/3CUP5z7>. It went to the Columban database, to schools and to local councils in NSW, to a total of 17,799 recipients. On the first day, 3,446 had opened it. After two weeks, that number had climbed to 4,843 or 27.2% opened, which in social media terms is very high. Congratulations and thanks to Maha for pushing us to embrace a new and wider audience for the interfaith message and the work of the Centre. We plan to have 3 e-bulletins in the coming year(s).



## 2021 Abraham Conference by Kim Chong

On 10 October, the Centre co-hosted the 2021 Abraham Conference, 'Women Leaders in the Abrahamic Traditions: Role Models for Our Time', on Zoom. The Conference highlighted the contribution and difference women leaders in the Abrahamic traditions made in their time to inspire our time. The Conference featured a speaker from each of the Abrahamic faiths. Jacquie Seemann Charak shared the millennia-old stories of two women from Jewish texts, Deborah and Beruriah. Associate Professor Michele Connolly rsj spoke of two lay women and one group of women from the 21st century who inspire her as they live their Catholic faith. Yamamah Agha spoke of Khadija, the wife of Prophet Muhammed and "the first woman of Islam". The MC was Jane Jeffes, producer and director of a range of documentaries, and former executive producer of *The Religion and Ethics Report* on ABC Radio. View the 2021 Abraham Conference at <https://bit.ly/3pZ6ROu>.



## Parliament of the World's Religions by Patrick McInerney

On 18 October, Kim Chong, Ryan Epondulan and Patrick McInerney presented *The Sydney Statement* online to the Parliament of the World's Religions. This is the world's oldest and largest interfaith event. There were more than 4,000 registrants, 557 sessions and 5 plenaries over 5 days. There were many simultaneous, competing events which spread the audience very thin. To be honest, we had only 2 attendees for our live presentation! But the video is available to registrants for 30 days, so we hope more will check it out. With a well-prepared script in 3 voices, video clips and PowerPoint, we did a very professional presentation (which we can adapt for other presentations and occasions). We made the point that despite its name, *The Sydney Statement* is not just for Sydney, but is relevant to multireligious towns and cities around the world.



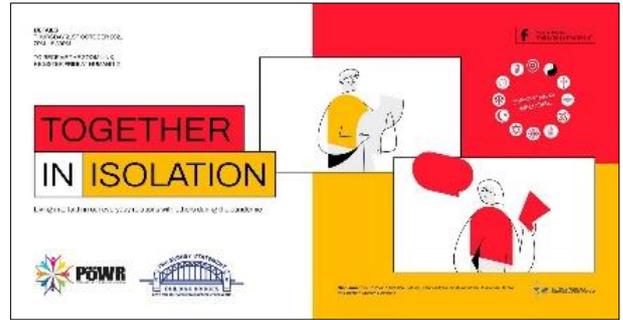
## From one Parliament to another! by Ryan Epondulan

On Tuesday, 19 October, Shadow Minister for Multiculturalism, Stephen Kamper MP presented a Private Member's Community Recognition Statement, recognising the outstanding interfaith work of Youth PoWR. Presented in the Legislative Assembly of NSW Parliament, Kamper's statement recognised the collaboration of young adults from different religious traditions across Sydney in helping to generate *The Sydney Statement*. Kamper highlighted the importance of the statement as a "guiding beacon for building and maintaining a harmonious society" and encouraged his fellow parliamentary members to read the Statement. This endorsement from the Shadow Minister is a ringing endorsement of Youth PoWR and *The Sydney Statement*, a very substantial and one of the strongest official endorsements received. This recognition from the Shadow Minister follows the endorsement of former Opposition Leader and Shadow Minister for Multiculturalism, Jodi McKay, who spoke at our media launch event in March and assured Youth PoWR of her support for a great interfaith initiative. The Hansard report is available at <https://bit.ly/3CFGYyb>. If you haven't already, be sure to read, sign up and share *The Sydney Statement*, available on our website: [www.thesydneystatement.org.au/](http://www.thesydneystatement.org.au/)

**P.S.** On 15 October, we finally received official notice that the Stronger Together Grant for which we had applied on 26 May 2021 on behalf of Youth PoWR for promoting *The Sydney Statement*, had been refused. This was very disappointing. 😞 It is the first time since 2015 we have been refused. It forces Youth PoWR to charge tickets to cover costs of events. In the past two years, the costs of hosting online events have been minimal. We are considering how to consolidate Youth PoWR for the long term, both financially and organisationally. Sam has some big challenges ahead of her! [Patrick McInerney]

## Youth PoWR: Together in Isolation by Ryan Epondulan

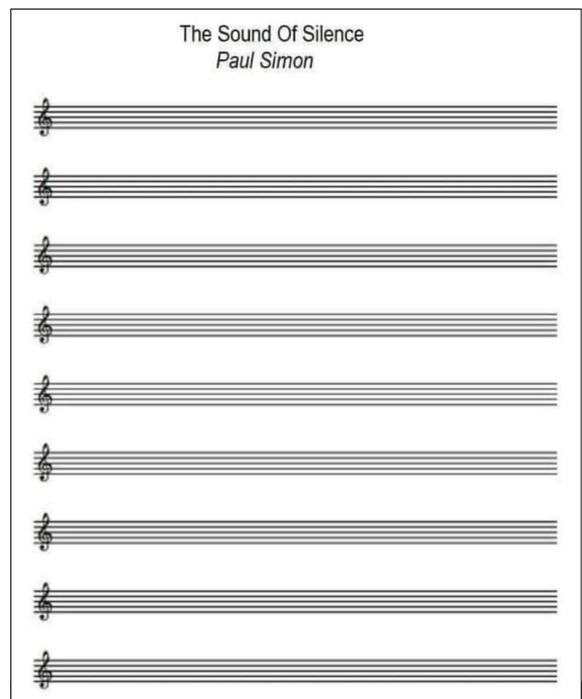
On Thursday 21 October, Youth PoWR held its first event since the media launch of *The Sydney Statement* in March this year. Themed as “Together in Isolation”, the event looked at our experiences of the pandemic and how restrictions physically isolated us from each other. With 50 participants, the event featured frontline workers from the Baha’i, Buddhist and Christian faith traditions who work for local health and community organisations. Participants participated in a small breakout room session where they shared their experiences of the pandemic and created their own concrete actions relating to the commitments of the dialogue of life in *The Sydney Statement*. Our next event is on Thursday 18, November at 7pm (AEDT) via Zoom. Register now for FREE via Humanitix: <https://events.humanitix.com/youthpowr-togetherinaction>



## Conclusion

As COVID restrictions ease, may you keep safe and well. 😊

*Patrick McInerney*



**Hired a handy man and gave him a list. When I got home, only #1, 3, & 5 were done. Turns out, he only does odd jobs!**