

JCMA Board Members 2019-2020

Rev Ian Smith – President



Rev Ian Smith is an ordained Churches of Christ minister, is married to Karen and has 3 adult children. He has spent the last 30 years working in multicultural and interfaith settings throughout the northern suburbs of Melbourne as a local Christian minister.

Ian is the inaugural chair of the Northern Intercultural and Interfaith Network that is working across 5 municipalities in the Northern Region of Melbourne. Currently Ian is then Executive Officer of the Victorian Council of Churches.

Ramzi Elsayed – Vice-President & Treasurer



Ramzi Elsayed has held a variety of honorarium positions including president, vice president and treasurer on the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) for nearly 10 years. The ICV is the peak representative body for the nearly 200,000 Victorian Muslim Community with 63 member organisations.

He has extensive experience working with young people having been a member of Young Muslims of Australia for more than 15 years. He is an accredited Muslim hospital and prison chaplain. Ramzi is a certified practising accountant (CPA) and a self-employed businessman. He has been married for 29 years and has 3 children and 3 grandchildren.

Lorraine Lipson – Secretary



Lorraine Lipson has a professional background in social work, librarianship and information management (BA; BSW; Dip. Librarianship and Information Management – University of Melbourne) and is semi-retired. In 2015 she gained a Grad Certificate in Theology, YTU University of Divinity.

She brings extensive work experience in case management, coordination of education, library and information services. Currently she is working part-time for the Office of the Public Advocate providing advice to a diverse range of professionals and members of the community in the health, aged care, mental health and disability sectors. In recent years she has volunteered as an English tutor with the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Program. As a long standing member of the international Focolare Movement, Lorraine has been actively involved in the interfaith field in Melbourne over many years, having previously worked as a volunteer for JCMA, as a member of the Executive Committee of Religions for Peace and the Catholic Interfaith Committee, Melbourne.

Elissa Roper – VCC Liaison Officer



Elissa Roper is a doctoral candidate researching contemporary Catholic ecclesiology with a focus on synodality. She is a member of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission and has served on the Victorian Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission for six years.

Elissa's skills from her previous career in communications network engineering are used in her role as Program Co-ordinator for the Sisters of Mercy in their Program of Theology for women in Papua New Guinea. Elissa and her husband Philip have four young children.

Frances Prince, JCCV Liaison Officer

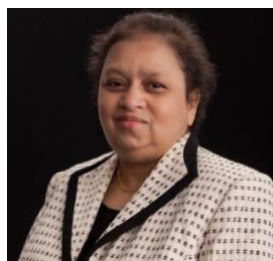


Frances Prince was born in Melbourne. She has been an educator at Mt Scopus College for over 25 years. In her current role she is Coordinator of Teacher Development, responsible for creating a culture of continuous reflection and improvement in teaching practice throughout the Secondary School.

For twelve years Frances was Coordinator of the Outreach (Interfaith) program at Mt Scopus. Together with Rabbi Ralph Genende, she organised the first encounter in Melbourne between Jewish and Moslem secondary school students. She also initiated the school's involvement in the Building Bridges Interfaith Dialogue program. Frances is Educational Facilitator at B'nai Brith Anti-Defamation Commission's annual Multi Faith Future Leaders Program (for people aged in their 20's).

She writes and leads the National Council of Jewish Women's annual interfaith Model Passover Seder for women and girls. She was a writer and educational consultant for Garratt Publishing's "The Third Space" project, a series of interfaith novellas and educational guides for Australian Middle School students. She was also founding Board Member and Education Officer for March of the Living, Australia- an educational journey to Poland and Israel for Australian Jewish Year 11 students. She is married to Steven Kolt, and they have two adult sons

Sithy Marikar – ICV Liaison Officer



Sithy Marikar arrived with her late husband and two daughters to Australia in August 1988, from Sri Lanka. To help members of the Sri Lankan community integrate and also understand Australian politics and the Australian way of life, Sithy together with a few others formed an association, Sri Lankan in Australian Affairs for which she was the inaugural Vice President. She later became an inaugural committee member of USMAA, United Sri Lankan Muslim Association of Australia.

Employed by Australia Post in 1989 as a Postal Services Officer Sithy, became an active union member and in July 2003 was elected as a union organiser for the Communication Workers Union – Victorian branch. Sithy was the first Muslim female to be elected as a union organiser in July 2007 I was elected as Vice President (Affirmative Action) of the Communications Workers Union of Australia.

Currently Sithy works as an Electoral Office (p/t) for Federal Member for Bruce and as a volunteer for the South East Community Links and is serving in a number of executive positions; Committee member of the Monash Council Interfaith Gathering & Monash Multicultural Advisory Committee, Committee member of the ICV Interfaith Group, Trustee – United Sri Lankan Association of Australia (USMAA), Vice President – Australian Advocacy for Good Governance in Sri Lanka (AAGSL).

Jim Cyngler OAM



Jim Cyngler has been a practicing mediator since 1992. He is a senior trainer for the Institute of Arbitrators and Mediators Australia and is a Principal Instructor under the Australian National Mediator Standards. Jim has been a practicing lawyer since 1976 and a member of the Victorian Bar since 1979. He is a builder and property developer and has a familiarity and background in business. He was as President for 11 years instrumental in developing one of Australia's fastest growing Independent Schools. He serves on a number of not for profit boards. Specialties: Conflict Management Consultant and Skills Trainer, Commercial Negotiator, Facilitator, Mediator and Arbitrator, Barrister specialising in dispute resolution and conflict management, Commercial dispute resolution, Commercial property and construction law, Small business, Registered builder. In 2009 Jim was awarded an OAM for services to the community.

Ayesha Bux



Ayesha Bux is a fifth generation Australian of Pakistani heritage. She gained a valuable insight into the traditions and practices of the Abrahamic faiths during her Catholic schooling. This inspired ongoing support of interfaith initiatives. She has a Masters in Computer Science from RMIT University and has taught at various universities.

Ayesha was on the board of SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneurs Council and is currently the Honorary Investment Consul for Pakistan in Melbourne. She has presented globally at various conferences and events including CHOGM Perth, WexNet and Education without Borders. She is an avid supporter and volunteer for various causes including women empowerment, inter-faith harmony and linkages, empowerment of the high needs or marginalised groups of the community.

Harold Zwier



Harold Zwier has had a longstanding interest in civil debate, constructive dialogue and social justice. Although he works in the computer industry as a software engineer, his real interests are in ideas, politics, the Jewish community and writing.

Harold has been a member of the JCMA since 2012 and participated in a number of the winter conferences since then. For many years Harold was a delegate to the Jewish Community Council of Victoria for the Australian Jewish Democratic Society. Harold has participated in and initiated a number of debates within the Jewish community ranging from the Wik legislation and Aboriginal land rights, human rights issues, anti-terrorism legislation, acceptance of gay groups, the Israeli Palestinian conflict, and civil debate.

In recent times Harold has been on the Leadership Group of Befriend a Child in Detention, which has been regularly sending books, games, toys and writing material to refugee children in Nauru. Harold is a member of a small modern orthodox Synagogue, is married to Railea Abrams and has two adult sons.

Rev Dr Julie Hall



Rev Dr Julie Hall is Minister at Bentleigh Uniting Church. She has an extensive social work background with experience working with women, children and families in counselling, health, parenting education and welfare settings. Julie's PhD thesis concerned families' experiences in accessing health care for their children. She also holds a Master of Social Work, specialising in infant and parent mental health, a Post Graduate Diploma in Family Therapy and a certificate in Parent Education Leadership Training.

Julie was the inaugural recipient of the Madeline Crump Award presented by the AASW for outstanding fieldwork teaching in social work. Julie holds a Master of Divinity, trained in interfaith ministry, is an advisor to the Interfaith Centre of Melbourne, chairs the Uniting Church VicTas Synod Working Group on Christian-Jewish Relations and is a committee member of the Progressive Christian Network of Victoria.

Fahim Farooq



Fahim Farooq is an aircraft engineer by profession and an Australian citizen living in Australia since 2006 with his four children.

Fahim is a committed volunteer working for a number of community and wider Australian communities including the VCC Emergency ministry, Ararat Islamic welfare Association, PGCC Doveton, Nurul Huda Academy Dandenong, Urdu Language Society of Australia, Halal food bank Chaplain in Monash health and member of the South Regional Advisory council Victoria.

Jenny Better



Jenny Better was born in the UK and emigrated to Australia in the 1960s when she was a child. Her adult work life has been dedicated to teaching; in the classroom at Our Lady of Mercy College and more recently as the Senior education Coordinator at the Jewish Museum of Australia where she manages the Schools education program including the educational method and content and the large team of volunteers that deliver the programs to students of all different faith backgrounds.

It is in this role that she has organised and coordinated many harmony days programs and it was because of this work in 2009 that she was awarded a Victorian Multicultural Award for educational excellence. More recently she has managed a program called Museums Together where the Islamic Museum of Australia and the Jewish Museum of Australia collaborated to upskill the year 6 students from an Islamic school and a Jewish School enabling the students to take their cohort from a different faith group around their Museums. Jenny is married to Nathan Better and they are the proud parents of 4 adult children.