

Australia-Indonesia Interfaith Dialogue

Thursday 1st December 2022



Centre for Indonesian Law,
Islam and Society



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



KEMENTERIAN LUAR NEGERI
REPUBLIK INDONESIA



REPORT

Background:

The Australia Indonesia Interfaith Dialogue was established under the auspices of Indonesian President Joko Widodo and former Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison to promote mutual understanding, foster respect, and achieve peace-building goals. Following the first successful interfaith dialogue in 2019, the Australia and Indonesian Governments highlighted continued support for the Dialogues in their Plan of Action for the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2020-2024).

Dialogue Themes:

The 2022 Dialogue was centred around three agreed and pressing issues, focusing on the ways different faith communities in each country:

1. Interact with youth and social media.
2. Approach climate change and other environmental issues.
3. Face the challenges of the COVID19 pandemic.

2022 Dialogue Overview:

- Program planned jointly with regular communication between the Indonesian and Australian co-chairs
- Presentations and contributions from 19 expert speakers and chairs from at least 6 faith groups
- 32 Australian and Indonesian interlocutors with significant expertise in the themes actively participated with lively questions and information exchange in the chat
- Total of 79 participants including observers
- Dialogue recorded and permission gained for distribution to wider audience
- Simultaneous interpretation provided by expert team
- Support for deeper engagement and continuing sharing of experiences, research findings, new models and emerging challenges and opportunities, particularly face to face
- Summative messages from the Co-Chairs, Professor Tim Lindsey and Professor Jamhari Makrut

The Dialogue Opening Session:

Co-chairs Professor Tim Lindsey, University of Melbourne, **and Professor Jamhari Makruf**, Indonesian International Islamic University, welcomed speakers and interlocutors to the Australia - Indonesia Interfaith dialogue and thanked all participants for making time in busy schedules.

Their welcome included:

- Acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land from which participants speak today and paying respects to their Elders past and present. In particular, extending that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples joining us.
- Advising participants that simultaneous translation from English to Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Indonesia to English was available.
- Noting that this Interfaith Dialogue was established under the auspices of Indonesian President Joko Widodo and former Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison to promote mutual understanding, foster respect, and achieve peace-building goals. Following the first successful interfaith dialogue in 2019, the Australia and Indonesian Governments highlighted continued support for the Dialogues in their Plan of Action for the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership from 2020 to 2024. This Dialogue had been convened on behalf of the two governments by the Indonesian International Islamic University, and by Asialink and the Centre for Indonesian Law, Islam and Society, both at the University of Melbourne.
- Recognising that Indonesia and Australia are very different societies, but they do have in common great diversity. Both are places where many different religions are followed. Moreover, people of faith in both countries face many similar challenges.
- Introducing representatives of the Indonesian government Dr Teuku Faizayah, Director General for Information and Public Diplomacy in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia to speak on behalf of the Indonesian government; and Mr Ridwaan Jadwat, First Assistant Secretary, of the Southeast Asia First Assistant Secretary, of the Southeast Asia Maritime, and Australia's Special Envoy to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation,

Dr Faizasyah noted the great diversity of Indonesia and the need to continue with such Dialogues amid global multi-crises. Indonesia has 34 interfaith dialogues with country partners and was pleased to host R20, the first G20 inter-religious forum, initiated under Indonesia's G20 presidency.

Mr Jadwat also stressed the diversity of Australia, the enormous changes in our world and the great opportunity to learn from each other. Australia is a secular society, however, 40% identify as Christian and Islam is now the 2nd largest faith group. People of all faiths are now being seen not as the other, but of this land.

The Panels

1: Faith and The Environment

Co-Chairs: Professor Tim Lindsey of the University of Melbourne and Professor Jamhari Makruf, Indonesian International Islamic University.

Indonesian panellists:

Reza Wattimena, Ph.D is a researcher in Political Philosophy, Philosophy of Science, and Eastern Wisdom. Alumni of the Driyarkara College of Philosophy in Jakarta. He has taught at various universities, including Atma Jaya Catholic University Jakarta, Airlangga University, Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya, President University, University of Indonesia Postgraduate Program, and Multimedia Nusantara University. spoke on behalf of the Buddhist community in Indonesia

Prof. Dr. I Gde Pitana, M.Sc, (Ida Pandita Mpu Brahmananda) is a Professor of Tourism at Udayana University, Denpasar, Bali. He has served in many important positions at the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Industry. In 2019, Professor Pitana became more involved with Hinduism in Bali.

Australian panellists:

Rabbi Jonathan Keren-Black was instrumental in establishing the Jewish Christian Muslim Association of Australia and received the “Premier’s Award for Community Harmony’. In 2010, he was instrumental in establishing GreenFaith Australia, now a part of the ARRCC, the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change, bringing his environmental and interfaith passions together.

Dr Virginia Marshall is the Inaugural Indigenous Postdoctoral Fellow with the Australian National University’s School of Regulation and Global Governance and the Fenner School of Environment and Society. Dr Marshall a practising lawyer and was recently appointed to The Australian Government’s Climate Change Authority (CCA)Dr Marshall represented Indigenous Australian faiths at the Dialogue.

Summary: Environment and Faith

The notion that we are part of the world, not apart from it was a common, shared perception among the faiths. That humanity, as part of the natural world, has a sacred responsibility to tend the earth seems to be an idea that all of the faiths represented could trace back to their most ancient traditions.

The panel revealed a range of different approaches to the environmental crisis facing the globe, many of them designed specifically to suit the specific conditions of a local community, but also wider multilateral attempts to negotiate a coordinated and equitable response to climate change, even as it is unfolding.

2: Faith and The Pandemic

Co-Chairs: Dr Nina Nurmila, Indonesian International Islamic University, and Ms Julia Fraser, Asialink, University of Melbourne

Indonesian panellists

Rev Dr Izak Y. M. Lattu, is a lecturer at Satya Wacana Christian University (SWCU), Theology Faculty, Salatiga. Dr Izak earned his Ph.D. from the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley. He was a Fulbright scholar and an Indonesian Research Fellow at Harvard. He also studied at the Centre for Religious & Cross-cultural Studies, Universitas Gadjah Mada. Dr Izak's research includes the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and interreligious sacred space in hospitals in late 2023.

Js. Kristan, M.Ag is a lecturer on Character Building at Bina Nusantara University (BINUS), lecturer on Confucianism and Chinese Philosophy at Universitas Negeri Jakarta and STIE Kesatuan Bogor. He holds a Master's degree in Comparative Religion from the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University. Kris is also a master in Qigong and Jingzuo, Confucian Ru Meditation.

Australian panellists

Dr Joyce Man is a clinical psychologist and Learning and Development Manager with ORS Group where she provides training and supervision to psychologists in the disability field. She is a co-founding committee member and current president of Australian Association of Buddhist Counsellors and Psychotherapists.

Dr Ruth Powell is Director of NCLS Research, a research centre that focuses on spirituality, religion and wellbeing. Ruth has worked with NCLS Research since 1991 and became Director in 2007. Her role involves managing research projects on religion, church and community life including exploring differences between age cohorts, and potential generational influences over time. She also holds a position as Associate Professor and Research Fellow, Charles Sturt University

Summary: Faith and the Pandemic

The panel shared different and, at times, very personal experiences of the damaging impact of Covid-19 in different societies, including for women in particular. The speakers also emphasised the role of faith in supporting healing. They included insights into how illness and adversity can deepen religious encounters, revealing the value of faith in a time of crisis.

The speakers shared the idea that we are all connected to one another and have not just individual responsibility but also collective responsibility to care for one another. In addition, they agreed there was plenty of evidence of the resilience of faith communities in adapting to the isolation and suffering created by the pandemic - some even reported better spiritual health.

Session 3: Faith and Youth and Social Media

Chairs: Professor Abdullah Saeed, The University of Melbourne and Dr Tati Wardi, Indonesian International Islamic University

Australian panellists:

Peter Gould leads a strategic design consulting firm based in Sydney, Dubai, Jakarta & Beirut. Over the past 20 years his engagements have included Apple, Google, United Nations, Greenpeace and a diverse portfolio of clients from senior government projects to Web3 startups. In 2020, Peter was appointed as a UNHCR Ambassador in recognition of his efforts supporting refugees.

Shekhar Diptiman is the Secretary of Sankat Mochan Samiti, a Melbourne based not for profit organisation providing physical, moral, and spiritual support to the Hindu community. Shekhar has supported the organisation's growth through the introduction and development of its online presence. An engineering graduate in Computer Science with over 25 years' experience, Shekhar creates and manages IT solutions for corporations and Not for Profit organisations. Currently he is a practice lead for an IT consulting and software development business

Indonesian panellists:

Dr Y. Sari Murti Widiyastuti is a Dean of the Faculty of Law at Universitas Atma Jaya, Yogyakarta. Dr Widiyastuti has served as a Head of the Forum for Handling Victims of Violence for Women and Children, and a member of the Development Coordination Team with a Gender Perspective. She has also been involved in the Counter Woman Trafficking Center founded by Ikatan Biarawati Indonesia.

Dr Ismail Fahmi is an information scientist, founder of Media Kernels Indonesia & creator of the Drone Emprit application system. Drone Emprit presents social media analysis maps, for example, showing where the source of the hoax spread, who was the first 'buzzer' and which group it belongs to. In the current post- truth and rapid flow information era, Emprit Drone has become valued by government and the private sector. Ismail received his PhD from the University of Groningen after studying telecommunication engineering at Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB).

Summary: Faith and Youth and Social Media

Panellists emphasised the growing central importance for youth of faith-based social media influencers, across a huge range of sub-cultures in both countries – including even Muslim gamers. They all agreed that the Internet has become enormously influential as source of faith education and guidance. As one speaker said, faith, youth and social media are three words that may well determine what our collective future will be.

Questions arose about the double-edged sword of social media, including the use of hate speech to incite inter-religious tensions, and the problems that arise from the anonymity the internet offers, and the echo chamber effect. There was also discussion about how interfaith harmony and tolerance can be maintained in our new digital world, and how faith communities – now increasingly populated by digital natives – can rethink the ways they communicate and work together to defend the meaning and nuances of their traditions in the face of distortion and manipulation.

Dialogue Concluding Remarks

Co-chairs Professor Tim Lindsey and **Professor Jamhari Makruf** drew the 2022 Australia-Indonesia Interfaith Dialogue's lively discussion to a close with the following remarks

- There are powerful lessons to be drawn from today's discussions about how people of faith can help wider communities in our two countries address the common challenges we all face, and perhaps even contribute to policy formation.
- We are sorry we ran out of time. There is certainly a great deal to reflect on and we hope there will be the opportunity next year to reconvene, face to face, in Australia as Ridwaan Jadwat foreshadowed, for a more extended dialogue and person to person discussions, building on the discussions today.
- Thank you once again to all who have made this year's virtual Dialogue such a success. Thanks are due, first to the governments of Indonesia and Australia for supporting this event, and in particular Tom Coghlan and Ashton Papazahariakis. We hope there will be the opportunity next year to reconvene, face to face, in Australia for a more extended dialogue, building on the discussions today.
- We want to thank of course all our speakers, interlocutors and the chairs, Dr Nina Nurmila, Julia Fraser, Professor Abdullah Saeed and Dr Tati Wardi.
- Thanks go also to the audience and interlocutors, for their valuable questions, and to Jenny McGregor of Asialink who played a central role in making today possible.
- I would also like to thank Kathryn Taylor, Manager of the Centre for Indonesian Law, Islam and Society for her invisible but hard work behind the scenes keeping the IT working. And special thanks as well to Mia Hapsari and Zamira Loebis for their fantastic simultaneous interpretation, which is so important to an event like this.