

A PROPOSAL:

Symposium concept of level playing field and interorganisational dialogue.

October 2023

A key element of a symposium is a focus on mutual dialogue rather than depending on prominent key speakers. The other key is to choose a theme that has equal interest to people of all worldviews, as well as being crucial in contemporary Australia.

A theme we have begun to consider is around “the level playing field” and “interorganisational conversation”. This theme grapples with the transition in Australia from its strongly Christian heritage towards an open society that affirms the dignity of difference and where there is no preferencing of any one faith or of faith communities over against secular ones.

This transition is of crucial interest to secular groups that have been disadvantaged by State policies preferencing religion. It has also been a significant factor in the emergence of legal recognition for those in the Queer community, for those advocating Voluntary Assisted Dying, and for those concerned about prayers imposed in civic meetings.

In a different way, the transition is also crucial to faith groups who cannot establish and speak with authentic voice while benefitting from any preferencing. Such a symposium is an opportunity for faith and secular adherents to be more attentive to the nuances of each other’s understandings in order to move beyond inherited prejudice.

An early task will be to identify a wide range of interested groups, including secular and faith communities, as well as civil society groups advocating for issues of justice, and some organisations in the field of social services.

Such a symposium might be planned for early 2025 but organization and promotion could be well advanced.

We believe now is the moment to do something extraordinary, and for all of us to maintain the momentum of our life’s work engaging the Other in conversation.