

Dialogue Diaspora

Principles, Method and Process

Key Principles of Dialogue

- No culture, religious group, nation or ethnic community has a monopoly on truth or wisdom
- All of the world's major ethical traditions share a deep commitment to:
 - Dignity of human life
 - Personal fulfilment
 - Standards of *rightness* in human conduct
- But there are also important differences ~ each community has:
 - Its distinctive ethos & symbolism
 - Its own customs
 - Its own norms
 - Its own understanding of personal & social relationships
 - Its unique contribution to the human dialogue
- Difference is no cause for alarm – diversity is vital for growth.

Method of Dialogue

- The key to dialogue is not merely to recognise and value difference, but to *engage the other in a common search for truth and understanding.*
- To engage in dialogue is *to enter into respectful communication with the other*
- In dialogue, we *speak*, but just as importantly we *listen*
- In dialogue, participants:
 - Hold up their own community and its policies and practices up to critical examination
 - Seek to rediscover the basic wisdom and humanity that are at the core of their community's philosophy and tradition
- Dialogue nurtures and is nurtured by:
 - Empathy
 - Compassion
 - A willingness to share each other's pain and suffering

Process

- Participants will take part in their personal capacity, and NOT as representatives of any organisation. They will, of course, be perfectly free, indeed encouraged, to voice the views of the organisations and networks with which they are associated.
- The dialogue itself will be conducted under the auspices of the Centre for Dialogue at La Trobe University.
- The Centre for Dialogue will proceed by consensus wherever possible, but it is ultimately responsible for determining who will participate, and for setting the ground rules for participation, that is for the actual conduct of the dialogue.
- The Dialogue will be conducted over a period of 30 hours spread over a number of months.
- Those who agree to participate are asked to give a firm undertaking that they will participate for the full 30 hours of dialogue, regardless of whether or not they think the dialogue is progressing to their satisfaction.
- The Dialogue has two important and closely connected aims:
 1. To see whether participants representing different ethnic and religious communities resident in Australia can identify:
 - Issues of common interest;
 - Mechanisms for more effective communication and interaction;
 - Possible areas of practical and effective cooperation (one or more joint activities or projects).
 2. To see whether it is possible to reach:
 - Some common understanding of the nature of the conflicts in question;
 - A measure of agreement on the principles that should guide efforts to create conditions for a just and peaceful long-term future.

Some participants may wish to give more emphasis to objective 1, others more emphasis to objective 2, and others still equal emphasis to each objective.

Organisation

- The dialogue will involve a mix of methods, including:
 - Discussions involving the whole group.
 - Discussions in small groups.
 - Role play (if the conditions are right).
 - Short interventions by Centre for Dialogue staff.
 - Regular input by a facilitating group of about 6 people.
 - Participants will be asked to form a facilitating group to be convened by one staff member of the Centre for Dialogue.
 - Adjournments for informal discussion.
 - Periodic review and evaluation.
- As a rule of thumb, the progression will be from analysis of the problems to the discussion of possible ways forward, or at least principles that may facilitate the way forward. It will focus on ideas as well as on practical initiatives.
- The Dialogue will have the option of concluding with a written statement summarising the issues discussed and any conclusion reached (including areas of agreement and significant points of difference).