

Media Release: 23 October 2018

## Does religion unite us or divide us?

### Delegates to cast their vote at Conference in Sydney

With religious freedom a hot-button topic in Australia's social and political agenda, delegates at the International Metropolis Conference, Sydney, will cast their vote in a moderated debate on whether the religious affiliations of migrants create bridges or barriers to belonging.

Metropolis 2018 – to be held at ICC Sydney, 29 October to 2 November 2018 – is the only platform to bring together international, national and local migration experts and practitioners to highlight the latest research, challenges, insights and successes in migration, diversity and integration.

Issues around religion loom large in discussions of migrants and integration in contemporary Australia and, indeed, across the world. Public discourse around migrants and religion commonly focus on perceived differences and barriers to pluralism.

While religious affiliation can provide bonds and bridges that increase a migrant's sense of belonging, the Pew Research Center Australia reports to have seen a continued rise in social hostilities involving religion.

The vote on the topic "Religion divides us more than it unites us" will follow a robust debate including leading thinkers **Jawad Syed (Lahore University, Pakistan)**, **Peggy Levitt (Wellesley College, USA)**, **Farida Fozdar (The University of Western Australia)** and **Sunil Badami (author, Australia)**. **Dr Simon Longstaff (Executive Director of The Ethics Centre, Australia)** will moderate the debate.

Conference Chair, current Telstra Australian Business Women of the Year and CEO of Settlement Services International, **Violet Roumeliotis**, said the debate will be an engaging way to wrestle with a hard issue.

"This debate will bring together both sides of the argument in a professional and entertaining way.

"Delegates will experience a kind of discourse we don't often get to see in the media and politics. This is about ideas, about people and how we live together.

"I'm anticipating this debate will be one of the highlights of the Metropolis Conference, and a session not to be missed", said Ms Roumeliotis.

The Debate: Religion divides us more than it unites us, will be held on Friday 2 November 2018 at the International Metropolis Conference, Sydney.

More information: [www.metropolis2018.org.au](http://www.metropolis2018.org.au)



International  
Metropolis Conference  
29 October–2 November 2018  
Sydney • Australia

**-ends-**

## Notes to Editors

**Limited Media Passes are available** for relevant and interested parties and are subject to approval. If you would like to apply for a media pass, please contact Marlise Beasley on [marlise@zadroagency.com.au](mailto:marlise@zadroagency.com.au)

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**Images and logos** can be downloaded from [here](#).

## About the Event

The International Metropolis Conference will be held at ICC Sydney | 29 October – 2 November 2018.

The world's brightest academic, government and community leaders and practitioners will gather for a week of learning, discussion and debate on migration, diversity and integration. Metropolis will be an intellectually challenging, culturally rewarding opportunity to network and explore the latest thinking and practices in migration policy, research and programs.

Metropolis 2018 – the only gathering of its kind that brings together leaders and experts to discuss migration, diversity and integration.

This year's event is hosted by a consortium, led by [Settlement Services International \(SSI\)](#), in partnership with [Australian Multicultural Foundation \(AMF\)](#) and [Multicultural NSW \(MNSW\)](#).

The Conference Chairs are:

- Violet Roumeliotis, CEO, Settlement Services International and Telstra Business Woman of the Year 2017.
- Dr Bulent (Hass) Dellal AO, CEO, Australian Multicultural Foundation
- Hakan Harman, CEO, Multicultural NSW



AUSTRALIAN  
multicultural  
foundation



Multicultural  
NSW



International  
Metropolis Conference  
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Sydney • Australia

The conference theme is *Global Migration in Turbulent Times*. It will focus on the following eight sub-themes:

1. Enterprise, Innovation and Employment – catalysts for social change?
2. Migration and Mobility – the dynamic shifts in the Asia-Pacific region
3. Displacement and asylum – new dimensions driving an old phenomenon
4. Visible and powerful – migrant voices in a connected world
5. Conflicting agendas? National, local, regional and global responses to the governance of migration
6. Religious diversity – a bridge or a barrier to belonging?
7. Migration and inequality – complex challenges under the microscope
8. Australia a multicultural paradise – myths and realities

To view the program: [www.metropolis2018.org.au/program/](http://www.metropolis2018.org.au/program/)

For all conference information [www.metropolis2018.org.au/](http://www.metropolis2018.org.au/)