

## WFWP Melbourne, Australia's Pasifika Festival And Charity Walk

Anne Bellavance  
December 3, 2022



Every year, families get together to experience Pasifika culture through dance performances, arts and crafts, food, vendors, kid-friendly activities, a DJ, and a live band at the Melbourne Pasifika Festival (MPF) and Charity Walk held on December 3, 2022.

The WFWP Global Development and Aid Projects in the Pacific Islands are supported financially through the Charity Walk, which is greatly needed. In order to give the larger community a glimpse into all things Pasifika, the MPF celebrates and promotes the beauty and uniqueness of each Pacific Island culture. This fosters conversation, reconciliation, and conflict resolution at all levels.



WFWP Australia unites with like-minded individuals who are committed to constructing a more harmonious and peaceful world by supporting and campaigning for the Pacific Island populations residing within Australia. The MPF Committee and its supporters strive to achieve

SDG 16: To promote just, peaceful, and inclusive societies

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goal as Global Partners assisting in the achievement of the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The Samoan community's Ava Ceremony, which marked the official opening of the festival, was a lovely event. Ceremonial Kava is distributed as part of a ritual that is conducted at the start of all Pasifika events and gatherings in order to foster harmony and respect among all participating groups. The ritual usually begins with greetings from religious dignitaries and elders, who are followed by the high chief of the community that is hosting the event.

The New Zealand Consul-General in Melbourne, Ms. Bella Katz, Maribyrnong City Council Mayor, Cr. Sarah Carter, UPF Victoria President John Bellavance, and Rugby Victoria President, Neil Hay were among the dignitaries present at the opening ceremony. Community representatives from Samoa, the Cook Islands, Niue, Fiji, PNG, and New Zealand Mori were among those present as well.

In her opening remarks, WFWP Australia President, Mrs. Anne Bellavance reminded everyone that our celebration today serves as a reminder that we are one Pasifika community and one human family. The

dignitaries then talked about their communities and themselves.



The Festival's children's activities were a major component. During the morning, primary- and secondary-aged children attended a junior and senior rugby clinic held by the Melbourne Rebels rugby club's team members and aspiring coaches. Children could release their energy in a massive adventure castle and face painting.

This year's celebration included vendors selling Pasifika food and goods from seven Pasifika Island heritages including Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, as well as Western Union, Australian Red Cross Lifeblood, Department of Justice, and Community Safety. Among the exhibits that attracted visitors were the Melbourne Rebels.

Through the Pasifika Scholarship fund, money raised through the registration of these kiosks will allow one young woman to enroll in a university for an entire year. WFP Australia sincerely appreciates the participation of all of our Pasifika businesses this year. A heartfelt thank you to the volunteers and committee of the Melbourne Pasifika Festival who worked countless hours. Everyone contributed to the festival's success.

The 14 cultural dance groups, which began with Zumba by Nadine just before the Opening Ceremony, were fantastic, highlighting each Pacific Island culture. The MT Fao Band gave a concert-like atmosphere. A great thank you to Marie Pewhairangi, who is of Mori origin, and Canada Mcarthy, who is of Samoan background, for serving as our Master of Ceremonies throughout the day.

