

WFWP Oceania: Melbourne Pasifika Festival And Charity Walk 2023

Anne Bellavance
December 2, 2023

The Melbourne Pasifika Festival (MPF) and Charity Walk is an annual celebration of Pasifika culture, giving families the opportunity to enjoy Pasifika culture through dance performances, art, crafts, food, merchandise, children's activities, DJ and a live band.



The Charity Walk and the Festival raises much-needed funds to support WFWP Global Development and Aid Projects located within the Pacific Islands.

The MPF promotes a culture of peace through fostering dialogue, reconciliation, and conflict resolution at all levels by celebrating and promoting the beauty and uniqueness of each Pacific Island culture to provide the wider community a window into all things Pasifika.





By supporting and advocating for the Pacific Island communities living within Australia, WFPW Australia connects with like-minded people who are dedicated to building a more harmonious and peaceful world. As Global Partners working to achieve the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the MPF Committee and supporters work towards:

- Goal 16: To promote just, peaceful, and inclusive societies, and
- Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goal.





This year's Opening Ceremony was conducted by the Fijian Community Association Victoria and led by Ratu Kitione Tuibua, Chief and President of the Queen Victoria School Old Boys Association in Victoria.

The Welcoming Ceremony, or Veiqaraqaravi Vakavanua in the Fijian language, was very dignified and is a beautiful way to officially start the festival. It is a solemn ritual performed at the beginning of all important Pasifika services and gatherings where ceremonial Kava is shared to promote unity and respect among all the groups participating. Typically led by the high chief of the hosting village, the ceremony begins with words of welcome from religious leaders and elders.



VIPS who participated during the Opening

Welcome Ceremony included:

- Anne Bellavance, WFWP International Vice-president representing Oceania and SE Asia - President, WFWP Australia - Co-Chair for the Melbourne Pasifika Festival Committee.



- Sylvia Coombe, VIC Multi-cultural Commissioner and President of the Fiji Community Association of Victoria.

- Neil Hay, President Rugby Victoria.

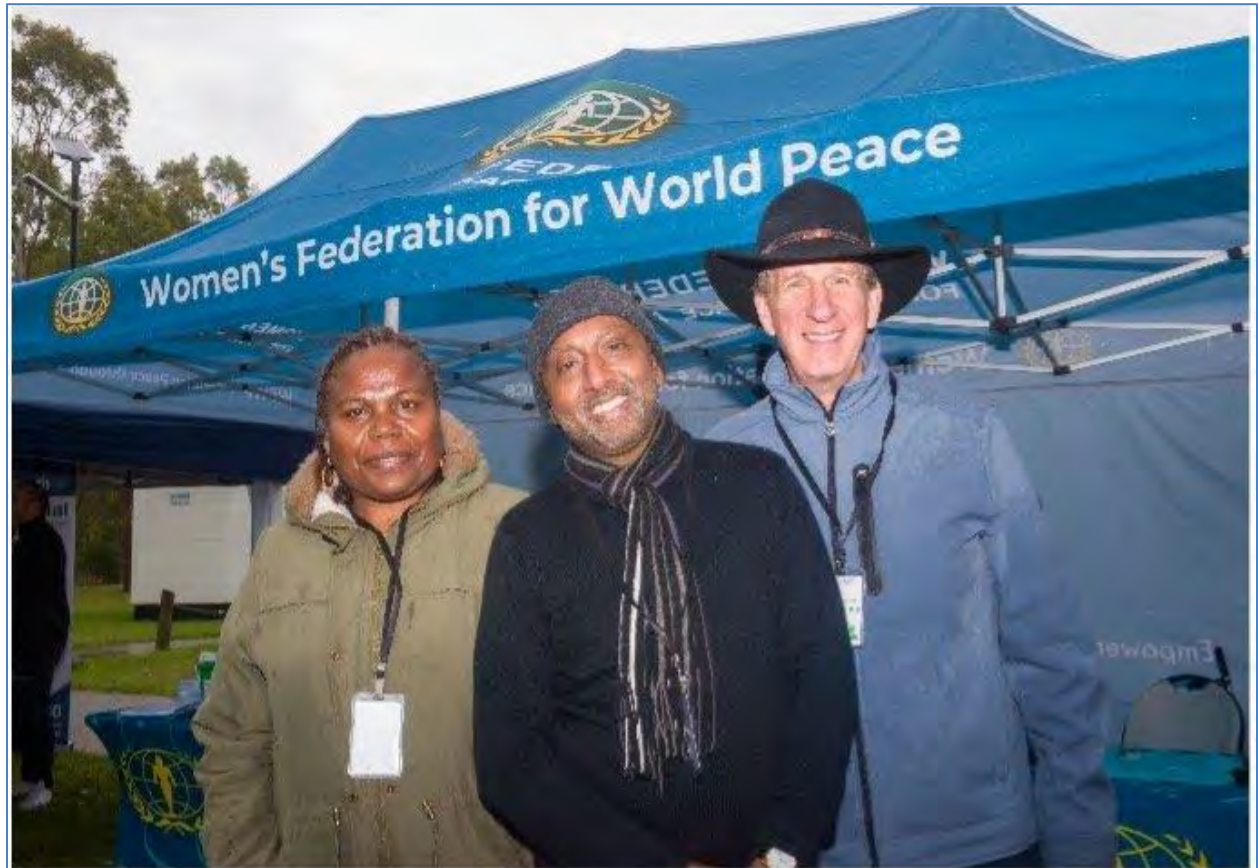
- Jacob Sigabalavu, Parliament of Victoria's Community Engagement team.



- Pulotu Canada Mearthy, President Samoa Community Advisory Council Victoria.



- Kylie Hatch, Secretary Pacific Connections.
- Veronica Kurufher, Secretary PNG Australia Association of Victoria.
- Roshelle, Secretary Australian Integrated Fijian Association Victoria.
- John Bellavance, President UPF Victoria.



Giving the Opening Address, Anne Bellavance thanked the Melbourne Pasifika Festival Committee and all the volunteers that make the festival hum so smoothly. She shared that this year's stall holder payments enabled one young woman to undertake one year of university in 2024. Anne briefly explained the Global Development and Aid project run by WFPW Australia and encouraged people to get involved through the philosophy from WFPW's co-founders, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, of "living for the sake of others" as a methodology to create peace within myself, my family, my community and in society. Each VIP then shared about their organization and themselves.



Children's Activities are a big part of the Festival. Despite the rain, the Melbourne Rebels Rugby Club coaches and team members conducted a morning junior and senior rugby clinic for primary aged and secondary aged children. Face painting brought magic.

The festival featured Pasifika food and merchandise stalls from 6 Pasifika Island Heritages. In alphabetical order: Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Samoa. A big thank you to all our Pasifika businesses who participated this year despite the rain!



Cultural Dance groups were phenomenal, showcasing each Pacific Island culture. Our PNG Momase group of Papua New Guinea Australia Association Victoria were so inspired after their performance that they continued to boogie to the DJ music, off stage in the rain.

A big thank you to our MCs throughout the day, Marie Pewhairangi from Māori heritage, and Canada Mearthy from Samoan heritage. This year, some of the ABCs Talent Development Lead, Asia Pacific Newsroom team participated during the Festival to gather stories. Johnson Raela and Hilda Wayne,

Presenters/Producers both shared the microphone as MCs.



Another big thank you goes to the Melbourne Pasifika Festival Committee members, and volunteers who put in many long hours. Together, we made the festival a fun day of dancing in the rain, despite the poor weather.



Reflections from participants:

"Great day celebrating the pacific culture with family and friends. Delicious food that reminds you of home and fantastic stalls."



"Great event, awesome to see diversity growing in Melbourne, beautiful atmosphere."

"Such a beautiful day out celebrating the Pacific, thank you so much we had so much fun!!"

"A great series of dance performances, choir and bands. Great vibe with the communities dancing. Good activities for the kids and food stalls."

"Fantastic event. Looking forward to a bigger and better one next year! Round of applause to the organizers and all those involved in moulding the event!!"

"Very well organized. Can't help bad weather. But spirits were high."

"Fun day and culturally enlightening."

[VIDEO LINK](#)





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