

Festival of light and joy: Diwali

Federation Square came alive as the Indian Community celebrated Diwali.

The Indian community celebrated Diwali at Federation Square on Saturday 21 October 2007 with a spectacular range of displays, Bollywood and traditional dancers, food stalls, costumes and fashion parade, dancing workshops and fireworks.

Event co-ordinator Mr Arun Sharma said the celebrations were enjoyed by 70,000 people and that Diwali represents a feeling of "unity in diversity", as the

nature and reason for the celebration varies across India.

"There is nothing in India more joyous than the annual Diwali "Festival of Lights" celebrating the triumph of good over evil, light over dark and knowledge over ignorance," said Mr Sharma.

One of the few festivals to be held across the whole of India and touching all 1.2 billion people, Diwali cuts across religions and is celebrated by Hindus, Jains, Sikhs and Buddhists. In many cities in the west, Diwali has become a major yearly event.

The origins of Diwali vary across India. For some, it is a celebration of

the triumph of Lord Ram, for others it focuses on Lord Shiva, Lord Krishna or the Goddess Lakshmi.

Sikhs celebrate it as the date for the laying of the foundation stone of the Golden Temple, while Jains believe it is the time when Lord Mahavira attained nirvana.

Whatever the reason for celebration, it is clear that it unites everybody in feelings of hope and goodwill.

"Diwali is really a reminder of the beauty of this world and all things in it – what a great message of hope and optimism this is for all our children," said Mr Sharma.

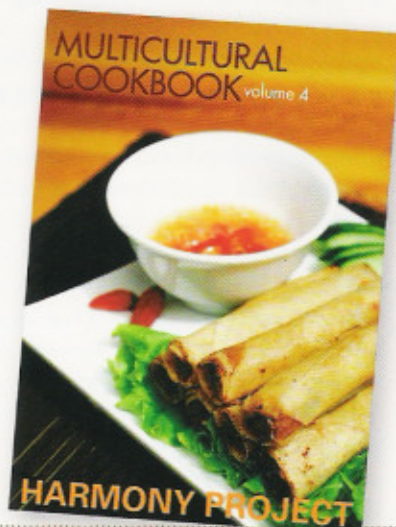
Cooking up culture

Celebrating cultural diversity through cooking is a recipe for success.

The Australian Vietnamese Community Action Network Inc (AVCAN) is a group of Vietnamese workers and those working with the Vietnamese community who meet regularly to share ideas and exchange information.

Last year, thanks to a Women Creating Harmony grant, the network undertook a variety of programs under the banner

of "Bridging Differences, Binding Similarities, Building Harmony", that aimed to promote social harmony and cultural diversity. The projects included the production of a multicultural cookbook, which was launched in November 2007, as well as workshops and a cultural day for women from the African, Greek and Vietnamese communities.



We have 100 copies of the cookbook to give away to community groups. Call the Victorian Multicultural Commission on (03) 9208 3184 for a copy.