

In 1922 the first Australians joined the Faith. They were Oswald Whitaker, a Sydney optometrist, and Effie Baker, a Melbourne photographer.

Soon Bahá'í groups sprang up around the country. By 1934 there were enough Bahá'ís to elect a national governing body, the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand.

A Bahá'í meeting in Melbourne in 1923

In 1955 Fred Murray of South Australia was among the first Aboriginal people to become a Bahá'í. 'Uncle' Fred belonged to the Minen tribe that roamed in the Western Australia coast.

The tribe was almost exterminated at a poisoned waterhole at the turn of the 19th century. A child of nine years, Fred was able to survive along with his brother eventually becoming the last survivor of the tribe. Many people of his race knew of the Bahá'í Faith through him. Fred often said of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh: "One people, one God, everybody one-that is good!"

Fred Murray (1884-1963)

The Faith's numbers surged in the early 1970s as young people found in the Bahá'í teachings answers to spiritual questions and solutions to global issues.

The Bahá'í House of Worship in Sydney was dedicated on 17 September 1961 and opened to the public after four years of construction. The initial design was approved in 1957 with seating for six hundred people. The building is a highly visible landmark from Sydney's northern beaches in a natural bushland setting overlooking the Pacific Ocean. It's surrounded by gardens containing a broad variety of native fauna and flora.

Bahá'í House of Worship in Sydney

The size and diversity of the community was boosted in the 1980s when Australia opened its doors to those fleeing the resurgence of persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran. Their subsequent settlement, integration and contribution to Australian life have been a major success story.

Since the beginning the Bahá'ís of Australia have become involved and spoken out on a number of civic issues - from world peace initiatives to conferences on socio-economic development, indigenous issues, human rights and the environment. The Faith has also gained a higher profile through its activities for peace, interfaith harmony and gender equality as well as the religious education it provides in many State schools in Australia. There are over 17 000 Bahá'ís throughout Australia.

Bahá'ís attach great importance to the spiritual and moral education of children.

In an October 2019 letter to the Bahá'ís of Australia the Prime Minister Scott Morrison wrote:

The values of love, acceptance and unity, as taught by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, are a source of understanding, compassion and purpose that enrich our community and help make our multicultural, multi-faith society one of the most harmonious on earth.

A Bahá'í Conference in Sydney

For more information about the history of the Bahá'í Faith in Australia please access:
<http://vimeo.com/11590457>

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— Centenary of the Bahá'í Faith in Australia (Used by permission of the curator)