

# Moving Lunch Conversation

Halal, Tofu and food for thought

Melinda Marshal

**I**t could have been any other Sunday at The Channon Hall. There was music, food, laughter, interesting conversation, and children outside playing in the sunshine.

But the recent Halal and Tofu

Moving Lunch Conversation was an event with a difference.

Peace group Remembering and Healing and the Northern Rivers Muslim Association organized the lunch to bring together our diverse community as

an antidote to the current political climate of division and despair.

Muslim speaker Abdul Aziz told the crowd the day was very much in tune with Muslim values of tolerance, peace and love.

In the tradition of the community pot-luck, everyone brought a dish to share. It was all delicious and somehow mixed well on the plate, whether Halal chicken stew, potato salad, or veggie slice.

Guests were obliged to shift a little out of their comfort zones for the "moving conversation" part of the day. MC Kath Fisher guided tables through a relaxed discussion about the value of multiculturalism and how to promote it more widely through the community. The catch was that you had to sit with someone you hadn't met before. The result was a lively, constructive discussion that circulated throughout the hall.

Those who took part came away with a little more hope in their hearts. Perhaps our culture of resentment and blame can be combated with the cultivation of gratitude. And perhaps racism, bigotry and fear can be overcome bit by bit with community efforts at connection, understanding, and friendship.

