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Hobart's MONA offers 'speed dating' fair for religions


 BY EDITH BEVIN
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Two members of the Tasmanian Pagan Alliance pitch their beliefs to punters at the fair. ABC

Pagans, potions and the paranormal have featured at a fair with a difference at Hobart's Museum of Old and New Art.

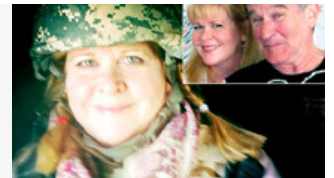
The celebrated museum known for its darker side has opened its

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doors this weekend to a festival of thought billed as the Australian Fair for Freedom of Belief and Religion.

Organisers, who believe it is the first time an event exploring belief and religion has been held in Australia, are describing it as "speed dating" for religions.

The fair is a trade show of religions, allowing visitors to ask questions and find out more about a range of beliefs all under one roof.

It features stalls manned by everyone from Anglicans to pagans putting their beliefs on display for potential converts.

Organisers say while traditionally some of these beliefs would not mix, there has been no tension between them.

Jess Steers from the Tasmanian Pagan Alliance said her group had an affinity with the island state.

"Tasmania being such a beautiful natural state with so much wilderness, it's very normal for people to love nature and care for the earth," she said.

"Tasmania's probably more pagan than it thinks."

The fair also lets people "try before they buy" with a number of lectures and workshops.

"We wouldn't expect anyone to convert on the spot because we really want people to think about this," Ms Steers said.

And for those not wanting to get too serious, the fair also features a laughing yoga workshop.

Exponent Jacob Miller said practising just 15 minutes a day had benefits.

"It's about just enjoying the chance to have a laugh and be joyful, but also getting all those benefits that come from laughter; so increased oxygen flow and all the endorphins that make you feel good."



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