

## **PORT PHILLIP/CAULFIELD LEADER**

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### **The healing hug**

**By Nicole Strahan**

People went with their infant children, with their elderly parents and others went alone. Some were dressed in traditional Indian attire, some in shorts and T-shirt, others in dresses or trousers.

But all of them went to the Moorabbin Town Hall last week to meet the woman revered as a saint in India – spiritual leader Mata Amritanadamayi, affectionately known as Ammachi.

Her seventh visit to Australia attracted hundreds to the town hall for meditation and the chance to receive 'Darshan', Ammachi's world renowned hugs believed to awaken spiritual awareness.

The hug blessing include the soft chanting in Hindi of 'my darling, my darling' by Ammachi.

Some ask for guidance or prayers for their ailments, others looks on in awe while some walk away visibly moved by their experience, with tears running down their cheeks.

In India, it is not unusual for Ammachi to hug 20,000 people in one day and it is estimated she has hugged more than 20 million people worldwide.

The center for Ammachi in Victoria, the North Caulfield M.A.Centre, organized Ammachi's visit to Moorabbin.

Centre director James Conquest said people came from all over the world to receive the 'Darshan' and from all faiths, including Jews, Christians and Buddhists.

"I think what she teaches or tries to ask people to listen to is just to find some balance in life," he said.

"She is not saying run away to a mountain and meditate for the rest of your life, she is saying live in the world and find some balance between it and the spiritual world. While it is steeped in the Hindu tradition, she has a universal approach."

However, Ammachi's work extends well beyond 'Darshan' to work with charitable institutions, which saw her nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize.

**(Courtesy of Leader Community Newspapers)**