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Hugs for true believers

by Annika Priest

In a time of terrorism, disease, national disasters and skepticism, it seems that all people want is a good old-fashioned hug from a modern-day fairy godmother.

More than 5000 people queued up this week to receive a cuddle from the "hugging saint" at the Passenger Terminal in Freemantle - a venue usually reserved for expos.

People of all ages and from all walks of life filled the terminal sitting with their tickets and waiting for their cuddle from the woman swathed in white at the front of the room.

Sri Mata Amritanandamayi, or Amma, is believed to have hugged and blessed more than 21 million people since she started in 1987. She travels around the world nine months of the year and will sometimes sit for more than 20 hours until she has hugged everyone in the room waiting to see her.

Amma is rumoured to have cured illnesses and leprosy.

"When she hugs, she in fact transmits part of her energy and helps to reawaken the love and motherhood within," an assistant said.

Amma left Perth yesterday, but will be back next year for more hugs.

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