




CHAPTER ELEVEN

PUBLIC RELATIONS 1978-1995

In the period from 1978 to 1995 the Board greatly increased its public relations activities, both in a reactive and a pro-active fashion. The annual report of 1983 claimed that 1982-83 'saw the Board truly become the "address" for New South Wales Jewry for both the Jewish and general community'.¹ The Board's office was a ready reference for information concerning all matters affecting the community and events in the Middle East, particularly Israel. As well as monitoring the media and reacting to antisemitism and anti-Israel activities, it sought to develop a positive image of the local community and Israel through a range of programs which included its speaker service, programs on ethnic radio, various briefings and sending journalists to Israel. The office further became even more professional, expanded its staff and by the 1990s it had become a most effective spokesman on behalf of all community interests.





In April 1978 the Public Relations Committee restated its brief in the following terms:

- To acquire and assess information in the Jewish and non-Jewish community relating to all matters Jewish and to the Middle East;
- To promote the interests of the Jewish community in New South Wales and the Jewish and general community; and
- To undertake such activities as may be necessary to promote these objects.²

The PRC needed to intensify its activities in all these areas because it felt that: 'there has been an acceleration of antisemitism, anti-Zionism and anti-Israel activities as time passes from the period of the Holocaust so that what was unprintable, perhaps even unthinkable a few years ago, is now openly espoused with little fear of recrimination or condemnation'.³

EXTREMIST ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

During the 1970s there was a decline in the number of racist and nationalist organisations operating in Australia, but in the 1980s these groups re-emerged because of the more unstable economy which led to higher unemployment and rural depression; Asian immigration following the end of the White Australia Policy during the Whitlam years, 1972 - 1975; and the impact of the debate on Nazi war criminals in Australia. While the central plank of the right-wing groups was opposition to Asian immigration, campaigners were often motivated by a more general racism in which Jews were singled out as 'corrupters' of Western society. Holocaust historian Dr David Bankier has argued that in most twentieth century societies there is a small number of people, never more than a tiny percentage, who are obsessed with the Jewish question and believe in the concept of a world Jewish conspiracy so that if



the 'Jewish problem' was solved there would be no unemployment, no inflation and no international conflict.⁴ This applies to the various extremist groups and individuals which operated from 1978 to 1995 in Australia. Their total membership fluctuated widely, but only numbered at the most in the hundreds. The extremist groups were very much on the fringes of Australian society, but it was felt that their activities could do damage to communal harmony and affect the climate of tolerance which existed in Australia, especially as a number of the groups became associated with violent activities.

Throughout this period, the Australian League of Rights continued to be the most influential, as well as the best organised and most substantially financed, racist organisation in Australia. Its annual budget of \$45,000 in 1979 was raised from supporters through public fundraising.⁵ In 1991 Human Rights Commissioner, Irene Moss, claimed: 'Its resources, influence, stability and professionalism far exceed those of any other racist organisation in Australia, past or present. Its success is in part due to the relative subtlety with which its ideology is promoted'.⁶ The framework which Eric Butler had created with the formation of the League in 1960 continued to operate but the organisation developed a much more sophisticated approach. Butler remained national director until December 1991 when he was replaced by David Thompson (formerly the New South Wales state director). Butler continued to travel extensively throughout the 1980s addressing numerous gatherings of the League and its network of various front organisations. These included groups such as the Christian Institute for Individual Freedom, the Institute for Economic Democracy, the Electors' Association, the Voters' Policy Associations, the Australian Heritage Society, the Ladies in Line Against Communism (LILAC League), and various Conservative Speakers' Clubs. The League's Heritage Bookshop in Melbourne also continued to sell sophisticated materials which supported its ideology including Holocaust denial, anti-Zionism and pro-PLO publications, and anti-Asian immigration. In the mid-1980s it also produced and sold video cassettes which spread its message of hate effectively. In 1986-7 the League claimed to have sold 30,000 such tapes.

The League's publications included *On Target*, *On Target Bulletin*, *New Times*, *The Social Creditor* and *Intelligence Survey*. Its readers were urged to oppose Asian immigration, teaching the Holocaust, criticism of apartheid South Africa and the trial of Mordecai Vanunu (an Israeli convicted of revealing military secrets), while they also included extracts from anti-Jewish/anti-Israel publications including the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The organisation had close ties with the Perth right-wing publisher, Veritas Publications.

Holocaust denial became a major plank of the League as a result of the increasing awareness of the atrocities committed during World War II. In 1978 the television program 'Holocaust', based on Gerald Green's novel, brought the theme of the Holocaust into people's lounge rooms for the first time. The League sought to minimise the impact of this series by circulating letters based on Arthur Butz's book *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, published in 1966, which sought to stress what Butz called 'the myth of the six million'. Butz, a professor of electrical engineering at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, claimed that there was no evidence of gas chambers at Auschwitz. While he was willing to admit that up to one million

Jews may have died during World War II, there was no special Nazi program against the Jews, who invented the Holocaust story to further Zionist aims.

The League was only too willing to promote the works of other Holocaust deniers such as the discredited Australian civil libertarian, John Bennett, and the British freelance historian, David Irving. In 1986 Butler affiliated with Irving's European Alliance and also promoted his Australian tour to launch the paperback of his book, *Uprising*, which was an antisemitic account of the 1956 Hungarian revolution. In 1987 a second Irving tour of Australia was also promoted by the League following Veritas' publication of Irving's controversial biography of Churchill which attracted much media attention. In 1993 when Irving was refused a visa to tour Australia, the League strongly opposed this decision. Irving's West Australian publisher, Veritas Press then attempted to screen his documentary video presentation, ironically entitled 'The Search for Truth in History' throughout Australia. Eric Butler's son, Phillip Butler, was involved in promoting this video but as a result of community opposition, the screenings did not go ahead.

In 1989 the League was also active in distributing the Leuchter Report, which was based on chemical tests of concrete and brick samples from Auschwitz which an American, Fred Leuchter, claimed showed no evidence of Zyklon B, thereby 'proving' that the gassing was a hoax. It was later proved that Leuchter's claim to be an "engineer" specialising in execution equipment for American prisons that carry out death sentences was a fabrication, and that his only tertiary qualification was a Bachelor of Arts degree from Boston University. This did not prevent the League from circulating copies of his report or from expressing support for the Canadian Holocaust denier, Ernst Zundel, whom the League portrayed as the victim of a show trial.

The League also campaigned vigorously against the holding of war crimes trials in Australia and in the late 1980s attacked anyone supporting the war crimes legislation including Sam Lipski of the *Australian Jewish News* and the ECAJ president, Isi Leibler. In 1992 the League sponsored the visit of Doug Christie, a Canadian anti-war crimes campaigner, who addressed numerous public meetings and seminars arguing against war crimes trials. Christie's visit attracted significant media coverage. One of the reasons for the broader base of support for the League was the wide range of issues on which it campaigned. In 1987 it opposed the idea of the introduction of the Australia Card, campaigned against laws which sought to restrict the possession of fire arms (an issue which particularly affected rural Australia), sought to support farmers affected by the rural recession, and rallied behind conservative political candidates. It focused on the more conservative church groups, especially in northern New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

Since the League was able to present a more respectable face, it has been able to reach into mainstream politics. Many of its members have sought political and government positions without revealing their League affiliation. Public figures such as Ray O'Connor, who had been premier of Western Australia, addressed a meeting of the League in 1983 when he was Leader of the Opposition, and Senator Flo Bjelke-Petersen of Queensland was a member of the LILAC League and wrote in support of the League's activities. In 1984 the Jewish community was concerned when the leader of the Country Party, Ian Sinclair, stated on the 'Sunday' television

program that he was not opposed to sharing a platform with the League of Rights, indicating the level of mainstream acceptance of the League's activities, especially in rural Australia.⁷

One of the League's most articulate spokesmen was Jeremy Lee, who in 1987 gained the support of the Sydney radio broadcaster, Brian Wilshire who went so far as to decry Lee's failure to nominate for the Senate. Lee was associated with Peter Sawyer in the formation of the Logos Foundation as a fundamentalist Christian group. In 1991 the Logos Foundation moved its base from Toowoomba in Queensland to Dubbo in New South Wales. It has sought to promote conspiracy theories and the idea of international manipulators. It was active in supporting the "No" campaign in the 1988 Federal referendum and tried to rally support for the idea of citizen initiated referenda. Thus, as with the League, it has sought to hide its more extremist agenda through the support of more mainstream issues.



Irene Moss, Human Rights Commissioner

As Irene Moss stated in 1991:





In many respects the League may be more profound and dangerous than other extremist groups because it assumed an image of respectability by espousing family values, patriotism and nationalism while covertly disseminating racist views. The League represents the respectable face of racism. Its advocacy of traditional values may have won it mainstream support from people who are unaware of its racist and extremist ideas.⁸

As a result, the Board needed to find ways to counter the League's propaganda, particularly in rural areas where the League was most active.

Australia's most active Holocaust denier was the Melbourne lawyer, John Bennett, whose views and writings were actively promoted by the League. Bennett was for a number of years secretary of the Victorian Council for Civil Liberties. He supported the view that the Holocaust was a myth and sought to propagate this position in whatever way he could. When the more mainstream New South Wales Council for Civil Liberties sought to distance itself from Bennett's views and in 1987 he was dismissed from the Victorian Council, he established the Australian Civil Liberties Union. From the mid 1970s Bennett began to publish an annual 'legal handbook' entitled *Your Rights* which included a chapter in which he challenged the reality of the Holocaust, referring to it as the 'Holocaust Hoax' which, he claimed, persists only through 'thought control exercised through censorship'.⁹ In the fourteenth edition of *Your Rights* he revised his chapter on racism to make Holocaust denial less strident, but his basic world view did not change.¹⁰



As with the League, Bennett had the ability to appear reasonable and credible, despite the extreme nature of his views. He was frequently interviewed on radio and television, appearing on major programs such as the Mike Walsh Show on Channel 9 in 1980, and often had letters published in major newspapers. He wrote defending Germans from 'slander' in films dealing with Nazism, opposing police powers and arguing against action on Nazi war criminals living in Australia. When interviewed on ABC Radio National in December 1986 in relation to the war crimes debate, he was introduced as a 'civil liberties lawyer', indicating how he was able to achieve credibility for his arguments.¹¹ His legal handbook was widely distributed, with 3,500 copies being distributed in New South Wales alone in 1986 by major distributors such as Allan Wright and later Angus & Robertson. The 1993 edition continued to include anti-Zionist, anti-Jewish and anti-Aboriginal statements.

More obviously extremist was the National Socialist Party of Australia. This party faced leadership problems following the expulsion of Robert Cameron and the imprisonment of Nazi leader Ross May, known as 'The Skull', for three months for desecrating the Martyrs' Memorial in the Jewish section of Rookwood Cemetery in Sydney. By 1981 the party had almost ceased to exist and was replaced by National Action led by a former Nazi Party member, James Saleam. Many leaders of this group were tertiary-educated and they masked their race hatred under slogans on anti-Asian immigration. In late 1981 National Action became very active on Sydney campuses, with its principle focus being the visible presence of Asian students. In 1984 Saleam contested the federal electorate of Hughes but gained only 4% of the vote, winning some support for his anti-Asian platform. During this year the group attracted media publicity following the publication of a poorly documented work entitled *Nazis Out of Uniform*, written by a Communist Party activist, Denis Frenay. Saleam countered this with his own publication entitled *Never in Nazi Uniform*. National Action used direct violence and in 1985 two National Action members, including Saleam, were convicted on charges which included the possession of prohibited weapons and insurance fraud. After these convictions, the group was less active, especially in New South Wales, until Saleam's release from prison. In 1989 they were involved in graffiti, vandalism, poster campaigns and harassment of



individuals such as Rev Dorothy McMahon of the Pitt Street Uniting Church, but these activities came to an end following Saleam's arrest on charges of having been involved in the attack on ANC representative, Eddie Funde, as well as fire bombing a car outside the Parramatta District Court.. Saleam's trial continued into 1993 and he was later gaoled for this offence. At the same time two other National Action members were arrested, including Perry John Whitehouse, tried for the murder of Wayne Smith, a member of National Action who had turned informant. Whitehouse was sentenced in September 1992.

In 1978 another extreme right wing organisation, National Alliance, was established. Its membership was small, but it was relatively well organised. It produced a glossy tabloid entitled *Audacity* which was sold at newsstands and had an extensive poster campaign with slogans such as 'National Alliance for a White Australia'. Its secretary, Frank K. Salter, published letters in the mainstream press, seeking to appeal to unemployed youth and in 1979 ran for the by-election for the federal seat of Grayndler. In 1982 after four years of activity, the National Alliance joined with other extremist groups to form the Progressive Nationalist Party and later its leaders were attracted to Saleam's more strident National Action, although only a few members of this group remained involved with National Action for long.



In 1990 a splinter group of National Action calling itself the 'National Socialist Defence of Australia Party' and led by David Palmer emerged on the Eastern coast. Born in 1938, David Palmer was an electrician. In Queensland he had been a member of the Liberal Party and had once stood for the seat of Cairns. He later moved to New South Wales, became disenchanted with mainstream politics and joined National Action. After a disagreement with Saleam over strategy, he decided to form his own party. Palmer was seen by the Board as 'inflammatory and offensive' and a self-styled Neo-Nazi agitator¹² who joined with other neo-Nazis such as Ross May and Robert Leyes. This group gathered in the Sydney Domain on Sunday afternoons in full Nazi uniform, surrounded by swastika flags and using antisemitic slogans such as 'Jews and Niggers'. At the first meeting, Simon Lane, a Palmer supporter, assaulted a Jewish youth. Lane was later arrested, tried and convicted for this assault. Palmer advocated typical Nazi views, believing that whites must maintain their 'racial purity', denying that the Nazis sought to eliminate all Jews during World War II, and alleging that Zionists controlled the political process in Australia. He also expressed opposition to Asians, Aborigines and American blacks. These extremist views attracted media attention, and in July 1991 Palmer was interviewed by Ray Martin on Channel Nine.¹³ Other groups, such as the Humanist Society in Chippendale, invited Palmer to speak on 'The Revision of the History of the Holocaust'. This publicity gave Palmer and his group a level of credibility.

Another extremist group was the National Front which emerged in Australia in June 1978 with Rosemary Sisson as its leader in Victoria and Robert Cameron in New South Wales, although divisions soon developed between the two. A small branch was also established in Brisbane. It published a monthly newsletter entitled *Front Line* which continued to operate in a low key fashion, appearing to cease in 1985 although one issue did appear in 1987. After this the National Front appeared to fade away. There was some contact between the United Kingdom's National





Front and Australia's, but no funding support was provided by the British group. After some initial publicity in the *Age*, which led to press headlines throughout the country, the organisation had a very low profile.

A more extremist offshoot of the Australian National Front was the Australian Nationalist Movement (ANM) which in Western Australia in the late 1980s reached a peak of violence under the leadership of former National Action member, Jack van Tongeren. The ANM magazine, *The Nationalist*, was strident in its antisemitism and Holocaust denial and in its attack on Asian immigration and Japanese investment in Australia. The movement gained publicity through graffiti, sticker and leaflet campaigns. It also ran a book service and maintained contacts with similar hardcore Nazi organisations in Australia and overseas. In August 1990 the movement's activities were crippled by the arrest of five key members, including van Tongeren, on a series of charges including the bombing of Chinese restaurants. In March 1991 van Tongeren was sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment on four separate charges and the other four members also received gaol sentences. While this severely curtailed the ANM's activities, it continued to produce *The Nationalist*.

National Vanguard was another racist group which emerged under the leadership of Robert Pash and was able to carry out more effective activities because of financial contacts which Pash established with Libya. Pash has flitted amongst various groups across the political spectrum whose opposition to Jews has been their unifying factor. His activities are indicative of the centrality of anti-Jewish feeling to extremists in Australia. Pash has headed his own 'church', led a section of Nation Action, and from 1987 he ran a pro-Libyan, pro-White Australia group known as The People's Congress which was later called National Vanguard. He published low quality magazines, the most popular of which was *Green March* which included Holocaust denial, as well as attacks on Israel and Australian immigration policy. This magazine was available from the pro-Moscow Socialist Party of Australia, as this group was apparently attracted by the statement 'Zionism is Racism' on its cover.

After Pash established his Libyan contacts, his movement operated on a more solid basis and he made a number of trips to Libya. In April 1987 he led a group including Tasmanian aboriginal activist, Michael Mansel. A meeting was held in Tripoli where Mansel was promised support for Australian black groups; this received much publicity. In 1988 Pash promoted a further trip to Libya by Australian parliamentarians and trade unionists including Joan McLean, George Crawford and Irina Dunn.

In addition to these larger extremist groups, a number of smaller organisations emerged for a time and then disappeared. Some were front organisations established by Arthur C. Tane who in 1979 formed the Friends of German Culture Association in order to disseminate Holocaust denial materials following the screening of the 'Holocaust' television series. The Australian German Anti-Defamation League, also formed in 1979 in Adelaide, had similar aims of whitewashing the Third Reich and promoting Holocaust denial. A number of anti-immigration associations were formed over the years. They included the Immigration Control Association, also called the Progressive Conservative Party (1980), the White Australia Movement (1980), led by former Nazi leaders Ross May and Robert Cameron, and the Patriotic Lobby

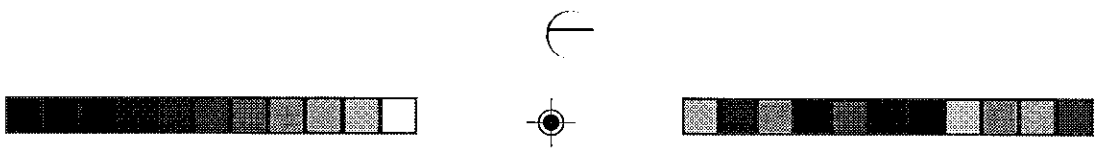


(1981). The Patriotic lobby was initially led by J. McGrath who stated he was in favour of the repatriation of all non-Caucasians to their country of origin, and later by Major Richard Ashley-Riddle. The Immigration Control Association and the Progressive Conservative Party later amalgamated to form the Progressive Nationalist Party which was blatantly antisemitic and opposed Asian immigration. This party appeared to have grass roots support and sufficient funding to produce and disseminate hate literature. In 1987 the Constitution Heritage Protection Society was formed to fight the Australia Card which it saw as part of an international conspiracy which was not necessarily controlled by Jews but included some Jews. Following the United States racist ideology espoused by Lyndon La Rouche, Citizens Electoral Councils were established in rural Australia in 1991 and 1992. In May 1993 they organised an International Conference on the International Monetary Fund and this attracted wide media coverage. While most of these groups had only a tiny membership and rarely lasted long, they helped to exacerbate racial intolerance in Australia.

A number of individuals have been purveyors of racism, antisemitism and Holocaust denial. Some, such as Arthur C. Tane, have already been mentioned. Others who dispensed such anti-social literature in this period included Yakov Selzer, a disillusioned Russian Jewish immigrant, who distributed racist leaflets obsessed with Jews and Judaism which he left on train seats, at university campuses and in letterboxes; and Tom Graham who sent unsolicited material proclaiming 'Communism is Jewish!' or warning of the 'Truth of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion'.¹⁴ The impact of these individuals was limited but their activities were disturbing for the Jewish community.

In 1986 the issue of Nazi war crime trials in Australia in relation to a few immigrants who had come to Australia particularly under the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) program aroused great controversy. A vigorous campaign opposing the concept of war crime trials brought to the fore a number of anti-Jewish elements which expressed their virulent antisemitism in letters to the press, on talkback radio and various publications. Involved in this were various migrant groups some of whom harboured hostility towards Jews but had not expressed it openly.¹⁵ Included in these was *News Digest International* which for more than twenty years was the main publication of the antisemitic right wing migrant groups. Published in Sydney, this English language magazine is distributed nationally and internationally and while focusing on Communism, tends to equate Jews with Communism. Throughout 1986 *News Digest* vigorously opposed the investigation of war criminals, claiming that the whole process was 'proof of a "Zionist-Communist Conspiracy"'.¹⁶ Disturbing for the Board was the fact that, despite efforts to develop a dialogue with the Ukrainian community, in January 1987 George Mencinsky, president of the Ukrainian Council of New South Wales widely circulated a booklet entitled *Why is one Holocaust Worth More than Others?*, with articles by John Bennett and a "Yurij Chumatsky" who wrote that Jews were to blame for their treatment by antisemites.

Similar anti-Jewish hostility were manifested by some Baltic representatives on an SBS program on the topic of Nazi war crimes trials. Early in 1987 the Croatian newspaper, *Hrvatski Ijednik*, was censured by the Australian Press Council for publishing an antisemitic article entitled 'B'nai B'rith Long Knives' while the



publications of Hungarian Bela Kantor in Perth, including *Utes Cel*, and the Sydney based *Szabad Magyarsag* often included blatantly antisemitic material and promoted Holocaust denial. The Hungarian community also feted David Irving when he visited Australia in 1986 to promote his book on the Hungarian revolution. The campaign for justice for the victims of the Holocaust who suffered at the hands of Nazi collaborators aimed to bring those who, after the war, illegally sought sanctuary in Australia, to trial. Unfortunately, this process led to further antisemitism and hate-mongering in Australia. While this antisemitism did not gain respectability within mainstream Australia, it did reinforce the opposition to the war crimes trials in Australia.

During the 1980s a coalition developed between left wing groups, both political and academic, and Arab national associations. While the official platform of these various groups was anti-Zionist and anti-Israel, and not antisemitic, they sometimes utilised traditional antisemitism to convey their message. They drew on the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and, as will be seen, often joined with the extreme right-wing groups in their opposition to Israel and Zionism. Although these small left-wing and pro-Arab groups were again largely on the fringes of Australian society, their existence was of concern to the Board of Deputies.

A number of small left-wing societies operated throughout this period. Their membership fluctuated because of internal conflicts but they never numbered more than a few hundred. A fairly vocal group was the Socialist Labor League (SLL), affiliated with British actress Vanessa Redgrave's anti-Zionist Workers' Revolutionary Party; it supported her visit to Australia in 1982. The SLL published a bi-weekly paper, *Workers' News*, which tended to champion the PLO cause and attack Israel.¹⁷ In September 1987 the paper summed up its position on Israel in the following terms:

The basis for any real peace in the region will be the overthrow of the imperialist enclave of Israel and its replacement by a secular and socialist state of Palestine as part of a federation of Socialist States in the Middle East.¹⁸

The party was also very supportive of Colonel Gaddafi's policies in Libya. *Workers' News* and other left-wing, anti-Israel publications were distributed through the SLL's Jura bookshops. SLL ran candidates for various elections and in 1980 contested eight seats, polling a total of 2.48%.¹⁹

The Socialist Workers' Party, which was affiliated with SLL but was somewhat less fanatical, also championed the PLO cause through their weekly newspaper, *Direct Action*, which by 1987 was in its fourteenth year of publication. One of the party's main spokesmen was Sol Salby, a well known Jewish anti-Zionist. The Socialist Workers Party also had connections with two pro-Palestinian organisations, the Union of Palestinian Workers and the Palestine Human Rights Campaign (PHRC), founded by Jean Calder as a 'humanitarian' organisation; it published *Palestine* as part of their support for the PLO. PHRC was active at various times on campuses in New South Wales and was supported by George Peterson, MLA for Wollongong. Other left-wing organisations included the pro-Moscow Socialist Party of Australia which supported Syrian factions in the Middle East rather than Arafat, and the

Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) which was pro-Chinese communism and which, while supporting the PLO, was less strident in its opposition to Israel.

Another relevant organisation was the Australian People for Health and Educational Development Abroad (APHEDA) which was established in 1984 by Helen McCue, a former worker for the PLO affiliated 'Palestine Red Crescent' together with the assistance of ACTU president, Cliff Dolen. The Board felt that while the APHEDA had 'admirable aims', its record was 'questionable'. In 1988 the organisation changed to become the Overseas Aid arm of the ACTU and it has continued to function.

In 1991 a group called Women in Black was formed, comprising Jewish women and Palestinian and other Arab women who supported the cause of the Palestinians. They were active protesting against Israel during the Gulf War and held their first vigil during refugee week of June 1991. While only a fringe group, they received wide media coverage and were featured on the ABC's 'Coming Out Show' and SBS 'Dateline'. Jewish participation in this group caused much concern within the Jewish community.²⁰

In addition to these various left-wing organisations, a number of pro-Arab groups lobbied for support of the PLO cause throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. The most significant was the Palestine Information Office which has been run for many years by Ali Kazak, an Australian citizen and a full-time professional worker for the PLO. Since the early 1980s Kazak has edited an English language paper, *Free Palestine*, which has argued the PLO position and is circulated extensively to Australian opinion makers. Initially located in Melbourne, it was moved in June 1987 to Canberra to heighten its goal of appearing to be equivalent to an embassy and allow better access to federal parliamentarians. Ali Kazak receives considerable media coverage. The Board felt that over the years he had 'dramatically improved his appearance... and, on some occasions, manages to both look and sound reasonable'.²¹ Kazak received a grant of \$5000 from the Australian Arts Council to hold an exhibition of Palestinian art at the Sydney Opera House in August 1987 and then in Canberra. Over the years Kazak has been regarded as the official PLO representative in Australia, although he has not held this position in any formal capacity, and has been successful in increasing support for the PLO position.

Smaller pro-Arab groups include the Palestine-Australia Association, which was most active in South Australia, and the Association for Arab Australian Friendship. The Libyan backed Palestine-Arab Club, affiliated to the Popular Front and the Australia-Palestine Solidarity Committee, was involved in organising anti-Israel demonstrations in January 1988 in Sydney. An even more fanatical group with a reputation for violence was the Syrian National Socialist Party which advocated the establishment of a greater Syria to incorporate Lebanon, Israel and even Cyprus within Syria.²² While this group was active in the early 1980s, its effectiveness was limited by internal divisions in the second half of the decade. A number of the various organisations supporting the PLO cause were joined together in the Palestine Committee which also produced material in support of Arafat and a Palestinian state.

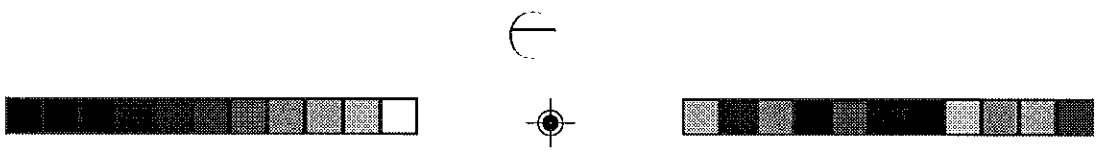
Another matter of great concern to Sydney Jewry was statements by Sheikh Taj Eldine El-Hilaly, Imam of the Lakemba mosque and, from 1989, Mufti of Australia. Hilaly entered Australia in 1982 on a three months' tourist visa which

was extended. In 1987 the Minister for Immigration, Chris Hurford, decided to deport Hilaly because of his 'deep-seated contempt of basic Australian values and attitudes' but Hurford's successor, Mick Young, revoked the order. In 1988 in an article by Susan Bures, the *Jewish Times* highlighted an antisemitic speech by Hilaly at a seminar at the University of Sydney entitled 'Islam and Judaism: Can They Co-exist?'. In this speech (which de Vahl Davis saw as 'a most vile, overt antisemitic tirade'²³), Hilaly labelled Jews as 'the underlying cause of all wars threatening peace and security of the whole inhabited earth'.²⁴ Jewish leaders wrote to Senator Robert Ray, Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, calling for Hilaly's immediate expulsion because of his 'blatant incitement to racial hatred'.²⁵ The *Jewish Times* pointed out that there was no legal form of redress for Hilaly's 'offensive outburst' and the community could only complain to the State Anti-discrimination authority.

Despite the community's requests for Hilaly's deportation and the fact that the Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW condemned his speech as giving 'hurt and offence to the Jewish community', he was granted a visa extension in September 1989 for a further twelve months which the Board felt was contrary to 'the multicultural harmony of Australia'.²⁶ In September 1990 the newly appointed minister, Gerry Hand, decided to grant him permanent residence. *The Australian* noted in regard to the 1989 decision that the federal government 'valued votes more than it valued its credibility'²⁷ since the electorates of both Leo McKay and Paul Keating included much of the Muslim congregation of the Lakemba Mosque. In 1990 Keating lobbied on Hilaly's behalf, saying 'he is a religious leader in a very large community within my electorate and surrounding electorates'.²⁸ ECAJ president Leslie Caplan described the decision to grant Hilaly permanent residency as 'outrageous' and 'totally against the spirit of multiculturalism'²⁹ while the NSW Board unanimously passed a motion moved by Jeremy Jones stating that the government's decision 'goes against the spirit of multiculturalism and gives succour to racists and hate-mongers'.³⁰

The Jewish community also felt concern about the activities of a left-wing Victorian ALP politician, Bill Hartley, the official correspondent in Australia of the Iraqi news agency and a prominent member of the Australian-Libyan Friendship Society. He arranged visits to the Middle East for numerous journalists and trade union leaders.³¹ He also broadcast on 3CR in Melbourne and promoted anti-Israel sentiments in the general media. In 1988 he formed the Industrial Labor Party after he was expelled from the ALP and continued his anti-Israel activities through that medium, although with much less impact as the leader of a fringe organisation rather than a prominent member of a mainstream political party. Another extreme left-wing politician was Dr John Troy, MLA in Western Australia, who championed the Palestinian cause. After Hartley, he was the most active Australian politician in promoting anti-Israel activities not just in his own state but across Australia.

As well as the parties and associations discussed above, a left-wing academic organisation, the Australasian Middle East Studies Association (AMESA) was formed in Melbourne in August 1981 by an anti-Zionist academic, Dr Irwin Herman. Dr Herman, who claimed to be of Jewish origin, arrived in Australia in April 1979 to take up the appointment of Deputy-Director of the Footscray Institute of Technology. Shortly after his arrival he emerged as 'one of the most influential and active anti-



Israel lobbyists in Australia'.³² In addition to being a founding member and leading figure in AMESA, he appeared frequently as a commentator on radio and television, as well as writing many newspaper articles and letters to the editor. Another key figure in AMESA was Dr (later Professor) Robert Springborg, lecturer in Politics at Macquarie University, who was frequently used as a commentator on the Middle East. According to the Arab language paper, *An Nahar*, he was the secretary of the Australia-Iraq Friendship Society. Dr Caroline Graham, lecturer in the School of Humanities at the NSW Institute of Technology (later University of Technology, Sydney) and a member of the Palestine Solidarity Committee, was another central figure in AMESA.³³ The Association held annual conferences at which papers were presented in relation to the Middle East, usually with a pro-Arab and anti-Israel bias as seen from the Board's perspective.

Some aspects of Christian activity also caused concern for the Jewish community, in particular in relation to missionary efforts. There were two main groups which were seen as particularly problematic, namely Jewish Outreach which was active in door knocking campaigns, especially in the eastern suburbs, and Jews for Jesus which attempts to gain converts by organising campus meetings as well as circulating leaflets and pamphlets. The Australian Mission to the Jews was another group which sought to convert Jews to Christianity. Problems were also experienced with the World Council of Churches which was seen as being hostile not only to Israel but also to Jews, while the Australian Council of Churches Middle East delegation was seen as being generally hostile. In 1982 the president of the Australian Council carried out an attack on Jews and their 'genocidal God'. Following the publication of a controversial report, 'The Middle East: A Way In', in 1986, the Board's annual report claimed that 'the ACC's publications' views of Israel over some time have been hostile to Israel and, on occasion, verged on antisemitism'.³⁴

It can be seen that the Jewish community of New South Wales was faced with attacks from both the extreme right and the extreme left and from Arab national groups. The activities of a few extremists did create concerns for the community and resulted in a constant expansion of the Board's activities.

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS TEAM

Throughout this period New South Wales Jewry was fortunate to have high calibre people representing the community's needs and responding to the threats posed by the groups discussed above. Lay leadership included some of the community's most dynamic personalities and almost every chairman of the PRC also served as president of the Board. Indeed, Graham de Vahl Davis, chairman from 1982 to 1984 and again from 1991 to 1993, and Michael Marx who also served for a total of six years, 1985 to 1990, before relinquishing the position to take up the vice-presidency and then presidency, with Phillip Hynek serving as PR chairman from 1994 to 1996, together spanned most of this period. Similarly, the community was lucky in its professional leadership with Robert Klarnet and Jeremy Jones being the outstanding figures of this period. The PRC also enjoyed close cooperation with other key groups, including B'nai B'rith, UIA and SZC, and with the staff of the *Australian Jewish Times* and Australia/Israel Publications.



The Public relations team meeting in July 1987.
From left to right: Professor Graham deVahl Davis,
Daryl Hodes, Margaret Gutman and Jeremy Jones.

The continuity of service of the two key professionals of this period, Robert Klarnet and Jeremy Jones, was one of the Board's strengths in public relations activities. They were able to accumulate expertise and indepth experience in the area. The appointments of both also represented the growing professionalism of the Board in the area of public relations and Jones served as inaugural Research Officer. As already discussed, Klarnet was appointed as the Board's second Public Relations Director in September 1975 and served in that position for eight years until March 1983, working closely with three presidents, Sid Muller, Robert Goot and Leslie Caplan. In 1980 Klarnet married and in 1983 decided to take time out to travel with his wife Judith and young son, Jake. It is interesting to note that when Klarnet resigned in 1983, Michael Danby of Australia Israel Publications in Melbourne was approached informally and offered the position. He initially expressed interest, but then was offered a position as a researcher for the federal MP, Barry Cohen, which he accepted. Jeremy Jones was appointed to replace Klarnet.

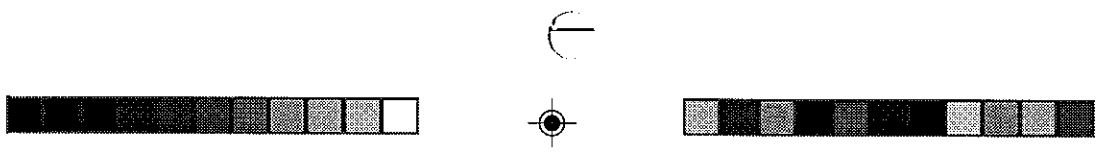
On his return to Sydney Klarnet accepted the new position of Director of Information in Sydney for the Zionist Federation of Australia. He worked in this position for four years until ZFA president, Mark Leibler, decided in August 1987 to close this office and relocate and centralise the Federation's professional staff in Melbourne. Klarnet then worked for a couple of years in commercial public relations. Towards the end of 1988 he was approached informally by Michael Marx who sought to persuade him to return to his previous position as Director of Public Affairs, as it was then called. At this time Klarnet was working for John Saunders as executive co-ordinator dealing with public affairs and funding for the Hope Town Special School. After some discussion with Graham de Vahl Davis and Gerry Levy, who at the time planned to stand for the presidency, he agreed to resume the position in January 1989 and has remained in office to the present day.



Robert Klarnet, Public Relations Director, 1975 - 1983
and Public Affairs Director, 1989 -

On Klarnet's return to the Board, he found substantial changes and felt that he was working in a much more professional environment. Margaret Gutman had taken over as Executive Director shortly after he had left in 1983 and he felt that she had made an enormous, creative impact over the entire range of the Board's activities. In addition the offices, which had moved from the first to third floor, had been upgraded, refurbished and computerised. Thus, while in theory he was resuming his old position, he felt that 'it was more like commencing in a brand new job in a new environment for an organisation with a new attitude and outlook'.³⁵

Another major change in the Board's public relations staff was the decision to appoint a research officer to assist the PR Director. When Klarnet was initially employed in 1975 he had an enormous brief as he was responsible for implementing every aspect of the community's internal and external public relations policies and programs. By the end of the 1970s he felt that he needed additional professional assistance and that the job was too much for one person, but at that time the Board







had insufficient funding to employ an additional person. With the major increases in the JCA allocation during Goot's presidency, this became possible and in 1982 Jeremy Jones became the Board's inaugural research officer, launching Jones into a life-long career in communal service.

Jeremy Jones came from a family which was deeply involved in the community. His father, Justin Jones, had been involved with the Board for many years, serving as chair of the PRC and vice-president. Jeremy had completed a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Sydney and had been very active in student politics, having served on the AUJS executives at both the regional and national levels; he was a director of the University of Sydney Union from 1979 to 1983 and its vice-president from 1981 to 1982, served on the Students' Representative Council from 1977 to 1981; was a member of the Faculty of Arts and Academic Board in 1979, and a member of the University's Proctorial Panel from 1979 to 1981. In addition, he served as president of the Maccabi NSW Debating Club in 1983 and 1984.


With this background in student politics and public speaking, Jeremy Jones was an outstanding candidate and his employment initially as research officer and then, following Klarnet's resignation in 1983 as PR Director until he left in 1988 to travel overseas, was of great benefit to the community. In late 1983 the Board began an active policy of developing links with Jewish organisations overseas, with which it had previously had only a casual relationship. In early 1983 Jones was sent to New York and London by the Board with the mission to meet with key people in organisations in those cities who would include the Board in mailings and be able to assist the Board in various public relations projects. During Leslie Caplan's term as ECAJ president from 1985 to 1987, Jones also served as executive director of the ECAJ when he further developed these overseas links.

During the 1980s Jones held a number of positions in student and general politics. He was honorary secretary of the 2EA Jewish Radio Hour; secretary of Labor Friends of Israel; and a member of the Policy Committee for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs of the ALP. Jones was also active in the formation of 'Australians for Racial Equality' in 1984 and served on its executive. The agenda for this body was to allow a general community response to attacks on Asians and Indigenous Australians, which were partly due to the activities of National Action.


After Jones became PR Director, there were a number of people who served as research officers. Ron Kampeas, a student at the Hebrew University who moved to Sydney to complete his degree, was an effective worker who contributed to a wide range of activities. He provided the groundwork for the re-establishment of the Media Response group, served on the executive of the NSW Friends of Hebrew University as publicity officer, had a strong input into the AUJS radio program 'You Don't Have to be Jewish', represented the board as newsletter co-editor of the Australians for Racial Equality Executive and SBS's Advisory Committee on Racism. When Kampeas resigned in November 1986 to return to Israel, he was replaced by recent law graduate, Darryl Hodes, who served first as research officer from 1987 to 1988 and then as director for just over a year until Klarnet returned at the beginning of 1989. Darren Cohen was appointed to replace Hodes as research officer, and he was followed in turn by Neer Korn, Adrienne Kern and Sarah Nicholas, all of whom made valuable contributions.



Another important innovation in this period was the idea of employing a student intern over the university summer break with the aim of involving key student leaders in the work of the Board. Caplan brought back this concept from the United States following his visit to APAC in Washington where students worked over the summer before going back to campus. This scheme was introduced in December 1983 with the first participant being Jo-Anne Bloch, at the time a commerce student at the University of New South Wales, a member of her Students' Representative Council and president of NSW AUJS. During her internship she began research for the Board's publication 'Australian Churches and the Jews'. Over the years a number of talented young people have served in this internship, including Alex Baykitch who also became a deputy and continued to play an active role in the Board's work, and Lawrence Jackson. There are some inherent problems with the scheme, especially since January/February is a quiet time in the Board's office and it is difficult to produce a worthwhile project in only four to five weeks,³⁶ but it is a significant way of reaching out to the younger members of the community.







One lay leader who only served the PRC for a very short period due to her early death from a heart attack was Eve Symon who also served as vice-president. When she became chair of the PRC she decided to try to change the emphasis 'from reacting to attacks and defending our ideals to the more positive approach of creating the right image, making contact with opinion makers, acting rather than reacting'. However, she stressed that 'this, of course, does not mean that the other approach was not just as important or could be abandoned'.³⁷ An example of the new policy was that before the tour of PLO supporter, Vanessa Redgrave, the Board's office prepared an information kit which was distributed to all key media outlets. Eve Symon brought to her role substantial public relations expertise as a result of her editorship of the *Australian Jewish Times* from 1965 to 1980 when she suffered her first heart attack. During Symon's editorship the paper developed into being a major community publication which subsumed its Sydney rival, the *Sydney Jewish News*.³⁸ After her death Ken Wiener took over as acting chairman and he commented that 'her great experience and expertise made her one of the best chairmen the Committee has ever had'.³⁹




MONITORING COMMUNITY ATTITUDES TO JEWS AND ISRAEL

One of the main tasks of the PRC was to keep a watch on a number of important areas in the community including student organisations, extremist groups such as those discussed above, and the media. In 1979 the monitoring of all electronic media was commenced. This work was done in close liaison with the *Australia-Israel Review* personnel, at the time Sam Lipski, Michael Danby and Ron Abel, in cooperation with the ECAJ and the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies. Links between Jeremy Jones and Michael Danby were further strengthened in 1983 following a meeting of Jewish professionals working in public relations in New South Wales and Victoria.⁴⁰ In September 1979 the monitoring of the ethnic media, especially the Arab press, was begun with the services of a translator being obtained for a modest fee. The cost of this initially was personally covered by Ken Wiener; in 1981 the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation Unit took over responsibility for coordinating




and financing this project in conjunction with the Board. By 1985 the PRC was monitoring six major daily newspapers and over 60 magazines and journals, recording news and current affairs programs, monitoring the ethnic press and listening to hourly news broadcasts and public affairs radio. It was assisted by members of the Jewish community who would contact the Board office if they came across anything offensive. By 1987 the Board had become aware that with the complex data that it was accumulating through its monitoring program, it was necessary to computerise the office and, when this was accomplished, the monitoring work of the PRC was greatly facilitated.

There are numerous examples of Board concern at bias and misreporting in the media over this period. Some of the most controversial programs were Jeune Pritchard's production of 'The Palestinians' for Background Briefing on ABC radio on 20 July 1986 following her tour of the area organised by Palestinians; the ABC special feature, 'The Palestinians', produced as part of a Four Corners program; and the responses of Ron Casey on talk back radio. The Board was extremely concerned at the failure of the ABC to be accountable when it came to complaints from the public and campaigned for a more responsive policy.⁴¹




When the Board did come across something offensive in the press or other media, the PRC chairman and Public Affairs Director immediately made contact to try and address the situation. The 1992 Annual Report noted that most newspapers were very cooperative, but an exception was David Hickie, editor of the *Sun Herald* who was unwilling to respond to a number of serious complaints from the Board. He would simply write a response stating: 'Thank you for your letter. Your complaint has been noted'.⁴² The Board also experienced great problems with talk back radio, particularly with the midnight to dawn programs. In the same annual report it was noted that:



Unfortunately these programs provide a forum for social misfits of every type, including those who harbour the most virulent and blatant antisemitic and anti-Zionist views, allowing them to articulate these sentiments with relative impunity to a significant audience.⁴³

While in some cases the radio host was receptive to the Board's concerns, in other instances such antisemitism was allowed to continue. At times the result was extremely positive. Thus, Bruce Best, producer of the popular television series GP, promised to consider making an episode examining antisemitism after de Vahl Davis complained to him about an episode which portrayed a negative stereotype of a Jewish orthopaedic surgeon.

In addition to monitoring the media, the Board surveyed politicians to ascertain where they stood in regard to key issues of concern for the Jewish community. This was the suggestion of Michael Marx when he took over the chairmanship of the PRC in 1984 and the first such survey was conducted in November 1984 when questionnaires were sent out to 125 New South Wales candidates for the federal election of 1984. The questions were developed from a draft drawn up by Professor Sol Encel, then Professor of Sociology at the University of New South Wales and an expert in political science surveys. Issues covered by the questions included racial



vilification legislation, sharing a platform with a known racist, action relating to the dissemination of material which incites racial or religious hatred by an embassy or accredited diplomatic representative, recognition of the PLO, attitudes towards government policy on the Arab/Israeli conflict, granting of visas to representatives of groups that advocated violence for political reasons, and the Arab League trade boycott. The report on the responses commented: 'In general, the replies received were sympathetic to our concerns...[but] there are clear indications that the matter of legislation to penalise incitement to racial hatred is very contentious and also that we cannot assume that bans on PLO visits will continue indefinitely'.⁴⁴ Similar surveys were carried out for the 1987 federal election, and again in March 1993. The 1987 results were very similar but indicated that one area of change since 1984 was that 'opposition to the granting of visas to representatives of groups that advocate violence for political reasons has lessened'.⁴⁵ These surveys assisted communal leaders to gain an insight into the position of various politicians and to ascertain which issues required greater advocacy on behalf of the community.

The Board also took action in regard to the antisemitic activities of the groups on the right and the left, as well as the Australian Council of Churches. For example, in 1981 the Board assisted students to undertake research and respond to the racist propaganda of National Action of the Sydney campuses. In the same period, the Board commenced an outreach program to the churches, including seeking to develop constructive relationships at the senior level; writing letters to church publications; establishing contact with educators within the different churches; and later assisting Jewish participants in meetings of the Council of Christians and Jews. The speaker service also began to seek church venues for talks. In relation to the problem of Holocaust denial, the Board began to develop resources on the topic and articles were published by Jones which exposed the roots of Holocaust denial in Australia.

CREATING A POSITIVE JEWISH IMAGE

The PRC during this period continued and expanded its outreach into the general community in its attempt to create an understanding of Jews, Judaism and Israel. The most important element of this outreach was the speakers' service which was greatly expanded in the years after 1978. The service continued to provide speakers for service groups, schools, religious and other groups on a wide range of topics which included Judaism and the Jewish way of life including the Jewish festivals, Israel and the Middle East, antisemitism, the Holocaust, and Jewish medical ethics. The community was able to provide a large number of expert and articulate speakers, with the speakers' panel comprising some thirty members, with significant input from the rabbinate. In 1979 52 different groups were addressed; by 1981 this had increased to 60 talks.

However, it was the appointment of Jeremy Jones as Research Officer which dramatically increased the number of talks to 125 talks for 1982, amounting to a 150% increase over three years. In the 1980s the most successful year was 1985 when 163 groups were addressed. The increasing use of the speaker service was largely due to Jones' promotion of the service, including the printing pamphlets to advertise the program with over 500 of these being mailed out each year to community

groups, advertising the service. With time these pamphlets, as well as materials prepared as handouts, greatly improved.⁴⁶ When Jones left the Board to travel overseas, it was difficult to maintain these high numbers.

On average during the second half of the 1980s about 120 talks were given each year, reaching about 10,000 people. In the 1990s this increased again with 200 groups being addressed in 1993. The availability of sufficient expert speakers for the panel was indicative of the growing Jewish expertise resulting from improved Jewish education facilities in Sydney. This included the growth of the day schools which were only in an embryonic stage in the 1960s.

But there was a need was to extend the speaker service to rural areas of New South Wales where the ignorance and suspicion of Judaism was greatly fostered by the League of Rights which, with a much stronger hold on rural Australia, could effectively foster the myths about Jews and Judaism, including Holocaust denial.⁴⁷ The first organised talks to country areas began in October 1985 with Jeremy Jones undertaking an extensive eighteen talk visit to the North coast involving schools, service organisations and church groups. Jones went again in 1987 and, on his return, Jones stressed to the plenum the importance of maintaining this service and of meeting people face to face.

It was Josie Lacey who took up the challenge. Board stalwart, Ken Symonds, told Lacey about a Christian group in a country town in the New England area where the lady organising the group was a Judeophile. Concerned with the activities of the League which was very strong in that area, Lacey was invited by a contact to give a talk there. Although she had had many years of communal experience, including being state president of WIZO and public relations chairperson of the Women's Division of the UIA, as well as writing Josie's Column for the *Jewish Times* for eight years, she was at first reluctant to take on the task. However, her contact in Tamworth told Lacey that she had been praying to find a solution to the problem of Holocaust deniers and she believed that Lacey had been sent by God to assist her. Although Lacey came well prepared, she was not prepared for the extent to which League propaganda had influenced her audience. When she finished speaking, a farmer stood up and told her that he had read the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Recalling this episode, Josie Lacey said: 'I was staggered. I knew that it was a forgery and that it was about a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world, but I didn't know much more than that'. Lacey had a meeting with the editor of the local newspaper but he simply looked her in the eye and asked: 'Why did you kill Jesus?' after which he refused to interview her.

After this experience, Josie Lacey became aware of the enormous amount of work which needed to be done in the area of public relations in rural areas. On her return to Sydney she informed the plenum of her experiences. After some intensive research, she prepared a four page article on the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, initially published as part of the B'nai B'rith 'Background Briefing'. This pamphlet, as well as another which she also originally wrote for 'Background' entitled 'Medieval Roots of Modern Antisemitism', became very useful tools and were widely used by the Public Relations Committee. She later heard that the farmer who had asked her the question in Tamworth had left the League of Rights as he realised that there was no basis for the conspiracy theory against Jews.

After this, a number of people became involved in speaking tours including Earle Hoffman of Canberra who addressed groups at Wagga Wagga in 1989; Neer Korn who spoke in the Forbes area in 1990; Vic Alhadeff, at the time assistant editor of the *Jewish Times*, who went on a number of trips including Byron Bay in 1990, and the Southern Highlands in 1992; and Dr David Beirman who undertook an extensive tour in the Wagga Wagga area in 1992. Lacey herself continued to visit country areas, but she realised that it was better not to go on her own. When she returned in October 1990 for a second three day speaking tour of the Tamworth area, she went with Caroline Haski.⁴⁸ This time she enjoyed good media coverage, being featured in the *Tamworth Northern Daily Leader* and television and radio interviews, as well as meeting with church leaders and visits to five schools.⁴⁹



Vic Alhadeff addressing a group

In November 1991 Josie Lacey and Caroline Haski undertook a speaking tour to Inverell, a League stronghold and a hot bed of antisemitism. For example, in March 1991 the Concerned Voters Association, a front organisation for the League, held an 'Inverell Forum' to discuss rural finances, local government and better strategies to meet rural problems, with the speakers including League leader David Thompson and the right wing radio commentator Brian Wilshire. When the Board was making plans for the speaking tour to Inverell, the Board's research officer, Adrienne Kern, received a threatening phone saying: 'Who invited Jews to Inverell anyway? We don't want to hear more Jewish lies about the Jewish Holo-hoax. You know it's a lie. It didn't happen. Not to Jews, not to anyone...'⁵⁰

When Josie Lacey addressed a meeting of ministers of the Uniting Church in Inverell, eight men filed in: she realised that they were League members. After her address they claimed the Holocaust was a Hoax and quoted from Arthur Butz. The local minister did not want Josie to reply but she did, stating that 'anyone who denies the Holocaust has evil intent'.⁵¹ A Catholic priest who was present announced that he would organise a Holocaust commemoration. Commenting on this experience, Josie Lacey stated: 'When I came back and addressed the plenum, the Board thought I was paranoid. I spoke about a militia with guns buried in back yards, the prevalence of conspiracy theories and the fact that the League of Rights was entrenched even in the local pharmacy. Later I was vindicated'.⁵² While such experiences were difficult for those involved, country tours became an important part of the proactive work of the Board and Lacey later spoke at Dubbo, Bathurst, Wagga, Port Macquarie and Bowral. The Board was one of the very few religious communities to do this and practically the only Jewish Board/Council to have such a program in Australia.⁵³

In February 1990 Josie Lacey formed the Women's Action Group after her experiences with the first Indigenous Women's Conference in Adelaide, followed by a conference of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in Sydney. Josie Lacey heard that the PLO were sending representatives to the WILPF Conference in Sydney and she wanted to find another Jewish woman to attend the conferences with her. She was not successful and in the end attended both conferences by herself after Jones had briefed her. Before Lacey attended the indigenous conference, she made contact with some of the aboriginal elders in Redfern with the assistance of a Jewish lawyer, Eddie Neuman, who assisted the aboriginal cause. At the conference each participant had to find a partner and Lacey was paired with a young aboriginal woman who became her 'buddy'. After listening to some violently anti-Israel speeches at the conference, Lacey told her aboriginal buddy that she could not stand it any more and was going home. Her buddy told her: 'If you believe in something you must fight for it'. So Lacey stayed and spoke on behalf of Israel. She was supported by the aboriginal woman who said: 'I am an aboriginal woman, but today I am a Jew and I am not hearing harmony or peace'.⁵⁴

Realising the need for a women's group so that Jewish women could find strength through mutual support, Lacey formed the Women's Action Group (WAG). WAG developed a core of fifteen or so prominent women who contribute significantly to the speakers' service, who are active on talk back radio, in letter writing, undertaking media interviews and disseminating relevant literature. Among the group which holds monthly meetings are Josie Lacey, Caroline Haski, Miriam Briggs, Gael Hammer, Judy Doobov, Miriam Frommer, Rochelle Eisenberg, Celie Benchom, Geraldine Jones, Vera Ranki and originally Amanda Gordon and Judy Shapira. For a period Vera Ranki wrote a weekly 'Myths and Facts' column for the *Australian Jewish News*. One of WAG's achievements was to develop a submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission on the issue of the *Gett* (Jewish divorce) which was presented through the ECAJ Women's Issues Committee and was before parliament in August 1992. Another member of WAG, Dr Anna Berger, wrote a response about the perceived bias of the Bickerton-Pearson textbook on the Arab-Israeli conflict. In this way the Women's Action Group has provided another significant element to the Board's public relations efforts.

In 1993 a new sub-committee of the PRC was formed — the Jewish Advocacy Group. This group held a series of weekly sessions which had the aim of establishing an informal Jewish advocacy. It was led by David Knoll and attracted a large number of university law students who were keen to be involved.

Publications were another form of Board outreach to the general community as the PRC sought to distribute important materials from overseas. Specific publications were reprinted such as *The Record* which dealt with the Holocaust and was distributed in conjunction with the television series 'The Holocaust' in 1979 and the booklet *PLO Exposed* which was reprinted from an overseas publication and widely distributed in 1982-3.

In 1982 'Probe' was begun and since then has been distributed on average three times a year to around 300 key people. It consists of major articles compiled from around 50 local and international services, including for many years the well known *Australian Jewish Times* fortnightly column 'Media Watch' which was written for the paper at its request by Board officers.⁵⁵ 'Media Watch' provided a summary of national print and metropolitan electronic media dealing with issues of Jewish interest. It appeared over one hundred times as a general contribution, before the final dozen or so columns appeared above the signature of Jeremy Jones, at the time the Board's Public Affairs Director.

Following the negative impact of the Lebanon war, an Israel Information Committee was formed in 1983 under Executive Director Margaret Gutman to provide press releases and distribute materials to specialist publications. This information sought to promote Israel's positive achievements to the general community. During the 1980s the Board developed a major resource facility to compile public source information, not only on Israel but also on the activities of extremist groups. This resource is still widely drawn on by journalists, academics and politicians.⁵⁶

The Board also ran regular briefing sessions, for members of both the general and Jewish community. In 1980 the concept of informal briefing breakfasts or luncheons was introduced. Senior politicians, public servants, editors and other key media personnel were invited for an informal session of discussion over lunch with the aim of creating goodwill and a better understanding. On the whole these functions were not designed to deal with specific issues but rather to provide an opportunity for people to ask about the work of the Board and issues relating to the Jewish community and to discuss matters in a relaxed atmosphere.⁵⁷ At times of crisis, or during the visit of a key personality, more specific sessions were held. For example, at the height of the Lebanon war a special session was organised with political scientist Dr Peter Medding, ECAJ president Dr Joachim Schneeweiss, Dr Moshe Yegar, deputy director of the Israeli Foreign Ministry and Dr Colin Rubenstein of Monash University. During Gerry Levy's presidency, the policy of key communal leaders meeting high ranking members of the press continued. For example Marx and Klarnet met with the news editor of the *Sun Herald*, Levy and Caplan with the editor of the *Australian Financial Review*, Klarnet and Michael Fischer with *Vox Populi*, and Josie Lacey with the SBS *Dateline* producer.

Briefing sessions were also organised for members of the PRC with key visitors to the community, and in relation to issues of concern to the community such as the UN Women's Conference in Nairobi in 1986 and government funding to

day schools. Later, such meetings were organised for communal leaders as breakfast briefings, often in conjunction with the State Zionist Council or the United Israel Appeal. In 1981 and 1982 a series of 'Probe Seminars' was held to enhance the political awareness of young adults within the Jewish community. These seminars were run by a committee headed by Nigel Rein and were considered to be very useful. In this way the Board sought to raise the level of knowledge of key opinion makers in both the general and Jewish community.



Abe Foxman, of the Anti-Defamation League,
with Graham de Vahl Davis at a briefing, Sydney 1984

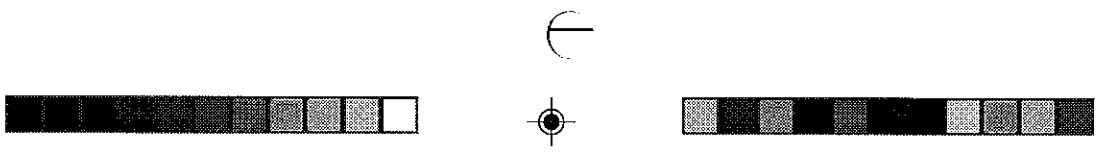
Another key area of Jewish outreach, again for both Jewish and general audiences, was radio. 2EA programs continued throughout this period thanks to the enthusiasm and devotion of the broadcasters associated with the Yiddish, Hebrew and English segments. In 1978 the Jewish Broadcasting Committee chaired by Severyn Pejsachowicz was brought under the aegis of the PRC, and guidelines were established which it was considered would act as a blueprint for future activities.⁵⁸ Jewish radio continued to maintain three programs on Sundays from 10 to 11 am, Wednesdays from 7.15 to 8.15 pm and Fridays from 2 - 3 pm. The Sunday and Wednesday programs were produced live. The main function of the Jewish Radio Hour was to inform and entertain the Jewish community. Communal activities were publicised and programs attracted a significant number of listeners.

Problems emerged with the running of the Jewish Radio Hour because of changes in government policy. For example, in 1986 a public service requirement was introduced that people over 70 could not continue in employment. This particularly affected the Yiddish presenters. Acting president Robert Goot and Caplan met with SBS management and negotiated that new personnel would be gradually phased in over the coming months and by March 1987 Dalia Ayalon who had been associated with Jewish Radio Hour for a number of years took over as coordinator from Pejsachowicz who had fulfilled that function with great dedication for ten years. In 1989 another change created cause for concern when SBS management insisted that presenters had to be bilingual which meant that the English segment run by Margaret Gutman and Rochelle Eisenberg would have to be deleted. Levy and de Vahl Davis met with the new 2EA station manager, David Mapstone, and explained to him the importance of the English language programs for the Jewish community, many of whom did not understand either Yiddish or Hebrew. In 1991 there were further problems with 2EA restructuring and another meeting was held with its management.

In May 1989 Yiddish presenter Chaim Opperman addressed the plenum about the Jewish programs on 2EA. At that time, five people were involved in the Yiddish program — Yiddish stalwart Alisa Siderowicz, Ruth Leiser, Severyn Pejsachowicz, Chaskal Davis and Opperman; Margaret Gutman, Rochelle Eisenberg and Colin Cohn for the English; and Nitza Lowenstein who broadcast alone for the Hebrew. Since then the team has remained much the same. While the Hebrew program had been restructured in 1989, the other two had not been. Opperman stressed the value of these programs for the community and urged deputies to become involved.⁵⁹ There is no doubt that without the continual dedication of the presenters and the support provided by the Board this important Jewish cultural endeavour would not continue.



Members of 2EA Radio celebrating its twelfth birthday in 1988



Another important Jewish radio program which ran for over a decade was 'You Don't Have to be Jewish' on 2SER FM once a week for thirty minutes. This program started in 1979 at the suggestion of the PRC and was produced by members of AUJS with the financial assistance of the Board and B'nai B'rith. The program was directed more towards the general public and included features on Biblical archaeology, Jewish festivals, the peace process, antisemitism, and Jews in Arab lands. The founding producer of the program, Stephen Gottlieb, who became a new deputy, was congratulated on his initiative in developing this program.⁶⁰ Jeremy Jones and Ron Kampeas as research officers paid particular attention to this program which they saw as an important outlet for information to be presented to the general community from the Jewish perspective. Over the years the program was maintained by AUJS enthusiasts who devoted much time and effort to its production⁶¹ and while it was originally run at 7.30 pm, in 1984 it was changed to a lunchtime to cater for lunchtime listeners with topics being lighter and a five minute editorial section being introduced. The program had an estimated 10,000 listeners and aimed 'to present a positive view of Judaism and Zionism to the larger community'.⁶² In 1990 the program ceased following the withdrawal of some of its funding.

There were two other radio initiatives. In 1981 a segment of five minute talks on Jewish festivals, customs, Jews in Society, Israel and the Holocaust was introduced on 2CBA FM, the Christian radio station, after a talk with Rev Vernon Turner. In April 1988 a new program, 'The Jewish Week', was introduced on 2RES FM as a half hour weekly segment with funding from the Board and the *Australian Jewish Times*. This aimed to provide updates on communal news, current affairs items and entertainment for both Jewish and non-Jewish listeners. The program, initially run by Josie Lacey and Darryl Hodes, was later taken over by Robert Teicher, who continues as the driving force behind the program. Daniel Feiler co-produced and present 'The Jewish Week' from 1993 to 1996.⁶³

An issue in relation to radio broadcasting was the fact that the ABC often broadcast special programs of Jewish interest on Friday nights and Jewish festivals when observant Jews do not listen to the radio. The Board urged the ABC to schedule these programs when all members of the Jewish community could listen to them.

Another interesting concept was that of access television. In 1993 Channel 31 offered the concept of ethnic community programs and Stephen Lewis, director of Sydney Jewish Community Access TV was elected to Channel 31's board of management. In February 1994 Sydney Access TV acquired a transmitter and started to conduct tests, but the whole idea was eventually abandoned for financial reasons.

IN DEFENCE OF ISRAEL

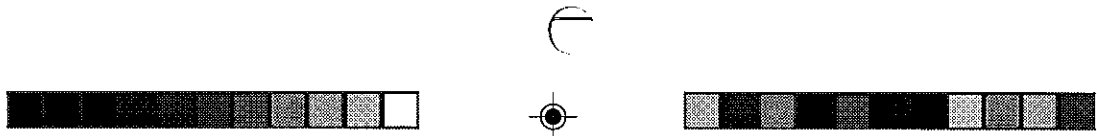
Throughout these years the PRC was constantly alert to attacks on Israel and what it perceived as anti-Zionist propaganda. In particular, they sought to find ways to reply to the attacks from the left-wing and pro-Arab groups. The Board was concerned with what they saw as bias in the general media, and also sought to influence politicians to understand Israel's position. It was felt that the best way of reaching out to these influential groups and individuals was by enabling them to visit Israel.

The position taken by the media towards Israel has been an issue of constant concern for Board leaders. Israel has always featured prominently in the media despite its tiny size and comparatively small population of around five million. Paul Sheehan, day editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald* pointed out in 1983: 'the *Sydney Morning Herald* devotes greater resources to its coverage of Israel than any other country in the world with the exception of the United States'. Sheehan also stressed that the average Australian 'knows nothing about Jews and Judaism because the Australian Jewish community was so tiny'.⁶⁴ This undue emphasis on events in Israel is a common feature everywhere in the western media, and is not unique to Australia.

Community concern about Israel and the media reached a peak during the Lebanon war in 1982 during the presidency of Leslie Caplan when the Jewish community felt that a very negative image was emerging in relation to Israel, especially after the attacks on the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps in Beirut. Caplan called a meeting of professional Jewish journalists who advised that during the period of the conflict there was little that could be done but that once the war was contained, the Board should send journalists to Israel so that they could gain a first-hand understanding of the situation.⁶⁵ Caplan followed this advice and in May 1983 the first group of three leading journalists was sent to Israel. Following this approximately every eighteen months the Board sent a small group of two to five leading journalists for a ten day intensive and comprehensive briefing tour of Israel. There they met with a wide range of informed experts as well as key political figures and saw the country for themselves.



A group of journalists at a plenum meeting, 1985
From left to right: John Highfield, ABC, Colin Segelov, Channel 10,
with Betty Wilkenfeld, honorary secretary



This program did have a significant impact on the participants, many of whom produced important materials afterwards. In November 1984, for example, Dawn Swain, then editor of the *Australian Women's Weekly*, produced an eight page coloured spread on Israel based on her visit earlier that year, while in June 1989 David White, news editor of 2MMM FM who had joined the Board's media mission to Israel in 1988, won the international radio festival's Gold Medal with his documentary 'The Promised Land' produced following his visit. Greg Sheridan, foreign editor of the *Australian*, visited Israel as part of the third group in 1986 and has remained a close friend of Israel and the Jewish community. In all, the journalists' program has been felt to be a most effective means of promoting a better understanding of the situation in Israel and the Middle East.

The 1982 war in Lebanon also led to increased anti-Israel activity on university campuses, with a series of debates run through the Australian Union of Students (AUS) in 1983. Prior to the campaign it was felt that the general feeling in Australia had swung against Israel, particularly as a result of events in Lebanon. Jewish students, however, were again successful in preventing anti-Israel motions being accepted through AUS and even outdid their predecessors of 1974 and 1975 in terms of campus voting in support of the Australasian Union of Jewish Students (AUJS) position. The AUS suffered from major secessions of campuses in 1977 and 1979, leading to its substantial weakening by 1980 and its final dissolution in 1984. Its support for the PLO was a significant factor in its dissolution.

These campaigns not only forced spokesmen within the Jewish community to address the issue of debating with the outspoken critics of Israel, but also unified and politicised a generation of Jewish students, especially through the AUJS. This body, previously known for its social and educational activities, now became deeply involved with political issues. In New South Wales, this involvement proceeded very much in conjunction with the Board of Deputies, with two deputies, Steven Klimt and Rodney Brender, and Jonathan Caplan, a member of the Public Relations Committee, working hard in support of AUJS. In this way, AUJS and the Board became partners in campaigning both on behalf of Israel and for other issues facing Jewry and Judaism. It is interesting that in the case of Jonathan Caplan, it was actually a father-son partnership, since in 1983 Leslie Caplan was serving as Board president. In 1990 there was a further series of campus debates as a result of the impact of the Intifada. Many meetings featured Mike Waterman, a Jewish anti-Zionist, but AUJS was again active in putting forward Israel's position.

Throughout this period, the Board continued its annual *Yom Ha'atzmaut* (Israel Independence Day) cocktail parties in conjunction with the State Zionist Council and held at a major city hotel. These have continued to be important public relations exercises, with prominent figures being invited from political, government, legal and business circles, as well as academia and the media. Most years the main speaker has been the current premier of New South Wales, including Neville Wran, Barry Unsworth, Nick Greiner and Bob Carr, reflecting the importance of this function which normally attracts an attendance of between 550 and 700.



The annual Yom Ha'atzmaut Independence Day Cocktail Party
Top, 1984: left to right; Paul Landa, Leslie Caplan, Neville Wran and Greville Janner
Bottom, 1994: Michael Marx, Dr Joachim Schneeweiss, Bronwyn Bishop,
the Honorable John Fahey and the Honorable Robert J. Hawke.

Another important development in promoting Israel has been the establishment of the Labor Friends of Israel. It held its first formal function in late 1981 when visiting Israeli author, Amos Oz, gave an address at the Randwick Labor Club.⁶⁶ One of the key personalities and strongest supporters of Labor Friends of Israel has been Bob Carr who entered the New South Wales parliament in 1978, became Minister for Planning and Environment in 1984, during the Greiner years was leader of the Opposition and then was elected premier of New South Wales in 1995. During the 1980s when Carr was president of Labor Friends of Israel a number of important and successful functions were held for visiting Israeli personalities and political figures. The Board also provided copies of the Israeli Labor Party English language journal, *Spectrum*, which allowed the Israeli party to develop a presence within the Australian Labor movement.⁶⁷ As well, members of the New South Wales parliament joined the annual tour of Israel organised through Labor Friends of Israel.

In June 1984 Liberal Friends of Israel (NSW) was established through the efforts of Board stalwart, Ken Wiener, who was for many years the Board's honorary treasurer and was an active member of the Liberal Party. Tim Moore, MP for Gordon, was also very active in the establishment and activities of the Liberal Friends. Both organisations played a key role in developing a positive image of Israel and a better understanding of the situation in the Middle East.



Board stalwart, Ken Wiener, honorary treasurer
and founder of Liberal Friends of Israel

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES AND RACIAL LEGISLATION

In dealing with antisemitism in the press and the media, the Board complained about serious breaches to the Press Council and the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (ABT). In 1979 a new radio station, 2SER FM, started broadcasting. From the beginning the Board has been concerned with the program produced by the Middle East Radio Collective whose materials the Board found to be anti-Zionist, antisemitic and highly offensive. In 1981 the Board made a submission to the ABT and, following this, agreements were reached with the Collective. However, the Board continued to feel that offensive material was still being produced and in 1983 complained about the program of 20 December 1982, which dealt with alleged Nazi-Zionist

collaboration during World War II. However, the Middle East Collective ceased broadcasting in mid-1983. The Board was also concerned with a Polish program on radio 2EA, which included antisemitic comments and made another formal complaint to the ABT about this program.

In 1985 the Board became concerned with a pro-Libyan Arabic language program which they felt was highly problematic, and the program producers were disciplined by the ABT. These experiences in New South Wales mirrored the problems experienced in Victoria with Radio 3CR where, again, the matter was taken to the ABT by the Victorian Board of Deputies and eventually a settlement was reached in 1979. In order to deal with such difficulties, the Board was involved in consultations on the code of practice for commercial broadcasters with the ABT.⁶⁸

Various issues were also taken to the Press Council of New South Wales. The longest running problem was with the Arabic newspaper, *An Nahar* which claimed that the firing of shots into the car of a prominent Sydney Arab in September 1979 could have been due to 'hidden Zionist fingers'. On 3 and 24 April 1981 two further anti-Israel articles appeared in *An Nahar*. After attempts at conciliation failed, a complaint was listed in mid-1981; the case was initially heard in November 1981 but was deferred to 1982. Robert Goot prepared the legal brief for the Board, although the Press Council itself did not accept formal legal representation, and the Board was represented by Goot and Dr Alan Crown of the Department of Semitic Studies at the University of Sydney. The case was finally dealt with in April 1982 when the Press Council censured the first of the two articles for 'bringing the freedom of the press into disrepute' by publishing extracts from the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*⁶⁹ but felt that the second article of 24 April was 'acceptable propaganda in time of hostilities and . . . not calculated to spread hatred against the Jews in the Australian community'.⁷⁰ *An Nahar* then published an account of this case on 14 May 1982 which the Board also found to be unacceptable, lodging a further complaint with the Press Council. However, the Council did not censure *An Nahar* in this instance. While being very disappointed with this result, the Board was not aware of any further action it could take.

In 1986 the Board lodged a complaint against another Arabic paper, *An Nahda*, which revived the blood libel accusation. The Board was represented by Ian Lacey and this time the Press Council did uphold the Board's complaint.

Problems were also experienced with Alex Mitchell's column of 2 September 1990 in the *Sun Herald* when Mitchell wrote a very disturbing article about plans for the Jewish college, Mandelbaum House, which was to be built as part of the University of Sydney. In December 1990 the Board referred Mitchell's article to the Press Council which upheld the Board's complaint, its decision being handed down in April 1991. The Board was represented by de Vahl Davis during these proceedings.

In 1992 and 1993 the Board had cause to lodge further complaints against *An Nahar* because of two offensive articles. The first, 'Let His Blood be Upon Us and Upon our Children' by Michael Haddad, was published on 16 July 1992 and the second, 'A Discourse on Zionism and Christianity' by Hani-El Turk, was published on 6 May 1993. Haddad's title referred to the statement in the Gospel of Matthew (chapter 27, verse 25) and the article began:

Why, O Council of Churches of Australia, the publication of the document on Christian-Jewish religious reconciliation and rapprochement at this time? And why this sudden tolerance by absolving contemporary Jews from the crime of shedding the blood of Christ?⁷¹

Haddad then argued that the 'Hebrew state' was established through 'killing and expelling the Arab original residents from their homes at the hands of the international Zionists and criminal gangs'.. and that the 'presumed holocaust was disproved' so that the idea of the Holocaust is 'to blackmail the world physically for generations to come'. He also referred to the 'Zionist holocaust against the Arabs' and made accusations of Israeli prostitutes 'committing adultery inside the Church of Resurrection in Jerusalem, the yard of the Al Aqsa Mosque' and other holy Christian and Moslem places. The second article published nine months later re-asserted that Jews of every generation are responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus and alleged that there was a Jewish conspiracy to destroy Christianity.

In response to these articles, the Board protested to the Anti-Discrimination Board. In one of his letters to the Board's commissioner, Steven Mark, Board president, Michael Marx wrote:

There is no doubt that the writer of the article clearly intended to promote and perpetuate serious hatred. In fact, in our view there is a real danger that some readers might well be incited to violence by such material.

Two meetings were held in July and August and as a result *An Nahar* finally agreed to publish a 'Correction' in which it admitted that both articles were 'derogatory of the Jewish faith and a vilification of the Jewish people' and expressed regret and apologies. The editor, Peter Indari also undertook to ensure that similar articles were not published in the paper in future and that *An Nahar* supported the concept of a multicultural Australia. The paper also agreed to publish in a forthcoming issue some excerpts from the 'Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish relations' adopted by the Catholic Bishops Conference in November 1992. Thus the result in the 1993 decision was much more acceptable to the Board than it had been with the earlier incident in 1982.

Another important case occurred in April 1994 when the Sydney Arabic language paper, *Al-Moharrer Al Arabi*, published on 1 April an offensive article entitled 'Blood for Zion's Unleavened Bread'. This article claimed that Jews practise ritual murder and included the statement that Jewish 'directives' include killing 'gentiles, who are not different from animals'. The author charged that shedding 'Muslim blood is justifiable' for Jews who are depicted as followers of a religion that finds it 'easy' to murder 'hundreds of human beings and even the entire human race'.⁷² The article was written by Taleb Shaheen who gave this explanation for the massacre of Muslim worshippers at a mosque in Hebron by Baruch Goldstein in February 1994.

Board leaders including vice-president, Peter Wertheim, immediately demanded an apology from the editor of the paper, Morris Tadros. They were particularly disturbed since Tadros, an Egyptian Christian, was a municipal councillor

and served in a senior position on the Ethnic Communities' Council of New South Wales. Tadros stated that the article was 'handed for publication without receiving my approval' and he immediately published an apology stressing that:

The article expressed the view of its author and not those of this newspaper, which is committed to the principle of respect for all religious faiths and ethnic groups in the Australian community...We recognise that vilification of ethnic or religious groups is unacceptable in a multicultural Australia.

Al-Moharrer Al Arabi deeply regrets having published the article and apologises unreservedly to the Jewish community in Australia. The editor will take responsibility to ensure that such statements will not be published in the future.⁷³

In addition, Tadros wrote a letter of apology to the Australian Jewish community which was published in *the Australian Jewish News*. The Board also lodged a complaint with the Anti-Discrimination Board which dealt with the issue through the process of conciliation.

All these cases made the Board very aware of the importance of the anti-discrimination legislation which was first introduced at the federal level in 1973 and became law in 1975, and at the state level in New South Wales in 1977. However, it was felt that this legislation was not strong enough as it did not prohibit racial vilification or provide for formal criminal sanctions, making effective action very difficult. Barry Cohen, MP, had tried to insert a clause making incitement of racial hatred a punishable offence but he had been outvoted at the time.⁷⁴ In 1982 a committee was established at the state level jointly sponsored by the Anti-Discrimination Board and the Ethnic Affairs Commission, both of New South Wales, to seek ways of improving inter-community relations. Stewart Levitt represented the Board on this committee which recommended substantial changes to the Anti-Discrimination Act of 1977. The Board approved these recommendations.

In November 1982 the Board's honorary secretary at the time, Ian Lacey, attended a national seminar on racism and the media entitled 'Common Law against Incitement to Racial Hatred', held in Melbourne. At this seminar Carmel Niland, then president of the Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales invited Lacey to chair the legal sub-committee established by the New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Board to consider amendments to the Act. Following on from this appointment, Ian Lacey became the main spokesperson for the Board on the issue of racial vilification legislation. He felt strongly the need for changes to the legislation because, listening each month at plenum meetings to the list of antisemitic manifestations, he felt that 'there was little we were doing about it apart from meeting with editors and writing letters because there was no final sanctions in our hands'.⁷⁵

In September 1987 a working party was established by the Unsworth government to look into this legislation. This group had to consider the debate as to whether penalties should be of a criminal or civil nature, an issue over which the Board failed to develop a unanimous policy. Although racial legislation was drafted, with civil penalties only, and passed, it was never proclaimed. When Nick Greiner

was elected Liberal premier of New South Wales, he demonstrated a personal commitment to supporting changes to the legislation, including criminal sanctions in extreme cases. By early 1989 the new legislation proposed to make it unlawful to express hatred, threats, severe threats and incite to violence a person or group on the basis of race. A conciliation process was introduced with the president of the Anti-Discrimination Board. As well, the Equal Opportunity Tribunal was given the power to order apologies and retractions and to award damages in line with its existing jurisdiction up to \$40,000. The Bill also made it a criminal offence if racial vilification is accompanied by threats of or incitement to violence to persons or property. Fines and/or imprisonment for up to six months could be imposed.⁷⁶ There was bipartisan support for this Bill, and in fact it was Bob Carr, leader of the Labor Opposition, who introduced it to the Legislative Assembly. The only opponent in the Upper House was Mary Whitehouse, a member of Fred Nile's party. Ian and Josie Lacey were both personally invited to attend the parliamentary session where the racial vilification legislation was enacted.



Honorary Officers visit to Premier Nick Greiner, 1989
From left to right: John Glass, Geejay Schneeweiss,
Michael Marx, Joy Balkind, Nick Greiner and Gerry Levy.

This new legislation was welcomed by the Board and, after its proclamation in October 1989⁷⁷ the following resolution was passed:

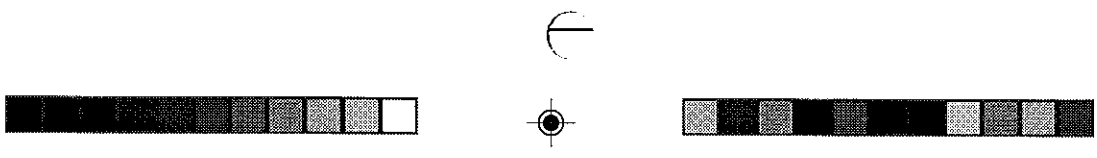
The New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies conveys to the Premier, the Honorable Nick Greiner, and the Parliament of New South Wales, its support and appreciation for the enactment of the amendment to the Anti-Discrimination Act proscribing racial vilification in this state.

The Board believes the legislation is an important step in promoting harmony in multi-cultural Australia. This New South Wales legislation sets new standards in Australia that we trust will soon be followed in other states.⁷⁸

However, the Board expressed some concern that the word 'religion' was not included in the definition of 'race', although Lacey argued that the Jewish community 'would be protected on the basis of case law relating to similar legislation in the United Kingdom and New Zealand'.⁷⁹ By 1991 the Board felt that the anti-vilification provisions did not adequately address the large number of antisemitic manifestations which had occurred since 1989 so that further changes to the legislation were required.⁸⁰ The Board and the ECC pushed for a review of the legislation to which Greiner agreed, appointing Jim Samios as chairman of the Review Committee. Lacey prepared the Board submission which was handed to Samios. As a result of this review, some amendments were made, with ethno-religious groups being expressly protected for the first time, but the remedies and sanctions were not strengthened.

In addition, while some other states including Western Australia and Victoria did follow the New South Wales example, the federal government did not introduce racial vilification amendments, including criminal sanctions, to its Racial Discrimination Act. It was only in 1992 that a Bill was drafted, presented for its first reading, as well as being circulated for national consultations. Josie Lacey was appointed by the Attorney-General's Department as Convenor of the NSW Consultation, and Ian Lacey prepared submissions on behalf of the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW and the Federation of Ethnic Councils of Australia, which strongly supported the legislation in principle and proposed some improvements. However, when parliament was dissolved, the Bill was allowed to lapse.⁸¹

In December 1993, Michael Marx met with the New South Wales State Attorney General John Hannaford, and urgently advocated that the federal bill be re-introduced. The Laceys, Wertheim and Catherine Chung, vice-president of the Australian Chinese Community Association, also prepared complementary submissions to the Federal government supporting the introduction of a Federal law prohibiting incitement to racial hatred. However, it was not until 1995 that a fresh Race Hatred Bill was introduced. The Bill had two parts. Firstly, there was a proposed amendment to the Crimes Act which would have imposed a criminal penalty for intentional incitement of racial hatred. Then there was the civil 'unlawful act' of 'offensive behaviour based on racial hatred' which provided the remedies of the



Racial Discrimination Act for acts which 'offend, insult, intimidate or humiliate'. In this way, the government would have been able to take firm action on racial hatred. Ian Lacey considered this to be 'the best legislation of its kind ever proposed'.⁸²

Unfortunately this Bill was opposed in the Senate. Josie and Ian Lacey gave evidence to the Senate Legislation Committee on behalf of the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils, which complemented the ECAJ's evidence in Melbourne. In the end, after consulting with the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW and the ECAJ, the federal government accepted the Senate amendments which removed the criminal sanctions. On 15 September 1995 the 'watered down version' of the Federal Racial Hatred Act became law. Thus, while important progress had been made in regard to legal sanctions and antisemitism, the community feels that still more needs to be achieved.

Board's Holocaust teaching
kit praised by educators

Remember

