

JEWISH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATES IN INTERFAITH DAY OF HEALING

The Jewish community was strongly represented at a moving interfaith ceremony on Sunday to mark the second anniversary of the national Apology to the Aboriginal People.

Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Hindu leaders joined Indigenous people at the Kamay Botany Bay National Park to acknowledge their original ownership of this country, the continuing pain suffered by survivors of the Stolen Generations and their unique culture and tradition.

Addressing the gathering on behalf of the NSW Jewish community, NSW Jewish Board of Deputies President Robin Margo referred to some deep affinities that exist between Aboriginal and Jewish people. "Jewish people know too well the silence that follows atrocity. We recognise in the depth of our being the genocidal atrocities that were inflicted in the past on Aboriginal people and know how the crippling effects, the fear and the pain pass down, from generation to generation." And he referred to the famous protest in December 1938 by William Cooper and other Aboriginal leaders against the Nazis' persecution of the Jews. "This was a magnificent gesture of humanity by people who were then not even recognised as citizens in their own country. We will never forget it." "While we have much still to learn, we also have an intuitive understanding of the importance to Aboriginal people of their ancient connection with the land. Because we are a people united, not only by our religion, but also by our historical and spiritual attachment to a land, which was taken from us by force ... Aboriginal and Jewish people also know what it is to endure, yet not to harden our hearts, or to lose our capacity love."

Emanuel Synagogue Rabbi Paul Jacobson offered a prayer, as did representatives of the Muslim, Hindu, Christian and Aboriginal communities.

Also in attendance from the Jewish community were Board of Deputies CEO Vic Alhadeff, Social Justice Committee Chair, Professor Bettina Cass, and Ilona Lee, a member of the Committee and President of Shalom College.

The event was organised by the Sutherland Shire Citizens for Native Title and Reconciliation and by Shaping Our Future Together.

Sunday 14 February 2010