

## Textbook chapter on Judaism rewritten after flaws exposed

**T**HE chapter on Judaism in an HSC textbook has been comprehensively overhauled after scores of errors were drawn to the attention of the publishers by the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies.

The textbook was the *Cambridge University Press Studies of Religion Stage 6* volume. Its authors were Christopher Hartney and Jonathan Noble and it was published by Cambridge University Press Australia & New Zealand.

Chapter 12, titled *Judaism: The basic facts*, was riddled with inaccuracies, spelling mistakes and a comment which took the textbook into the realm of racial vilification.

Five examples:

- *Much modern conflict in the world is related to the reactions of other groups to the Jewish people.*

This statement had the potential to incite racial hatred.

- *Passover involves slaughtering lambs, smearing the lintel on the front door with blood and eating unleavened breads for seven days.*

False. There is no slaughtering of any animal at Passover. (According to biblical tradition, this did occur in Egypt once - 3500 years ago. When the Jews were about to leave Egypt, they marked the doorposts of their homes with the blood of a lamb so that the Angel of Death would pass over their homes.)

- *While outlawed in many countries, polygamy is commonly practised in Israel today.*

False. The implication is that it is practised among Jews; in fact, it is outlawed for Jews in Israel, but Muslims are permitted to carry it out because of the freedom of religion afforded to them and to all faiths in Israel.



### CELEBRATING THE MACE

An unusual event was held at Parliament House - celebration of the 35th anniversary of the donation of the Mace to the NSW Legislative Assembly. The initiative came from Sir Asher Joel, a member of the Upper House, in 1974, and the function was attended by four generations of his family. From left: Rabbi Jeffrey Kamins, NSW Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell, Dr Michael Joel, Oscar Asher Deutsch, Bennett Mason, Natasha Joel, Alexandra Joel, Lady Sybil Joel, Board of Deputies President Robin Margo S.C., Anna Joel, Professor Gus Lehrer.

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Photo: Ingrid Shakenofsky

- *The tendency for Jews to choose sophisticated professions such as law, medicine and scholarship is closely connected to Jewish family*

*togetherness.*

An absurd non-sequitur.

- The caption beneath a pair of Shabbat candles stated: *The sharing of a Seder meal is an im-*

*portant part of the Shabbat celebrations.* Absurd.

Once the Board of Deputies had been made aware of the problems in the textbook, it approached Cambridge University Press to express its concerns and met with the executive director, publishing director and managing editor.

The publishers duly withdrew the textbook from circulation with the following statement: "Cambridge University Press has recognised the concerns that have been expressed about interpretations within the book and in response will seek the advice of an independent expert in Judaism."

The Board of Deputies offered to assist with rewriting the chapter, and it was comprehensively overhauled.

### Senior journalists visit Israel

Four senior journalists participated in the 2009 Board of Deputies Journalists Mission to Israel - from left: *Daily Telegraph* Associate Editor Nick



Tabakoff, Channel 7 senior producer Michelle Ainsworth, Mission supporter Sabina Van Der Linden-Wolanski, *Sydney Morning Herald* Foreign Editor Connie Levett and *Sydney Morning Herald* Chief Correspondent Peter Hartcher. The Mission is supported by Ms Van Der Linden-Wolanski and the JCA Haberman Kulawicz Fund. The journalists were accompanied by four colleagues who were guests of AIJAC.

# 200 teens explore commonalities



200 teenagers of different ethnic and faith backgrounds came together in a unique youth harmony program.

Titled "Respect, Understanding, Acceptance", the program is a project of the Board of Deputies Education Secretariat and organised by Education Manager Lynda Ben-Menashe.

The participants came from St Paul's College Manly (Catholic); Hamazkaine Arshak and Sophie Galstaun College (Armenian); Davidson High School (state); the Australian International Academy (Muslim); and Masada College (Jewish).

The students were welcomed by Board of Deputies CEO Vic

Alhadeff, who urged them to be proud of their identities - and to have the courage to respect the identities of others. The keynote speaker was radio and TV identity Glenn Wheeler, who described how Australia had changed - for the better - since his youth, and emphasised the need to embrace diversity.

The students engaged in discussions, painted canvas murals with messages of peace, performed musical items and enjoyed a kosher barbecue. The program was held at Masada College.

"The objective is to break down barriers and for students to come to know, understand and respect each other for who



From left: Zainab Mohson, Fatima El Nabouch, Dylan Rosenthal and Naseli Robertson at the Board of Deputies' Respect, Understanding and Acceptance program.

they are - Australian youth who happen to have diverse backgrounds," said Alhadeff.

"It was the third time this year that we brought these students together, and it was gratifying to note the friendships which developed from the time of the initial encounter to today."

The Board of Deputies brings

together about 1000 students of different backgrounds in various harmony programs every year.

The feedback was overwhelming. Said one teacher: "This project has been one of the most wonderful education experiences I have ever been involved in - better than years of classroom activity."



## CHANUKAH COMES TO PARLIAMENT

Chanukah came to Parliament for the first time since the NSW Parliament was established in 1856. The event was hosted by the Yeshiva Centre-Chabad NSW under the auspices of the Board of Deputies. 70 MPs, a dozen ministers and shadow ministers and 100 Jewish leaders attended. From left: Then-Premier Nathan Rees MP, Speaker Richard Torbay MP, Chabad NSW Chief Rabbi Pinchus Feldman, Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell MP, Board of Deputies President Robin Margo S.C.

## Celebrating St Vincent's

THE courage of St Vincent's Hospital in accepting Jewish doctors at a time when many hospitals did not was acknowledged at a moving ceremony.

Jewish leaders and medical identities - including world-renowned AIDS specialists Professors David Cooper and Ron Penny - and St Vincent's Private Hospital celebrated the hospital's centenary and the role Sydney Jewry has played in its history. The event was organised by the hospital and the Board of Deputies.



From left: St Vincent's Private Executive Director Robert Cusack, Australasian Jewish Medical Federation (NSW) President Dr Jane Law, Professor David Cooper.

## 300 at interfaith gathering

ABOUT 300 people from a range of backgrounds came together for a stirring day of engagement at Old Government House as a precursor to the Parliament of The World's Religions.

Muslims, Jews, Baha'is, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and Zoroastrians enjoyed debate, music and vegetarian food.

Board of Deputies Interfaith chair Josie Lacey OAM oversaw the Jewish involvement; Faye Sussman organised the musical component, which included a rendition by Dalia Dior; Judith Levitan spoke on fasting and feasting; and ABC broadcaster Dr Rachael Kohn chaired a youth panel, which included Glen Falkenstein.

## 400 mark Kristallnacht

An outstanding turnout of 400 people attended the Board of Deputies' Kristallnacht ceremony at Emanuel School. Board of Deputies President Robin Margo S.C. and Kevin Russell (right) spoke about the courage of Aboriginal leader William Cooper, who in 1938 led a demonstration to the German Consulate in Melbourne to protest at Nazi Germany's treatment of Jews. Also pictured are Cooper's grandson, Uncle Boydie Turn-



er (left), and Holocaust survivor George Sternfeld. Russell is Cooper's great-grandson.

## Talking about Israel

The Board of Deputies runs free "Talking about Israel" courses for members of the community. The 5-session course covers 1948, refugees, 1967, settlements, human rights and the UN. Sessions have been scheduled for Moriah College, Wizo, JewishCare and Masada College. To enrol, email [benmenashe@nswjbd.com](mailto:benmenashe@nswjbd.com)



# Celebrating the Mace

AT the initiative of the NSW Parliament, a function to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the donation of the Mace to the NSW Legislative Assembly was held in the Speaker's Garden.

Comprising gold and gemstones, the Mace was presented to the NSW Parliament by the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies on October 15, 1974 to celebrate the sesquicentenary (150th anniversary) of the establishment of parliament in Australia.

As the initiative to donate the mace came from Sir Asher Joel, a member of the Upper House and a prominent member of the Jewish community, the function was attended by four generations of his family – his wife, Lady Sybil Joel; son Dr Michael Joel; grand-daughter Natasha Deutsch; and great-grandson Oscar Asher Deutsch.

Speaker Richard Torbay MP welcomed guests, and Board of Deputies President Robin Margo S.C. responded, acknowledging that "NSW and Australia have given asylum and refuge to many Jews fleeing persecution.

"People who have learned what it means to live under circumstances of political oppres-



**NSW Nationals Leader Andrew Stoner MP, Yaron Finkelstein, Board of Deputies Vice-President Yair Miller.**



**The Leader of the House John Aquilina MP, ECAJ Executive Director Peter Wertheim AM.**



**Jonathan O'Dea MP, Sophie Caplan.**



**Andrew Fraser MP, Board of Deputies CEO Vic Alhadeff.**

sion feel the deepest appreciation for the privilege of living in a society that respects the rule of law and that strives to uphold values of fairness, equality, non-discrimination and respect for human rights.

"That is what the Mace symbolises: a democracy of free citizens, upholding values that men and women who came before us fought and died for; and the opportunity, indeed duty, to participate fully in the life of our State and country."

## FROM THE CEO



**RELATIONSHIPS** matter. That is the theme which permeates this edition of *The Board* – an edition which talks about the need to engage, reach out and generate understanding of our issues.

Every year the Board of Deputies undertakes road trips into Regional New South Wales. The objective is to connect with key sectors which do not knowingly come into contact with Jews and are therefore unlikely to be exposed to Jewish issues.

Equally, they are unlikely to hear perspectives on Israel and the Middle East which provide a degree of balance and context.

These tours provide opportunities to address all of the above – to speak about the integral Jewish role in Australia dating back to the First Fleet, racism, antisemitism, the Holocaust and Israel. They are an opportunity to engage with religious, civic and political leaders, as well as hundreds of students.

Similarly, our Luncheon Club is a forum in which opinion-leaders exchange views with leaders of the community. The past year has seen an eclectic range of speakers offering a diverse range of perspectives, while our Young Luncheon Club featured one of Australia's leading unionists, Paul Howes, delivering a stirring message to young unionists.

Our Respect, Understanding, Acceptance program brings together hundreds of teenagers across the faith groups. It is constantly growing, and after being successfully piloted on the north shore, will possibly take root in the southern and eastern suburbs too during the course of 2010.

Our front-page story about the Cambridge University Press textbook is a salutary reminder to members of the community to be vigilant and to inform the Board of Deputies should you come across anything untoward that requires intervention.

**Vic Alhadeff**

## Building bridges to Regional NSW

A STUDENT who had never disclosed his Jewish identity wore a *kippa* to a lecture on the Holocaust in Coffs Harbour.

While he held his silence throughout the two-hour discussion, he ensured that the speakers - and his classmates - were aware that he was a Jew.

This episode was one of numerous poignant moments during an intensive Board of Deputies bridge-building tour of the NSW mid-north coast.

Conducted by CEO Vic Alhadeff and Education Manager Lynda Ben-Menashe, the five-day road trip comprised interactions with 1000 people via 26 engagements in Armidale, Kempsey, Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour.

The presentations and discussions were with leaders of



**Board of Deputies Education Manager Lynda Ben-Menashe and CEO Vic Alhadeff (rear) with leaders of the Armidale Dumaresque Council, from left: Mayor James Ducat, Councillor Herman Beyersdorf, Deputy Mayor Jim Maher and Councillor Colin Gadd.**

the Uniting, Anglican and Assembly of God churches, MPs, city councillors, Rotary clubs, media, schools, a TAFE and an English teachers association.

"It's all about relationships," Alhadeff said.

"The overwhelming response was enormous receptiveness, with seeds sown for further dialogue, exchanges with Jewish schools and visits to the Sydney Jewish Museum."

Previous road trips have been to Parkes, Forbes, Dubbo, Mudgee, Young, Cootamundra, Byron Bay, Taree, Shoalhaven,

Wollongong and the Southern Highlands.



**John Paul College students who received a presentation on the Holocaust.**



# Speakers at lunch

THE Board of Deputies Luncheon Club provides a forum in which public figures engage with the Jewish community.

Recent speakers included: Deputy Premier **Carmel Tebbutt**, Australian Workers Union National Secretary **Paul Howes**, NSW Treasurer **Eric Roozendaal** MP, *Sydney Morning Herald* Chief Correspondent **Peter Hartcher** and Foreign Editor **Connie Levett**,

*Daily Telegraph* Associate Editor **Nick Tabakoff**, Channel 7 Senior Producer **Michelle Ainsworth**, political scientist **Peter Khalil**, Shadow Minister **Chris Pyne** MP, Israeli political commentator **Yoram Deckel**, *Tikkun* Editor **Michael Lerner**, Religious Action Centre Director **David Saperstein** and philanthropist **Bobby Sager**.

The Luncheon Club is hosted by Harold Milner, Director of Shaw Stockbroking.



Justice Stephen Rothman, NSW Treasurer Eric Roozendaal MP, Board of Deputies President Robin Margo S.C.



*Sydney Morning Herald* Foreign Editor Connie Levett, Board of Deputies Vice-President Roma Shell, Kjeld Hansen, Suzy Wolanski.



Zeke Solomon, Stephen Chipkin.



Political scientist Deputy Premier Peter Khalil. Carmel Tebbutt MP.



Community Relations Commission Chairman Stepan Kerkyasharian, philanthropist Bobby Sager.



Jaimi Primrose-Levi, Sarah Constable, Shadow Minister Chris Pyne MP, Mark Sheldon, Daniel Rod.



Michael Shur, Executive Council of Australian Jewry President Robert Goot AM, SC.



Board of Deputies Honorary Secretary Jeremy Spinak, Michael Zelas.

## Young Unionists Luncheon Club

AUSTRALIAN Workers Union National Secretary Paul Howes (pictured) addressed a NSW Jewish Board of Deputies Luncheon Club for young unionists. He spoke of



peace initiatives in the Middle East being undertaken by the AWU, including its establishment of TULIP – Trade Unions Linking Israel and Palestine - while Board of Deputies CEO Vic Alhadeff outlined grassroots peace projects underway in Israel.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT



THE Board's General Franchise elections at the end of last year produced many more Deputies under the age of 30 than has been the case for many years.

Age is not of course a test of individual merit any more than is gender but, as with gender, it is important for succession and the overall quality of decision-making that there be a representative mix and balance among Deputies. That younger people were prepared to put their hands up for community service, and that so many were elected as General Franchise Deputies, is therefore invigorating for the Board and very welcome.

This welcome development presents challenges as well. A challenge for new Deputies will be to learn as quickly as possible what has been built through trial and error by their predecessors and to tap into the knowledge and skills of older Deputies and the Board's professional staff, many of whom have decades of hard-won experience under their belts. A challenge for continuing Deputies, on the other hand, will be to allow space for new ideas and experiments, for new perspectives on old problems

and for new ways of tackling them.

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik has observed that the problems of humanity (eg terrorism, political stability or anarchy, morality or permissiveness, poverty, epidemics, pollution) transcend the boundaries of ethnic groups – an environment that is stricken, either physically or ideologically, can wreak havoc upon all groups – and that it is our duty as human beings to contribute our energies and creativity to alleviate the pressing needs and anguish of mankind and to contribute to its welfare.

Although Jews in Australia long ago became fully integrated into the wider Australian community, younger Jews are sometimes more constantly conscious than their elders that we share in that wider experience and that our security and welfare as a community depends in intimate ways on the achievement of social justice and inclusion for all groups and faiths in our society.

I look forward to a year in which the important work of the Board will continue and be infused with fresh vitality.

**Robin Margo S.C.**

## Commentators at breakfast



Dr Hilton Immerman, Ori Golan, Israeli political commentator Yaron Deckel, Penny Hurst.



Rabbi David Saperstein, Director of the Religious Action Centre in Washington DC.

## Young blood joins Board

A DRIVE by the Board of Deputies to recruit young blood paid off when an unprecedented number of young adults sought and won election as General Franchise deputies.

With 99 candidates standing for 75 positions, 23 of the candidates elected were under the age of 30 - almost one third.

The result was an astronomical jump for the Board, which previously had only two General Franchise deputies under 30.



Newly-elected deputies, from left: Dikla Blum, Byron Danby, Glen Falkenstein.