



At The BOARD

Working for the political and physical security of the community

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Liberal MPs tour Jewish Museum

Seven members of the State Opposition front bench toured the Sydney Jewish Museum in a mark of solidarity with the Jewish community. The visit, which was at the initiative of the Board of Deputies, followed the release of figures reflecting a near-record 442 antisemitic incidents in Australia logged from October 2005 to September 2006 - an increase of 110 incidents on the previous 12 months. Back from left: Shadow Education Minister Brad Hazzard, Shadow Minister for Small Business Andrew Fraser, Museum CEO Norman Selligman, Deputy Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell; middle row from left: Museum education officer Avril Alba, Holocaust survivor and guide Marika Weinberger, Board of Deputies Public Affairs Manager Candice Talberg, Board of Deputies CEO Vic Alhadeff, Shadow Transport Minister Gladys Berejicklian; front from left: Shadow Finance Minister Peta Seaton, Shadow Police Minister Mike Gallacher, Opposition Leader Peter Debnam. Photo: Ingrid Shakenovsky

'Brave' defence of Jews at conference on Islam

MICHELLE ROMAIN

NSW Jewish Board of Deputies CEO Vic Alhadeff offered a "brave" defence of the Jewish people following his address at a conference on the media's coverage of Islam.

Titled "The journalist and Islam", the two-day conference at NSW Parliament House, convened by Macquarie University's Centre for Middle East and North African Studies, was opened by former NSW Premier Bob Carr, who came under attack for his criticism of Sheikh Tajeddin al Hilaly.

The audience of almost 100 people fired most of their questions at Alhadeff during a panel discussion which followed his presentation, in which he showed a powerpoint presentation of anti-semitic cartoons which had been published in the Islamic media.

"Speaking as a Jewish Australian, we have a concern that a great deal of the media coverage that comes out of the Middle East lacks context and balance," he said. "Assailants draw a dotted line, blaming Australian Jews for what is happening there."

He said the proliferation of anti-semitic material in Islamic media "sends an unambiguous message that hatred of Jews is not merely permissible, but is endorsed and encouraged".

"We as a Jewish community and you as a Muslim community are all in this together. We have a shared interest in working towards acceptance as part of the fabric of Australian society."

In the midst of a spate of hostile questions, Alhadeff received support from an unexpected quarter when a hijab-wearing journalism lecturer from RMIT, Nasya Bahfen, took the microphone and commended him for having "the courage" to address the forum. She urged the audience to acknowledge his message.

And the following day, Alhadeff was lauded online for his presentation. Writing on the website Crikey.com.au, Irfan Yousuf, a Muslim journalist, said that Alhadeff had made a "brave presentation" which "opened up my eyes to this scourge of anti-semitism".

Alhadeff commented later that while he had found the environment "extremely challenging", he felt that it was "important to get our message out there".

Other speakers included journalist Peter Manning, former ambassador to Israel Ross Burns, The Australian's Tom Switzer and Janet Albrechtsen, and Federal Health Minister Tony Abbott.

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Board of Deputies lends a hand to Muslim professionals

NSW Jewish Board of Deputies CEO Vic Alhadeff was invited to address the fledgling Muslim Professionals Group to assist its members in forming themselves into a representative body.

The Muslim Professionals Group includes lawyers and businessmen and women.

Its members came together for a full-day seminar in Parramatta under the auspices of the Community Relations Commission to explore the issues involved in setting up a repre-

sentative organisation. The forum was chaired by CRC Chairman Stepan Kerkyasharian.

Given the organisational reputation of the Board of Deputies, Alhadeff was invited to address the meeting on the structure of the Board, as well as its activities. He dwelt on the Board's interfaith and outreach work, and emphasised the need for both the Jewish and Muslim communities to speak with one moderate voice.



Board of Deputies CEO Vic Alhadeff (front, centre) with members of the Muslim Professionals Group. The seminar was chaired by Community Relations Commission Chairman Stepan Kerkyasharian (front, left).

From the president

Every conversation counts

IN an interview in January last year, the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, described the spread of antisemitism as a "tsunami". A year later, that wave shows little sign of receding.



Violence - whether physical or verbal - against Jews is socially unacceptable. Australian Jews are entitled to a fair go. Why then, was there an increase in antisemitic acts in 2006?

The Jewish community has been on a state of alert against terrorism and racist violence for some years. Until recently, mob violence was considered anathema to Australia. That is no longer the case.

Two groups - white supremacists and extremist Islamists - fanning the violence of December 2005 on Sydney beaches, are among those considered to pose a threat to the Jewish community. It is essential that antisemitism and racism be seen as socially unacceptable by the widest possible cross-section of Australian society.

The intensity of antisemitism is not on the scale felt overseas. While the highest level of incidents in Australia continues to be in NSW, the Board of Deputies' Communal Security Group has made enormous strides in managing the physical security risk. The overall level of incidents has fallen for the third year in succession. Our security, however, is the responsibility of us all.

The Jewish voice in Australia also needs to become more articulate. As a community we must do all we can to create a positive perception of Israel and of the Jewish people in the wider community. If Israel and the Jewish people are perceived positively, society at large will condemn attacks upon Jews. But if they acquiesce in expressions of antisemitism, then both verbal and physical abuse of Jews will be tolerated.

Everyone is capable of helping to build the bulwark against antisemitism. Advocacy is about reaching out and making every conversation count towards making antisemitism socially unacceptable and generating a positive perception of Jews and Israel.

David Knoll



Member of the JCA family of organisations



Member for Strathfield Virginia Judge MP (centre) with Jewish, Muslim and Christian participants in the Youth Encounters programme. Photos: Ingrid Shakenovsky

Teenagers reach out

CHRISTIAN, Muslim and Jewish teenagers came together in Sydney in a ground-breaking programme designed to build bridges and break down barriers.

Titled Youth Encounters, the grassroots interfaith project was conceived by Board of Deputies Special Projects Manager Josh Levin in 2004, and has tripled in size since its conception.

About 240 Year 11 students from 12 schools - four Muslim, four Jewish and four Christian - took part in the latest version of the watershed initiative.

The two-day programme, held at MLC in Burwood, comprised workshops, drama performances and presentations, all designed to help generate a more tolerant and harmonious society.

The Member for Strathfield, Virginia Judge MP, addressed the students at the closing ceremony.

"Australia is an incredibly diverse society, and Youth Encounters brings together students from diverse backgrounds in a spirit of understand-

ing and friendship," she said.

"With the world we live in, we cannot afford to take community harmony for granted; it's something we always need to work on building.

"Understanding and engagement are building blocks to successful societies."

The closing ceremony was also addressed by Board of

Deputies President David Knoll.

Youth Encounters was launched in 2004 with three schools - one Jewish, one Muslim and one Christian. In 2005 it was doubled to six schools, and in 2006 doubled again.

The programme is run in conjunction with the (Muslim) Affinity Intercultural Foundation and Kincoppal Rose Bay.

- In an inspirational aftermath to the 2006 Youth Encounters programme, five Moriah College students who participated in the interfaith exchange took the initiative of inviting five Muslim students whom they had met to have Shabbat dinner with them. The Moriah students accompanied their Muslim guests to Central Synagogue for the Friday night service, after which they walked to the home of one of the Jewish students for a Shabbat dinner with a difference.



A Muslim student explains the Koran to Jewish colleagues at Youth Encounters.

Muslim honour for interfaith innovator

A STAFF member of the Board of Deputies was honoured by a Muslim organisation for his interfaith work.

The award was presented to Board of Deputies Special Projects Manager Josh Levin by the (Muslim) Affinity Intercultural Foundation in recognition of his pioneering role in Youth Encounters.

Youth Encounters - which last year brought together 240 Muslim, Jewish and Christian Year 11 students - was Levin's

brainchild. He launched the project in 2004 in conjunction with Affinity and Kincoppal Rose Bay. He was presented with the award by Affinity President Mehmet Ozalp at the closing ceremony of the Youth Encounters programme at MLC Burwood.

He commented afterwards that it was "very gratifying" to be recognised for his role in the programme

Levin, 26, joined the Board of Deputies in 2002.



Board of Deputies Special Projects Manager Josh Levin receives an award from Affinity Intercultural Foundation President Mehmet Ozalp.

Building bridges with Regional NSW

THE importance of speaking out in the face of injustice was the theme which underscored an intensive visit to Port Macquarie, Taree and Wauchope by NSW Jewish Board of Deputies chief executive officer Vic Alhadeff.

The speaking tour comprised 15 engagements in three days - meetings with MPs, church leaders, police, media and business leaders, and addressing senior students from six high schools.

The tour was organised as part



Board of Deputies CEO Vic Alhadeff with the Mid North Coast Local Area Commander, Police Superintendent Paul Fehon.

of the Board of Deputies' Speaker Service.

"The Jewish community has a proud relationship with both Regional NSW and the Christian community," Alhadeff said in an interview with the Port Macquarie News. "This visit was undertaken within that context."

"The first Jewish MP of an Australian parliament represented the Country Party as the Member for Orange. Similarly, we engage in numerous programmes with other faith groups. My aim was to build on that."

Alhadeff addressed students at Westport High, Port Macquarie High, Mackillop High, Christian Heritage School and Taree High.

"We explored a broad range of complex issues, from racism to the Middle East to Jewish identity to antisemitism to the Holocaust."

"The importance of such a speaking tour is that it gives people an opportunity to engage with a representative of the Jewish community and ask questions which



Board of Deputies CEO Vic Alhadeff with students at Westport High School in Port Macquarie during his speaking tour of the Mid North Coast.

they won't otherwise get to ask."

Alhadeff also addressed the Uniting Church in Wauchope, met with NSW National Party Leader Andrew Stoner MP, Independent MP Rob Oakeshott, members of the Ministers Fraternal, Police

Superintendent Paul Fehon and the Manning River Valley Chamber of Commerce, and was interviewed by the Manning River Valley Times and ABC Radio Mid North Coast.

Confronting cultural conflict

LEADING representatives of a range of faiths came together to exchange views at the fifth annual Abraham Conference.

Held at the University of Sydney, the conference deals with interfaith relations in confronting cultural conflict.

It is designed for interfaith professionals and lay leaders of faith communities.

The keynote speakers were Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, Professor Zeki Saritoprak, and North Shore Temple Emanuel Emeritus Rabbi Richard Lampert.

The Board of Deputies is a co-sponsor of the event, along with the (Muslim) Affinity Intercultural Foundation, the Sydney Catholic Archdiocese, the Uniting Church and the Columban Centre for Catholic-Muslim Relations

The organising committee



Wilma Visanathan, Shalom Institute Adult Education Director Peta Jones Pellach, Sister Giovani Farquar, Board of Deputies Interfaith Committee Chair Josie Lacey.

comprised Sister Giovani Farquar, Sister Pauline Rae, Mehmet Saral of Affinity, Board of Deputies Interfaith Chair Josie Lacey and Board of Deputies Special Projects Manager Josh Levin.

Professor Bettina Cass chaired the proceedings, and Shalom Institute Adult Education Director Peta Jones Pellach addressed a workshop.



From left: Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, Sister Pauline Rae, Professor Bettina Cass, Professor Zeki Saritoprak, Sister Giovani Farquar, Rabbi Richard Lampert, Board of Deputies Interfaith Committee Chair Josie Lacey, Affinity Intercultural Foundation Secretary Mehmet Saral, Ahmed Keskin.



Chief Rabbi addresses leaders

Commonwealth Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (left) addressed community leaders at a gathering organised by the Board of Deputies at Mandelbaum House. In Sydney as a guest of the Great Synagogue, Rabbi Sacks is pictured with NSW State Zionist Council then-President Brian Levitan and Board of Deputies President David Knoll.

Photo: Ingrid Shakenovsky

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Engaging with opinion-makers

THE second year of NSW Jewish Board of Deputies Luncheon Clubs proved a great success, creating an opportunity for opinion-makers to engage with leaders of the Jewish community.

A total of 14 speakers addressed Luncheon Club meetings in 2006. They included political strategist Lynton Crosby, former Mossad chief Efraim Halevy, NSW Roads Minister Eric Roozendaal MP, Sydney Morning Herald columnist Paul Sheehan, Daily Telegraph political editor Piers Akerman, Shadow Federal Minister for Water and Infrastructure Anthony Albanese MP, NSW Shadow Transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian MP, Member for Maroubra Michael Daley MP, Member for Drummoyne Angela D'Amore MP, Fairfax Director of Corporate Affairs Bruce Wolpe and ABC 702 presenter Virginia Trioli.

The Luncheon Club meetings are generously hosted by Shaw Stockbroking.



Di Simons, Natalie Goldman and Lynda Ben-Menashe at the Board of Deputies Luncheon Club.



Minister for Roads Eric Roozendaal MP, who addressed the Luncheon Club, with Board of Deputies President David Knoll and public relations consultant Virginia Gordon.



Waverley Mayor George Newhouse, Board of Deputies Interfaith Committee Chair Josie Lacey, JCA Allocations Committee Chair Greg Shand.



Nathalie Samia with Lynton Crosby, Managing Director of the consulting firm Crosby Textor, who addressed the Luncheon Club.



Daily Telegraph political editor Piers Akerman (centre), who addressed the Luncheon Club, with Michael Shur (left) and Barry Smorgon.



Journalists see Israel for themselves

Three of Sydney's senior editors and journalists spent an intensive week in Israel as participants on the Board of Deputies' Journalists Mission. Sydney Morning Herald National Security Editor Tom Allard (left), SBS TV News and Current Affairs Director Paul Cutler (next to him) and Sydney Morning Herald columnist Paul Sheehan (right) were briefed by political, military and security commentators and flew over the country by helicopter. They are pictured with Journalists Mission supporters Sabina Van Der Linden-Wolanski and Kjeld Hansen.

The gift of life

THE Board of Deputies has thrown its weight behind the Gift of Life – a project which encourages members of the community to have their blood tested as they may be a compatible match for a person in need of a life-saving bone marrow transplant.

Rabbi Dovid Slavin and genetic scientist Shula Endrey-Walder addressed the Board of Deputies plenum to explain the importance of the programme.

Both are founders of Gift of Life Australia – a programme which recruits Jewish donors to the Australian Bone Marrow Registry.

- Donors should be between 18 and 40, in good health and must have not lived in Britain between 1980 and 1996 for more than six months. Blood tests are conducted at Wolper Jewish Hospital every Sunday between 9am and 11am. Telephone 9328 6077 to make an appointment. Alternatively, go to a Red Cross Blood Bank Centre and ask to join the Australia Bone Marrow Donor registry. Or donors can register online at www.giftoflifeaustralia.org.au

From the CEO

2006 saw the Board of Deputies go into overdrive, responding to the crisis in Lebanon and its flow-on effect in New South Wales, while initiating a raft of outreach projects.

The war in Lebanon saw Board of Deputies staff put in 18-hour days to get Israel's side of the story into the marketplace, while members of the Board of Deputies Executive and other volunteers put in long hours to help get our message out.

The Board of Deputies has worked hard to professionalise its operation as the representative body of the community.

In that capacity, we participated in media forums on the situation in Lebanon, responded to issues in the media, delivered background briefings to politicians, distributed information packs to keep the community informed, addressed hundreds of students on the differences between the facts on the ground and what they saw on television, and helped university students devise and implement a strategy to counter hostility on campus.

Our proactive approach is apparent from this edition of At The Board. The thread which connects every activity reported here is outreach – breaking down

barriers and building bridges.

Extending a hand to the wider community was the rationale behind our Trade Union Passover celebration last year, and it is the rationale behind the innovative Interfaith Passover dinner we are planning this year.

Outreach underpins much of what the Board of Deputies is about. It is essential and it is the way of the future.

Meanwhile, the Board of Deputies has taken steps to make the arrest and prosecution of those who attack the community easier through the installation of a sophisticated closed-circuit television system at various Jewish communal institutions.

It is important to acknowledge that none of this work would be possible without the great support of the JCA.

Finally, this edition includes a subscription form. For a nominal fee you can be part of the vital work we do on your behalf. The more members the Board of Deputies has, the more effective we are. Join us.

Vic Alhadeff

