



# At The BOARD

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NSW JEWISH BOARD OF DEPUTIES • Ph: 9360 1600 • Email: mail@nswjbd.com

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Vol 2 – 2007

## 260 come together at unique interfaith event

**A**N unprecedented event in the history of the City of Sydney took place when the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies brought 260 people of 15 faith and ethnic groups together at Sydney Town Hall.

Co-hosted by Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore MP, the unique Passover dinner attracted representatives of a broad range of groups, including Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Uniting Church, Baha'i, Zoroastrian, Greek Orthodox, indigenous, Mandaean, Anglican, Catholic and Jewish.

The Interfaith Seder followed an unprecedented Union Seder which the Board of Deputies organised with Unions NSW in 2006. That event was attended by 75 unionists, including ACTU President Sharon Burrows and Unions NSW Secretary John Robertson, and 75 members of the Jewish community.

After the Interfaith Seder, the Board of Deputies was commended in the NSW Parliament for its work in the field of social harmony.

Labor Party MPs Virginia Judge and Linda Burney acknowledged the work of the Board of Deputies during a sitting of parliament and welcomed CEO Vic Alhadeff, who



At the Board of Deputies' Interfaith Seder, back from left: Shadow Transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian MP, Jillian Segal, Sabina Van Der Linden-Wolanski, Board of Deputies President David Knoll, Community Relations Commission Chairman Stepan Kerkyasharian, Renee Ferster-Levy; front: Board of Deputies Interfaith Committee Chair Josie Lacey, Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore MP, Peta Jones Pellach, Ben Levy.

Photos: Ingrid Shakenovsky

was in the public gallery.

The Interfaith Seder was organised by the Board of Deputies Interfaith Committee, chaired by Josie Lacey. It was produced by Roz Feitelson and led by Peta Jones Pellach, with performances by the Sydney Jewish Choral Society, Moriah College Jazz

Band, Mount Sinai College Choir and Masada College Primary School Choir.

Community Relations Commission Chairman Stepan Kerkyasharian launched Understanding Judaism – a booklet which was funded by the CRC and compiled by the Board of Deputies – in an address to the 260

guests (see page 3).

A painting of Jerusalem by Sydney artist Derryn Tal was presented to Lord Mayor Clover Moore at the conclusion of the function.

The event was funded by the JCA LotBen Fund in loving memory of Lotka and Bernard Ferster.



Some of the dayschool students who assisted at the interfaith seder.



Sarah Taouil and Zubeda Raihman on the drums at the interfaith seder.



Volunteers at the seder, from left: Sara Kohn, Joelle Stein, Gabi Metz, Megan Hosiosky.



Board of Deputies CEO Vic Alhadeff presents a painting to Lord Mayor Clover Moore MP.



Community Relations Commissioner Wajina Ahmed was a guest at the interfaith seder.



Sydney Town Hall geared up for the 260 interfaith Passover guests.



Shane Lawrie, Elsie Heiss, Shehara Viswanathan, Professor Anita Heiss.



Mount Sinai College pupil Tali Rubinstein, 8, performed at the seder.



Interfaith seder producer Roz Feitelson, JCA CEO Ian Sandler, Cely Malki Benchoam.



Shehara Viswanathan and North Shore Chabad Rabbi Zalman Kastel at the seder.



## From the president

Education is and must remain a major priority in our community.

Since the early 1980s Australian Jewry has made investment in Jewish day schools a major priority. Roughly 6 out of 10 Jewish children attend a Jewish day school, and in NSW at least, through Academy BJE, we ensure Jewish education for a majority of our children who are in public schools. Few Diaspora communities compare.

Levels of assimilation, while worrying, have not - and if our investment in education works - will not grow to North American levels. Making the Jewish experience relevant and attractive to succeeding generations of Jews is a challenge willingly accepted by our community.

The Board of Deputies represents the Jewish education sector to Government and in the wider multicultural Australian community.

The Board of Deputies has now established an education secretariat to reinforce and enhance that important work, so that the Jewish education sector - like other faith-based schools - is effectively represented.

On a related matter, it should be (but is not) beyond argument that Jews must be forthright in making the simple point that those who consider themselves anti-Zionist believe that all nations except the Jewish nation are entitled to the right of self-determination.

They say that a right accorded to other peoples is to be denied to the Jewish people. That position is racist, dangerous and antisemitic, and we should not be afraid to say so, the time for sophistry having long since passed. In this regard, we are working with our day schools, AUJS and Hillel in ensuring that our students have the tools to make that simple point.



David D Knoll



Member of the JCA family of organisations

## Premier invokes Rabin

PREMIER Morris Iemma invoked the stirring plea of slain Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin when he delivered the keynote message to 350 guests at the Yom Haatzmaut cocktail function.

Addressing diplomats from 29 nations, as well as MPs, business and religious leaders, he recalled Rabin's words on the White House Lawn in 1993: "Enough of blood, enough of tears, enough!"

But he added his own rejoinder: "Enough terror. Enough

bombs. Enough jihad. Enough hate."

The world has to learn to accept Israel's right to exist, Mr Iemma said, describing Iran as a financier of terror.

Countries represented included Germany, Egypt, Poland, China, Turkey, Tonga, Mongolia, Russia, Lesotho, East Timor, Slovenia, New Zealand, Serbia and Montenegro.

The function was hosted by the Board of Deputies, the State Zionist Council of NSW, the Executive Council of



Premier Morris Iemma toasts the State of Israel.

Photos: Ingrid Shakenovsky

Australian Jewry and the Zionist Federation of Australia.



John Aquilina MP, Parliamentary Secretary and Leader of the House, with Angela Chan.



Paul Pearce MP, Virginia Judge MP and Warren Mundine at the Israel Independence Day cocktail event.



NSw Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell, Rabbi Nochum Schapiro, George Varughese, Alex Gottshall.

## Breakfast briefing



AIPAC Policy and Government Affairs Director Dr Marvin Feuer (front) addressed a breakfast meeting of young adults hosted by the Board of Deputies. Back from left: David Berman, Martin Guenzl, Dr Doron Samuelli.

## Understanding Palestinian culture



Insights into Palestinian culture were the theme of an address by Palestinian Media Watch Director Itamar Marcus (centre) to members of the community at a function hosted by the Board of Deputies, which also arranged media briefings for him. He was in Sydney as a guest of The Shalom Institute. He is pictured with, from left: Rebecca Melkman, Nathalie Samia, Gary Samowitz and Yaron Finkelstein.



Minister of Fair Trading Linda Burney MP (left) - the first Aboriginal Member of the NSW Parliament - presents Aunty Beryl Carmichael with the Rona Tranby Award.

## Activist honoured

AN indigenous activist has received the Rona Tranby Award for services to Aboriginal culture. The Award is supported by the Board of Deputies.

Established in 1991, the Award is funded by a bequest in the will of Thomas Rona and administered by the Rona Tranby Trust in collaboration with Tranby Aboriginal College and the Board of Deputies.

Thomas and Eva Rona - members of the Board of Deputies - were committed to social justice. Both were killed in an accident in 1987.

The Award will enable Aunty Beryl to complete the oral history recordings of her life story, *The Footsteps of Ngiyeemppaa Elder*.



# 'Jewish mob' bonds in Boggabilla

ANNA LEIBOWITZ

**D**ROP a dozen Jewish university students, accustomed to designer trainers, on a dusty road in Outback New South Wales and you are bound to encounter an interesting adventure. This is Derech Eretz.

The Derech Eretz programme aims to create relationships between Jewish students and the disadvantaged Aboriginal communities of Boggabilla and Toomelah in far north New South Wales – communities where most children have been abused and unemployment is rife.

Derech Eretz is sponsored by the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, The Shalom Institute, the Australasian Union of Jewish Students and B'nai B'rith. In addition, Board of Deputies CEO Vic Alhadeff was a catalyst in the establishment of the programme, which is run by Melanie Schwartz and Gary Samowitz.

Like all relationships, the initial stages can be awkward. Being accepted into a different community and making friends can be difficult.

It was clear from the outset that for the programme to succeed, we would all have to find a meeting-point.

I found my meeting-point through song and dance.

"Ya wiggle ya bum funny!" was the reaction when I tried to do a dance move taught to me by some young girls in Boggabilla.

After watching them imitate Beyonce and J-Lo with fluidity, my improvised performance was simply inadequate.

Over the next seven days, while other members of the so-called "Jewish mob" found their own meeting-points by creating "dream-catchers" with twigs and feathers, painting their bodies red, yellow and black, or making dolls from paddle-pop sticks, I danced in the back shed of the Boggabilla community centre.

Although the identity of performers changed daily and kids came and went as they pleased, we aimed to create a dance to perform at the family disco night at the end of our stay.

Dancing in the heat, barefoot and sweaty, we bonded. The kids told me of the ghost that lived in the



AUJS students with young members of the local communities of Boggabilla and Toomelah.

caravan park where we were staying. They instructed me to stop dancing when older men passed by. They asked about the songs we sang after dinner on

Friday night.

And, just as casually, they told me of the young girl they saw hanging in a tree. Strange, confronting, but reality.



Derech Eretz is about relationships. Forming relationships with young adults in my community and building relationships with all ages in the tremendously disadvantaged communities of Boggabilla and Toomelah.

My lasting thoughts about this meaningful programme are that beyond our differences, human relationships are the ultimate meeting-point.

Anna Leibowitz is a third-year arts student at the University of Sydney.

## Understanding Judaism

THE Board of Deputies recently published Understanding Judaism – a user-friendly resource on Jewish customs and beliefs.

Funded by the Community Relations Commission, 22,000 copies were printed.

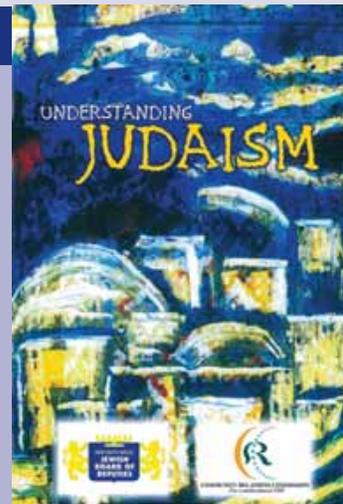
Copies have been distributed to every federal, state and territory MP in Australia, as well as to police stations, churches, schools, interfaith groups, communal organisations, the Sydney Jewish Museum for its visitors,

and to the JCA, which mailed 6500 throughout the community.

Board Executive Member Ian Lacey oversaw the text, while the cover (right) is a painting of Jerusalem by Sydney artist Derryn Tal.

The booklet was commended by Prime Minister John Howard in a message to the Board of Deputies.

- Members of the community requiring copies should contact the Board of Deputies at 9360 1600.





## Discussing the issues at lunch

THE Board of Deputies Luncheon Club provides a forum in which opinion-makers engage with members of the community.

Recent speakers include Federal Deputy Opposition Leader Julia Gillard ; NSW

Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell ; Janet Albrechtsen of The Australian; Shadow Foreign Minister Robert McClelland ; Labor candidate Mark Dreyfus QC; Sydney Morning Herald National Security Editor Tom Allard and

columnist Paul Sheehan ; SBS TV Head of News and Current Affairs Paul Cutler ; Deputy Premier John Watkins ; and The Australian's Foreign Editor Dennis Shanahan.

The luncheon is generously hosted by Shaw Stockbroking.



Federal Deputy Opposition Leader Julia Gillard, Alison Rahill , Waverley Mayor George Newhouse.



Yosi Tal , Jillian Segal and Mark Dreyfus QC, Labor candidate for Isaacs, who addressed the Luncheon Club.



Alan Gold with Janet Albrechtsen , a columnist on The Australian, who addressed the Luncheon Club.



Ron Weiser , Sydney Morning Herald National Security Editor Tom Allard , Paul Cutler of SBS TV News and Current Affairs.



Justice Stephen Rothman , Board of Deputies Honorary Secretary Robin Margo , WIZO NSW President Bev Kaplan .



Irving Wallach, Shaw Stockbroking Managing Director Harold Shapiro .

## At the AIPAC conference



Board of Deputies Vice-President Yair Miller (right) attended the 2007 AIPAC policy conference in Washington DC. He is pictured with Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations, Dan Gillerman, who addressed the 4200 delegates. Board of Deputies CEO Vic Alhadeff also participated in the conference.



Then-NSW Opposition Leader Peter Debnam (right) with Robert Goot , recently nominated as the next President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.

## 1500 mark the Shoah

1500 people commemorated the six million victims of the Holocaust during Shoah Week, which included several innovative features.

The events began at the Martyrs Memorial, where Israeli Deputy Chief de Mission Eli Yerushalmi and Rabbi Jeremy Lawrence described their connections to the Shoah.

NSW Governor Marie Bashir and nine Supreme Court judges then joined former High Court Chief Justice Sir Gerard Brennan, Cardinal George Pell, Bishop Forsyth, Shoah survivors and students at a moving Reading of the Names ceremony at the Sydney Jewish Museum, which the museum co-ordinated.

At the same time, Rebecca

Gaida directed an inspiring ceremony for youth movement leaders.

Sydney Institute Executive Director Dr Gerard Henderson later addressed a ceremony at Moriah College, while former Premier Bob Carr invoked Primo Levi's prose in addressing the north shore function. Both events were the best attended in years.

Rabbi Gary Robuck co-ordinated an innovative programme which introduced bar/batmitzvah youth to the Shoah.

Shoah Week was organised by the Board of Deputies Shoah Committee, chaired by Alan Gold, in conjunction with the Australian Association of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Descendants.



Cardinal George Pell (centre) with Holocaust survivors Olga Horak and Harry Fransman, and youth movement leaders at a Shoah Week ceremony.

## From the CEO



EACH time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope. Crossing each other from a million centres of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression."

So said former US Attorney-General Robert Kennedy.

The Board of Deputies works hard to create social harmony, to shape a society which is free of racism and prejudice. A society in which Jews hold their heads up with pride and confidence.

We are privileged to be citizens of this great country, to play our share in contributing to the richness of our society. But this is not Camelot. There is racism out there and there is bigotry.

This is where the Board of Deputies comes in. Our efforts fall into two categories - proactive and reactive.

We spend a great deal of time building bridges - in particular with other faith groups so that they get to know us and to know that we speak with a sober, unified and moderate voice.

Three years ago we conceived of Youth Encounters, which brought together 60 Muslim,

Christian and Jewish Year 11 students. We have increased the programme each year so that it now comprises 500 students from 25 schools.

And in a ground-breaking initiative, we brought together 260 people of 15 faith and ethnic groups at an interfaith seder. It was an inspiring evening, and we acknowledge the generous support of the JCA LotBen Fund.

The Board of Deputies also has to be reactive.

We intervened in the Marrickville-Bethlehem sister-city issue, addressing a Marrickville Council committee meeting and speaking with the mayor to draw their attention to the potential fall-out.

We advocate on behalf of individuals who suffer discrimination. We respond to incidents which adversely impact on the community. And we are seeking to have the state's racial vilification legislation strengthened.

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

Vic Alhadeff