Tribute to Professor Sol Encel

delivered by Professor Bettina Cass AO

to the Annual General Meeting of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies

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It is with great sadness that the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies marks the passing of Emeritus Professor Sol Encel on Friday 23 July. We wish tonight to pay tribute to him as a distinguished university educator and researcher, an esteemed contributor to ideas and knowledge and public policy in the Australian community and the Jewish community, and a wonderful committed family man, friend and colleague. It should be emphasised that Sol Encel made these contributions over 6 decades since his graduation as a political scientist from the University of Melbourne, from which time he was a teacher, researcher, writer and collaborator on many significant projects and public policy bodies until the day before he died. He truly lived the maxim of never giving up his intellectual work and writing, never giving up teaching and learning, or his contributions to the wellbeing of the community, or on his deep-seated policy commitments to human rights and anti-discrimination. He is an inspiration to us all on living a full, good, committed life with his family and wide circle of friends, and in the wider community and the Jewish community.

Sol Encel was born on 3 March 1925 in Warsaw, Poland and immigrated to Melbourne with his parents Godel and Hadassah and his older sister Stella when he was 4 years old. Sol's parents ensured that Sol received an excellent education including in Hebrew and Yiddish. At the age of 18 Sol entered Melbourne University as a science student. As this was in the middle of World War 11, Sol felt it was important to contribute to the war effort, and as a peace—loving man, it suited him to become a medical orderly. He served on Morati in the Pacific where was eventually promoted to the rank of "Leading Aircraftman". On his return to the university, Sol moved from the study of science to the study of the humanities and social sciences, focussing on political science, because he considered these subjects to be for him of greater interest and importance.

From a young age Sol was committed to Zionism and the formation of the State of Israel through the Zionist Youth Movement, and it was through this connection that he met his wife of 61 years, Diana Hovev. They spent the first year of their married life on a kibbutz in the newly independent State of Israel, and Sol retained his commitment to Israel throughout his life. Sol and Diana returned to Australia and had four children, Vivien, Deborah, Daniel and Sarah, creating a warm, close family life, in which Sol was a committed and loving husband and father.

Following the completion and publication of his PhD, a pioneering study of Cabinet Government in Australia, Sol taught and carried out research at three Universities: Melbourne University, The Australian National University and the University of NSW, first as a political scientist, but from his appointment to the Chair of Sociology at the University of NSW in 1966, he soon became known as the father of Australian Sociology. Following his retirement from the School of Sociology in 1991 at the age of 66, Sol without missing a beat became Emeritus Professor at the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of NSW, where he worked on a range of projects, contributing his great knowledge, experience and research skills and engaging productively with key public policy issues. He remained in this position until he passed away, still an active member of several important projects.

Sol Encel was a pioneer in the study of Sociology in Australia. He was a distinguished educator and researcher, mentor to countless students and colleagues, whose Honours and PhD research he supervised, and with whom he worked on many significant research projects. His influence on several generations of sociology scholars was profound, and I count myself blessed and privileged to have been an undergraduate, honours and PhD student under his supervision from 1968, and then as a lecturer in the School of Sociology where Sol was a guiding inspiration. His teaching and research strengths included European social theory; social class and inequality; power and political institutions in modern states; population ageing and its social implications especially for service provision; policies to address age discrimination in the workplace, particularly with respect to the difficulties faced by mature-age job seekers; science policy; the status of women and how to achieve equality; ethnicity and multiculturalism and how to overcome discrimination; and the relationship between government and the non-government welfare sector. Sol Encel's sociological enterprise always engaged with matters of policy shaped by his concern for human and social rights, for the eradication of discrimination on the basis of gender, age, and ethnicity - issues which reflect his values as a researcher, educator and his public policy activities. He was elected Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia in 1968.

Sol also sat on numerous public policy bodies: on ageing policy and retirement, age discrimination, science policy, multicultural issues, education, employment and unemployment policy, social justice and human rights. He was still working actively on the NSW Ministerial Advisory Committee on Ageing until the day before he died, and was a key advisor on research and policy for the NSW Council on the Ageing, the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Jewish Centre on Ageing, of which he was one of the founders. His influence on research and education, both in universities and life-long community education through the University of the Third Age, and his influence on public policy in Australia was profound and highly distinguished. He was often called upon in the media for his expert, learned views on a range of social and political issues, often on ABC Radio National. As a tribute to Sol, the Science Show presented on 14

August a replay of his broadcast celebrating the Soviet nuclear physicist, dissident and human rights activist, Andrei Sakharov. Sol's knowledge was encyclopaedic, and his willingness to disseminate and share his knowledge unsurpassed.

Sol was actively involved in research and publication relating to the Jewish community and Jewish affairs since 1969, when he directed a large survey of the NSW Jewish community, which was updated in 1978. From 1976 he undertook analyses of the Commonwealth Population Census on behalf of the Jewish Communal Appeal. The results were very important for planning and for the work of Jewish welfare and education bodies, providing them with essential demographic information about the community.

In 2004 Sol and Associate Professor Suzanne Rutland of the University of Sydney were awarded an ARC Linkage Grant with the ECAJ, NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, and JCCV as the linkage partners to investigate 'The Political Sociology of Australian Jewry'. Sol and Suzanne conducted focus group discussions with community leaders in all the Jewish centres and published a number of articles in journals and books dealing with women, the smaller communities, and the issues of racism and multiculturalism. Sol was also a Deputy on the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and active on the Board's Social Justice Committee, engaging in particular with issues of poverty and ageing in our community. He was a giant figure of influence and held in high esteem in the Jewish Community, on the Board of Deputies, the JCA, the Jewish Centre on the Ageing, among many other organisations which benefited greatly from his research, knowledge and unstinting contributions.

His wisdom, knowledge, experience and generosity of spirit will be sorely and greatly missed by all those who knew him, his friends and colleagues, those who worked and studied with him, learnt from him and were inspired by him. We send our deep condolences to his wife Diana and their family.

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