



# COUNCIL BULLETIN

National Council of Jewish Woman of Australia Ltd.

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## INSIDE

Challenging the Stereotype  
of Jew = Male p3

Listening to Hidden Voices p5

Feminist Forebears p7

Deal at the Wall p13

[Dr Elana Maryles Sztokman](#)  
Scholar - in - Residence





## President's Report

Pesach 5776 is upon us. We look forward to celebrating the Festival of Freedom with our families and friends. We pray that this Pesach finds all Jewish families in Israel and around the globe enjoying freedom, peace and good health.

It is nine months since I took over Presidency of NCJWA, and I have been in close contact with all Sections, following their activities and celebrations. I have attended Annual General Meetings in NSW, Victoria and Canberra. We have shared news from Sections and Chairs of various NCJWA portfolios about their events and celebrations and their plans for future functions and ways to attract younger members to NCJWA. The Strategic Planning Session at the 30th NCJWA National Conference held in Sydney from 31 May to 2 June 2015 has been revisited. It needs everyone's input, together with the Israel Projects review. We need to involve everyone to enable us to plan for the future of our organisation. Also, of utmost importance

is the development of a leadership and succession plan for our organisation.

I congratulate NSW on their most successful joint function, attended by over 300 people together with the Greek community, remembering the bravery of Zakynthos' Mayor and Bishop, protecting the island's Jews against the Nazis. WA Section marked Holocaust Memorial Day and held health issues seminars. The Victorian Section organised a most successful ILAN Concert, an exquisite Luncheon at Cranlana with Victorian Governor Hon. Linda Dessau AM, 'Brain Food' sessions, and a 'Stop the Traffik' event. Brisbane, Canberra and Gold Coast are continuing to support and fundraise for Israel Projects. NCJWA recently sent funds to ILAN Center for disabled children, Haifa University Ethiopian Scholarship, Haifa University Rape Crisis Center and MICHA. The most exciting event coming up is the visit of Jewish feminist Dr Elana Sztokman, NCJWA Scholar in Residence. She will arrive from Israel on 17 May in Perth, then visit Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane. I will be joining Elana in Perth, Melbourne and Sydney. Di Hirsh OAM will accompany Elana to Canberra, and Shirley Glance will travel with her to Brisbane. Shirley, Di and I have worked closely to organise a program for Elana's visit to share her wisdom and expertise in the areas of feminism and gender inclusion. She is an educator, fascinating speaker and author of many books on women's issues. Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to meet and hear Elana Sztokman. Please contact your Section or National office for more details.

On behalf of the NCJWA Directors and Executive, I wish you a Kosher Pesach and an enjoyable time together with your families.

**Rysia Rozen OAM, National President**

### BULLETIN INFORMATION

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### NCJWA NATIONAL

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Barbara Stewart-Kann OAM 0412 377 488 or  
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# Challenging the Stereotype of Jew = Male

NCJWA is excited to be bringing Elana Sztokman, author and feminist activist best known for her book *The War on Women in Israel* as Scholar-in-Residence for 2016.

This program has been a vehicle to bring eminent Jewish women to Australia to raise the profile of women's issues since 1987. Past Scholars have included Deputy Attorney-General of Israel Judith Karp, Leah Rabin (wife of then Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin) and Professor Alice Shalvi. In 2010 the NCJWA Scholar-in-Residence was eminent Israeli lawyer and activist for women's and children's rights Dr Sharon Shenhav.

I was lucky enough to have a chance to talk with Elana about her trip and to ask her about what she feels we, as Australian Jewish women, most need to understand about the current situation.

Elana's most important message is that the rise of religious radicalism should concern us all because of its impact on women. This isn't specifically a Jewish problem. Religious radicals in Christian and Islamic communities and countries are also trying to shape their worlds.

Within the Jewish world this radicalism has seen women disappearing from the public arena. There are signs banning women from walking on certain streets, shopping in certain stores or attending medical clinics. There are also occasions where women are allowed to be places, but only if they are dressed as the radicals consider appropriate. This doesn't just affect the women living within religious communities. Women have been turned away from funerals and been unable to visit the graves of loved ones because the people who run the Chevra Kadisha (funeral society) deem them inappropriately dressed.

In Israel, this radicalism is enabled by a system that does not have any separation between religion and the state. The Rabbinit, the religious authority, controls marriage, divorce, conversion and death. It is impossible to live in Israel without feeling the power of the religious institutions. There is no civil marriage and religious marriages require the woman to visit the Mikvah. Thus the control of the state run Mikvahs and the new laws that are being passed affect not just religious women, but ALL women in Israel. [For more information see the article by Naomi Marmon Grumet.]

In the Jewish world, photos of women are removed or just never published. Can you spot the difference between these group photos of the Agudath Israel Convention?

There were two photos taken at the same event to be distributed to the press. This was because many of the orthodox newspapers refuse to publish any images of women. In the same vein, Festivals are refusing to allow women singers and dancers onto their programs. Conferences, even on topics that specifically affect women, refuse to allow women to present. There are even

situations where women are unable to publicly accept awards that they have won and have been completely excluded from ceremonies that are designed to celebrate their achievements.

The challenge facing us in 2016 is to free Judaism and Jewish communities from male domination. So much of Jewish communal life excludes women, as community organisations, publishing houses, schools and institutions continue to be run by men who tend to reward and recommend men, with whom they work, learn and pray, for leadership. Elana would like to see us all challenge the stereotype of Jew = male that permeates our society. We've come some way in this direction over the last few generations, but the rise of the radical right shows us that we still have a long way to go.

Elana will be visiting NCJWA groups around the country to talk about the way women are being asked to disappear from public spaces, and the different responses to these events from women (and men) from across the Jewish community. She welcomes questions, stories and ideas and would love to have you contact her when you next visit Israel if you are interested in talking about women in Israel.



Version 1 with women



Version 2 for Hardei Press

Brie Shroot is engaged in creating systems of support for new mothers, and has an interest in the role of women, feminism and Judaism. She is a member of Shira Hadasha, Melbourne.





# INSPIRING WOMEN IN OUR COMMUNITY

## The Hon Linda Dessau: Governor of Victoria

On 1st July, 2015 at the age of 62 Linda Marion Dessau was sworn in as Victoria's 29th Governor; boldly making history as Victoria's first female in the role and additionally the first Jewish holder of this office. She enthused about her years in the law. "All law," she said, "was ultimately about people."

After returning to Australia, the Governor took her first judicial appointment as a magistrate in 1985. In 1995 she was appointed Family Court Judge, a role that continued for the next 18 years. In the Family Court she worked on the most difficult cases, involving family violence and the sexual abuse of children. Outside the law, the Governor was engaged in leadership roles for a broad spectrum of community organisations. In 1997 was the founding Chair of the Essendon Football Club's Women's Network, a group that has made its mark in the grand final week calendar. She is determined that the Governor's role remains relevant. "I actually love listening to people and hearing their stories." [1]

## Rosa Zwier & Rachel Flitman: App Developers

The driving force behind the new App that is changing the way the Australian Jewish community connects are Rosa Zwier and Rachel Flitman. The result is *Tribe: Let My People Know*, that allows people to search for Jewish events by location, demography and interest. Organisations and individuals can list their events, and then users are able to find and connect with them. Unlike Facebook events, the guest list remains private. The app is able to let you know if anyone on your facebook friends list is planning to attend.

Rachel reports that many within the community felt that they were missing out regularly on events that would have interested them. So much has depended on word of mouth, necessitating people already be in the community. Visitors and newcomers who are interested in meeting people have struggled to get information about the range of activities and communal events that may interest them. Described as their 'secret love child' Tribe was created with support from Launchpad and other Launchpadders. Rachel and Rosa both work full time and Tribe was built in their spare time. [2]

## Judy Singer: 2016 International Women's Day Honour Roll

Congratulations to Sydney-sider, Judy Singer, who has worked extensively in voluntary and advocacy roles in the areas of tenants' rights and disability inclusion. Judy has given her own time and energy consistently over many years, to ensure that some of our society's most marginalised people have a voice. Judy has also taken strong action for with people with Autism Spectrum Disorder, including founding a social club, Asteen, for teenagers with Asperger's syndrome. Judy demonstrates an incredible capacity for activism and passion for social justice.

Having a family history of Asperger's syndrome, Judy is known internationally as a pioneer of the world wide autistic self-advocacy movement through her Honours thesis, book chapters, and academic papers. She is credited with prefiguring the idea of creating a 'neurodiversity movement' which was cited in Wired magazine's 20th anniversary issue as one of the world changing ideas of the new millenium. [3]

Contributors: Freda Kaufman,  
Brie Shroot & Nicole Robinson

Photos: (L-R) The Hon Linda Dessau (R); Rachel Flitman & Rosa Zwier : Judy Singer (R).

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## LISTENING TO HIDDEN VOICES

It was almost ten years after *The Feminine Mystique* was published, in June 1972, that the first female rabbi - Sally Priesand - was ordained in the USA. Changing perceptions of women's role in Jewish religious life saw non-Orthodox women in the United States begin to adopt the rituals and public symbols of Judaism, including the wearing of tallit and the kippah. In Melbourne, the Jewish community was unaware of these important developments.

However the controversy over the role of women in Judaism was soon imported to Australian shores. In June 1981 Rabbi John Levi, senior Rabbi of Temple Beth Israel, Melbourne's largest Progressive community, announced the arrival of Rabbi Karen Soria with a brief description of her background and a small photograph. Only a brief comment that "Rabbi Karen Soria will be Australia's first woman rabbi" indicated that there was something unusual in this appointment.

Leading Melbourne Orthodox Rabbi, Ronald Lubofsky admitted that "there is no specific legislation against women rabbis because the thought was so remote to early Jewish communities that it would be like legislating against flying to Mars." He was quoted in the daily newspaper *The Age* as saying: "The ladies of the Charnwood Grove Congregation are shuddering at the prospect of the arrival of Rabbi Karen Soria".

Considered by most to be a progressive and liberal thinking Orthodox rabbi, his comments were surprising given that women had been ordained in the United States for nine years. Why the outrage, since the rabbi himself had admitted there was no legal barrier to the idea of a woman rabbi? This was not the last of the angry reactions in Melbourne.

In October 1981 the State Zionist Council of Victoria arranged a program in which three prominent women, including Rabbi Karen Soria, would speak to the community. That evening saw the hall crowded with people heavily clad in winter clothing to resist the storm that raged outside. They would soon discover that nothing would protect them from a storm that was about to erupt inside the hall. Most of the audience were older, conservatively dressed men and women. A large section of the room was filled

with ultra-Orthodox men decked out in their large black hats, beards and sidelocks.

I watched with great anticipation and excitement as Rabbi Karen Soria approached the podium. Melbourne Jews had never seen or heard a woman rabbi speaking in public about the richness of the people in the Torah and the many famous women who have been lost to history because their lives, their deeds and their characters were not considered important enough to record. As a result, Rabbi Soria concluded, there were few female role models for modern women.

By this time the crowd was restless. The sidelocked men in black began to heckle and interrupt, shouting abuse at the young speaker, fists clenched in a rage of fury. As Rabbi Soria concluded her remarks and began to answer questions, it became impossible to hear anything above the din of shouting and heckling, and so, with great dignity she was shepherded from the hall.

There are moments in one's life that change a person forever – and this was one of those moments for me. I had arrived at the hall with a sense of anticipation that I was about to share with my community a new vision of how women could take part in Jewish leadership. I left a few hours later feeling inspired by the new rabbi's words but bothered by the extreme reaction to her words. What had she said that caused such fury? In this insulated community a small, demure woman had created a controversy that was long overdue.

Up until the Jewish enlightenment, which began in the 1770's, the idea of women rabbis seemed farfetched. To some people the idea is still far-fetched and ridiculous. Yet if we consider that the word 'rabbi' is a Hebrew word that literally means teacher then there have been many women rabbis in Jewish history.

Consider Beruriah who lived during the second century and is renowned for her scholarly interpretations of Jewish law which are quoted in the Talmud. Hannah Rachel Werbemacher was known as the Maid of Ludomir.

Cont next page...

### Women Rabbis Who Have Served In Australia

1980-1989	Rabbi Karen Soria
1990-1998	Rabbi Betsy Torop
1995-1998	Rabbi Linda Joseph
1995	Rabbi Aviva Kipen
1997-1999	Rabbi Lenore Bohm
1998	Rabbi Jacqueline Ninio
1998	Rabbi Alison Conyer
2000-2002	Rabbi Aviva Bass
2001-2006	Rabbi Patti Kopstein
2003	Rabbi Deborah Kahn Harris
2005	Rabbi Lenore Bohm
2006-2010	Rabbi Rayna Kevurtz
2006	Rabbi Shoshana Kaminsky
2010	Rabbi Kim Ettlinger
2012	Rabbi Nicole Roberts
2013	Rabbi Sheryl Nosan-Lantzke
2014	Rabbi Orna Trigobuff



She lived between 1805 and 1892, teaching young scholars Torah in Jerusalem while awaiting the Messiah. Eve Bachrach, was born in Prague in 1580. As the daughter of a distinguished rabbinical family, she acquired a wide knowledge of Hebrew and rabbinical literature, and could often assist rabbis in solving textual difficulties. Such erudition was quite uncommon among Jewish women of that time. Yet the traces of their lives are there in our texts and in our history books. Sitting behind closed doors listening to their fathers teach their brothers, they learned as much from these clandestine classes as many great scholars. Their voices are harder to discover as many did not write their thoughts and teachings down. But they are there and they whisper to us over the generations – if only we will listen.

I was ready to listen. A few days after that stormy evening I met Rabbi Soria and shared with her my sense of inadequacy and lack of knowledge about Jewish texts. I explained that I was ready to listen to those whispered voices and to add mine to the generations of women who carved out a path for us. She immediately agreed to begin a women's study group. So a wonderful life of engagement with Jewish texts began for me and for many other women that continues to this day. We wrestled with the Jewish scholars of our past, we learned to chant from the Torah and ultimately I found myself assisting others on the same exciting journey.

The arrival of the first woman rabbi in Melbourne changed the lives of many women, yet went unnoticed by many others. For those who entered the doors she opened, their lives would never

be the same. Since those days the Melbourne Progressive Jewish community has been blessed with the participation of many female rabbis. They have all added another dimension to the rabbinate and to the rich tapestry of Jewish life and learning. Many girls and women now take on the responsibility of Bat Mitzvah and it is not unusual for newborn daughters to be welcomed with a Brit Bat. Women's participation in the religious and communal life of Progressive synagogues is now taken for granted.

Some of us still remember the small group of women who helped shape this new world. While the process is still continuing, this new world has created opportunities for women to make real choices about all aspects of their lives – secular, spiritual and religious. Women now voice their opinions loudly and without emotion – we wrestle with God and with ancient Jewish texts and interpretations. We shape new rituals and share our wisdom, our questions and our doubts. Women all over the world, including a small Jewish centre at the edge of the world, known as Melbourne, have finally entered the conversation of the Jewish people.

**Caryn Granek** is a retired lawyer who completed a Master of Arts (Jewish Civilisation) at Monash University, Melbourne Australia. This article is based on part of her research into the influences that shaped the development of Jewish feminism in Melbourne. She is one of many lay leaders at Kehillat David HaMelech (Kedem) in Melbourne

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# Pesach & Feminist Forebears

The biblical story of Pesach buzzes with women, working together, enabling birth and affirming life.

In this piece, I want to consider how a traditional, and in many ways very beautiful rabbinical reading of the role of the women, can also be seen to give voice to a discomfort by the rabbis when women play too large a part in history.

A key part in the narrative is played by two brave women - Shifrah and Puah, the midwives whose courage to disobey Pharaoh's genocidal orders enabled the birth of baby Moses. They are introduced after Pharaoh, having failed to stop the Hebrews conceiving, commissions mass infanticide. But the midwives provide what modern commentators have described as an early example of civil disobedience, refusing to kill the babies on the pretext that the Hebrew women were too lively and birthed their babies before the midwives could arrive.

When Pharaoh ramps up the prosecution and orders that all babies be drowned in the river, we encounter three more strong and defiant women. Yocheved, the mother of Moshe and Miriam, his sister, find a way to keep their baby son and brother alive, setting him to float in a basket until he is rescued by the third woman in that episode, a princess, known in tradition as Batya, the disobedient daughter of Pharaoh. Each of these five strong women who defy death decrees to ensure continuity, and to enable the possibility of birth and family are central to this story.

Miriam's powers of persuasion are credited with the ultimate survival of the Jewish people in an interpretation offered by the rabbis. Amram, Miriam's father and a leader of the people, chose to divorce his wife rather than conceive a child only for it to be killed. Miriam was horrified by his anti-life position and challenged his authority, saying: "your decree is harsher than Pharaoh's because he decreed the elimination of male children only and you decreed the elimination of male and female children". Amram heeded Miriam's word and he and his followers returned to their wives.

Yet there are a number of Midrashic and rabbinical sources in which the Rabbis dilute the role of the women in Moshe's life by

merging them. It is traditionally held that the midwives Shifrah and Puah, and Miriam and Yocheved, are the same two people.

Feminist commentator Lori Hope Lefkowitz provides this interesting reading:

"The large number of female characters in the episodes surrounding Moshe's birth ... is rare and therefore disconcerting. Midrash Rabah accordingly suggests that Shifrah and Puah are other names for Yocheved and Miriam. In the world of the bible we see very little suggestion of women in community. Instead we typically meet women alone or in pairs. ... the presence of five distinct women finding their way into sacred story in so short a space seems ... unwelcome to the commentator who reduces this remarkable group into a single pair... In the biblical story women proliferate, Mother, sisters and midwives and princess all work together... the text asserts women's heroic capacity to generate history but a subsequent counter impulse works to contain them ... by limiting the women's numbers"

It is important to hear the rabbinical note which gets nervous at the thought of too many powerful women in this story. But this year at my Seder I hope to instead hold onto a beautiful affirmation in Jewish life: "ken yerbu" (may there be many more). I do this both as a celebration of the women in the narrative who enabled life, and a prayer for the well-being and proliferation of strong Jewish women who won't be silenced or contained.



Mandi Katz is a governance professional in the financial services sector by day, and a Jewish community activist much of the rest of the time. She is the president of Shira Hadasha, an orthodox and egalitarian synagogue and is co chair of Limmud Oz Melbourne 2016.





Presents

# Dr Elana Maryles Sztokman

Jewish Feminist Writer,  
Researcher & Educator



## Perth

Wednesday 18 May  
7.30pm Jewish Community Centre  
61 Woodrow Ave, Yokine  
Topic: Status of Women in Israel Today  
Bookings: 0402 263 976 jeta@iinet.net.au

## Melbourne

Saturday 21 May Shabbat Kiddush  
9.45 am Shira Hadasha  
222 Balaclava Rd, Caulfield

Sunday 22 May  
12.45pm Melbourne Jewish Writers Festival (MJWF)  
<http://www.mjwf.com.au/>

7.30pm JCCV joint event  
Blake St Hebrew Congregation  
868 Glen Huntly Rd, Caulfield South  
Topic: Bodies, bodies, bodies: Gender in Pop Culture

Monday 23 May  
9.30am Melbourne Jewish Writers Festival (MJWF)  
<http://www.mjwf.com.au/>

Tuesday 24 May  
7.45pm Mina Fink Memorial Lecture  
Glen Eira College  
76 Booran Rd, Caulfield East  
Topic: Women in Leadership in Israel

Thursday 26 May  
7.45pm Unchain My Heart joint event  
'Mekudeshet' screening followed by Panel Discussion  
Topic: GETTING it right from the start Exploring Jewish  
Marriage and Divorce  
Glen Eira College  
76 Booran Road, Caulfield East  
Bookings for Melbourne events:  
03 9044 5401 [www.ncjwavic.org.au/events](http://www.ncjwavic.org.au/events)

## Sydney

Sunday 29 May  
2.00pm Venue TBA  
Topic: Jewish Women's Leadership:  
Current & Future Perspectives  
Bookings: 02 9363 0257 [admin@ncjwnsw.org](mailto:admin@ncjwnsw.org)

## Canberra

Monday 30 May  
7.45pm National Jewish Memorial Centre  
31 National Circuit, Forrest  
Topic: Religious Politics & Trends, and the Effect on  
Women in Israel  
Bookings: 02 6295 1052  
[actadmin@canberra jewishcommunity.org](mailto:actadmin@canberra jewishcommunity.org)

Tuesday 31 May  
12.00pm Gender Institute, ANU  
Hedley Bull Theatre 2  
Topic: Status of Women in Israel Compared  
to the Rest of the World

## Brisbane

Wednesday 1 June  
Evening Venue: TBA  
Topic: Women's Rights in Israel Today  
Bookings: 0407 145 739 [cfgold@bigpond.net.au](mailto:cfgold@bigpond.net.au)

[www.ncjwa.org.au](http://www.ncjwa.org.au)



Media Partner





# Not Modest Little Women



Dr Renee Rabinowitz (Uriel Sinai/New York Times/Redux/eyevine)

Last year, I wrote a blog about an uncomfortable incident I experienced flying back home to Israel on El Al. I was returning from a lecture tour around the United States following the publication of my book *The War on Women in Israel: A Story of Religious Radicalism and the Women Fighting for Freedom*, when an ultra-Orthodox man kept us from taking off by refusing to sit next to me. After watching silently for a while, as he anxiously paced the aisles, I eventually confronted him. It did not go well. The entire incident, in which I was literally surrounded by the backs of men in black coats refusing to acknowledge my existence as a human being, left me stinging. I admitted in my little post that I actually cried. I know that these things happen – in fact I spent five years chronicling the many ways in which women are objectified and dehumanized in Israel. But somehow this particular dehumanization was too personal for me to easily brush off.

Well, my post went viral and created many follow-up posts by those pro and those against women moving over for ultra-Orthodox men. Tablet Magazine, which was the first to pick up the story, even created a cartoon satire video in response that is still circulating. And then everyone went back to their lives. Until now. This time, the Haredi men picked on the wrong woman.

Dr Renee Rabinowitz is an 81 year old Holocaust survivor and retired lawyer who was asked to move from her business class seat in El Al in order to accommodate the demands of an ultra-Orthodox man. For that insult, she is now suing El Al for damages on the basis of gender discrimination.

"Despite all my accomplishments – and my age is also an accomplishment – I felt minimized," she told The New York Times. "For me this is not personal. It is intellectual, ideological and legal. I think to myself, here I am, an older woman, educated, I've been around the world, and some guy can decide that I shouldn't sit next to him. Why?"

Dr Rabinowitz is being represented by Riki Shapira Rosenberg of The Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC). "This is an extreme case of discrimination in El Al" Rosenberg told me. "She was in business class and walks with a cane, and yet the flight attendants still had no hesitation asking her to move."

The Haredi community has not always been like this. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, most religious men followed the rulings

of the Rabbi Moshe Feinstein that men could use public transport and sit next to women. After all, the New York City subway system is not about to create single-gender cars (at least I don't think so). There was never an expectation that society at large would accommodate ultra-Orthodox idiosyncrasies. And yet, since the mid-90s, ultra-Orthodox men have become emboldened enough to change those expectations and to demand that society create women-free zones.

This is a direct result, in my opinion, of the Israeli electoral system. It comes from Israeli politicians bending over backwards to include Haredi parties in coalitions. This has led Haredi leaders to become

accustomed to making outrageous demands – and being heeded. This reality has serious economic implications, with exorbitant sums of money going to Haredi institutions in exchange for Haredi support of coalition initiatives. But aside from money, this reality also disproportionately affects women, who are expected to roll over as Haredi men take over. We see this with issues of public transport, where gender segregation persists despite it being against the law. We see it in the army, where cries to 'absorb' Haredi men in the IDF have led to the creation of women-free spaces throughout the army. And we see it in public policies all around Israel, where municipal signs prohibiting women from walking on certain streets or entering health clinics dressed 'immodestly' regularly infringe on Israeli women's right to walk freely throughout Israel.

"When did modesty become the sum and end all of being a Jewish woman?" Dr Rabinowitz asked in The New York Times article. "Our heroes in history were not modest little women." Dr Rabinowitz's lawsuit is one of several key initiatives by groups promoting feminism and pluralism in Israel, initiatives aimed at stopping the spread of religious radicalism that threatens women's real lives. I urge people around the world to support organizations in Israel – like IRAC and Kolech – that are protecting Israel's democracy for all of us.



Elana

Maryles

Sztokman is an award-winning author, sociologist, educator, activist and thinker in the field of Orthodox Jewish feminism. Her first two books, which cover different aspects of Orthodox Jewish feminism from sociological and educational perspectives, each won the National Jewish Book Council Award. She has lectured on gender in several institutes for higher education, including Bar Ilan University, the Schechter Institute for Jewish Studies, Young Judea and the Efrata Teacher Training College. She also worked as Executive Director of JOFA, The Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, from 2012-2014.



## Brisbane



Brisbane - Mira for MICHA 2015: Terry Groen Raffle Winner (L) & Mira Myler in front of Mira's 2015 quilt

## Brisbane



Brisbane - 'Four Score and More' LR Leah Werner, Terry Groen, Judith Benjamin, Ruth Boock and Pam Hupper

## Canberra



Canberra - Steering Committee 2016. LR Back: Yael Cass, Jo Dixon, Barbara Butow, Anita Shroot, Judith Eisner. Front: Sarit Cohen, Fleur Wimborne, Karen Tatz

## Canberra



Canberra - Dr Fanny Reading (L) & Fannie Heymanson at the home of Rebecca & Benjamin Rosenberg (Great-grandmother of our new Canberra correspondent Fleur Wimborne), Geelong 1927

## Gold Coast



Gold Coast - Gary Kann guiding a group through the Anne Frank exhibition on the Gold Coast

## Gold Coast



Gold Coast - Opening of Anne Frank Exhibition Gold Coast LR Barbara Stewart-Kann OAM, President of Gold Coast Hebrew Congregation David Rebibou and Rabbi Nir Gurevitch

## NSW



NSW - Pink Cancer Morning Tea with speaker Krystal Barter (centre)

## NSW



NSW - Song Of Life: LR Courtney Houssos MLA, Vic Alhadeff, Victoria Nadel, Steve Koutoulougenis, Anna Koutsis, John Koutsis, Jim Gouskos, Dennis Gouskos, Denise Gouskos, Miri Orden, Sophie Cotsis MLC, Vaios Oreopoulos (Trade Commissioner, representing General Consul of Greece).





NSW - MUM FOR MUM Volunteers: L-R Andy Bromberger, Brenda Kaplan, Sharon Baden, Suzy Wolanski, Patricia Liling, Sue Fillingham



Anne Reid OAM (front), Miri Orden (behind Anne), President Rysia Rozen OAM, Judy Eshel, Naomi Whelan, Victoria Nadel. "My name is Richard Rozen."



Victoria - Signing MOU between Jewish Care and NCJWA Vic to support our Golden Aged Clubs L-R: Shirley Glance, Jackie Lewinsohn, Nellie Khoroshina, Co-ordinator NCJWA Vic Golden Age Clubs



Victoria - Glen Eira Rotary Wonder Woman finalist Joanne Gubieski (R) with her mother Sandra Masei



Victoria - 'The Caring Mums, Great Cheese Cake Bake' winner Karen Solomon (L) with Alice Zaslavsky



WA - The NCJWA Yachad team- organisers of NCJWA WA's International Jewish Film Festival. L-R Caroline Frank, Yaara Barker, Stella Reuben.



WA - Holocaust Remembrance Day 'March of the Living' student speakers and their teacher L-R Jordan Saddik, Michayla Wasserman, Shirley Atlas (teacher) & Ethan Bloom.



WA - Mitzvah Day Classical Concert performers: L-R John Urban, Trumpet; Jacek Slawomirsky, Violin; Margaret Helfgott, Piano; Estee Todres, Mezzo-Soprano.



# From The Portfolios

## Interfaith: 50 years of Vatican II

For 2000 years, Christian leadership taught through their education programs and schools that Jews were the killers of Jesus. For generations this message was deeply encrusted in the minds and souls of a large number of the Christian faith followers. The beginning of change was the result of the meeting, on June 13 1960 between a remarkable Jewish French historian, Jules Isaac and Pope John XXIII. The Pope accepted Isaac's evidence that the view of Jews was fundamentally out of tune with the Gospels themselves. Cardinal Augustin Bea, a champion of Jewish-Catholic relations, was entrusted to lead the effort to draft a declaration on the Church and the Jews. Jules Isaac coined this anti-Judaistic tradition of the church 'the teaching of contempt'.

It was opposition to this initiative, particularly from bishops in the Middle East and traditionalists, and then suggestions from the bishops of Africa and Asia, that brought about a broadening of the text to cover the attitude of the Church to all religions. Thus was born *Nostra Aetate*.<sup>\*</sup> An initiative of a Jew, a survivor of the Holocaust.

October 2015 marks 50 years of this important document. While this document tells Christians that we are all equal it is not sufficiently well known in many parts of the world. Nevertheless it is a game changer in Jewish/Christian relations.

*True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. The Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ. Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.\**

Since *Nostra Aetate* was signed, all Popes have taken seriously its charge to improve Jewish-Catholic relations. And in 1998, the Vatican apologized for its inaction during the Holocaust. Rabbi Dovid Freilich, Chief Rabbi of the Perth Hebrew Congregation, who as his predecessors, Rabbi David Freedman, Rabbi Reuven Sacks & Rabbi Dr Shalom Coleman



have fostered a close connection with the two archbishops of Perth, the Catholic and Anglican diocese had the fantastic initiative to mark this historic event. Together with the Catholic Archbishop of Perth, the Most Reverend Timothy Costelloe he discussed the possibility of a 50th Anniversary service at PHC to mark this date. They both decided that a combined service would be held at the Perth Shule on 18 November 2015 to mark this historic and far reaching declaration.

I encourage as many groups of the Jewish community as possible to discuss this great milestone in our interfaith relationship with the Catholic Church. We must aim to increase our interfaith and intercultural activities and share our experiences with other groups. We must bring whenever possible a strong message on how important it is to educate people about the fact that we are all equal.

## Ilan Israel

NCJWA has contributed to ILAN, the Israel Foundation for Handicapped Children, for over 42 years. ILAN is a voluntary organization dedicated to the rehabilitation of disabled children and adults afflicted with cerebral palsy, polio, progressive muscle dystrophy or neuro-muscular injuries and diseases. The organisation has recently held a Volunteer Day to honour the work of volunteers, and has held Purim celebrations which were enjoyed by all. We are happy to share some photos of these events with you [above].

## Status of Women: Leadership

We have two projects in the pipeline. The first relates to the concept of feminism and how it fits into the NCJW. A questionnaire to be sent out to all members is being finalised. The second concerns the needs of the organisation and of the larger community for leaders, and for the encouragement and development of women as leaders in the voluntary sector. A workshop is being planned that will hopefully trial in Victoria (where they both reside) and will then be made available for the other sections.

<sup>\*</sup>Nostra Aetate (Latin: In our Time) is the Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions of the Second Vatican Council. Passed by a vote of 2,221 to 88 of the assembled bishops, this declaration was promulgated on October 28, 1965, by

Ester Steingieser - NCJWA Interfaith and Intercultural Portfolio Chair  
Di Hirsh OAM - Ilan Portfolio Chair  
Marilyn Gross and Negba Weiss-Dolev, co-chairs of the Status of Women Portfolio



# What's the 'Deal' at the Western Wall

Rabbi Vanessa Ochs

Jewish women — including many Orthodox women — have prayed wearing tallit and tefillin at the Western Wall (Kotel) for over half a century, exercising rights that were confirmed in historic rulings by Israel's civil courts in 2003 and more recently in 2013.

But the future of women praying at the Western Wall according to their (minhag) custom is in jeopardy. On January 31st 2016, the Israeli government announced it would create an alternative site for women and for the liberal Jewish denominations. The deal, brokered by Jewish Agency head Natan Sharansky and former cabinet secretary Avichai Mandelblit (now, Attorney General), was motivated by a promise Judaism's liberal Reform and Conservative leaders made to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Accordingly, if they could persuade some of the members of the organization called Women of the Wall (a contingent led by Anat Hoffman, an employee of the Reform Movement) to leave the Wall for good, and no longer present what the Haredim (Ultra-Orthodox Jews) have determined is an annoyance, the government would use Israeli taxpayer dollars and foreign donations to renovate and declare holy an archaeological site in the vicinity of the Western Wall called Robinson's Arch, already used for mixed-gender prayer. This site, already used for egalitarian prayer by liberal Jews, would then be called the 'Southern Wall,' and it would be governed by representatives of the liberal movements and Hoffman's group, among others. The Western Wall would be under the jurisdiction of Haredim.

When the deal was announced, the Reform and Conservative movements celebrated, in the belief that this was recognition of Jewish religious diversity in Israel and that it was a harbinger of greater respect for liberal Jews. This has proven not to be the case.

Original members of Women of the Wall (now calling themselves 'Original Women of the Wall' OWOW) saw the willingness of the liberal movements to give over the Western Wall to Haredi Jews as an act of betrayal. The deal hung on this premise: observant women who tried to pray at the Wall would be arrested and fined. OWOW (the group I belong to) has vowed to remain at the Wall, deal or no deal. OWOW, represented by the preeminent Israeli Human Rights lawyer Susan Weiss, have filed a suit against the Western Wall Foundation, administered by Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz, who refuses to give women access to Torah scrolls at the Wall or to bring in their own.

As of this writing (March 29), the deal seems on the verge of collapse. Leaders of the ultra-Orthodox parties in Netanyahu's cabinet have opposed the plan, claiming that Reform Jews are not fit to have jurisdiction over sacred space. Reform and Conservative leaders have vowed that if the plan is not approved according to the original agreement, they will renew a lawsuit they filed some years back and then abandoned. This suit involves the demand that Reform and Conservative Jews have the rights to pray, in their fashion, at the traditional Wall. At the moment, the government has offered to provide a new plan by June that will reconcile the differences.

Reaching a resolution that all parties can agree upon? That does not seem likely.

Rabbi Vanessa Ochs is a professor in the Department of Religious Studies and the Jewish Studies Program of the University of Virginia. She is the author of *Inventing Jewish Ritual*, *Sarah Laughed* and *Words on Fire*. One of the founding directors of the International Committee for Women of the Wall, she is now a leader of the Original Women of the Wall.

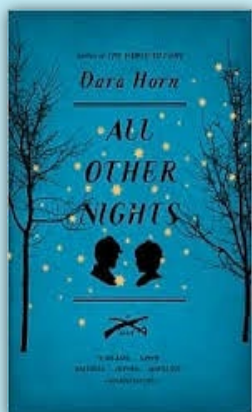


# BOOK CLUB: ALL OTHER NIGHTS

Every Jew is meant to imagine that he or she personally left Egypt. As we sit around our tables on Seder night, while we tell the story of the Exodus, we don't often think about the fact that this is the way that Jews have held Seders for years. Seder is a night full of questions, the most basic of which is 'why is this night different from all other nights?'. Dara Horn's haunting novel, *All Other Nights* is set during the American Civil War. Her protagonist is confronted with many questions, maybe ones that we all need to ask ourselves. What would it take for you to abandon your family and who is your family anyway? Would you blindly follow orders of your superiors? What is your breaking point? Could you become a spy and reinvent yourself over and over again?

Jacob Rappaport is a young man when he flees from his family to avoid an arranged marriage. He goes on to join the Union Army and is ultimately recruited as a spy. The army exploits Jacob's Jewish connections. Jews anywhere, including during the American Civil War in the 1860's can always find a place for themselves at a Seder. One Seder night Jacob finds himself at a Seder where Jews are discussing the Exodus and freedom of the Jewish Slaves from Egypt. It is ironic that they were sitting around a table where African slaves were serving the meal and the discussion is about continuing their slavery.

The story is full of real Jewish historical experiences, from Jewish soldiers on firing lines to weddings and deaths. Scattered throughout are mentions of events and people that are not widely known - from Judah Benjamin the first Jew to enter US cabinet and Secretary of State within the Confederacy, to the expulsion of the Jews of Tennessee by the Union army. Although the book has been widely received by non-Jewish and Jewish readers alike, as a Jewish reader you feel like the author is speaking to you with clever references thrown in that only a Jew would recognise as being a modern retelling of part of the Haggadah.



Horn's story is full of a twisting narrative that is well researched and filled with real historic figures while still remaining a work of fiction. *All Other Nights* is highly recommended. It will leave you with many questions, including whether we can find redemption and truly be 'freed slaves'.

Danielle Jones-Resnik

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# Not Really the Birds and The Bees



Shani Aloni

If we are serious about preventing sexual violence we need to educate our children and communicate with them about sex, sexuality and violence. Healthy communication has been found to reduce the chances that a child will be involved in violent acts, reduce the time it would take them to seek help and even give them the tools to have healthy and positive sex life in their adulthood.

Most parents have no doubt that this is important. But when we start talking about the 'details' of how this communication is done – I see a few common mistakes:

**"You should see my child, she/he is 14 but so naïve!"**

Too many parents wait for when they feel that their child is 'ready' to have a serious conversation about sex. The sad, sad, reality is that more than 60% of the children are exposed to pornography for the first time before the age of 11. By the age of 16 the majority of the teenagers (boys mostly, but girls too) watch pornography on a daily-weekly basis. Even if your child is not consuming pornography in their free time, you can be sure that they are exposed to it very often. If we wait till they are 16, we are 4-5 years late!

**"My children know that they can ask for my help whenever they need it"** That is probably true in most families, most of the time. But sex and sexual violence are a different story. Most parents do not mention sex in front of their children until they are adults, and even then it is not a topic we feel comfortable talking about with our children. In other words, from a very young age we give children a message that we can talk about everything, but not about sex. How can they know that they can talk to us about it, if we don't talk to them about it?

**"It's not about what you say to your child, it is about the way you behave"** That is also very true most of the time. But here again, sex is a very different story. Children do not watch their parents have sex, and they should never be asked or encouraged to do that! So how do we know that when the time is right, they will know how to treat their partner with respect and sensitivity? Well, there is no way to show it to them, so we must explain it to them.

**"When my child was 16 I sat with her/him and we talked about using a condom"** The brave parents who dare to talk to their children about sex, often focus solely about using protection. The majority of teenagers know about contraception. But when we talk to teenagers most of them admit that they

had unprotected sex, at least once, even though they had a condom with them at that moment. Why is it that they are not using the knowledge that they have? Because no one taught them how to use it (and I'm not talking about the technicality of using a condom...). What do you do when your partner refuses to do what you asked them? Can you say 'no' in the middle of sex because you feel uncomfortable? How do you choose a

partner that would respect you and protect you? No one ever taught them how to have an open and relaxed conversation about sex, how can we expect them to do that with an intimate partner? Finally, I want to give an advice I got from one of our staff members at the education department – be a big hunter of small opportunities. Start talking about the beauty and dangers of our body, sexuality and sex as young as possible and adjust the level to the child's maturity. Look for everyday moments (a scene in a movie, an article in the newspaper, a question your child asks, etc) to share with them your values and beliefs about sex. So when the time is right, they have the knowledge and skills to be good friends, good partners and great lovers!

Shani Aloni, Executive Director of the Haifa Rape Crisis Centre, is a certified Lawyer & Social Worker (Hebrew University) & has an MBA in social leadership from Ben-Gurion University. The HRCC (supported by NCJWA) works to end sexual violence through community outreach, advocacy and educational programs and operates a 24-hour crisis intervention hot-line for survivors of rape, sexual assault, incest and sexual harassment.

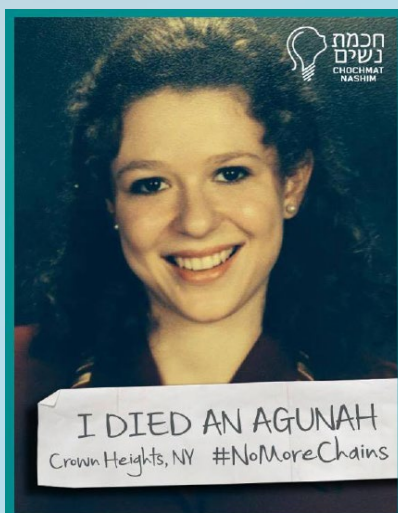
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#NoMoreChains



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## Agunot: Where There is Rabbinic Will...

Agunot are chained women who are unable to remarry or have more children until their husband grants them a Gett or Jewish divorce. The numbers of Agunot in Australia is unknown at this time. However both in Australia and the International community individuals, groups and a few rabbinic courts are working to try and break the chains that are holding these women to men and preventing them from moving on with their lives.

In Australia, NCJWA (VIC) has joined a coalition of Jewish Women's organisations in Melbourne comprising Emunah, Jewish Taskforce Against Family Violence, Project Deborah, WIZO, and UIA Women's Division to form **Unchain My Heart**. In the words of chairperson Susie Ivany, the aim of the committee is "to support Agunot by raising awareness, educating and empowering the next generation of men and

women to ensure this problem will no longer exist in the future".

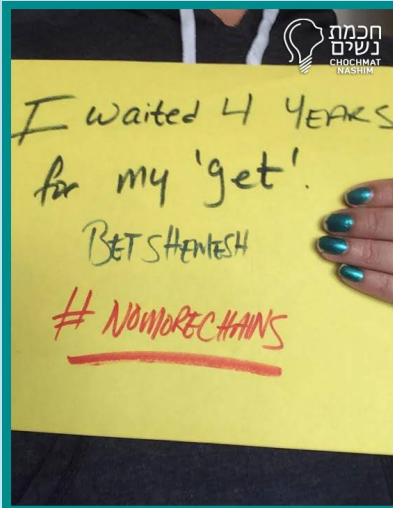
Taanit Esther, the day before Purim, has been designated as International Agunah Day. So Chochmat Nashim, an initiative of religious women for social justice in the Jewish Community, ran a social media campaign in an attempt to personalise the Agunah issues. Over a dozen women from around the world shared their status with the world. These photos were shared on [Facebook](#) almost 2000 times, and generated discussions among many who had previously not known about the subject. In Australia, **Unchain My Heart** released balloons in solidarity with women in Australia and around the world whose husbands are refusing to grant them a Gett. The committee has asked for any individual who knows of a Agunah to encourage them to contact Unchain My Heart and fill in the [Agunah Survey](#). Small steps are being taken by Rabbinic Courts in response to the Agunah issue. In March 2016, the Tel Aviv Regional Rabbinical Court sentenced to 30 days in jail, the father of a man who refused to grant his wife a Gett. The son abandoned his family in Israel in 2005 returning to America where it is believed that his father has supported him and helped him evade his family and responsibility. When the father arrived in Israel, the Court demanded he testify and





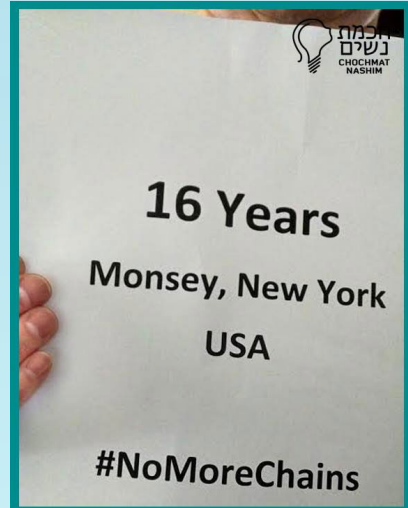
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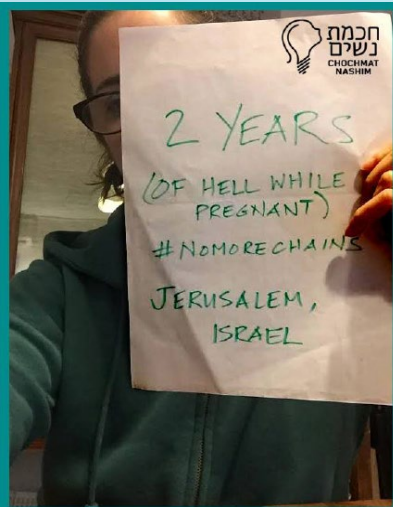
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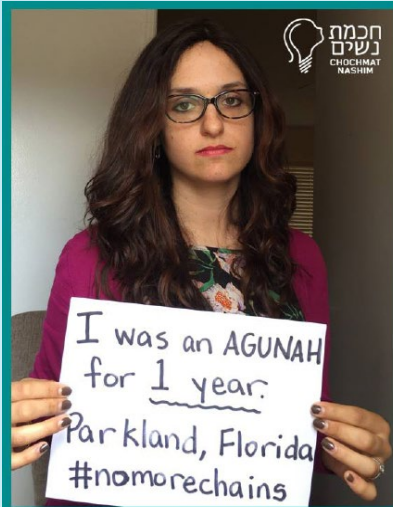
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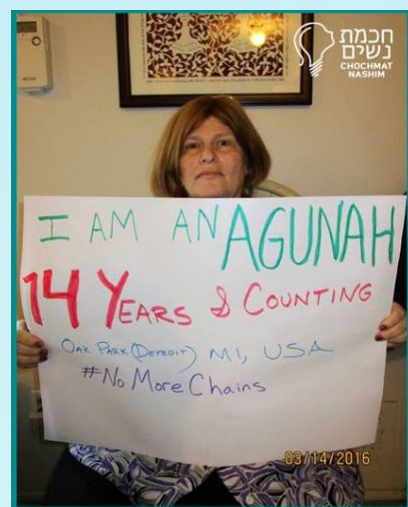
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יום העגונה י"ג אדר תשע"ו AGUNAH DAY 23.3.16

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barred him from leaving the country until he had done so. The Judge presiding over the case declared it to be "one of the most difficult cases the Court has been dealing with" and stated that the decision to punish the man was part of a crackdown by Orthodox Jewry to deal with the issue of Gett refusal.

In the meantime, in February 2016, the London Beth Din published the name of a man who has refused to grant his wife a Gett and have instructed Synagogues to deny him entry. This is the third man in six months that the London Beth Din has publicised as part of a campaign to isolate and marginalise men who refuse to grant their wives a Gett. This has not been universally seen as progress. Miriam Shaviv commented on thejc.com:

"On the face of things, this is a welcome development, a turning of the screws on men who are using Jewish law to ruin their wives' lives. It looks as if the Beth Din is stepping up its efforts to solve the plight of the agunot, or chained wives. But this is a mirage. While the Beth Din has every appearance of acting to help agunot, it is deliberately avoiding the one step that could actually help them, which is to find a halachic way to free them from their marriages."

So, despite the individual actions being taken by rabbinic

courts, Blu Greenberg's optimism that there would be rabbinic will to find a halachic solution to the Agunot problem seems a long way off. As Susie Ivany asked "Why in the 21st century must we turn to the civil authorities to solve the problems associated with our Jewish laws? It is time for the international religious leadership to come up with a universal fair solution."





# Section Reports

Compiled by Andrea Cooper

## Brisbane

In October we honoured our most senior members at a 'Four Score and More' morning, where we thanked them for their long term commitment to NCJWA. We also presented this year's Mira Myler handmade quilt, as the prize in our annual raffle to winner Terry Groen. We raised \$1600 for MICHA Tel Aviv. In November we participated in the Queensland Jewish Community 150th Anniversary Fair with a craft stall. A Silent Raffle for a painting by Kay Lipton was a highlight and was won by Hana Ben-Tovim.

Our monthly meetings regularly include speakers. In recent months we have heard from Dr Gill Fine on Women's Health Risks and Prevention; Maxine Cheylik on her recent visit to Rwanda; and Liliana Cisneros, on the Sephardi Jews of Peru and Spain.

NCJWA Brisbane Section support many charities both in Israel and the local community. Donations have been made: to purchase a bed for a person in with Motor Neuron Disease, to Young Care to buy iPads, to women's refugees, to Angel Flight, Alzheimer's Association and Cancer Fund.

## Canberra

This is my first Bulletin as NCJWA Canberra Section correspondent, taking over from last issue's correspondents Janet Frommer and Fiona Sweet Formiatti and of course the wonderful Sylvia Deutsch now in Sydney. With a number of committee changes in the last several months a lot of planning is going on in our Canberra Section, with much more to come as 2016 progresses. Our annual Canberra Section Film and Supper night was held on Sunday 30 November at the National Jewish Memorial Centre. The film 'Harry and Tonto' was enjoyed by all and \$269 was raised for Toora Women's Refuge. Thanks to all who joined us for the evening.

2016 commenced with Council Shabbat Saturday, 5 March, (Parsah Vayekel). As usual this was a combined event with the Orthodox and Progressive congregations. We were also delighted that the children from the Tots' Shabbat group joined in. Jo Dixon gave an inspiring drosha and the event was followed by community Kiddush.

## Gold Coast

For Rosh Hashanah Barbara Stewart-Kahn baked honey cakes which we distributed to senior and needy members of our community. From October to December the Gold Coast Hebrew Congregation hosted The Anne Frank Exhibition with NCJWA providing volunteers guides.

Our recent guest speakers have included: Tracey Smith, a lawyer who spoke to us about wills and estates; and Andrew

Antonopoulos and Bonita Tyler from the Gold Coast Project for Homeless Youth which we have supported since 1989. We have also recently held yet another very successful fundraising BBQ at Bunnings. It is such activity that helps us continue our support for those in need including within the Gold Coast Jewish Community.

## New South Wales

In October 2015 we hosted Krystal Barter, founder of Pink Hope in support of our NCJWA Jewish Women's Breast Cancer Network. In November our MUM FOR MUM volunteers heard Developmental Paediatrician Michael Zilibowitz on the parenting program 'Watch, Wait and Wonder'. Later in the month we held 'Celebrating Israel' with Israeli Ambassador to Australia, Shmuel Ben-Shmuel and Parliamentary Friends of Israel MP, Bruce Notley-Smith. December marked NCJWA Founder's Day with a panel on 'Domestic Violence and Judaism' with panelists Rabbi Michael Gourarie and Psychologist Caron Kaplan from Jewish Alliance Against Family Violence.

In February we celebrated the 'Song of Life' with the Greek Zakynthian Association of Sydney and NSW. This event honored the heroic actions of Metropolitan Bishop Chrysostomos Demetriou and Mayor Loukas Karrer during the Holocaust which resulted in the survival of all the Jews of Zakynthos. Also in February, at our Tu B'Shvat function, Rebbetzin Dina Gourarie discussed 'The Seven Species of Tu B'Shvat within our Soul'. Money was raised for our joint JNF project. We also held a movie day where our Progressive Group enjoyed 'Making Trouble - Three Generations of Funny Jewish Women'.

In March, National President Rysia Rozen joined us for a screening of "My Name is Richard Rozen". In April, Helen Bersten OAM addressed us on the topic of 'Writing Women Back Into History'.

## Victoria

In February we joined with our Patron Lady Southey for a luncheon where we were addressed by Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AM, Governor of Victoria.

Congratulations to Joanne Gubieski, finalist in the Glen Eira Rotary's Wonder Woman of the Year Awards. Also mazeltov to Samantha Blau, whose recent pre-wedding raised \$2000 for the HRCC. Our BrainFood talk series continues this year on a range of topics. Speakers to date include Dr Leah Kaminsky on her book 'The Waiting Room', Marcia Jacobson on 'In Praise of Being Known- A Conversation about Gay Children and One Mother's Shifting Identity' and Dr Renee Miller on 'Grand Parenting in the 21st Century'. In March we held an International Women's Day event with the screening of 'Sumangali: The Untold Story' with Carolyn Kitto from STOP THE TRAFFIK. Our Council Shabbat involved President Shirley Glance speaking at Temple Beth Israel and Chabad Glen Eira. We also had a stall with 'Unchain My Heart' at the 'In One Voice' Jewish Community Festival; raised funds for our Caring



Mums program with 'The Great Cheesecake Bake!' judged by former MasterChef contestant Alice Zaslavsky; and held our annual 'Women's Interfaith Model Seder', facilitated by Rabbi Allison RH Conyer.

## Western Australia

In October we held our annual Pink Sunday, in support of the Breast Cancer Network Australia. Kim Witkin, a Jewish Community member and author of 'Butterfly Blessings' spoke of her sister Cherie's journey with breast cancer.

In November our younger group Yachad led by Caroline Frank, ran a Jewish International Film Festival to benefit the Haifa University Ethiopian Fund. We also hosted a Mitzvah Day inspired classical music concert. The musicians generously donated their performances, so all proceeds were able to go to the Community Security Group. International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January was again commemorated in conjunction with WA branch of the UN Association, the Holocaust Institute of WA and the Jewish Historical and Genealogical Society of WA. Teacher Shirley Atlas and three local teenagers spoke about visiting Poland with the 'March of the Living'.

In March we heard a presentation on 'Health Aware – Macular Degeneration' by a speaker from the Macular Degeneration Foundation.

Sunday 1 May: What place is there for gays and lesbians in the Jewish community? Are LGBTI people welcome? Panel Discussion with Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton, Chief Minister of The Great Synagogue; Rabbi Jacqueline Ninio, Emanuel Synagogue; LGBTI activists Dawn Cohen, Justin Koonin and Brando Srot

Monday 9 May (& then monthly): 1st meeting NCJWA Cancer Support Group

Wednesday 18 May: MUM FOR MUM Continue the celebration of Mother's Day with a 3 course cooking demonstration by Neil, owner and chef of Brown Sugar and Lox Stock & Barrel.

Sunday 29 May: NCJWA Scholar-in-Residence Dr Elana Sztokman, 'Jewish Feminism and Gender Equality'

Monday 20 June: AGM (Note a week earlier than previously advertised)

Thursday 18 August: 4th Annual Birthing Kit/packing Morning - Status of Women/Transcultural Day.

Monday 22 August: Jana Gottshall Memorial Library Event - Composer Elena Kats-Chernin in conversation with Gael Hammer

Sunday 4 September: Antisemitism Panel discussion

## Victoria

Tuesday 3 May: Bernie Kuran, 'Jewish Surnames - Their origins, types and etymologies'.

Tuesday 24 May: Mina Fink Memorial Lecture with NCJWA Scholar-in-Residence Dr Elana Sztokman

Tuesday 7 June: Ephraim Finch 'My Story'

Wednesday 15 June: Renata Singer on 'Older & Bolder: Life After 60'

Tuesday 5 July: Anna Ciddor 'The Family With Two Front Doors'

Tuesday 2 August: Dr Dvir Abramovich 'Flashpoints: Israel, Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust'

## Western Australia

Wednesday 18 May: NCJWA Scholar in Residence, Dr Elana Sztokman 'Status of Women in Israel Today'

Sunday 19 June: Health Talk- Gynaecological Cancers

We hold monthly meetings with speakers on a wide range of topics - please be in contact for further information: [esteingiesser@gmail.com](mailto:esteingiesser@gmail.com)

# Upcoming Events

## Brisbane

We hold monthly meetings with speakers on a wide range of topics - please like our Facebook page to be sure to get further information: NCJWA Brisbane.

Wednesday 1 June: NCJWA Scholar-in-Residence Dr Elana Sztokman with Gold Coast  
Watch out for our 'Back to the 70s' function.

## Canberra

Sunday 8 May: Annual Show & Tell  
Sunday 19 June: Movie & Supper Night  
Monday 30 May and Tuesday 31 May NCJWA Scholar-in-Residence Dr Elana Sztokman  
Wednesday 10 August: AGM  
Sunday 11 September: Short & Sweet Poetry afternoon

## Gold Coast

May Guest Speaker on Aged Care/Government changes  
Wednesday 1 June: NCJWA Scholar in Residence Dr Elana Sztokman with Brisbane  
June: Function – Private Home  
Monthly meetings  
Movie night  
Facebook: National Council of Jewish Women Gold Coast

## New South Wales

Brisbane:  
Carolyn Goldsmith OAM

Canberra:  
Fleur Wimborne

Gold Coast:  
Tammy Ota

New South Wales:  
Miri Orden, Anne REID OAM & Viki Nadel

Victoria:  
Shirley Glance

Western Australia:  
Ester Steingiesser





## Editorial

Pesach is primarily a festival of memory. We remember what it was like to be a slave in Egypt – to feel the tongue of the whip, the derision that goes with being less than human. We remember what it was like to be a stranger – for even before slavery we were strangers in the land of Egypt. We are therefore enjoined to think deeply about the mechanisms of slavery and otherness, the circumstances that allow people from all backgrounds and all walks of life to find themselves as outsiders.

We begin this issue of the Bulletin with an interview with Elana Sztokman, who you will have the opportunity to meet in May when she visits Australia as NCJWA Scholar-In-Residence. Elana's message is that to understand how women are treated and to respond to that oppression, we must understand the role of stereotyping in the legitimization of otherness. Caryn Granek picks up this theme in her discussion of the history and treatment of women who serve as Rabbis in Australia. Jewish history has

often left the story of women untold, but Mandi Katz tells us that in the Pesach story we can find the story of strong women – women strong enough to take on men on to lead the way. Elana Sztokman herself tells one story that should make us angry, however mer have met their match in the guise of an 81 year old retired lawyer and Holocaust survivor. Vanessa Ochs tells us another story of strong women who have fought and continue to fight for women's equality at the Western Wall. The other two major issues we touch on in this Bulletin are too close to home to be ignored. Below you'll find a letter from our friend and ICJW colleague, Lucette Pilcer, who writes to us in the wake of the terrorist attacks in Belgium. We must stand united and offer solidarity to those in Europe and elsewhere who have been directly affected by the growth of fundamentalism. And we also must recognise the extent to which our own tradition continues to allow for the slavery of Agunot – women bound in chains.

I hope that you will not only find this issue of the Bulletin interesting, but that you will find in its pages material that you can use, share and discuss on Seder night and beyond. Our next issue will focus primarily on tackling issues related to reproductive rights, including abortion, infertility, Mikvah access and more. We welcome contributions from all our members and from women within our community. On behalf of the Editorial team – Andrea Cooper, Brie Shroot, Danielle Jones-Resnik, Di Hirsh – I would like to wish you a meaningful and Kosher L'Pesach.

Melinda Jones

### A Letter From Belgium

Jewish women – including many Orthodox  
I was very touched by marks of sympathy received from ICJW members around the world.  
Commenting on the effects of the recent terrorist attack in Brussels can be restrained to  
describing grief, psychological shock and then resumption of 'normal' life in a city and, by  
extension, a country wounded in its democratic flesh.

If I only slightly dwell on the matter, I go back about 25 years and complain like most older  
people do about the transformation of society. In that period, level of school education has gone  
down but parents now mostly depend on it for their children to be taught everything including  
good manners and shoe lacing.

Politicians often do not show determination or courage and quibble rather than make decisions.  
Failing economy and historic oblivion engender populism and extremism from which follow  
racism and anti-semitism. The only way out of this mess I can see, is to keep our fighting spirit,  
continue a dialog with other communities and try to re-establish the civilization we believe in.  
Time passes and men forget... maybe Jewish Women do not!

Lucette Pilcer (ICJW Belgium)



For further information on any of these Events, or Contacts in any other NCJWA  
Sections please look online at [www.ncjwa.org.au](http://www.ncjwa.org.au) or phone our National office on 03 9523 0537

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