The Labor government of Prime Minister Paul Keating remained in power through 1995 and into early 1996, when it was knocked out of office. An election upset ended a record tenure of 13 years for Labor, under the leadership of Bob Hawke from 1983 to 1991 and under Keating since 1991.

On March 2, 1996, Australians elected a new Liberal/National Party federal government led by John Howard. The upset was generally attributed to a tired government, the electorate becoming weary of the strong personality of Prime Minister Keating, the professionalization of the Liberal Party, and the ability of the conservative parties to neutralize sensitive issues by supporting social programs such as compulsory Medicare, a commitment to immigration, and continuity in areas such as multiculturalism and Aboriginal issues.

The new Liberal government set a course of fiscal prudence aimed at producing a balanced federal budget. With the exception of defense, most other areas were slated to be financially reduced, some severely. Proposed cuts to education created genuine apprehension in the Jewish community, though Howard made specific commitments in support of Jewish day schools in the election campaign. He reaffirmed this sentiment in an address to the Jewish community on June 1, 1996, when he said he fully understood the importance of Jewish day schools for the community and pledged that his government would continue to give strong support for nongovernment schools.

In a policy speech in February, Howard strongly reaffirmed the Liberal and National parties' continuing commitment to a multicultural Australia — in which all Australians are able to participate fully “in our inclusive society” — and to the maintenance of immigration at around its current level.

Once in office, however, the government imposed limits on welfare benefits for migrants and announced cuts in immigration, reorienting the intake toward skilled migrants and away from family-reunion criteria which, the government claimed, had resulted in increased unemployment. Overall the annual immigration intake was reduced by 10,000 to 86,000 for the 1996–97 period. The government also downgraded the Office of Multicultural Affairs by merging it into the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, and was poised to close the
Bureau of Immigration, Multiculturalism and Population Research. Premier of the State of Victoria Jeff Kennett criticized his federal party colleagues for what he portrayed as their short-term vision in cutting immigration, arguing that it would inhibit Australia's development as a multicultural nation. Also, clumsy handling of Aboriginal reconciliation, with the responsible minister launching a book praising the virtues of assimilation policy toward Aborigines, impaired initial attempts by the new government to promote relations with Australia's indigenous people.

The election campaign was marred by incidents of racism, notably from Pauline Hanson (who was disowned by the Liberal Party after she made racist comments about Aborigines) and Bob Burgess (a National Party candidate who was not elected). Soon after her election as an independent to the seat of Oxley in Queensland, Hanson formed an alliance with another independent member of Parliament, Graeme Campbell, who lost his Labor Party endorsement over his acceptance of the platform of the racist League of Rights and his promotion of Australians Against Further Immigration (AAFI).

AAFI, a racist party led by Rodney and Robyn Spencer and Denis McCormack, had links to the most extreme elements of Australia's far right. In mid-1996 the party considered disbanding and merging into a new party named the Australia First Reform Party (AFRP), under the leadership of Graeme Campbell MP and Ted Drane, the leader of the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia. Campbell and Drane hoped to attract support by piggy-backing on the wave of protest that followed the federal government's imposition of strict gun control in response to a horrific massacre in the Tasmanian town of Port Arthur on April 28, in which 35 people were killed.

The Port Arthur massacre of both tourists and townspeople, allegedly by a local resident, was the focus of national debate for the last two months of the period under review. Prime Minister Howard's call for an Australia-wide ban on semi-automatic rifles and shotguns sparked an extreme reaction from pro-gun groups and far-right individuals and organizations, some of whom likened the government to the Nazi regime.

**Israel and the Middle East**

The assassination of Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 had a profound effect in Australia on both the Jewish and broader communities. Then-prime minister Paul Keating made his first visit to Israel to attend the funeral, and most senior government ministers and opposition shadow ministers attended official Jewish community services of mourning around Australia.

While supportive of the peace process and Israel, the government continued to pressure Jerusalem on a number of issues. For example, in his Sam Cohen Memorial Lecture of September 10, 1995, sponsored by the Labor Friends of Israel, Foreign Minister Gareth Evans expressed concern over the Israeli govern-
ment's "extreme inflexibility" on the issue of Jerusalem. "I have always thought," he remarked, "and often said, that a 'two flags' solution is the only viable formal resolution..." Evans was criticized for a statement he made after the suicide bus bombing in Jerusalem on August 21 in which he denounced the continuing "violence by extremists on both sides." Critics noted that there was no equivalent campaign by Israeli opponents of the peace process comparable to the deliberate murder of Israeli civilians by Hamas terrorists.

Australia's ambassador to Israel, Peter Rodgers, failed to attend the Jerusalem 3000 celebrations in September, a clear reflection of government policy.

Australians helped monitor Palestinian elections in January 1996, and also committed resources to aid the development of a legal framework in Gaza. Federal Court Justice Marcus Einfeld initiated the efforts of the Australian International Legal Resources (AILR) organization in the territories, working under the control of the Palestinian Authority. AILR, an organization of lawyers that fosters the rule of law in developing countries, was supervised by Einfeld, who traveled regularly to the Palestinian areas during 1995.

The Howard government's promise to support Israel was underlined by strong condemnation of the terror bombings in Israel in late February and early March 1996. Similarly, following Israel's Operation Grapes of Wrath in Lebanon in April, the Australian government was cautious yet supported Israel's need to defend its northern border. However, following the deaths of approximately 100 Lebanese civilians at the UN base in Qana, Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Foreign Minister Tim Fischer (National Party), in an impromptu comment to the media on April 19, described the shelling as an "atrocity." (By contrast, in responding to the March 5th terrorist bombing in Israel, Fischer had called the incident "very sad news.") Prime Minister Howard effectively repudiated Fischer's "atrocity" remark in a statement (April 21) that recognized the Hezbollah provocations against Israel. "In the past two weeks we have seen attempts to destroy the progress that has been made toward peace between Israel and its neighbors in the Middle East. Hezbollah attacks on northern Israel have aimed at wrecking the mutual confidence and trust which is necessary for a lasting settlement. Those attempts must not be allowed to succeed. The violence must end."

Prime Minister Howard and Foreign Minister Alexander Downer both addressed the biennial Zionist Federation of Australia conference, on June 1 and 2, respectively. Howard described himself as a "longstanding friend of Israel" who valued highly "the strong links between Australia and Israel." Downer committed Australia to support Israel's membership in the Western European and Other States Group in the United Nations.

**Anti-Semitism and Extremism**

For the calendar year 1995, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, which maintains a database on reports of anti-Semitic violence, vandalism, harassment,
and intimidation, recorded 243 reports of this type. This was the highest-ever number, with 227 reports in 1994 the previous record. However, much of the increase came in the area of harassment. The total for serious incidents of violence and vandalism was lower than reports for both 1990 and 1991. In this category, 1995's figure was more than 10 percent below average.

The desecration of more than 70 Jewish tombstones at the West Terrace Cemetery in Adelaide in early July 1995 highlighted the existence in that city of active far-right groups and neo-Nazis linked to Australian or international extreme right-wing organizations. Then-minister for ethnic affairs Nick Bolkus committed the government to contribute funds for the repair of the graves. Disappointingly, though two men were arrested and convicted of the crime, the judge found no proof that there was racism involved—despite the fact that Jewish graves were attacked, while graves on all sides of the Jewish section were untouched. Seven weeks before that attack, tombstones and a Holocaust memorial were vandalized in a Queensland cemetery, with the perpetrators still at large.

The most common form of anti-Jewish intimidation and harassment was hate mail, generally carrying threatening overtones. There were also regular reports of telephone threats and mail drops of anti-Jewish material. In graffiti attacks on synagogues, Holocaust-denial slogans featured prominently.

In early 1996 the mayor of the municipality of Woollahra, the local-government area with the second-highest concentration of Jews in the state of New South Wales, came under public attack after it was reported that he had put in writing his view that he did not intend, as an architect, to do business with Jews. The mayor, Neville Gruzman, was born Jewish but had converted to and was an active member of the Anglican Church. Criticism of Gruzman was compounded when it was revealed that he also said on videotape that “very few Jewish people understand what esthetics is all about.” Although his council voted 10-4 calling for his resignation, Gruzman refused to step down.

American Jewish erotic performer Annie Sprinkle (real name Ellen Steinberg) embarked on a tour of Australia in early 1996. A former prostitute who had become a pornographic actress, Sprinkle performed a solo stage performance which drew criticism from Christian groups and some commentators for alleged immorality. During her appearance in South Australia, Adelaide radio commentator Bob Byrne invoked Hitler as a model critic. Byrne said, “Mind you, there is one theater critic who'd know just what to do with Annie Sprinkle or Ellen Steinberg”—then played a tape of Hitler speaking—“Adolf, where are you now that we need you?” The radio station on which Byrne broadcast suspended him because of the comment.

MEDIA BIAS

Overall, the Australian media could not be regarded as particularly antagonistic to Jews or to Israel. Following the Gulf War, the Australian Broadcasting Cor-
poration (ABC) improved visibly the quality of its research and presentation on the Middle East, and its new complaints procedure and revised internal guidelines did much to allay Jewish concerns. Nevertheless, in the year in review there continued to be examples of one-sided, unprofessional bias against Israel and insensitivity to Jews bordering on anti-Semitism, in both the print and electronic media.

Incongruously, SBS (the government's second broadcasting service, committed specifically to serve ethnic communities and reflect and enhance multicultural Australia) aired several programs that were directly anti-Israel in content, without alternative views given airtime. Even when SBS uncharacteristically put the Abba Eban documentary "Israel: A Nation Is Born" on air, one of its presenters introduced the program as being "a partisan view of this tumultuous era in history. . . . It's unfortunate that the Arab view is not sought. . . ." By contrast, in introducing the many anti-Israel programs, at no stage did an SBS presenter announce his or her regret that the Israeli point of view was not included.

On an unfortunately regular basis, Jewish community representatives were required to speak out against the misuse of terms such as "Nazi" and "Holocaust." The loose evocation of such terms was condemned by responsible media commentators, such as the respected syndicated columnist Gerard Henderson, but, particularly in the federal election campaign and the debate over gun control, "Nazi" became a common, over-used insult. The use of past Jewish suffering as a means to chastise contemporary Jews included the gruesome distortion that "Jews behave like Nazis," particularly during Israel's attempts to remove the Hezbollah presence from southern Lebanon in April. Letters on the subject were published in major newspapers in all cities and in the national daily, The Australian, and it was a common theme in calls to talk radio shows.

Key communal public-affairs organizations were actively engaged on a day-to-day basis responding to errors of fact and examples of prejudice in all media. The Jewish community had a small voice in the national media through Jewish-language programs on SBS radio, the multi-language network. These included programs in English and Hebrew, produced by the long-serving Uri Palti's team, broadcast nationally from Melbourne, and programs in Yiddish and English broadcast by Chaim Opperman's team from Sydney, complemented by high-quality broadcasters in the major cities and a number of other centers.

HATE ON THE INTERNET

Modern communications technology, in the form of the Internet, gave isolated places like Australia easy and cheap access to material which, while not unknown in Australia, was not widely available. It had also proven to be a cheap way to spread anti-Jewish propaganda widely, via news groups, electronic mail lists, and the establishment of hate sites on the World Wide Web. Two Australian sites established in early 1996 that were of particular concern to the Jewish community
were those established by the Adelaide Institute, an organization run by Freder-

ick Toben, devoted to Holocaust denial, based in the capital city of South Aus-

tralia; and Al-Moharrer Al-Australi, which included in its English-language pages

Holocaust denial and attacks on Jews. Another Web site, named “Sumeria,” with

links to far-right and conspiracy-theorist Web sites, continued operating, as did

those of the “new age” conspiracy magazines *Nexus* and *New Dawn*. The Citi-
zens Electoral Council maintained a Web site that publicized its *New Citizen*

newspaper, its candidates in various elections, and links to the LaRouche organi-
zation in the United States and its pseudo-intellectual front—the Schiller In-
stitute in Denmark.

**EXTREMIST GROUPS**

The Australian League of Rights—described by the federal government’s

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission as “undoubtedly the most

influential and effective, as well as the best organized and most substantially fi-
nanced, racist organization in Australia”—received widespread but largely neg-

ative publicity. The league continued to stage an extensive program of lectures

and seminars aimed at equipping “actionists” around Australia with information

to combat their Zionist, Fabian, and humanist enemies, and league material was

regularly included in mail drops of material encouraging hatred of Jews.

The Citizens Electoral Council (CEC), the front group of the Lyndon

LaRouche cult, operated extensively in Victoria and rural areas of Australia during

1995–96. The group persisted in its practices of spying on prominent mem-

bers of the Australian Jewish community, intimidation of the Jewish community,

fraudulent fund-raising techniques, and psychological abuse of its members and

their families.

The LaRouche cult was plagued by internal disputes, as a result of which in-

formation came to light regarding the obsession of their officials with an inter-
national conspiracy which, in Australia, assigned leading roles to Jewish com-

munity figures. More disturbing than this paranoia were revelations that the

organization had worked with elected parliamentarians to further anti-Jewish pro-

paganda campaigns. *Australia/Israel Review* published a special edition (July 1,

1996) devoted to exposing the LaRouche group in Australia, after *Review* editor

Michael Kapel and associates undertook lengthy investigations into the CEC and

succeeded in obtaining documents and eyewitness testimony to the above-

mentioned criminal activities of the group. This coincided with a program shown

on June 24 on Australian Broadcasting Corporation TV’s “Four Corners” pro-

gram, exposing the group.

According to both the *Australia/Israel Review* and “Four Corners,” the CEC’s

chief targets were Melbourne lawyer and former Zionist Federation of Australia

president Mark Leibler and his brother Isi Leibler, chairman of the governing

board of the World Jewish Congress, as well as former *Australia/Israel Review* ed-
itor Michael Danby. The CEC also conducted surveillance of Jewish organiza-
tions, including Australia/Israel Publications, B’nai B’rith Anti-Defamation Com-
mision (which downplayed the significance of LaRouchian activities), the Zionist Federation of Australia, and the State Zionist Council of Victoria. LaRouche operatives would attend Jewish meetings and use listening and recording devices to tape the proceedings. LaRouche organization members, as reported in their newspaper the New Citizen (July edition), also attended a session of the American Jewish Committee’s May 1996 annual meeting in Washington D.C., and monitored comments by Australia/Israel Publications’ editorial chairman, Colin Rubenstein. In a successful civil action against the Citizens Media Group P/L, settled out of court, Michael Danby received a full apology for allegations printed about him in the New Citizen.

The controversy created by the exposés of the LaRouche group in Australia led to calls from the Jewish community for an appropriate federal inquiry into its activities. At the time of writing, the new government was still considering what action it would take. Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer came out strongly against the LaRouche movement, pointing to its attempt to infiltrate and use the pro-gun lobby.

The neo-Nazi group Australian National Action was active in 1995. Based in Adelaide, South Australia, with a substantial following in Melbourne, Victoria, National Action held marches and demonstrations in front of the parliament houses of both states and was involved in violent confrontations with anti-Nazi and Jewish protesters. The incidents once again underscored the need for racial-hatred legislation, since neither Victoria nor South Australia had such laws.

The growing extremism of the Australian far right was highlighted by the visit to Australia of U.S. “Patriot” leader and conspiracy theorist Gerald “Jack” McLamb in October 1995. McLamb lectured throughout Australia and New Zealand about the threat of the New World Order, Jewish control, and multiculturalism, and advocated violent resistance to the government. Attendees at the Melbourne venue for McLamb included many known extremist and anti-Semitic figures. Paraphernalia available at the gathering included material from Holocaust deniers and other racist and anti-immigration groups.

A number of small organizations that define their Christianity through anti-Semitism, such as the Christian Identity Ministries (which facilitated and actively promoted the Jack McLamb tour), British-Israel World Federation, Covenant Vision Ministries, and Church of the Creator, had a small but visible presence on the extreme right of Australian politics. The British-Israel World Federation sold Holocaust-denial material and anti-Semitic literature in its Central Sydney bookshops, as well as Christian Identity, anti-Semitic, and anti-Israel books and magazines.

RACIAL-HATRED LEGISLATION

Racist vandalism, violence, and vilification in Australia, while far from a central concern, were present to such a degree that by 1995 all major political par-
ties were convinced of the need for federal antiracism legislation. After a long and complex debate, criminal sanctions, which had been recommended by a majority of members of the House of Representatives, were narrowly rejected by the Senate. A final bill incorporating civil penalties, which would supplement laws in place in a number of Australian states and territories, was still being debated at the end of June 1996. Addressing the Jewish community in Melbourne on June 1, Prime Minister Howard said, “You should be in no doubt about our abhorrence and rejection of all forms of racism. But tolerance of the views of others, at least their right to express them, is essential if our society is to retain its democratic foundations.”

HELEN DARVILLE/DEMIDENKO

A major public debate ensued after Australia’s highest literary award, the Miles Franklin Prize, was granted in June 1995 to a novel that a number of serious critics depicted as not only poorly written but anti-Semitic as well. The novel, The Hand That Signed the Paper, was written by Helen Demidenko, who claimed to be presenting to readers a fictionalized account of her family history as Ukrainians, in order to tell the “other side” of the Nazi genocide, at least as far as the role of Ukrainians in it was concerned. The author made claims such as that “Jewish Bolsheviks” had murdered her grandparents and that Jews were mistreating Ukrainians during the mid-1980s in Ukraine.

The novel had received some adverse commentary on publication, particularly for its stereotypical and negative depictions of both Ukrainians and Jews, but after it won the prize it came under sustained attack for its theme that murder of Jews was justifiable “revenge” for the crimes of “Jewish Bolsheviks.” As Sydney writer and critic Bernard Cohen wrote in Southerly (Autumn 1996), “The book’s logical coherence, the quality which makes the book internally consistent, is the logic of anti-Semitism. If a character acts against a Jew, the Jews (unindividuated) must have caused this action. If a character hates Jews, a Jew must have caused that hatred.”

On August 19, 1995, the Brisbane Courier Mail revealed that Demidenko was not the real name of the author. Ukrainian Helen Demidenko was in reality Helen Darville, the daughter of English migrants. Many in the literary community, including Miles Franklin judges Dame Leonie Kramer and especially Jill Kisson, as well as feminist author Dale Spender, continued to support Darville. Testimony from those closest to the writer, including her former boyfriend Paul Gadaloff, who helped her research the book, provided evidence that the writer was obsessed with Jews and intended to upset Jews with her novel.

Debate on the book often confused the issues of literary merit, the legitimate boundaries of fiction, and matters such as the sources of anti-Semitism, facts of the Nazi Holocaust, and the history of Ukraine. The novel’s depiction of Jews received enthusiastic support from openly anti-Semitic correspondents to news-
papers and from established extremist organizations. Charges were made that the "powerful" international "Jewish lobby" was attacking the book because the writer dared to tell the truth.

In addition to those who supported its central thesis, i.e., that Jewish Bolsheviks only received from the Nazis what they deserved, other defenders of the novel argued simply that literature could not be judged by standards that would apply to works of nonfiction, and that those who criticized judges for giving the Miles Franklin award to the book were in some way seeking to reduce freedom of speech. Prominent U.S. lawyer Alan Dershowitz, while on a visit to Australia in June 1995, attacked the book as "one of the most pernicious and mean-spirited works of fiction" and "a cowardly book." Dershowitz wrote in the *Australian Financial Review* that Demidenko was "afraid to write a non-fiction apologia for the Ukrainian genocide, lest she be rightly ostracized." He concluded, "Demidenko cannot bring herself to confront the humanity of a Jew even half a century after the Holocaust."

To the Jewish community, the fact that overt anti-Semitism received support as an "alternative" rendition of history was extremely troubling. During the time that the novelist was believed to be Ukrainian, even some of those most strident in their criticism of the book suggested that her anti-Semitism was in some way understandable or even justifiable due to her culture and background. After the novel was exposed as a work of fantasy, sections of the literary and journalistic establishment continued their enthusiastic defense of the novel. By contrast, critics such as Robert Manne of *Quadrant* magazine continued to emphasize both the anti-Semitism of the book and the profoundly disturbing reactions within the Australian journalistic and literary establishment to the distortion of history in the novel. Manne analyzed this phenomenon in a book, *Culture of Forgetting*, published in 1996.

Relations with the Ukrainian community were tested during the public controversy. However, following a meeting between representative bodies of the Jewish and Ukrainian communities, a joint statement was issued acknowledging the fraudulent history in the book and emphasizing the desire for communal harmony and good relations.

**Nazi War Criminals**

The case of Konrad Kalejs raised yet again the debate over whether Australia should institute measures—like those in the United States and Canada—to strip war criminals of their citizenship and even to deport them, where evidence is found that they lied on immigration and citizenship applications. Kalejs, 82, a suspected Nazi war criminal, obtained Australian citizenship in 1957 based on extensive misrepresentation of his wartime record and activities. In 1959 he moved to the United States, where he resided until his wartime record was uncovered by Department of Justice officials in 1984. They alleged that he was responsible for
the execution of more than 30,000 Jews and Romanies (Gypsies) during World War II.

In April 1994 a U.S. federal court of appeals found that Kalejs was "a key officer in a unit that killed tens of thousands of innocents," that the unit under his leadership "served as guards at the Salaspils concentration camp . . . the conditions there were brutal."

In April 1994 Kalejs was deported to Australia. In February 1995, following extensive media coverage, Kalejs left Melbourne for Canada, where he resided until his apprehension by the Canadian Department of Immigration in June 1995. Facing a deportation hearing in Canada, Kalejs departed Canada before the hearing and was declared persona non grata by the Canadian government. He returned to Australia on June 23, residing in Melbourne until September, when he again traveled to Canada. He was arrested by Canadian immigration officials at Pearson Airport in Toronto as he arrived, was detained, and was then released on a promissory note to appear at a federal immigration hearing on May 1, 1996. He remained in the Toronto area, awaiting the outcome of the May hearing. By the close of June 1996, Canada had still not deported Kalejs, due to defense counsel requests for delay, claiming his client was in poor health. At the same time, the Latvian government was reportedly soliciting information about Kalejs's criminal activities from the records of the Australian, U.S., and Canadian governments in an effort to seek his extradition and prosecution in Latvia.

The Australian Jewish community was deeply disturbed at the fact that Kalejs and other individuals, such as Karlis Ozols, who were intimately linked to the Nazi genocide, had been allowed to reside in and continually return to Australia. It sought to have the provisions of the Australian Citizenship Act of 1948 amended so as to permit removal of citizenship in cases of fraud or serious misrepresentation in the acquisition of Australian citizenship, even if this occurred prior to the ten-year period currently permitted. The community also wished to see the ministry for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs utilize its powers of discretion to remove citizenship from individuals whose involvement in and responsibility for war crimes and/or genocide were clearly established.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

**Demography**

The Australian Jewish community continued to grow through immigration, particularly from the former Soviet Union and South Africa. Estimates for the total number of Jews in Australia ranged from 95,000 to 105,000, out of a total population of 18 million. Immigration from the former Soviet Union, South Africa, and to a lesser extent Israel, the United Kingdom, North America, and New Zealand more than compensated for loss of numbers due to natural factors
and emigration. More than half the total number of Jews in Australia were born overseas—South African-born Jews the largest single group, followed by natives of Poland, Russia, Hungary, and Germany.

Almost one-third of Jewish men had at least one university degree, three and a half times the Australian average. One-fifth of Jewish women had a degree, three times the Australian average.

The Jewish community was still heavily concentrated in Melbourne and Sydney, with the Brisbane-Gold Coast representing the greatest growth area. According to the 1991 census, approximately 45 percent of Australian Jews lived in the state of Victoria, with 40 percent in New South Wales.

Although census figures (which are dubious, as it is not compulsory to answer the question on religion) indicate that between 15 and 20 percent of Jewish women and men currently had a non-Jewish partner, assessments based on anecdotal evidence suggest the figure may well be considerably higher. By comparison with members of other religions, Jewish Australians were more likely to marry, tended to marry later, and were less likely to be living in de facto relationships than other groups. Another demographic feature of the community was the high percentage of elderly, which placed an enormous stress on welfare and service agencies provided by the community.

There were between 14,000 and 20,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union in Australia, with the overwhelming majority living in Sydney and Melbourne. Per capita, Australia's Jewish community had received more immigrants from this source even than Israel, at least double the proportion of the United States, and approximately seven times the number that went to Canada.

The integration of this community was proving to be a major challenge, mainly due to the lack of Jewish knowledge and literacy among new arrivals. The Australian Jewish community provided some assistance, particularly on arrival in Australia, but communal leadership was concerned that the group was integrating successfully into Australian life but not into the Jewish community.

Communal Affairs

In November 1995 Diane Shteinman of Sydney succeeded Isi Leibler as president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), the Jewish community's roof body. Shteinman, the first woman ever to be elected to the position, had been a leading activist for Soviet Jewry in the 1980s. In June 1996 Ron Weiser succeeded Ann Zablud as president of the Zionist Federation of Australia. For the first time in well over a decade, the heads of the national representative organization of the Australian Jewish community and of the Zionist movement were both in Sydney, Australia's largest city.

In January 1996 Isi Leibler was elected chairman of the governing board of the World Jewish Congress, a body with which the ECAJ was affiliated and worked closely. The federal United Israel Appeal was relocated to Melbourne with the
election of Mark Leibler, former president of the Zionist Federation, succeeding prominent Sydney leader and businessman Frank Lowy as president.

Holocaust memorial activities played a major part in the Australian Jewish communal calendar. In 1995 the Australian government hosted a series of events as part of “Australia Remembers,” a program marking 50 years since the defeat of Nazism, with prominent Jewish participation. The city of Perth, Western Australia, unveiled a Holocaust memorial in a central city location during the year.

The Australian Jewish News was at the center of a nationally publicized controversy in March 1996, involving a power struggle, alleged financial improprieties, and criticism of its record, which its editor in chief, Sam Lipski, vigorously defended. Some critics, such as a leading member of the Lubavitch community, mining magnate Joseph Gutnick, wrote to the paper complaining of “leftish views and misrepresentations”; others criticized the initially soft treatment of Helen Demidenko’s anti-Semitic novel, The Hand That Signed the Paper, in a 1994 review, as well as an opinion piece on January 28, 1995, by the newspaper’s news editor claiming that circumcision was “primitive and atavistic,” and the paper’s perceived backing of Israel’s Labor Party against the opposition Likud.

Education

There were 19 Jewish day schools in Australia, with more than half of all Jewish children aged 4–18 and close to 70 percent of those aged 4–12 receiving full-time Jewish education. Over the past decade, the growth was most dramatic in Sydney, while Queensland developed its first Jewish school in that period. The Jewish day schools, which span the religious spectrum, were considered to produce outstanding academic results in addition to serving as the community’s major investment in Jewish continuity. The high cost of a schooling system made funding of Jewish day schools a high priority of the communities in which they are based. In addition to fees paid by students, the schools raised funds from benefactors and, in the case of Sydney, from the general communal appeal. A large number of students at all schools benefited from fee reductions, scholarships, and bursaries, but there were still a number of parents, dubbed the “disenfranchised middle class,” who could not afford full fees but did not qualify for fee reductions.

This situation fueled the ongoing communal debate between those advocating the status quo in funding for Israel and those seeking reallocation of some additional funds for local needs such as Jewish day schools. The consensus was that, while more money was needed by Jewish schools, this should not be at the expense of support for Israel. Leading community benefactors Richard Pratt and Frank Lowy, recognizing community education needs, established an educational fund; however, it foundered because of opposition from existing communal appeals. In this context, the pledge by Prime Minister John Howard on June 1 to continue government funding for the secular-studies component of Jewish day schools was significant.
Jewish-Christian Relations

Jewish-Christian relations continued to develop, through both dialogue and multifaith activities. The Uniting Church of Australia was working toward developing guidelines for understanding Jews and Judaism, following the lead of the Catholic Church, which issued guidelines in 1992. The Anglican Church, second in size to the Catholic, did not accord interfaith dialogue the same importance, but there was some contact and constructive dialogue with the Anglicans in the major cities. Councils of Christians and Jews met regularly and held services together where appropriate. One example was the memorial service held by the council in New South Wales, for the victims of the mass murder in Port Arthur, Tasmania. *Kristallnacht* was marked by an annual multifaith service.

The Jewish community was actively involved in multifaith initiatives on social-justice issues, with the Executive Council of Australian Jewry in a leadership role with the Working Group of Faith Communities for Aboriginal Reconciliation and on matters such as Western intervention in Bosnia.

While less formally organized than Jewish-Christian relations, on a number of occasions Muslim and Jewish speakers appeared together on public panels discussing matters of mutual concern, such as the depiction of minority groups in the Australian media. There was also constructive dialogue on matters such as food labeling and the relationship of the legal system to the needs of non-Christian religions.

On a less positive note, aggressive criticism of Australia's Jewish community representatives appeared in several English-language Muslim publications, and the Australian *Muslim News*, which was generally mainstream and moderate, published an article titled “The Jews Who Run Clinton's Court.”

Positive relations had developed with the Orthodox churches and the Baha'i, Hindu, and Buddhist communities, particularly at the national level. The Jewish representative on the Advisory Group on Faith Communities to the federal government's Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, Jeremy Jones, was elected in 1996 to serve as Convenor by a meeting attended by representatives of five major Christian and three major non-Christian Australian faith communities.

Jewish-Arab Relations

The overwhelming majority within the Arab communities in Australia — predominantly refugees from dictatorial Middle East regimes or the ongoing conflict in Lebanon — had no record of antagonism toward the Jewish community. Some of their spokespersons, however, were on a number of occasions openly hostile to the Jewish community or at best overly critical when Jews expressed what they considered legitimate Jewish concerns.

In June 1996 Mohamad Hassanien, who had been linked in Denmark to the terrorist Gama'at Islamiyah group, was found to be in Australia on a false pass-
port and subsequently deported. His case focused attention on international terrorism and the reach of organizations such as Hezbollah.

Earlier in the year, media reports of Jewish anxiety over threats by international terrorist groups to attack Jewish targets touched on the possible presence in Australia of overseas-based, or locally produced, terrorists affiliated with Middle Eastern groups. Although no Jewish community representatives made any general assertions, a number of Muslim and Arab leaders accused commentators who raised the issue of Islamic terrorism of being anti-Muslim and anti-Arab.

In a feature article that appeared in the *Melbourne Herald-Sun* (April 24, 1996), Joe Wakim, secretary of the Australian Arabic Council, implicitly supported Marlon Brando’s charge of Jewish control of Hollywood and claimed that Hollywood fostered stereotypes of Arabs as evil. Rabbi John Levi of Melbourne refuted the charges and suggested that “bigoted behavior toward one ethnic group is not a sensible way to further tolerance for another community.” The publication of anti-Jewish material, in Arabic, in the Sydney-based newspaper *El Telegraph* also contributed to souring a relationship that had been improving as a consequence of the Israeli-Arab peace process.

**Culture**

The Australian Jewish Museum entered new premises in Melbourne. It presented a major exhibition on Jewish food and an impressive display on Jerusalem 3000. The Sydney Jewish Museum contained a section on the Holocaust—with teams of Holocaust survivors acting as guides to the exhibits—and one on Australian Jewish history.

Major Jewish figures to visit Australia during 1995–96 included Jerusalem mayor Ehud Olmert, Israeli commentator Ehud Ya’ari, Ashkenazic chief rabbi Yisrael Lau, Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Tel Aviv University’s Natan Lerner, and Hebrew University historian Robert Wistrich.


**Publications**

The outstanding literary achievement by a Jewish Australian in the period in review was the receipt by Abraham Biderman of Melbourne of the National Book Council’s Banjo Award for nonfiction, which he won for his self-published autobiography, *The World of My Past*. Another Holocaust memoir, Mark Verstandig’s *I Rest My Case*, also received positive reviews, although comments concerning anti-Semitism in Poland in the book prompted more debate on this subject than
on the work's merit. A work titled *Diaries*, by prominent Sydney artist Judy Cassab, which includes a record of her life in Budapest in the 1940s under an assumed name, was highly acclaimed and positively reviewed. *Rabbi Jacob Danglow: The Uncrowned Monarch of Australian Jews*, a biography by Rabbi John Levi of the man who served the St Kilda Hebrew Congregation for more than 50 years, was recognized as a major contribution to Australian social history, as was Robert Manne's work on the Demidenko/Darville controversy, *Culture of Forgetting*.

Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* was released in Australia in April 1996, generating a great deal of debate and controversy in the print and electronic media, in letters to the editor and opinion columns. While the Goldhagen thesis of German culpability was criticized by many academics, it served to reinvigorate and refocus the debate on one of the core issues of the Holocaust.

Other works of interest by and about Australian Jews were *A Leaf on the Diaspora Tree*, a brief memoir by a Polish Jew who settled in Australia before World War II, Zelman Bernstein; *Without Regret*, the reminiscences of prewar European Jewish refugees in Western Australia, edited by Louise Hoffman and Shush Masel; *A New Australian, A New Australia*, the memoir of a Hungarian Jewish postwar immigrant in Sydney, Paul Kraus; *The Leica and Other Stories*, the memoir of a Polish Jew deported to Siberia by the Soviets, Harry Rosenberg; *Miracles Do Happen: Memoirs*, by survivors of Auschwitz and Lodz Ghetto Fela and Felix Rosenbloom.

**Personalia**

The most prominent Jewish figure during the year was Gordon Samuels, who became the first Jewish governor of New South Wales. Walter Jona, a former member and minister in the Victorian parliament, was granted an honorary doctorate in philosophy from Tel Aviv University; Graeme Samuel became chairman of the Australian Opera; the Mt. Scopus College Burwood Campus was renamed the Gandel Campus in honour of John Gandel; the late Sir John Monash, Australia's most important military figure and a prominent figure in early Zionism, was honored with his portrait adorning the new $100 note; Dr. Colin Rubenstein was appointed deputy chairman of the Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission; Jeremy Jones was appointed inaugural member of the Social Justice and Review Group of the New South Wales government; and Australian Jews were once again well represented in the Australia Day and Queens Birthday honors lists.

**COLIN RUBENSTEIN**