Multiculturalism, rights of the Aborigines, and immigration were key matters of public interest in the year and a half period ending December 1997.

Multiculturalism, a policy crystallized by the Liberal party while in government in the 1970s, recognizes the legitimacy of ethnic diversity, building upon it for the benefit of society as a whole, but within a framework of consensus and commitment to core Australian political and social values, such as the rule of law, parliamentary democracy, tolerance, freedom of speech and religion, and English as the national language.

The administration of Prime Minister John Howard initiated a review of the policy. In August 1997 the National Multicultural Advisory Council was appointed by Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock. In December the council released a paper designed to open debate on the issue, including areas in which the government could improve its performance and policies, as a prelude to producing its final report to the government due in mid-1998. The council’s preliminary view was that multiculturalism was a success, and it pointed to a Newspoll in May 1997 showing that 78 percent of respondents viewed it positively. In launching the discussion paper, Prime Minister Howard embraced the cultural and ethnic diversity of Australia as “a remarkable success story,” saying that “there is no place in the Australia that we love for any semblance of racial or ethnic intolerance. . . .”

Immigration to Australia dropped as the government gave more weight to skills criteria and less to family-reunion criteria, which the government claimed had resulted in increased unemployment. Knowledge of the English language also became a factor in the process. Overall, the annual immigration intake was reduced by 9,000 to 74,000 for the 1996–97 period.

The period under review also saw the end of the Special Humanitarian Migration Program, which had allowed between 7,500 and 8,000 Jews to immigrate to Australia from the former Soviet Union. The ending of the program had previously been agreed to by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) and the Federation of Australian Jewish Community Services, with the Australian government.
Under Howard, the Liberal government continued a tight fiscal policy, with cuts to all departments except the Department of Defense. In education, substantial cuts to tertiary education were continued, and fee-based courses began to appear in universities across the country. (Fees for university education had been removed in the early 1970s by the then Labor government.)

The government’s relations with Australia’s Aboriginal people continued to be inflamed. Two issues dominated the debate. The first was the government’s refusal to issue an apology for previous governmental policies that allowed Aboriginal children to be taken from their families and placed in Christian missions or with white families. A Human Rights Commission report on the issue of the “stolen children,” published in May 1997, was highly critical of the policy. Jeremy Jones, director of community affairs for AIJAC, the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council, made the presentation to the National Reconciliation Convention on behalf of all faith communities, in his capacity as chairman of the Advisory Group on Faith Communities to the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

The second issue was the government’s proposed legislative changes that would effectively extinguish native title to lands occupied prior to white settlement and subsequently leased to farming and grazing interests. A High Court ruling in 1996, in what became known as the Wik decision, found that the pastoral leases did not eliminate native title. To counter this, the Liberal government proposed and began to pass legislation designed to effectively eliminate native title on pastoral leases. Unfortunately, some government members, embroiled in an electorally costly race debate, engaged in scare tactics, claiming that freehold titles—residential properties—were also under threat, a claim with no basis in fact.

The Australian Jewish community solidly opposed the government’s policies both on the “stolen children” and Wik, supporting the Aboriginal rights in these matters. Gold-mining magnate and Lubavitch community leader Joseph Gutnick, a staunch Liberal supporter, derided the government and even stated at one stage that he would think about changing his vote if the government continued to enact prejudicial policies against the Aborigines.

The debate over Aborigines was also a factor in the rise of Pauline Hanson, the former Liberal Party candidate and now independent member of Federal Parliament, known for her racist views. In September 1996, in her maiden speech in Parliament, she asserted that Australia was being “swamped by Asians” and that indigenous Aborigines, who constitute less than 1 percent of the population, were not disadvantaged and did not deserve government assistance. Hanson attacked the process of reconciliation between the indigenous and nonindigenous populations, making numerous false claims about the ways in which Aborigines were advantaged over whites. Hanson also called for the dismantling of multiculturalism and for Australia to withdraw from the United Nations and all foreign treaties.

The effect of the speech and the refusal of newly elected prime minister John
Howard to explicitly repudiate and condemn her sentiments triggered a public outpouring of support for Hanson, with some opinion polls placing public support for her at 17 percent and above. Her celebrity lasted only several months, however, peaking with the formation of her own political party, One Nation, in April 1997. Her fortunes in the various political polls over the course of 1997 suffered a marked decline, except in her home state of Queensland.

In general, the Howard government won respect from the Jewish community for upholding the previous government’s decision to reject Holocaust denier David Irving’s visa application to visit Australia; for maintaining strong support of the private education sector and Jewish day schools; and for speaking out against racism and anti-Semitism.

Israel and the Middle East

The Howard government gave strong support to the Middle East peace process and Israel, as well as an unstinting opposition to terrorism. Prime Minister Howard accurately described himself as a “long-standing friend of Israel” and valued highly “the strong links between Australia and Israel.” On key resolutions critical of Israel in the UN General Assembly, such as those passed in the Emergency Special Session during 1997 against Israeli housing construction in Jerusalem, Australia stood out from the flock. Apart from an initial vote against Israel on Resolution 51/223, in subsequent votes that were passed by large majorities, Australia voted with the minority abstaining. This was a significant change in Australia’s voting pattern, reflecting the genuine empathy of the Howard government with Israel.

Federal Court Justice Marcus Einfeld continued his work with the Australian International Legal Resources (AILR) organization in Israel’s occupied territories, under the control of the Palestinian Authority. AILR, an organization of lawyers, aimed to assist in building the rule of law in developing countries.

In April 1997, when a German court handed down its verdict holding Iranian leaders, including then President Rafsanjani, responsible for directing acts of international terrorism, Australia reacted along with most Western countries in withdrawing its ambassador from Iran. However, he returned only a couple of days later, arriving in Teheran on April 18. In an interview with the daily Iran News, Ambassador Hume said, “I met and briefed Foreign Minister Alexander Downer and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade Tim Fischer, who voiced their satisfaction, and it was decided that I should go back to Teheran.”

In the past, both Prime Minister Howard and Foreign Minister Downer had strongly denounced Iranian involvement in international terrorism. In mid-1996, Howard said that “Iranian involvement in terrorism is absolutely unacceptable.” Complicating matters was the fact that, starting in 1991, Australia had maintained a line of credit of US $750 million to Iran and promoted a policy of “constructive engagement.” Foreign Minister Downer stated in June 1997 that the gov-
On December 23, 1997, Prime Minister Howard lit the first candle in the hanukkiah at the Sydney Jewish Museum at a function sponsored jointly by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and the Zionist Federation of Australia. Due to Australia’s position in relation to the International Date Line, Howard could quite rightly claim to be the first of many world leaders to light a Hanukkah candle in honor of Israel’s 50th birthday. His words of friendship toward Israel at the time reflected his many years of close identification with, and support for, Israel.

Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism

In 1997 the Jewish community was able, for the first time, to judge the results of the federal antiracism legislation adopted late in 1995. Implementation of the law, which had been heralded as an effective means to deal with racist individuals and organizations in contemporary Australia, proved to be complex, time-consuming, and limited in effectiveness. Nevertheless, in certain cases the law had positive outcomes. In one instance, following a complaint lodged by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry against an Arabic newspaper, El Telegraph, published in Sydney, which had published an article citing the notorious Protocols of the Elders of Zion as if they were a factual document, the newspaper was required to publish a rebuttal in a form of a critique of the Protocols, in Arabic. The same newspaper also ran an article calling on Jewish and Arab Australians to work together against racism, co-written and signed by two leading members of the Jewish community. This outcome was achieved through conciliation by the Human Rights Commission, as mandated by the new law.

Other complaints, however, including instances of Holocaust denial on the Internet, were not so readily resolved. On a number of occasions, Jewish community leaders noted that the time between the commission of an act and its likely adjudication was so great as to render the process totally inadequate. In other cases, the perpetrators of anti-Semitic acts were anonymous, thus making complaint impossible.

During the calendar year 1997, 246 reports of incidents of anti-Semitism were recorded. These included violence, vandalism, and intimidation directed at Australian Jews and Jewish communal institutions around Australia. The reported figure represented an 18 percent decrease over 1996, but was 19 percent higher than the average over the previous seven-year period.

Typical of anti-Semitic incidents that occurred over the year were daubing of homes in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, and Adelaide with anti-Jewish and Nazi graffiti, on some occasions associated with break-ins; damage to Jewish day schools from rocks thrown through windows of classrooms and fires deliberately...
lit; bomb threats against Jewish community organizations and schools; and telephone and mail threats.

The number of incidents of serious vandalism and significant personal injury was among the lowest since comparative records began to be kept. The comparative decrease in attacks on communal property could be attributed to greater awareness of communal security needs and the consequent increase in police protection and other measures. It is also relevant that the decreases in acts of harassment and intimidation that did occur were in population centers where the Jewish community had taken well-publicized legal action against prominent anti-Jewish propagandists.

There was a small increase in reports of physical harassment, and incidents of this type were reported at a rate of 17 percent above the average over the long term. Among reported cases of assault and harassment, most took place close to synagogues and were directed at Jewish families, or day-school students, easily identifiable by their school uniforms.

Some anti-Semitism was associated with events that drew public attention to the Australian Jewish community. Thus, for example, when four Jewish athletes were killed in a traumatic bridge collapse at the Maccabiah Games in Israel in July 1997 (see below), and more than 60 others were injured, the Australian media portrayed the events sympathetically, emphasizing that the athletes were Australian, not just Jewish. Still, letters to the editors of major Australian newspapers reflected a degree of anti-Semitism, one letter criticizing the right of Jews to have their own international sporting games.

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 financed, racist organization in Australia"—continued to receive widespread but largely negative publicity. Media attention was aroused following the revelation in the Australia/Israel Review that Graeme Campbell, then ALP Member for Kalgoorlie, had not only addressed league seminars but used the platform to comment insultingly about the prime minister. Questions were raised about the league's attempts to influence public debate, the activities of racist groups in Australia, and the questionable judgment of public figures who participated in activities organized by and for extremist groups. Although not all political figures opposed contact with the League of Rights, there was unanimity in condemning its anti-Semitism. The league continued its 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, continued to operate in Australia during 1997, but at a much lower
level than in previous years. The group persisted in its practice of spying on prominent members of the Australian Jewish community, intimidation of the Jewish community, and fraudulent fund-raising techniques.

The principal neo-Nazi group in Australia, Australian National Action, was less active during the period in review. Based in Adelaide, South Australia, with a substantial following in Melbourne, Victoria, National Action resorted to small-scale demonstrations against Asians, including some particularly distasteful abuse and assaults on schoolchildren.

Extremist publications, including *The Strategy; Lock, Stock & Barrel;* and *Nexus,* continued to promote the views of conspiracy theorists and the far right. U.S. militia leader Gerald “Jack” McLamb, a confederate of Bo Gritz and Mark Koernke, continued to receive substantial promotion in *The Strategy* following his 1995 tour of several cities and towns in Australia.

**MEDIA BIAS**

Incidents abounded of one-sided, unprofessional bias against Israel and insensitivity to Jews bordering on anti-Semitism, in both the print and electronic media. The most striking example came from the *Sydney Morning Herald,* which published an *Agence France Presse* report claiming that Israeli forces were dropping toy dolls in Lebanon to wound and kill Lebanese children. An investigation by the *Australian/Israel Review* proved that there was no evidence to substantiate the claims, and that the reporters involved were openly antagonistic to Israel.

The Melbourne *Herald Sun,* operated by Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation, published several letters highly critical of the Australian Jewish community during the year. One letter, by Nigel Jackson, a prominent anti-Semite and Holocaust denier, denounced attempts to bring Nazi war criminals to justice. The letter mentioned “the fanaticism of some powerful interests around the world” and cautioned the Australian government not to give in to a “noxious cabal of millionaires.” Letters sent in response were not published.

**Nazi War Criminals**

There were further developments in the case of Konrad Kalejs, described as “a key officer in a unit that killed tens of thousands of innocents” by the U.S. Federal Court of Appeals in 1994. An Australian citizen since 1957, Kalejs had attempted to live in both the United States and Canada but had been deported by both. (For full background, see AJYB 1997, pp. 409–10.) Most recently, he had entered Canada in September 1995, was arrested by Canadian immigration officials at Pearson Airport in Toronto, and was detained but was then released on a promissory note to appear at a federal immigration hearing on May 1, 1996. Almost a year later, in August 1997, the Canadian immigration proceedings ended with a decision to deport Kalejs immediately to Australia. He arrived on August 20 to a media furor and a revived debate about whether war criminals were
entitled to citizenship and residency in Australia. In the meantime, the Latvian government was seeking 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. At the end of 1997 it was not clear how far the process had advanced.

No action was taken in the case of Karlis Ozols, who was described in a 1992 brief for the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) as "the highest ranking alleged war criminal living in Australia." As a senior member of the Arajs Kommando — with a higher rank, actually, than that of Konrad Kalejs — Lt. Col. Ozols commanded a company that assisted in the rounding-up, transportation, guarding, and execution of Jews in the Minsk and Slutzk ghettos in Byelorussia. The victims of Ozols's unit alone probably numbered more than 12,000. He was decorated with the German War Cross of Merit, which was rarely given to non-Germans, a sign that Ozols had distinguished himself in his duties.

Ozols arrived in Australia in 1949 as a displaced person, gained citizenship in 1956, and had lived in Melbourne undisturbed ever since. He was investigated by the federal government's Special Investigations Unit (SIU) throughout its five years of existence, 1987-92, and by mid-1992 a brief had found that there was a prima facie case against Ozols for committing genocidal war crimes.

The Jewish community remained deeply disturbed by the fact that Kalejs, Ozols, and other individuals, intimately linked to the Nazis' campaign of genocide, had been allowed to reside in and continually return to Australia. They urged amending the 1948 Australian Citizenship Act so as to permit removal of citizenship in cases of fraud or serious misrepresentation, even if that occurred prior to the tenyear period currently allowed. They also wanted the immigration minister to use his powers of discretion to remove citizenship from individuals whose involvement in and responsibility for war crimes and/or genocide were clearly established.

Leaders of the Australian Baltic community criticized Jewish protests over the presence of alleged Latvian war criminals in Australia, principally Konrad Kalejs and Karlis Ozols. On November 25, 1997, a letter signed by four leaders of the Australian Lithuanian community to the Lithuanian newspaper Republika asked the four leading candidates in the presidential elections whether they intended to apologize for Lithuanian participation in the murder of Jews during the Holocaust, or if they would "do so only when the President of Israel apologizes for the harm Jews did to Lithuanians — for illicit arrests, deportations, inquests, imprisonments, and massacres during the Soviet occupation."

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. There were believed to be hundreds of thousands of others with some ancestral connection to the Jewish community, the high number due largely to the predominantly male immigration of Jews to Australia in the early years of European colonization. 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 to Israel.

The Jewish community was heavily concentrated in Melbourne and Sydney, with the Brisbane–Gold Coast representing the greatest growth area. Census figures (which are dubious, as the question on religion is not obligatory) indicate that between 10 and 15 percent of Jewish women and men currently had non-Jewish partners, although anecdotal evidence suggests the figure may be considerably higher. Another demographic feature of the community was the high percentage of elderly, which placed enormous stress on welfare and service agencies.

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. Although the newcomers were successful in their general integration into Australian life, their lack of Jewish literacy made integration into the Jewish community a major challenge.

Communal Affairs

Personal relations between Australian Jews—one of the most pro-Israel Jewish communities in the world—and the State of Israel were severely tested during 1997 as a result of a tragic incident at the opening of the 15th Maccabiah Games in Tel Aviv. On July 14, two Australian Jewish athletes were killed and some 70 injured when the bridge they were crossing over the Yarkon River, leading into the stadium for the opening ceremony, collapsed. Two more athletes died later, most probably as a result of ingesting polluted water from the Yarkon River. The water was heavily contaminated with chemicals, some of which were reportedly sprayed by Maccabiah officials to keep mosquitoes away. Fifteen-year-old Sascha Elterman was still in a Sydney hospital at the end of the year, following numerous operations and suffering from an abscess on her brain as a result of her immersion in the Yarkon.

The images of Jewish athletes coming back to Australia in coffins greatly distressed the community and evoked enormous anger at the apparent incompetence of the Maccabiah Games' organizers and at the Israeli government itself. That the games' opening ceremony went on, even as bodies were being pulled from the Yarkon, also enraged many, although overriding security and rescue considerations understandably influenced the decision. At the same time, there was enormous admiration for the athletes who stayed on and competed in the games, bringing home to Australia dozens of medals from the competition. Leaders of the Australian Maccabiah organization, principally President Tom Goldman and
Tom Danos, and communal leaders like Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council chairman Mark Leibler, traveled regularly to Israel to maintain the pressure on the Israeli government for compensation and a thorough investigation.

The official investigation, headed by Brig. Gen. (Res.) Yishai Dotan, refused to attribute specific blame for the collapse, although it became clear that the bridge was hopelessly substandard and that its builder had been selected because of an astonishingly cheap construction bid. (The bid from the Israel Defense Forces was $111,200; the organizing committee accepted the Irgunit construction firm's bid of only $34,750; Irgunit kept about $7,700 and subcontracted the work to Ben Ezra Constructions for a cost of around $27,000.)

Goldman called for those responsible to resign from the Maccabi World Union or the subcommittee responsible for the games. In December he announced that Australian Maccabi would pull out of the world organization in protest. A meeting was convened between Jewish leaders, including AIJAC national policy chairman Colin Rubenstein and Zionist Federation president Ron Weiser, with Israel's ambassador to Australia, Shmuel Moyal, in an attempt to calm the situation. In August Israel had offered a $500,000 compensation loan to athletes, until insurance claims could be settled, but the money had not materialized by the end of the year.

After receiving the Dotan Committee's report (judged insufficient by many), Minister of Sports Moshe Peled concluded that there had been a chain of negligence including all parties involved in the collapse of the bridge. "The sequence of foul-ups began with engineer Micha Bar-Ilan, who designed the bridge, and continued with the Irgunit construction firm and its subcontractor Ben-Ezra Construction, and the Maccabiah organizing committee. . . . It symbolizes a deteriorating Israeli society in which amateurism and the notions of 'it'll be okay,' 'don't worry,' or 'trust me' are contributing to unnecessary deaths."

Following a rapid investigation, in December Israeli authorities filed charges of negligent manslaughter against five of those involved in the bridge collapse, including the contractor, the designer, and the chairman of the Maccabiah Games organizing committee. Families of the dead and injured indicated that they would file suit against the Israeli government and/or the Ramat Gan municipality, the Tel Aviv municipality, and the Maccabiah Organizing Committee. A survivor, Jason Steinberg, summed up the mood in the Australian Jewish community in an article in the national newspaper, The Australian. "What people clearly can't and may never understand is why in a country so respected and renowned for its efficient defense and security forces, could they not build a simple bridge to carry 5,500 Jewish athletes representing 50 countries over a small stretch of river?" he wrote.

Newspaper editorials became increasingly critical of Israel over time as the toll on the Australian athletes increased. The reactions of Australian Maccabiah officials, increasingly upset by apparent Israeli delays and insensitivity (some Israelis referred to the bridge collapse as an "accident," even as criminal charges were
about to be laid against five of those responsible), became heated. This was reflected in the pages of the *Australian Jewish News* and also in the general media.

**Other Matters**

Australia/Israel Publications restructured in March 1997, becoming the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC). Mark Leibler, federal president of the United Israel Appeal, was appointed as national chairman of the organization. Dr. Colin Rubenstein became the national policy and editorial chairman, and Barry Smorgon, chairman in New South Wales. Michael Kapel remained as editor of the council's journal, the *Australia/Israel Review*. Jeremy Jones became AIJAC's director of international and community affairs, retaining his position as executive vice-president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ). The elected roof body of Australian Jewry.

AIJAC marked its restructuring by establishing an historic affiliation with the American Jewish Committee, enabling the two to collaborate on key Jewish communal and national policy issues. The new partnership with the AJC and its Pacific Rim Institute seemed to highlight the Asia Pacific as an area of growing significance to the Jewish world, an area previously neglected by American and Australian Jewish organizations. This development coincided with the expansion of radical Islamic and Iranian activity in the Asia Pacific area, which had an obvious impact on those societies but would also inevitably affect Jewish communities throughout the region and have implications for Israel and the wider Jewish world.

Diane Shteinman of Sydney continued as president of the ECAJ. Ron Weiser continued in his position 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 influential Zionist movement were both in Sydney, Australia's largest city. Nina Bassat continued in her post as president of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV). Ron Samuel, a South African immigrant, succeeded Doron Ur as president of the Council of West Australian Jewry. Athol Morris was succeeded by Sue Doobov as president of the ACT Jewish community.

Isi Leibler continued as chairman of the governing board of the World Jewish Congress, a body with which the ECAJ was affiliated and worked closely.

**Education and Culture**

Government spokespeople, including Minister for Education David Kemp and Prime Minister John Howard, extolled the virtues of Jewish day schools on a number of occasions. Jewish schools, like all private schools, received government funding for their studies. Jewish day schools ranked as four of the top five schools in Melbourne for their final year results, continuing their exceptional record of
the previous year, when they occupied all five top places. The only Jewish day school in Perth achieved the best results of any school in that state. While New South Wales did not publish similar comparisons, all Jewish day schools achieved outstanding academic results.

Storyteller Donna Sife of Sydney won first prize at the 1997 Australian national storytelling festival held at Macquarie University.

Kathy Temin was the youngest finalist in the inaugural contemporary art competition established by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney.

The world premiere of *Hemispheres*, composed by Russian-Jewish Australian composer Elena Kats-Chernin, took place in Sydney, as did the inaugural performances of Barry Kosky's *Operated Jew*. A play on Jewish divorce difficulties, *Getting Your Man*, by Margie Fischer, was first performed in Adelaide.

**Christian-Jewish Relations**

The Uniting Church Assembly approved a document on the subject of its relationship with the Jews. In addition to the long and detailed statement, the group adopted a new action policy, which, among other things, encouraged all preachers, ministers, teachers, and others to take into account the theological implications of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust in their reading and interpretation of Scripture, and to study material on the church's historic role in promoting anti-Semitism. This policy emerged from five years of discussion and negotiation between Jewish leaders and the church.

The Jewish community continued to develop relations with the Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church, both of which had already adopted progressive policies on Jewish-Christian relations. The first formal meeting between Jewish community leaders and the Anglican Church took place in Sydney in December 1997.

The Jewish community worked closely with the mainstream churches, and with Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, and Bahá'í groups on issues relating to indigenous peoples. Councils of Christians and Jews operated in most centers with significant Jewish communities.

**Publications**

*The Fiftieth Gate* by Mark Baker was published during 1997 to excellent critical reviews. So too were the *Last Walk in Naryshkin Park* by award-winning novelist Rose Zwi and essays on the experiences of European Jews by Lilly Brett called *In Full View*. Norman Rothfield published his autobiography, *Many Paths to Peace*.

**Personalia**

Sir David Smith, former assistant to the governor-general, was appointed a delegate to the Constitutional Convention; Rabbi John Levi, Melbourne University
law lecturer Kim Rubenstein, and Eve Mahlab were unsuccessful candidates for election as people’s representatives to the Constitutional Convention. Rabbi Levi, the first Australian-born rabbi, retired from his post as chief minister of Temple Beth Israel in Melbourne.

Ray Finkelstein QC was appointed as a Federal Court judge. Federal Court Justice Marcus Einfeld was one of only 100 Australians named as “national treasures” by the National Trust of Australia. Supreme Court Justice Howard Nathan retired from the bench during 1997. A colorful and beloved jurist, Justice Nathan was active within both the Jewish and wider communities.

Colin Rubenstein was appointed to the National Multicultural Advisory Council (NMAC). Michael Danby won Australian Labor Party preselection for the federal electorate of Melbourne Ports. If successful, he would become the only member of Federal Parliament to openly identify as a Jew.

Henry Burstyner, a Melbourne lawyer, won what was believed to be the first settlement with a Swiss bank over dormant funds deposited by a Nazi victim whose descendants had come to Australia after the war.

Jewish community benefactor, founder of the Sydney Jewish Museum, and prominent businessman John Saunders passed away in December 1997. His funeral was attended by numerous dignitaries, including Prime Minister John Howard and other prominent politicians from both sides of the aisle.

Other prominent community members who died in 1997 included Janet Simons, a local and international leader of the United Israel Appeal; respected community leader Mona Klein, widow of Jewish leader Louis Klein; Melbourne artist Jack Louis Koskie; Kurt Jacob, a patron of music with an international reputation for his expertise in harmonicas and accordions; Prof. Louis Goldberg, a leader in accounting, education, and research; Fred Gruen, a “Dunera” internee during World War II, who was arguably Australia’s leading economic theorist; Zosia Mercer, president of WIZO; Ida Ferson, Holocaust survivor, activist, and renowned musicologist; David Martin, one of Australia’s most prolific and talented writers; Rev. Isidor Gluck, emeritus cantor of Sydney’s Great Synagogue; and Ken Weiner, long-serving leader of Sydney Jewry and prominent Liberal Party activist.