Australia

National Affairs

Australia entered 2007 enjoying unprecedented economic prosperity fueled by booming demand for its natural resources. Yet change was the buzzword—from climate change and changing the industrial-relations laws to a possible change of government. With a national election looming late in the year, political debate was framed around the inevitable electoral showdown between long-serving Prime Minister John Howard and the confident leader of the opposition, Kevin Rudd.

Australia’s military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan continued, although the debate over scale and duration of these deployments had given way to concerns over the inherent dangers faced by Australian military personnel. Three Australian soldiers—Trooper David Pearce, Sgt. Matthew Locke, and Pvt. Luke Worsley—were killed in skirmishes in Afghanistan, and two Australians working for U.S. security companies were killed in Iraq.

After five years detention in Guantanamo Bay, Al Qaeda trainee David Hicks returned home to Australia in May after pleading guilty to terrorism charges in a controversial plea bargain. He then served nine months in Adelaide’s Yatala prison and was released on December 29 under an interim-control order. Hicks’s lawyer read a statement to the media on his behalf in which the convicted supporter of terrorism said he recognized “the huge debt of gratitude that I owe the Australian public for getting me home.”

In the wake of the foiled terror attack in Glasgow in June (see above, p. 352), federal police acted on intelligence linking the British terror cell to a Gold Coast-based doctor living in Australia, Mohammed Haneef, and Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews moved to cancel Haneef’s work visa. But the case collapsed under legal challenges and the charges were dropped.

In domestic politics, the government’s efforts to enact bold policy proposals and boost its sagging poll ratings met with controversy and resistance. In January, Prime Minister Howard sought to initiate a massive $10-billion rescue plan for the Murray-Darling river system, spanning
four states. But the plan had to be abandoned when the state of Victoria refused to give up control of its part of the waterway. An inquiry in June found shocking child sex abuse rampant in many indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, prompting the federal government to launch a controversial emergency intervention along military lines. Treasurer Peter Costello’s budget became a microcosm of the wider political climate: even though huge sums were allocated for higher education and payments to the elderly, and more tax cuts were proposed, the polls indicated trouble for the government.

Similarly, efforts to sully the reputation of opposition leader Rudd largely backfired. True, Rudd had been involved with disgraced lobbyist Brian Burke, but so had Environment Minister Ian Campbell, who was forced to resign. And then Minister for the Aging Santo Santoro was caught in a conflict-of-interest scandal relating to his stock portfolio, and had to resign as well.

Nevertheless, all year Prime Minister Howard defied the opinion polls and pushed on toward election day. But as he strode the world stage, behind the scenes some of his senior colleagues were advising him to resign, and once the formal election campaign got underway it was clear that the voters felt that eleven-and-a-half years in power were enough.

On November 24 Kevin Rudd—a Mandarin-speaking former diplomat and senior bureaucrat—secured a decisive victory for the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and became the country’s 26th prime minister. It was a dramatic fall for Howard, once a dominant figure who now lost not only the position of prime minister but also his own parliamentary seat, after 33 years of public life. The Liberal and National parties that had constituted his coalition would have to rebuild.

Five Jewish parliamentarians were elected, two on the federal level and three in state elections. MP Michael Danby, previously the only Jew in the Federal Parliament, was now joined in the House of Representatives by his ALP colleague Mark Dreyfus. Eric Roozendaal, for Labor, and Ian Cohen and John Kaye, for the Greens, were elected to the New South Wales Legislative Council, the state’s upper house.

Israel and the Middle East

The year 2007 marked a high point in Australian political support for Israel. The pro-Israel spirit characterized both the Liberal-National coalition government and the Labor opposition.

Early in the year the National Archives released 1976 cabinet docu-
ments previously restricted under the 30-year secrecy rule. They revealed that several Australian Jewish leaders, as well as future prime minister Bob Hawke, then president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, were targeted for assassination by Fatah and PFLP terrorists in 1975.

In his first address to the Jewish community since assuming the ALP leadership in December 2006, Kevin Rudd told a Yeshiva Centre fundraising dinner in Sydney on February 20 that he was “an unapologetic and lifelong friend” of Israel and the Jewish people.

The government continued to support the boycott of the Palestinian unity government and made clear that aid to the Palestinians would be conditional on Hamas meeting the three conditions laid down by the international community: recognition of Israel’s right to exist, renunciation of violence, and respect for past agreements between Israel and the PA. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer welcomed the reendorsement of the Saudi-sponsored Arab peace initiative at the Arab League Summit in Riyadh in March, which proposed recognizing Israel if it returned to the 1967 borders.

Following the Hamas takeover of Gaza in June, Downer pledged AUSS$4 million to PA president Mahmoud Abbas’s new government in the West Bank, and a further AUSS$3 million in humanitarian funding for Palestinian refugees in Gaza and Lebanon. On a Middle East visit in late June, Downer said he hoped the emergency government would provide an opportunity to revive the peace process with Israel. And in December, Australia pledged AUSS$45 million over three years to the PA at the international donors meeting that raised US$7.4 billion to prop up Abbas.

Arab diplomats from 12 countries called on the Australian government in June to adopt a more impartial role in the Middle East. Syria’s ambassador to Australia, Tammam Sulaiman, complained that Syria was so neglected that it “strived to get a glance from Mr. Downer.” Downer responded: “I would like Syria to play a truly constructive role in restraining extremism. . . . For Syria to constrain the activities of Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and in Lebanon more generally, and for Syria to exercise constraint over the activities of Hamas—that will help.”

Prime Minister Howard was awarded the Jerusalem Prize by the Zionist Federation of Australia, the State Zionist Council of Australia, and the World Zionist Organization at a Jewish National Fund function in May that was attended by 1,200 people. The honor recognized Howard’s many years of support for Israel and the Jewish community. The JNF also announced that a forest would be planted in Israel in his name.

On May 24 Attorney General Philip Ruddock extended for another two
years the listing of Hezbollah's external security organization as a terrorist group. In September he also re-listed Hamas's Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Lashkar-e-Tayyiba.

Both the government and the opposition staked out strong positions against the Iranian nuclear-weapons program. Labor, with an eye to the upcoming elections, sought to portray itself to Jews as more anti-Iranian than the government. Robert McClelland, the ALP foreign-affairs spokesperson, told a meeting of the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC) on March 5 that Australia should lead a campaign to have the UN Security Council refer Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the International Court of Justice for threatening to "wipe Israel off the map." Defense Minister Brendan Nelson attacked the proposal for "cruelly" raising the hopes of Australian Jews, since only countries, not individuals, could be prosecuted before the ICJ. Foreign Minister Downer called the plan "a domestic stunt [that] would embarrass Australia" and added that Australia would not participate in any U.S.-led military operation in Iran.

In an October 26 debate with Downer on ABC TV, the opposition spokesperson on immigration, Tony Burke, supported "in the strongest terms, economic and political sanctions being taken against Iran. We've expressed very deep concern about some of the comments that have come from the Iranian leadership, in particular the comments about wiping Israel off the face of the earth."

On November 7, the Howard government endorsed an earlier Interpol decision to issue arrest warrants for five Iranians and a Hezbollah operative suspected of involvement in the 1994 terrorist attack on the Argentine Jewish Mutual Association (AMIA) in Buenos Aires. Later that month Australia was one of only seven countries to challenge the UN Human Rights Council's selective obsession with Israel's human-rights record.

In a wide-ranging preelection interview with AIJAC's *Australian* *Israel Review*, both Howard and Rudd outlined their parties' respective positions on the Middle East. The two men spoke of the values shared by Australia and Israel and the importance of the bilateral relationship. Committing themselves to supporting a safe and secure Israel, they reaffirmed that there would be no negotiations with Hamas until it accepted the three international requirements. The main difference that emerged in the interview concerned the Iraq war, as Howard stressed that Australia's 1,500 troops would remain stationed there, while Rudd said he would implement a staged withdrawal of the 520 combat troops in south-
ern Iraq but maintain Australia's naval presence in the Gulf to stop oil smuggling, continue overflights to provide intelligence, and retain the troops protecting the Australian embassy in Baghdad.

Jews and other supporters of Israel sympathized with Howard upon his defeat on November 24, but took solace in the strong support that incoming Prime Minister Rudd and his ALP had demonstrated for Israel.

Prime Minister Rudd and the new Defense Minister, Joel Fitzgibbon, visited Australian troops in Iraq and met government officials there on December 22. In the last week of December, Australia's UN ambassador voted against funding for the UN's follow-up to the 2001 Durban Conference against Racism, scheduled for 2009. Since the original conference had been marred by anti-Semitism, Jews were reassured by this vote that the new government was sensitive to Jewish concerns.

Parliamentary opposition to Israeli policies was vocal but insignificant, more or less confined to members of small parties such as the Democrats and the Greens. Even the latter shifted position in April, deleting from their platform calls for Israel to remove its security barrier and settlers from Palestinian territories.

The fate of the three abducted Israeli soldiers—Ehud Goldwasser, Eldad Regev, and Gilad Shalit—drew considerable attention in Australia. Rallies in support of their release drew more than 500 demonstrators in Melbourne on June 25, the first anniversary of Shalit’s capture by Hamas, and 300 in Sydney on July 29. Shlomo Goldwasser, the father of Ehud, spoke before Australian audiences and met with Foreign Minister Downer and opposition leader Rudd in September, hoping to gather support in the fight for his son’s release. As he looked on, Parliament unanimously approved a resolution calling for the release of all three of the Israelis. And in November, 700 students on Australian university campuses participated in an international solidarity day for them.

Sydney’s Bankstown Council canceled a conference planned for January 27 by the extreme Islamist Hizb ut-Tahrir group. It was to have included an address by the radical Palestinian preacher Sheikh Issam Amira.

In April, Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews called on Sheikh Taj a-Din al-Hilaly, the controversial Egyptian-born imam of Sydney’s Lakemba Mosque, to consider leaving Australia permanently. Hilaly had questioned the Holocaust, made inflammatory remarks about Jews, and urged Muslims worldwide to support Iranian president Ahmadinejad. The next month, police dropped an investigation into whether Hilaly distributed $10,000 raised by a charity to Hezbollah. But in June, the Aus-
Australian National Imams Council removed Hilaly as spiritual leader of Australia’s 300,000-plus Muslims and elected Sheikh Fehmi Naji El-Imam to a two-year term. Although less controversial than Hilaly, Fehmi had spoken at a pro-Hezbollah rally in 2006 and described the organization’s members as “freedom fighters.”

Jack Roche, a convert to Islam who was jailed in 2004 after confessing to involvement in an Al Qaeda plot to bomb the Israeli embassy in Canberra in 2000, was released from prison in 2007.

In July, four Australian citizens were arrested in Lebanon on terrorism-related charges. Two of them were quickly released and the others were accused of supplying weapons to terrorists.

In December, the Australian newspaper reported that police in Victoria were investigating more than 50 men who had attended pro-Hezbollah rallies during 2006 for suspected ties to that group. Investigations were also being conducted into a Melbourne-based Hezbollah cell believed to be disseminating political propaganda and raising funds for Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Dr. Victor Batarseh, the mayor of Bethlehem, arrived in Australia in August to sign a sister-city partnership with the Sydney municipality of Marrickville. He told a rally at the University of Sydney that his city was dying. “Bethlehem is being strangled,” he charged, because of Israel’s security barrier. Marrickville also had a sister-city relationship with the Syrian town of Safita. After representations from the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies in June, Sydney’s Leichhardt City Council declined to twin with the city of Hebron, and instead offered support for NGO projects that included both Palestinians and Israelis.

The year saw a flurry of visits between Australia and Israel by politicians, academics, clergy, and businesspeople. Justice Elyakim Rubinstein of the Israeli Supreme Court delivered the AIJAC Hans Bachrach Oration in February. The next month Israel’s national infrastructure minister, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, arrived to sign a memorandum of understanding with Federal Environment and Water Minister Malcolm Turnbull on joint research and development in water technology. This was followed up in October, when a delegation of three state ministers, one shadow minister, and 50 senior executives from the water industry attended Israel’s International Water Technologies and Environmental Control Exhibition and Conference. Israeli historian Michael Oren, MK Ephraim Sneh, Middle East expert Professor Barry Rubin, and Israeli Arab Supreme Court Justice Salim Joubran visited Australia in August.

In a groundbreaking event, AIJAC’s Rambam Program together with
AJC's Project Interchange sponsored a visit to Israel by seven Indonesian journalists in October. Former IDF spokesperson Nachman Shai visited Australia to address United Israel Appeal functions in November. While in Israel as part of a Christian delegation, Archbishop Philip Aspinall, head of the Australian Anglican Church, criticized Israel's security barrier on ABC Radio in December, and the deputy chief of mission at the Israeli embassy in Canberra responded that the Christian delegation was biased, having originally not even planned to visit Israel, but only the Palestinian territories.

A record number of Australian Jewish students—more than 750—enrolled for Zionist Federation of Australia tours to Israel in the summer of 2007–08. And the New South Wales Board of Jewish Education, which ran outreach services to Jewish students in non-Jewish schools, sent 12 tenth graders for its inaugural six-week tour of Israel in November.

As media reports circulated in June that Australia had initiated discussions with Israel about negotiating a free-trade agreement, Australia's second largest investment firm, Babcock and Brown, announced plans to open a branch in Israel, reflecting the impressive recent success of the Israeli economy. A joint Australia-Israel biotech company, KarmelSonix, announced in November the commercial release of a product developed by Haifa's Technion to measure the severity of asthma attacks.

Israel's new ambassador to Australia and New Zealand, Yuval Rotem, took up his position in Canberra in August, replacing Naftali Tamir.

**The Media**

Not much changed in the Australian media's coverage of Israel. The public electronic broadcasters, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the multiculturally focused Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), were often problematic, if not quite as bad as in previous years. Both often emphasised alleged Israeli breaches of peace agreements while underplaying or ignoring Palestinian breaches. Similarly, coverage of the Annapolis Conference often emphasised the justice and reasonableness of Palestinian positions while subordinating Israeli demands for security and recognition.

SBS featured many documentaries about the Middle East, and this year the choice was far more even-handed than in the past. Nevertheless, "Dateline," SBS's main public-affairs program, continued to exhibit an anti-Western and anti-Israel slant. In May it carried a report on Iran's...
Jews that largely glossed over the difficulties they faced, and the following week it aired a show that stressed the hardships that Israeli Arabs suffered. The combined effect was to depict Israeli Arabs as worse off than Iranian Jews.

A disturbing incident occurred on ABC Radio National’s “Religion Report.” Host Stephen Crittenden interviewed an American professor, Alvin Rosenfeld, about Jewish groups that opposed Israel. Rosenfeld took exception to Crittenden’s use of the term “blood and soil Zionism” and his suggestion that revisionist Zionism had been influenced by fascist ideas about race. Crittenden then set out to “prove” his point by interviewing leftist Lenni Brenner, who was notorious for alleging Zionist ties with Nazis. After receiving criticism, Crittenden interviewed mainstream historian Walter Laqueur on the subject.

Among the print media, the Canberra Times was, as usual, the most critical of Israel, featuring scathing pieces reprinted from the notoriously anti-Israel Independent, published in Great Britain. The Fairfax-owned broadsheets, the Melbourne Age and Sydney Morning Herald, still had Ed O’Loughlin as their Israel correspondent, and he had a way of slanting his reporting through selective use of facts or subtle phrasing so that Israel was shown in a negative light. The Age ran a piece by a Palestinian writer virtually denying Israel’s right to exist. AIJAC executive director Colin Rubenstein provided a response, but it appeared on the Age Website, not in the paper. The Fairfax-owned Australian Financial Review had Tony Walker as its U.S. correspondent, and his articles were often critical of U.S. Middle East policy.

Coverage in the News Ltd. tabloids was generally less comprehensive but fairer, while Greg Sheridan, foreign editor of the Australian, the national broadsheet also owned by News Ltd., stood out for his incisive and expert analysis of the Middle East and international affairs in general.

One disappointing feature of the media was the prominence given to a tiny minority of very vocal, anti-Israel Jews led by Antony Loewenstein, who were given substantial column space to express the view that debate on Israel was suppressed, even though the ample coverage they received suggested the very opposite.

Israel’s release of the preliminary report of the Winograd Commission led many news outlets to recapitulate the 2006 war against Hezbollah. Many of the accounts were inaccurate, tending to explain Israeli actions as an impulsive response to the kidnapping of two soldiers and describing all or most of the Lebanese killed as “civilians.” Similarly, the 40th
anniversary of the Six-Day War triggered stories of Israel as the aggressor. The release of *The Israel Lobby* by the American scholars John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt prompted more media criticism of U.S. Middle East policy.

**Anti-Semitism and Extremism**

Anti-Semitism remained a marginal phenomenon in Australia. No one with aspirations to public credibility would admit to holding anti-Semitic views or associate with openly anti-Semitic organizations. Thus the nativist party One Nation, which gained adherents during the 1990s, virtually disappeared in the 2007 elections, polling 0.3 percent of the vote for the House of Representatives and 0.4 percent for the Senate.

Nevertheless there were an alarming number of anti-Semitic incidents, extreme right-wing groups continued to preach xenophobia and Jew-hatred, and virulent criticism of Zionism and/or Israel, usually but not always by the extreme left, sometimes crossed the line into anti-Semitism.

During 2007 there were 638 reports of “racist violence” against Jewish Australians. These included physical assaults, vandalism, threatening telephone calls, hate mail, graffiti, leaflets, posters, and abusive and intimidating electronic mail. The total was the highest on record, twice the previous annual average and exceeding by 8 percent the previous high, recorded in 2002. Indeed, the combined number of incidents involving physical assault, property damage, and direct face-to-face harassment was more than three times the previous average, and cases of harassment that did not include assault were recorded at a rate close to five times the previous average and two-and-a-half times the previous annual high.

Far-right groups in Australia generally combined anti-Jewish propaganda with white supremacy ideology, opposition to immigration, and advocacy of a return to policies that disadvantaged Indigenous Australians. Even so they sometimes found allies among conspiracy theorists elsewhere on the political spectrum who were inspired by quasi-New Age ideas, the Libyan-inspired “Third Way,” and political Islam, all of which promoted anti-Semitism while rejecting white racism.

The Australian League of Rights was the oldest and probably best financed extreme-right organization in the country. Its membership now was overwhelmingly elderly, but it continued to hold meetings, conduct action campaigns, and publicize its positions. The league published the weeklies *On Target* and *On Target Bulletin*, the monthly magazines *In-

In 2007 the league gave considerable publicity to the self-styled "independent Jews" who criticized Israel. It promoted their leader, Antony Loewenstein, as "an Australian Jewish intellectual," even advertising his book, My Israel Question. Also addressed in league publications were the allegedly unbridgeable gap between Jewish and Gentile "morals" and the case for Holocaust denial even against the "Jewish hold on discourse." A full report of the Tehran Holocaust-denial conference in December 2006 was made available on its Website.

The Adelaide Institute consisted of the followers of self-styled Holocaust revisionist Frederick Toben, whose views were so extreme that even revisionist historian David Irving viewed them as a liability to the cause. Despite several legal findings against the content of his Website, Toben continued to participate in international gatherings of Holocaust deniers including the one in Tehran, where he echoed the Iranian president’s call for the dismantling of Israel. As the year ended, the Federal Court was preparing new contempt proceedings against Toben for continuing to carry illegal content on his Website.

The Citizens' Electoral Councils (CECs) engaged in mass mailings of literature reflecting the views of Lyndon LaRouche, including bizarre anti-Semitic conspiracy theories targeting antiracist and Jewish groups. Despite spending huge sums on the 2007 election campaign, the LaRouche organization won an embarrassingly small number of votes. Serious allegations were made during the year that the CECs were seeking to infiltrate the national network of the conservative National Civic Council. A number of Australian Jewish communities complained that LaRouche propagandists were distributing material on college campuses and outside venues hosting Jewish community functions.

In most cities there were small groups of violent skinheads who were not necessarily aligned with any formal organization. Their main targets for harassment were Asian and left-wing students. The most important organized group was Australian National Action, which staged rallies in Melbourne and Adelaide and published a newsletter.

There were a number of anti-Semitic Websites that made claims to represent the views of organizations with impressive-sounding names, such as the World Church of the Creator and the White Pride Coalition of Australia. They were believed to be the work of no more than a handful of cranks.
JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

According to the most recent census figures, Australia’s Jewish community was continuing to grow. In 2006 the census counted some 89,000 Jews in the country, constituting about 0.43 percent of the total population of 21 million. This figure was nearly 5,000 higher than in 2001. The actual number of Jews was probably higher, since religion was an optional question on the census form and about 11 percent of the Australian population did not answer it. Jewish leaders, believing that many Holocaust survivors were especially averse to disclosing their religion, estimated the size of the Jewish community to be around 120,000.

Melbourne had the nation’s largest Jewish population, 40,000, followed by Sydney at 35,000 and Perth with 5,000. According to the census, Hebrew was the preferred language at home for some 7,500 Australians.

Communal Affairs

The most important change in communal leadership during 2007 was the election of Robert Goot to succeed Graeme Leonard as president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), the Jewish communal representative body. Philip Chester continued as president of the Zionist Federation of Australia and Mark Leibler remained national chairman of AIJAC, as did Jack Smorgon as federal president of the United Israel Appeal and Ron Ferster as head of the Jewish National Fund.

Education

More than half of all Jewish children aged 4-18, including almost 70 percent of those aged 4-12, received full-time Jewish education in the 19 Jewish day schools in Australia. Spanning the religious spectrum, these schools continued to rank at the highest level for academic achievement. This reflected the community’s major investment in the schools as a means of preserving Jewish continuity. Day-school enrollment continued to grow despite ongoing concerns over high costs and the challenge to the community to find new sources of funding.

Adult Jewish education in the country was largely under the influence
of the Melton Program, which attracted nearly 500 students in Sydney and Melbourne. Short-term courses utilizing guest lecturers also proved popular. Top priorities for the future, according to Australian Jewish educators, were expanded Jewish studies on the university level and teacher education to provide quality faculty for the day schools.

The Australasian Union of Jewish Students (AUJS) continued to play an active and effective role on campus, particularly in combating anti-Zionist and racist manifestations and in promoting Israel-visitor programs for Jewish students.

Interfaith Relations

Cooperation between different religious communities was evident in 2007 with a number of joint actions aimed at building interfaith harmony and understanding. The Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), the National Council of Churches in Australia, and the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils repeated their previous calls for tolerance. The Australian Partnership of Religious Organizations (formerly the Australian Partnership of Ethnic and Religious Organizations) hosted the inaugural Australian Religious Leaders Forum, where AIJAC’s director of international and community affairs, Jeremy Jones, spoke at the opening plenary.

Other interreligious groups, such as the World Conference of Religions for Peace and the Griffith University Multi-Faith Centre, also provided the Jewish community platforms for contact and cooperation with other significant religious bodies. The Australian delegation to the Asia/Pacific Regional Interfaith Dialogue, hosted by the governments of Australia, Indonesia, Philippines, and New Zealand, included Jeremy Jones, who chaired the plenary session on education against intolerance.

Churches were important proponents of diversity and tolerance, often in concert with the Jewish community. The Uniting Church in Australia, continuing to explore ways of taking joint action with the Jewish community to combat prejudice, once again held two national dialogues with ECAJ during the year. The Catholic Church also sought to promote understanding: the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Committee convened an international Forum on Religion and Peace in the Middle East, with keynote speakers Father Elias Chacour (Israel), Mohammad Sammak (Lebanon), and Jeremy Jones. And after several years of preparation, the Anglican Jewish Australian Dialogue had its third and fourth formal sessions in 2007.
These Christian groups, along with a number of service organizations, asserted moral leadership against anti-Semitism by refusing to allow racist and anti-Jewish groups to hire their premises and by making sure that their representatives did not share public platforms with known extremists.

Culture

The Jewish Museum of Australia and the Holocaust Museum, both in Melbourne, and the Sydney Jewish Museum were world-class institutions that maintained extensive permanent collections of Judaica and Holocaust memorabilia. They received visitors in ever increasing numbers, particularly school groups, and hosted numerous cultural events, such as literary evenings, book launches, and musical and dramatic presentations. Adelaide's Jewish community maintained a virtual museum, the Adelaide Jewish Museum (www.adelaidejewishmuseum.org).

The annual Jewish film festival, which attracted large and enthusiastic audiences, continued to be held in Sydney and Melbourne.

The Australia Israel Cultural Exchange (AICE), founded in 2002, made a significant contribution to the exchange of culture between the two countries. The third AICE Israeli Film Festival, held in Melbourne in August, was opened by visiting Israeli Film Fund director Katriel Schory. AICE also sponsored exhibitions of Australian Aboriginal art and an Australian film festival in Israel.

Personalia

The prestigious Australian Human Rights Medal for 2007 was won by Jeremy Jones, the AJJAC director of international and community affairs. This was the first time a Jewish Australian had won this honor, which was given for outstanding contributions to reconciliation, interfaith understanding, and fighting racism.

Novelist and poet Jacob Rosenberg was awarded the 2007 National Biography Award for his memoir East of Time. The book was chosen from a record 59 entries and was also short-listed for the 2007 Australian Gold Medal for Literature.

Two Australian Jews were named Companions of the Order of Australia, the nation's highest civilian honor. They were Victor Smorgon and David Gonski, philanthropic patrons of the arts.

Jews designated as Members of the Order of Australia were Prof.
Michelle Haber; Justice Stephen Rothman; businessman Peter Ivany; Dr. Murray Esler; former Jewish Care (Victoria) president Alan Schwartz; the late Roslyn Smorgon; Prof. (emer.) Ben Selinger; former federal minister Barry Cohen; Dr. David Rosenberg; lawyer Michael Frankel; and neuropsychologist Prof. Gina Geffen.

Jews receiving medals in the Order of Australia were Samuel Ginsberg; Vicki Vidor; Stan Marks; Joel Solomon, Bernard Freedman; Ernie Friedlander; Harry Atlas; Hanni Chalmers; Robert Simons; Dr. Paul and Zina Conway, Dr. Howard Freeman; David Ganon; Penny Hurst; Peter Kolliner; Henry Krug; Esta Levy; Aleck Miller; Kurt Rathner; Albert Selig; Marcelle Tanner; Dr. John Zalcberg; and Karoline Zolshan.

The Australian Jewish community mourned the passing of Major-General Paul Cullen, Australia's oldest Jewish ex-soldier and only the second Jewish person to hold the rank of major-general; Morris Zion Forbes OAM, NSW deputy crown solicitor and former president of the Australian Jewish Historical Society; Severyn Pejsachowicz, who fought for the Jewish community to be part of the Ethnic Community Council and was active with the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and B'nai Brith; Walter Jona a former member of the Parliament of Victoria; Lily Adonis OAM, who worked for WIZO in Western Australia since 1935; Hilda Hines, former South Australian Liberal Party MP and former WIZO South Australia president; Agi Shelly, Holocaust writer; Prof. Josef Lederer, former chairman of the Optical Dispensers Licensing Board and renowned optometrist; Michael Hershon, a businessman who ran both the Hestia and Berlei companies; and Gordon Samuels AC, CVO, the NSW Supreme Court judge and president of the NSW Bar Association.

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