



## Executive Council of Australian Jewry

### **JOURNEY OF PROMISE**

As a direct outcome of the ECAJ's involvement in the Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews and a 'Living in Harmony' grant, the ECAJ was a partner in the "Journey of Promise" in February 2004, a project designed to bring together young "people of faith" and to engage them in meaningful dialogue. In their week together, the group explored issues of common concern and some of the differences giving each group its distinct identity.

The Jewish community has good reason to be proud of the ten young Jewish Australians who represented them: Kim Baetz, Rebecca Greengarten, Joshua Levin, Michael Misrachi, Simon Nothman, Cygal Pellach, Dara Podjarski, Gary Samowitz, Ezra Sarajinsky and Natalie Shell.

The youth movement experience of most of the team provided them with the skills to take leadership roles amongst the thirty young participants. There is no doubt that our young adult representatives stood out as articulate and thoughtful. They made a disproportionate contribution to both the formal and informal components of the program.

Several Jewish organizations were visited, including the Sydney Jewish Museum, Kehillat Masada and the North Shore Mikveh. Non-Jewish participants were fascinated by and impressed with our institutions and our practices. A highlight of the week was the Shabbat program. All the Jewish participants were outstanding in their commitment to the day and how they demonstrated the beauty and potential of Shabbat.

The program itself provided some interesting challenges, not the least of which was the provision of kosher food. One of the most dramatic, almost bizarre and possibly significant incidents was bringing Kosher food into a Hallal restaurant. The proprietors offered disposable cutlery and crockery, cool drinks and fresh fruit, welcoming us with traditional Middle Eastern hospitality.

Participants agree that this 'Journey' was a worthwhile experience. They formed some genuine personal bonds with Christian and Muslim peers, learnt a great deal about the two largest faith communities and their beliefs and had experiences of a diversity of institutions. Most importantly, they consolidated their own Jewish identities. Participants have acknowledged that what they learnt in order to communicate to others has become part of the body of Jewish knowledge they value and want to extend.

Two of the Jewish participants in the 'Journey' built on this experience to found 'Youth Encounters', a project that brings together Year 11 students from Jewish, Christian and Muslim schools.