

Executive Council of Australian Jewry Inc.

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MEDIA RELEASE

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ECAJ welcomes Singer's decision not to run for Claims Conference presidency

Anton Block, acting president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the elected representative roof-body of Australian Jewry, has welcomed Rabbi Israel Singer's recent announcement that he will not run for another term as president of the Claims Conference.

"Earlier this year the ECAJ resolved and subsequently wrote to Rabbi Julius Berman and Mr Gideon Taylor, Chairman and Executive Vice President respectively of the Claims Conference, regarding the ECAJ's explicit principled opposition to Rabbi Singer holding any office of the Claims Conference.

While acknowledging Rabbi Singer's service to world Jewry over three decades, we noted that as a member of the Claims Conference and on behalf of a community which has a higher proportion of Holocaust survivors than any other Diaspora Jewish community, we firmly believed that all officers of the Claims Conference must be and appear to be, of the highest integrity and beyond reproach. As Rabbi Singer had been clearly tarnished by the publication in early 2006 of the Report of the Attorney General of New York into the affairs of the World Jewish Congress, he was not a fit person to hold any office in the Claims Conference, least of all its presidency.

As a result of the findings in the Attorney General's Report and the lack of response by the WJC and Rabbi Singer, the Australian Jewish community last year took the unprecedented step of disaffiliating from the WJC. We rejoined only last week as we are now satisfied that there are genuine governance and transparency in its affairs.

The requirement for transparency and governance is even more vital in the Claims Conference. Given recent controversy regarding the policy of financial allocations of the Claims Conference, it would surely have been morally wrong and inviting scandal and controversy to its own institution if Rabbi Singer had maintained any further leadership role. Hence his resignation was a necessary and positive step and one applauded by the Australian Jewish community. Together with the recent changes made by the WJC, this augurs well for a positive new era for World Jewry."

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