

# Executive Council of Australian Jewry Inc.

הוועד הכולל של  
יהודי אוסטרליה

## The Representative Organisation of Australian Jewry

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New Zealand Jewish Council  
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## STATEMENT BY ECAJ ON THE AHC AND RABBI ENGEL DISPUTE

The lead stories in the last two editions of the AJN have dealt with allegations flowing from the initial employment dispute between the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation and Rabbi Yossi Engel. Since becoming aware of the initial dispute early in 2007, I, along with many other national and South Australian communal leaders, have used our best endeavours to effect a resolution, but to no avail. It is the failure of these exhaustive and good faith efforts that resulted in the AHC, as a last resort, deciding to refer the matter to the London Beth Din.

As the elected representative roof body of Australia's Jewish community, the ECAJ and its principal constituents, the state and territory boards and councils, have no jurisdiction on matters deemed to relate to Halacha. It has been Rabbi Engel's insistence that his employment dispute can only be resolved by a Din Torah despite a judgment against him by the South Australian Supreme Court. The stand-off continues. It is a fundamental tenet of Jewish law that "the law of the land is the law".

Since then, the allegations of financial impropriety and negligence in Kashrut administration, as reported in the AJN, have surfaced into the public domain. These serious claims must be pursued by the appropriate authorities. The Kashrut claims need to be swiftly and comprehensively dealt with by the relevant orthodox institutions which must report their findings to the community they serve and to whom they are accountable.

Too often when such issues arise in our community, the truth and the community's best interests are lost in conflicts of interest and personalities. Our community deserves full transparency and the highest standards of governance from those entrusted with, and rewarded for, acting as keepers of our traditions and laws. This particularly applies to matters of fiduciary duty and Kashrut licensing.

On behalf of the ECAJ, I urge all involved in the South Australian imbroglio to set aside their personal loyalties, focus on the responsibilities of the institutes they represent and act accordingly. It is critical that this course be now pursued before any further damage occurs to our communal fabric.

Grahame J. Leonard  
President

13 August 2007