



Executive Council of
Australian Jewry

MEDIA RELEASE

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NANCY WAKE

The Executive Director of the ECAJ, Peter Wertheim, today expressed praise for the late Australian war heroine, Nancy Wake.

“The Australian Jewish community joins in paying tribute to Nancy Wake, war hero, resistance fighter and secret agent, who sadly passed away on Sunday,” Mr Wertheim said.

Much has been written about her daring exploits during World War II in Nazi-occupied France. She set up escape routes via the Pyrenees which helped save the lives of thousands of Jewish refugees from Nazi persecution as well as Allied servicemen. In the lead-up to the D-Day landings in Normandy, she led 7,000 French resistance fighters in missions to sabotage Nazi military installations. She outwitted the Gestapo, which placed a 5 million franc bounty on her head and paid an unintended compliment to her skill in eluding capture by giving her the code-name “The White Mouse”.

Highly honoured by France and Britain and, somewhat belatedly, by Australia, Nancy Wake was an inspirational example of how ordinary people can rise to extraordinary heroism in the crucible of conflict.

“The foundation of her heroism was her basic decency as a person and her refusal to abide any form of persecution or tyranny,” Mr Wertheim said. “She became resolved to fight Nazism after witnessing the shocking mistreatment of Jewish civilians by Nazi troops in Vienna.”

“In today’s superficial world, obsessed with appearances and material concerns, Nancy Wake’s example reminds us of the things that really matter in life. She demonstrated that one person standing up against monstrous evil can make a difference.”

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