

# Executive Council of Australian Jewry Inc.

הוועד הפועל של  
יהודי אוסטרליה

## The Representative Organisation of Australian Jewry



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16 April 2021

Most Reverend Mark Coleridge  
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Your Grace

We were deeply saddened to learn of the recent passing of His Eminence, Cardinal Edward Cassidy, who was held in great affection and esteem among his many friends in the Australian Jewish community.

We remember especially his wonderful work as President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews between 1989 and 2001. Cardinal Cassidy assumed that role at a difficult time in Catholic-Jewish relations, arising in particular over plans to erect a Carmelite Convent at the site of the Auschwitz extermination camp. With his trademark affability, kindness and humility, Cardinal Cassidy was able to re-establish trust with the Jewish community and the Vatican's support for the convent was withdrawn.

Not content merely to remove sources of friction, Cardinal Cassidy brought his considerable diplomatic skills to bear in order to deepen the understanding and friendship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people that had developed following the landmark declaration on relations between the two faith communities by the Second Vatican Council in *Nostra Aetate* in 1965. *Nostra Aetate* reproved indiscriminate accusations of Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus, affirmed the ongoing validity of the Covenant between God and the people of Israel, and repudiated hatred, persecution and antisemitism as contrary to God's universal love.

Cardinal Cassidy went a step further. Noting that the Christian faith had for centuries been invoked to justify persecution of the Jewish people, Cardinal Cassidy was the first Church official to call on Catholics to engage in "teshuvah" (literally "turning"), the Hebrew word which denotes the process of repentance.

Accordingly, in 1998 under Cardinal Cassidy's direction, the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews published "We Remember: A Reflection on

*the Shoah*”, another milestone in the positive development of Catholic-Jewish relations. The introductory letter to that document came from His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. The letter is addressed to “*My Venerable Brother Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy*” and reads in part:

*“On numerous occasions during my Pontificate I have recalled with a sense of deep sorrow the sufferings of the Jewish people during the Second World War. The crime which has become known as the Shoah remains and indelible stain on the history of the century that is coming to a close.*

*It is my fervent hope that the document: "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah," which the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews has prepared under your direction, will indeed help to heal the wounds of past misunderstandings and injustices. May it enable memory to play its necessary part in the process of shaping a future in which the unspeakable iniquity of the Shoah will never again be possible. May the Lord of history guide the efforts of Catholics and Jews and all men and women of good will as they work together for a world of true respect for the life and dignity of every human being, for all have been created in the image and likeness of God.”*

Cardinal Cassidy’s life was dedicated to the sacred work of building such a world. He will long be remembered for the significant contributions he made to that work and for the quiet, good-humoured, humble yet effective way in which he did so. He will be sadly missed.

We extend our sincere condolences to Cardinal Cassidy’s family, friends and colleagues. May his memory be a blessing.

Yours sincerely



**Jillian Segal AO**  
**President**



**Peter Wertheim AM**  
**Co-CEO**



**Alex Ryvchin**  
**Co-CEO**

cc Most Reverend Anthony Fisher OP, Archbishop of Sydney,  
Sr. Giovanni Farquer, Director, Commission for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations,  
Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney