



**Executive Council  
of Australian Jewry Inc.**

**Israeli Ambassador Mark Sofer's farewell**  
**5 August 2020**

The Australian Jewish community farewelled Israeli Ambassador Mark Sofer and his wife Sara in an online ceremony last night. The heads of the Zionist Federation of Australia, the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry each spoke from the heart, telling a group of over 200 invited guests of Mr Sofer's accomplishments, skills and approach.

In his speech, ZFA President Jeremy Leibler said, "The large turnout of friends and supporters gathered here this evening is testament to the profound impact Mark and Sara have had on the entire community. Mark, though not specifically noted in your impressive biography, perhaps one of your greatest attributes is that you're a true mensch... Over the past, very challenging six months, as the entire world has been impacted in such a devastating way by the coronavirus pandemic, your experience of managing catastrophic events in India and Nepal, gave you the focus and resilience to roll up your sleeves and do what was needed."

AIJAC National Chairperson Mark Leibler AC noted, "there's more than one way a diplomat can go about representing the interests of the government they serve. They can parrot the official line or they can convey it more subtly, more intelligently, with nuance that takes account of the situation and the personalities on the ground. Mark is true master of this art."

In her comments, ECAJ President Jillian Segal AO said, "You've been a champion for Israel, a supporter to the local community, a diplomat with discretion, representing your country with distinction, and a booster of the link between Australia and Israel... You've brought great energy and intellect to your role, and you've been indefatigable in your efforts to create relations with Australia's political, business, media and community leaders."

The three organisations also announced their establishment and sponsorship of the Mark and Sara Sofer Fellowship, where an Australian student will receive \$10,000 to assist in tuition, accommodation and travel costs for tertiary studies in Israel, specifically in the area of cyber security or international relations – fields in which the Ambassador has taken active interest and initiative

In his reply, Mr Sofer said how humbled he was by the honour. “Of all the gifts I’ve received, I think this is the most beautiful”, he said. He also stressed the uniqueness of the Australian Jewish community.

All speakers expressed regret that they were unable to farewell Mr and Mrs Sofer in person. As noted by the ECAJ’s co-CEO Peter Wertheim, who emceed the event, the Melbourne and Sydney Jewish communities traditionally host separate farewell receptions for departing Israeli ambassadors, and even though we could not do so by our physical presence, at least on this occasion we could all pay tribute to the Ambassador together. As all expressed, next year in Jerusalem!

**Contact**

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