

from our emerging leaders

LEXI KOWAL

BUDDING COMMUNAL STALWART

UPON graduating high school I found myself searching for an opportunity to contribute to the community through advocacy and engagement. I quickly found my home and passion in the Australasian Union of Jewish students, and in 2017 became the AUJS national vice-chairperson. Now as board director for AUJS, honorary secretary of the Zionism Victoria board, and volunteer for the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia (Vic) board, Victorian Liberal Friends of Israel and Caulfield Young Liberals – I am continuously amazed by the opportunities available to those willing to put their hand up in the community, and scope for change and contribution to a broader desire for the community to strive and thrive.

As my grandparents were persecuted for merely belonging to the Jewish people, I find myself consistently reminded that it is the Jewish people's sense of unity and determination to endure and thrive, that have permitted our survival. This remains the driving force for me, the desire to ensure that the voice of the community remains strong,



prominent and always heard – a mission for which I intend on dedicating both my professional career, and personal time, for years to come.

I have always been inspired by individuals who make decisions that are consistent with their high standards of ethics and integrity and exhibit courage and fortitude even when their decisions may not be popular. In this light, I have been privileged to have inspirational mentors, including Sharene Hambur, Kate Ashmor and David Southwick, to name a few, who have guided me in finding opportunities to allow for contribution to the community.

SAMANTHA KHAVIN

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OFFICER, EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN JEWRY

BORN in the USSR, my mother, my grandmothers and even my great-grandmothers could have only dreamed of the freedom to practise Judaism openly and proudly. 'Jew' was written on their passports, and in their hearts, but nowhere else.

I am the first Jewish woman in my family that was born in Australia. Although my parents, as new immigrants, had very little money when I was a child, my parents insisted that I attend a Jewish day school to have the Jewish education that they never had. This taught me very early on how much my family valued our Jewish heritage and what they were willing to sacrifice to make sure that it did not end with me.

Given my family history and the generosity of the Australian Jewish community in providing me with countless opportunities, it is no surprise that I work in Canberra for the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, ensuring that our interests are represented at the highest echelons of our country, educating



decision-makers about what matters to Jews. The global rise in antisemitism necessitates this work, and who better to create and foster these relationships than a woman? What I've been able to accomplish shows there is no shortage of opportunities for Jewish women in Australia who want to make a difference.

JANINE JOSEPH

AUJS UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY PRESIDENT

BECOMING involved in the Sydney Jewish community was essential because it is a strong part of me. Judaism can be like a trove of treasures and there was a lot I wanted to explore and understand.

To see the Sydney Jewish community blooming was heartwarming and encouraged me to be part of it. I am constantly surprised by the wealth of resources, knowledge and support available that show you know you're not alone. If you mention a problem you encounter in your Jewish organisation, there are immediately passionate and knowledgeable people that want and are able to help.

I feel safe and motivated knowing it's a place which listens and where things happen – a place which is proactive, not just reactive.

As the community is quite interknit but also inclusive and diverse, the friendships and connections I made in AUJS have opened up other possibilities.



I feel that the Jewish community is open enough to find a place for and value anyone and their contributions. From what I've seen and experienced, women are offered equal opportunities in the community.

I will definitely stay involved, particularly in 'Yallah' (Mizrahi and Sephardi Young Adults Sydney) which I truly believe has a lot of potential. I also plan on being a high school English teacher, so working in a Jewish school would be ideal!

MADELEINE BUCHNER

LITTLE DREAMERS, FOUNDER AND CEO

“OUR children must be able to grow up nourished and supported in loving and caring environments. They must have time to be children with all the wonder, happiness and innocence that childhood should bring” – National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009 – 2020, DSS.

You may not know what a young carer is, but I bet that you know one. A young carer is someone under the age of 25, who currently provides, or intends to provide care, to a member of their family who has a chronic illness, mental illness, disability or addiction. These young people take on tasks that are way beyond their years – think emotional support, cooking, showering, toileting and even catheter care at the age of 13.

I was 16 when we launched Little Dreamers Australia and today, 10 years on, we are Australia's leading not-for-profit organisation working to improve the quality of life for young carers. As of today, we have 12 staff across Melbourne and Sydney, working with 3000 young carers every single year around the country.

To me, being the founder and CEO of Little Dreamers is so much more than just a job.



Growing up as a young carer myself, I know just how isolating, lonely and challenging a childhood can be when you have caring responsibilities. These young people inspire me to push the boundaries of the care industry further, challenge the status quo, and develop innovative programs that deliver impactful results.

I believe in a world where every single young carer is supported by someone or something by 2030. It won't be easy. But it will be fun and that's what makes it exciting.

CAROLINE BOLOT

UIA NSW WOMEN'S DIVISION PRESIDENT

WAS recently appointed as president of UIA NSW Women's Division.

I was very honoured to be asked to assume this important role as I am passionate about the work that UIA does supporting the most vulnerable members of Israeli society: new olim, disadvantaged youth and the elderly.

We all love Israel so much but few in our community realise how large the gap is between the privilege that we enjoy here in Australia and the hard reality of many people's lives in Israel. I feel especially proud

of the work that the Women's Division does supporting at-risk women and children, such as our current project which works to combat the rising incidence of domestic violence among new Ethiopian families.

There is something so powerful in bringing together the women of the Sydney Jewish community to extend this vital hand of support across the globe to our Israeli sisters in need.

My appointment is part of timely generational change in leadership across many of our Jewish community organisations and I

am very aware of the great responsibility that comes with this trust. With my new executive of younger women, we have already begun the immense task of engaging our own generation in the work of Women's Division.

I know that it will be a long campaign to inspire the generations who have only ever known Israel as the thriving start-up nation, but I am energised by the legacy of our mothers and grandmothers and am equally motivated to instil a love of philanthropy in my own children.

