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Your Wedding magazine INSIDE

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MAKING SPACE FOR WOMEN

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THE Victorian branch of the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia (NCJWA) has made a push to ensure that Jewish women are equally represented in positions of leadership and at events within the community.

The #MakeSpaceForHer campaign was born as the result of preliminary research conducted by the NCJWA (Vic) Advocacy Subcommittee into 70 communal organisations which found only 14 per cent of boards showed balanced gender representation; and 15 per cent of boards were exclusively male.

There was also a growing frustration that “despite the potential and skill among our peers to be a voice in community forums and to participate at the highest level of leadership in our community, we were not seeing or hearing from enough women”, explained Advocacy Subcommittee chair Anna Serry.

“More than half of our community is female,” NCJWA (Vic) president Miriam Bass noted.

“We believe the leadership of our community should mirror the community that it serves and that our publications and events ought to reflect the people they seek to engage.”

Serry asked, “How are we going to leave a strong, vibrant and representative community for our kids if half the community is not fully engaged?”

A key point of action for the #MakeSpaceForHer campaign, is a request that all Jewish communal organisations in Victoria sign the NCJWA Gender Equality Pledge, with an intention for it to eventually “be rolled out throughout the Jewish community across Australia”, added Bass.

The pledge acknowledges that all members of the Jewish and broader community have the right to live in a



NCJWA (Vic) president Miriam Bass (second from left) oversees the signing of the NCJWA Gender Equality Pledge by (from left) Jennifer Huppert (JCCV), Jeremy Leibler (ZFA) and Sharene Hambur (Zionism Victoria). Photo: Peter Haskin.

safe and equitable society, with equal access to opportunities, representation and resources; that women and girls are a significantly under-utilised resource and only with the achievement of gender equality can a country, community or organisation achieve its full potential; women and girls must be given the same rights and opportunities enjoyed by men across all sectors of society, including in communal leadership, decision making and participation; and, that the aspirations, needs and voices of women and girls need to be equally respected and valued.

The pledge calls on organisations to embrace gender equality as an important value within the organisation; to actively pursue a culture of respect for women; to annually review the number of women participating at board and management levels, with a commitment towards more equitable female participation; and to adopt specific

policies regarding gender equality, including board and management composition and recruitment, and representation on panels, at events, conferences and workshops.

The Zionist Federation of Australia (ZFA) and the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV) were the first two signatories of the pledge; with Zionism Victoria also adopting the motion on Tuesday evening.

“I fully endorse the pledge,” ZFA president Jeremy Leibler told *The AJN*, “and I encourage our affiliates and all communal organisations, including synagogues, to adopt it for their own organisations too.”

“But the process does not end with adopting the pledge – it is the beginning – and we need to put the issue of gender equality front and centre for all institutions; not just because it is the right thing to do, but because it will ensure better outcomes for the benefit and

strength of organisations by having a diversity of perspectives around the table.”

Jennifer Huppert, president of the JCCV, said that “by signing the Gender Equality Pledge, JCCV has restated its commitment to ensuring the women in the Jewish community have the same opportunities as men to take on leadership roles”.

Echoing Leibler and Huppert’s sentiments, president of Zionism Victoria Sharene Hambur added, “It makes an important statement about the need for increased involvement by women in the leadership of our community.”

The official launch event of NCJWA (Vic)’s #MakeSpaceForHer campaign will be held on September 4, with key note speaker, business leader Carol Schwartz. For more information about advancing gender equality practices in your organisation, contact Anna Serry at anna.serry@ncjwavic.org.au.

THE BIG ISSUE

Women in the community

WELCOME to our first annual issue dedicated to women in the Jewish community.

We hope this week’s edition of *The AJN* will allow you to learn from female leaders, understand the evolution of women’s organisations, have a better appreciation of the need for significant change in leadership positions and hear from some of the future up-and-coming young female leaders.

As part of the edition, we have published for the first time a list of the number of women on boards across the community because for too long communal boards have been dominated by men.

The purpose is, in effect, to shine a light on which communal organisations are more inclusive on their boards.

To properly reflect the view of the community, and consider the opinions of those within it, the boards need to be a representative body.

Some organisations, such as the Australasian Union of Jewish Students, have shown an ability to move with the times and embrace women on their boards, others have not.

Next year, the list will be expanded to include more religious institutions, including synagogues, where historically women have been shut out of leadership positions.



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