

It is now three years since I took on the presidency of what was the old Victorian Union of Progressive Judaism. The last three years have been incredibly rewarding and I have really enjoyed seeing the old VUPJ morphing into a dynamic committee of dedicated people who have worked together to advance Progressive Judaism in Victoria.

The whole ethos of the committee has re-focused to see the how PJV can work with our affiliates and overcome territorial boundaries and advance our movement. We have achieved much, but there is a whole lot more to do. It is so nice to be able to say everyone on the PJV committee has been productive and effective. All the committee members and clergy have co-operated to move us forward. In particular I want to thank all our rabbis (and cantor!) who have been most positive and supportive.

There has been much progress in our outreach committee with more regular services being held in the Geelong area and around Bendigo. The committee under the magnificent leadership of Linda Stern, is starting to approach other areas outside of Melbourne. We hope, with the help of some of our clergy, to also start holding services at some of our Jewish aged care homes. Just last week we had a lunch at a members home in the Bendigo region for 25 people. There were many enthusiastic people there, grateful to make contact with fellow Jews who have moved there for lifestyle and other reasons. Tanya Warms has been helping the community around Geelong after Rabbi Keren Black created the opportunity.

The education committee, under the watchful eye of Julie Contole, has been very positive in its restructuring of our Introduction to Judaism course. They have now employed a course director to develop the curriculum to make it more appealing and fulfilling. We welcome Jim Beck who will replace Julie as the chair of the education committee. I want to thank Julie for all her very hard work, dedication and wise counsel.

Our Israel Awareness committee chaired by Pam Clements has harnessed any worthwhile visiting Israeli to present at special events, which have been attracting good size attendances. They are looking to broaden their range of speakers and activities but obviously are limited by who visits our shores! They are now looking at alternative ways to boost the Israel Awareness Committee and are looking at working with ARZA to bring a strong Israeli Progressive zeal to the community.

The Keshet Committee chaired by Jonathan Barnett is now broader than just PJV but still maintains the support of our executive. Keshet has progressed amazingly in such a short time showing just what are the great needs of the Jewish Gay, Lesbian, Transgender members of our communities. They have held a couple of community information events and have developed a parent support group. They hope to hold their main educational program of "teaching the teachers" around Pesach next year.

Leya Snider provides useful youth views into our activities. We are very blessed with our community shlicha, Lior Argaman, who has been one of a line of involved and effective shlichim holding this position. She has been, obviously, very involved with our Netzer groups and also has been very active at our congregations and at the King David School. Lior is a great resource for all our community organisations.

PJV is one of the main supporters of the Centre for Living Judaism which has developed a growing resource for congregations and families in Victoria and around our region. Rabbi Gersh Lazarow has had the vision of bringing the two overseas fellows to the centre and they have been a fabulous resource for all. Where ever they perform, Marshall and Steph bring a magic to the event. This is certainly the direction we need to travel and the very best use of community resources.

Patricia Keith is chair of Bet Olam and under her care there has been a whole restructuring and marketing program that will create a much greater awareness. Our service to the Jewish community has been greatly appreciated and hopefully Bet Olam will continue to be the natural first contact at the sad time of bereavement. Paddy working closely with Rhonda Nirens has done an outstanding job and Bet Olam now presents a far more professional image.

Much of our growth will also benefit from our new marketing strategy and under the chair of Brian Samuel a whole new focus on marketing will be launched in the very near future. This will tie in with the work of the Vision 20/20 that Brian, Muffy Hand and I are heading.

Ian Samuel, as this year's federal chair of the UIA Progressive Trust, had another very successful result and hopefully this success will continue into the future. Despite health problems, Ian has doggedly continued and we owe Ian much for his zeal and dedication.

We are also seeking greater connections with Jewish Care to eventually develop some programming in which PJV members can participate.

With thanks to Muffy Hand we are also developing a long term strategy for the growth of Progressive Judaism in Victoria. Two evenings have been devoted to thinking outside the box and looking to see what opportunities PJV can take in the years to come. We have planned a whole day of hearing community views on how to advance Progressive Judaism in Victoria. Keep Sunday February 10th free and come along to give us your ideas on how to move forward.

Our most effective and efficient administrator, Ellen Frajman, has been a tower of strength over the last few years and continues to help and support. She is one of the most efficient and effective administrators that I have worked with and I thank her for all her work above and beyond.

And much thanks must go to Alan Samuel for his careful and sympathetic hand on the treasury till. Alan is so reliable and has a wealth of community knowledge that is often used to short circuit complex discussions. I thank him for all his support.

At this time I wish to thank Rabbi Morgan for all his very useful and well developed ideas over the last few years. In particular his tremendous support.

As I stand down I know this next year will be very exciting and rewarding. I wish Rabbi Lazarow a long and very successful pulpit at TBI and I wish Brian every success in his new role and I hope I can be of assistance if required.

Philip Bliss President PJV