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Around the community

AJFN

The miracle of new Jewish life

AJN STAFF

DR Elay Golan, a mother from Kfar Aza who risked her life to protect her 18-month-old daughter on October 7, 2023, spent 52 days recovering from severe burns.

Since then, she has graduated from medical school and recently given birth to a miracle baby boy.

This August, Golan will headline the Australian Jewish Fertility Network's (AJFN) "Holding onto Hope" events in Sydney and Melbourne, as part of the organisation's milestone 18-year (Chai) anniversary. Her extraordinary story is a testament to resilience, hope and the miracle of new Jewish life.

The events will also feature a dynamic lineup of speakers including Tammi Faraday, acclaimed broadcaster and host of the Brave Journeys podcast, and Rebekah Giles, high profile lawyer, mother and tsunami survivor.

Since its inception 18 years ago, AJFN has played a key role in the birth of over 90 Jewish babies, providing vital financial assistance and emotional and spiritual support to people navigating challenging fertility journeys, ensuring that no Jewish Australian ever walks this path alone.

"Eighteen years ago, our organisation and community looked very different," said AJFN chair Kerry Gonski.



Dr Elay Golan and her husband, Ariel, pictured after she gave birth to their second child, a healthy miracle baby boy, following her life-threatening injuries on October 7.

Photo: Ziv Koren

"The fact that we can now support 125 families each year to bring Jewish life into the world is a reflection of our community's generosity, even in challenging times."

"In light of recent events, we have only grown stronger."

"As Dr Golan's story shows, it is now more important than ever to nurture, protect and grow Jewish life."

AJFN CEO Justine Saidman said, "The need for our support services continues to grow. Whether it's a grant for IVF, a nourishing Shabbat meal, or the one-on-one support of someone who's been through it before, we are there."

"Every AJFN baby is a light for our community. We always hold onto hope."

For more information about AJFN and to book for the Sydney event on August 27, visit ajfn.org.au

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

Harmony Day Competition

NSW Parliament recently hosted an uplifting prizegiving ceremony to celebrate the achievements of students who took part in the annual Harmony Day Competition, presented by Moving Forward Together.

Students from all over the country were invited to attend the event, with the winning entries on display on the screen.

"Look around the room," said Holocaust survivor and chair of Moving Forward Together Ernie Friedlander.

"It's so nice to see people from different cultures, from different backgrounds, here with us today. We are very proud of the students for the work they have done."

Friedlander told the story of how the humanity of one German soldier saved him and his mother after the soldier let them escape instead of being taken to a concentration camp.

"It woke me up to realise why people should not discriminate," he said.

The first Moving Forward Together Harmony Day Competition was held as a Poster Competition in 2005, but has expanded in recent years to include a Songwriting Competition and a Short Film Competition, with incredible results. The competitions are open to students around the country, with age group categories in each event, and exciting prizes to be won. The aim of these competitions is to encourage school students to consider themes relating to harmony, and express their ideas in creative ways.



Winning students at the Harmony Day Competition prize giving ceremony.

SHIR 2025: SONGS OF STRENGTH

Beating heart of Jewish music returns to Sydney

AJN STAFF

ICONIC Australian musicians Deborah Conway and Willy Zygiel will headline this year's SHIR Australian Jewish Music Festival, which returns with *Songs of Strength* – a one-night-only concert featuring some of the country's most acclaimed Jewish musicians.

Conway and Zygiel will be supported by a multi-genre lineup of acclaimed Jewish singers and musicians, including award-winning klezmer-fusion group Chutney.

Held during the sacred period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, *Songs of Strength* will be a communal moment of reflection, healing and pride expressed through the universal language of music.

The program spans classical to musical theatre, contemporary



Ben Adler performing at SHIR 2024.

Photo: Giselle Haber

Israeli pop to liturgical reimaginings.

"SHIR was born out of a need to bring Jewish music out of the margins and into the public square – to claim space with joy, pride and professionalism," said Ben Adler, artistic director of SHIR.

"After October 7, that need became urgent. This concert is an opportunity for our community to gather in strength, solidarity and renewal."

Conway said: "It is a joy to join SHIR this year and loudly stand up as proud Jewish Australian musicians."

In 2024, SHIR brought together over 1800 community members for a sold-out concert at Sydney Town Hall.

Formerly known as Shir Madness, SHIR relaunched in 2024 with a renewed mission: to create a space where Jewish identity can be expressed through music – proudly, publicly and professionally.

SHIR 2025 is presented with the support of Shalom Collective, a JCA member organisation creating contemporary Jewish experiences that celebrate culture, deepen identity and build community.

The concert will take place on Sunday, September 28 at Sydney Town Hall. To book visit www.humanitix.com Sydney-songs-of-strength



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Election for the 39th World Zionist Congress

For 128 years, the World Zionist Congress has been the "parliament of the Jewish people" – a powerful democratic forum where Jews from around the world can help shape Israel's future and Jewish life.