

Gays, reconciliation and the Olympics

What do the Maccabiah bridge tragedy, the Sydney Beth Din and the Olympics have in common? They all featured prominently in the Jewish news in 5760.

Dan Goldberg looks back.

SEPTEMBER

The Equal Opportunities Tribunal of Western Australia ruled that Perth's Carmel School discriminated in good faith against Gregory Goldberg because his mother had converted through Reform. "They admitted that they discriminated," said Gregory, "but they still won." Eleven Moriah College students were suspended for marijuana-related offences. "If we are soft on this," principal Roy Steinman said, "the school's moral authority will be undermined."

OCTOBER



NOVEMBER

The Republic referendum stole the headlines, with an AUV survey finding most community leaders in favour of severing ties with the Queen. Adelaide Institute director Fredrick Toben was found guilty in Germany of defaming the dead with comments on the Holocaust, and spent seven months in jail.

DECEMBER

Jewish students Danielle Linden, Mark Horowitz and Simon Skalicky achieved a UAI of 100 in the HSC, while 30,000 Sydneysiders celebrated Chanukah at Hyde Park.

JANUARY

The return of alleged Nazi criminal Konrad Kalejs sparked a storm of protest. Maccabi Australia issued an ultimatum to World Maccabi, settling three conditions for participating in the 2001 Maccabiah: the resignation of Uzi Netanel and Ronaki Bakalar, resolution of compensation and a review of security.

FEBRUARY

The inclusion of Jorg Haider's Freedom Party in the Austrian Government was greeted with anger by Australian Jewry. Protestors urged Foreign Minister Alexander Downer to follow Israel's lead and isolate Austria diplomatically.

MARCH

A Jewish boat containing 160 supporters joined the Mardi Gras under the banner "Stars of David Come Out". The coverage in the *Australian Jewish News* prompted the Sydney Beth Din to call editor Vic Alhadeff to a meeting. The issue made the front page of the *Sydney Morning*

Herald and prompted 28 prominent Jews to take out an advertisement in the AUV supporting its coverage. Mr Alhadeff declined the request to go before the Beth Din, stating that the AUV's "value to the community lies in its independence, which should not be compromised".

Shalom Institute chief executive officer Dr Hilton Immerman and NSW Jewish Board of Deputies (then) president Peter Wertheim also refused to appear before the Beth Din for a *Dir Torah* (Torah Judgement). Both were summoned on the basis of a request by Board of Deputies member Elana Freydel Miller — Dr Immerman because The Shalom Institute hired out its premises for a Shabbat dinner on the eve of the Mardi Gras, while Mr Wertheim believed he was summoned because of Ms Miller's failed efforts to prevent the hypothetical possibility of a gay group joining the Board.



Jewish participants in the Sydney Mardi Gras.

APRIL

Maccabi announced it would boycott the 2001 Maccabiah, despite the correction in Tel Aviv of five people over the bridge collapse. MWU chairman Uzi Netanel resigned. Rabbi Ronald Lubotzky, Rabbi Emeritus of St Kilda Synagogue, died.

MAY

Prime Minister John Howard ended a trip to Israel by inviting Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat to Australia. Participating at a Yom Hashoah ceremony, he wrote in the visitors' book that "the eclipse of humanity which led to the Jewish people's suffering is without parallel in history".

Melbourne Demons president Joseph Gutnick told his club that if they drafted Jewish teenager Ezra Poyes, it wouldn't be "in the spirit of Shabbat and it wouldn't be acceptable to me".

JUNE

Jews participated in Reconciliation Week.



Morian College students Natalie Grosser and Julia Veeley (top) and Ian Sagal and Greg Lunc during the Walk for Reconciliation over the Melbourne bridge. The Jewish community was represented in force.

In Israel, four of the five convicted Maccabiah officials were sentenced to between nine and 21 months' imprisonment. The fifth was given six months' community service. Unofficial families' spokesman Colin Eisenman slammed the sentences as "a disgrace".

With the imminent arrival of the GST, Glick's Cakes & Bagels in Melbourne planned to appeal the ruling that *challah* be taxed. South African educator and entrepreneur Graeme Crawford announced plans to open Reddam House — a non-denominational school which would cater for Jewish students.

JULY

Staff and students at Waikato University in Hamilton, New Zealand, protested at the candidacy of doctoral student Menachem Kupka, claiming he was a Holocaust denier and member of the extremist Republican Party. He withdrew his candidature.

The Knesset inquiry into the Maccabiah tragedy concluded that MWU president Ronaki Bakalar should resign.

AUGUST

MWU president Ronaki Bakalar resigned. Or Chadash Rabbi David Blackman and Mizrahi Rabbi Moshe Gutnick tussled over turf



with the Beth Din holding a *Dir Torah* (Torah Judgement) to settle the matter after Or Chadash purchased premises near Mizrahi.

The Australian Taxation Office renewed its decision to apply GST to *challah*, but if it was made without effect, it would be exempt.

SEPTEMBER

The Olympic circus rolled into town, preceded by extensive involvement from across the Jewish community at all levels.



The cover of the *Australian Jewish News* Olympic supplement, depicting the five Jewish Australians at the Games. It was announced that Rabbi Selwyn Franklin is due to leave his post after 12 years, and that the state would not renew linen aliahof Bol Golber's contract.

Joseph Gutnick's Melbourne Demons were steamrolled by Essendon in the AFL Grand Final. The game was played on a Shabbat, so Mr Gutnick did not attend. A permanent memorial to the Munich 11 was unveiled at Moriah College this week.

The Olympic circus rolled into town, preceded by extensive involvement from across the Jewish community at all levels. The target Israeli team in history moved, and American Jewish Soviet Immigrant Lenny Kravtzev won gold medals in the 100m and 200m backstroke. Against the backdrop of internal conflict at Central Synagogue, it was announced that Rabbi Selwyn Franklin is due to leave his post after 12 years, and that the state would not renew linen aliahof Bol Golber's contract.