

AROUND THE COMMUNITY

JNF

A voice of survival, a vision for renewal: Eli Sharabi headlines JNF's annual campaign

There are moments that divide history into "before" and "after". October 7, 2023, was one of them. On that day, Israel's border communities bore the unimaginable – families torn apart, homes destroyed, landscapes scarred. But as the dust settled, something else began to emerge: a quiet determination to rebuild, to heal, to rise.

In Australia, the JNF community didn't hesitate. Since that devastating day, JNF Australia has supported more than 60 urgent projects across Israel's north and south, restoring water infrastructure, creating therapeutic spaces for children, providing trauma recovery support and helping families return to their homes and land.

Now, with the launch of its 2025 campaign, Together, We Rise With Israel, JNF Australia renews its commitment to turning devastation into renewal, with more projects, more partnerships, and more purpose than ever before.

This year's campaign will be headlined by an extraordinary voice of resilience – Eli Sharabi, a survivor of Hamas captivity, who endured 491 days as a hostage, after losing his wife and daughters in the brutal attack on Kibbutz Be'eri.

Sharabi will share his story publicly in Australia for the first time, appearing live in Sydney on 2 September, Melbourne on 4 September and Perth on 7 September. In Sydney and Melbourne, he will be interviewed on stage by acclaimed Israeli journalist and podcast Call Me Back regular, Nadav Eyal, in what promises to be an unforgettable evening.

Eyal brings deep insight and empathy to the conversation. A winner of Israel's prestigious Sokolov Award, he is widely known for his sharp analysis and human-centred reporting.

"Sharabi is not just a survivor – he is a symbol of Israel's unbreakable spirit, a living testament to endurance, courage, and hope. This will be more than just an interview. It will be a deeply personal account of his time in captivity and his vision for a stronger and thriving Israel," says JNF Australia national president, Pam Krail.

"I lost everything – my wife, my daughters, my home. But I haven't lost my voice," Sharabi says. "What was taken from us on October 7 will not define us. What we rebuild together will," he says.

Sharabi's presence in Australia is more than symbolic. It's a personal call to action. This year's JNF Australia annual campaign is not only about hearing a story. It's about becoming part of the next chapter. From Kibbutz Nahal Oz to Kiryat Shmona, the needs are real and the time to act is now.

Over recent years, under the leadership of JNF Australia's immediate past president Steven Salamon, the organisation has worked closely with communities on the ground in Israel to



Photos show people and projects supported by JNF Australia

carefully select high-impact projects that the Australian Jewish community can proudly support.

"For many years, I've had the privilege of witnessing how every dollar donated from Australia transforms lives in Israel," says Salamon. "From donation to destination, we've focused on projects where we know we can make a real and lasting difference, not just today, but for generations to come."

JNF's approach has always been strategic and compassionate, ensuring that each initiative supported offers both immediate relief and long-term sustainability. "It's not just about responding to crisis," Salamon says. "It's about helping to rebuild communities in a way that's smarter, stronger and more resilient than before."

Among the many projects JNF Australia will support in 2025 is the restoration of the water reservoir in Kibbutz Nahal Oz, vital infrastructure for agriculture and survival in a region that was ravaged during the October attacks.

In Kibbutz Be'eri, where Sharabi lived, an outdoor educational space will provide children with a place for play, learn and heal. In Nir Oz, the ImagineBox

Learning & Treatment Space will offer an immersive therapy for emotional recovery.

Further south, Kibbutz Ein Hashlosa will benefit from a nature-based trauma recovery garden, a green space for mental and emotional healing, surrounded by resilience and rooted in community.

Projects will support a wide range of initiatives beyond infrastructure, from therapeutic gardens and wastewater systems to youth empowerment programs and environmental education in the Eshkol region. Projects like the restoration of the Gatun River in Nahariya, an Olive Grove at Ein Habsor and ecological rehabilitation in Kibbutz Malkiya are testament to JNF's holistic approach to recovery, healing the land, the people, and the spirit of Israel.

Israel's north suffered massive devastation and destruction after October 7, leaving communities displaced for more than a year. In Kiryat Shmona, where thousands were displaced by Hezbollah attacks, JNF Australia is committed to supporting a Community Stress Prevention Centre, an

innovative hub for emotional wellbeing and mental health support. In Misgav Am, ecological restoration is underway through replanting initiatives and the revival of community gardens, helping to heal both land and spirit.

Each of these projects has been chosen not just for what they rebuild, but for what they represent – safety, renewal and hope. These are not abstract concepts. They are tangible outcomes, shaped by the generosity of the Australian Jewish community and the direct engagement of JNF's on-the-ground partners in Israel.

What sets JNF Australia apart is its model of compassion in action. Funds raised go toward projects that are carefully selected in consultation with the affected communities. It's not just about building structures; it's about restoring futures. From donation to destination, JNF Australia provides full visibility, ensuring that every contribution leads to meaningful, measurable impact.

JNF Australia CEO Doron Lazarus says: "We don't just respond to crises – we invest in resilience. We don't just raise funds – we are grounded in the belief that rebuilding is not just about what was lost: it's about what can be bigger and better."

When the JNF Annual Campaign events conclude next month, the real work of rising with Israel continues. Supporting JNF Australia's wide-ranging projects is more than a donation. It's a commitment to Israel's future. It means becoming part of a movement that turns compassion into action and belief into impact. It's the understanding that these families are our families. We see them, we hear them and we stand with them as they rebuild their lives and communities.

Since its founding in 1901, JNF has helped shape the physical and emotional landscape of Israel. From planting trees to building towns, JNF's legacy is one of vision and action. In 2025, JNF Australia continues that mission by focusing on the future – funding what matters, with people on the ground.

As the JNF campaign declares, Together, We Rise With Israel, because rebuilding is not just about the past – it's about what we create next. Every donation, every act of solidarity is a step closer to a brighter future for Israel. Now is the time to turn compassion into action.

Join JNF Australia, hear Eli Sharabi's extraordinary story in conversation with Nadav Eyal and be part of rebuilding the lives and the land of Israel.

Last remaining seats are available, so to secure your tickets visit www.jnf.org.au or call 1300 563 563.