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CONFERENCE COMES AMID RISING ANTISEMITISM IN AUSTRALIA

KKL-JNF brings educators together

AJN STAFF

KEREN Kayemeth LeIsrael – Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF), together with JNF Australia, committed to advancing Israel-related education as they held their educational conference earlier this month bringing together educators, emissaries and communal leaders.

The three-day retreat focused on resilience, Jewish identity, Zionist education and connection to Israel.

At a time when many Jewish communities are facing uncertainty and increasing hostility highlighted in the personal testimonies in the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion, the gathering provided educators with practical tools, emotional support and renewed purpose.

Held in the Hunter Valley, the retreat gathered approximately 80 participants – educators and Jewish communal professionals from Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, alongside 14 shlichim in a parallel KKL program.

Participants represented a broad range of educational settings, including Jewish day schools, public schools and community organisations, and included both Jewish and non-Jewish educators.

The conversations held significant importance in the aftermath of October 7, especially in light of rising antisemitic incidents across Australia and the impact following

the Bondi Beach massacre, which has profoundly affected many within the Jewish community and beyond.

In December last year, dozens of teachers from around Australia participated in a 10-day tour to Israel in partnership with KKL and since their return, they have implemented the learnings from the tour. The retreat was created as a continuation of the annual JNF Educators’ Tour to Israel, offering alumni the opportunity to reconnect and continue building a national network of educators inspired by shared experiences.

A central focus of the retreat was ensuring that the experience would extend beyond the weekend itself. Each participant committed to developing and implementing an educational initiative inspired by the retreat within their schools or communities in the months ahead.

Throughout the weekend, participants engaged in workshops, collaborative discussions and experiential learning sessions exploring some of the most pressing issues facing educators and Jewish communities today. Topics included combating antisemitism, resilience and wellbeing in education, strengthening Jewish identity, innovative classroom methodologies, and fostering meaningful dialogue within schools and communities.

The program featured guest speakers and presenters from Israel and Australia, including Doron



Sharing ideas at the KKL-JNF educational conference.

Photos: Supplied

Libshtein, brother of the late Ofir Libshtein, head of the Sha’ar HaNegev Regional Council, who was murdered on October 7. Additional presenters included Talia Bernstein from Keshet and KKL educational representatives.

Alongside the formal educational sessions, the retreat created space for personal reflection, connection and wellbeing through yoga, mindfulness, meditation, creative activities, Kabbalat Shabbat and Havdalah.

Sar Shalom-Jerbi, head of KKL-JNF’s Education and Community Division, said the initiative reflected the importance of investing in educators during a challenging time for Jewish communities worldwide.

“By bringing together educators and emissaries from different frameworks, we are strengthening Jewish identity and communal resilience in Australia at a time when antisemitism is rising and many Jews in the Diaspora are facing fear and uncertainty,” he said.

Doron Lazarus, CEO of JNF Australia, added, “We’re incredibly grateful to the KKL-JNF Education Department in Israel for making the JNF Educators Retreat possible. This special gift

to our community from KKL-JNF enabled a truly meaningful and impactful experience for our educators.

“At JNF Australia, we remain deeply committed to supporting the next generation through education and connection, while continuing to directly fund projects that strengthen and support communities across Israel.”

JNF educational coordinator (Vic) Eden Abramov, described the retreat as both emotional and inspiring. “The highlight for me was the opportunity to reward teachers,” she said.

“They work in such an undervalued industry, yet they directly shape the next generation. Seeing educators reconnect, share ideas, and leave inspired to bring renewed energy and connection back into their classrooms was incredibly powerful.”

Hilli Lam, JNF educational coordinator (NSW), summarised, “From our perspective, this retreat was incredibly special and meaningful. Feedback throughout the weekend highlighted recurring themes of connection, inspiration, empowerment and community.

“Many participants spoke about the importance of feeling sup-



Doron Lazarus (left) and Sa’ar Shalom-Jerbi.

ported and understood by fellow educators navigating similar challenges, while also returning home with practical strategies and motivation to move forward.”


The retreat was made possible through the partnership between JNF Australia and KKL-JNF, whose continued investment in Jewish and Israel education is helping create meaningful long-term impact within schools and communities across Australia.

JNF Educators’ Tour 2026/2027 will take place from December 28 to January 6. Registrations are open. Learn more: jnf.org.au/educatorstour




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