

Around *the community*



JNF 50 FAMILIES PROJECT

Funding for healing space near Gaza border

AJN STAFF

JNF NSW recently hosted Entebbe mission veteran Rami Sherman at an event for its 50 Families Project, during his visit to Australia to mark 50 years since the mission.

The 50 Families Project brings together around 50 NSW families each year to collectively fundraise for one project in Israel, with 25 per cent of donations matched by KKL-JNF. Projects may include physical infrastructure, community spaces or programs, depending on where the need is greatest.

This year, the project is supporting a community therapeutic yurt at Kibbutz Nir Am in the Sha'ar HaNegev Regional Council. The kibbutz, located 1km from the Gaza border, was devastated in the October 7 attack. The yurt will provide emotional support,

counselling, resilience workshops and wellbeing programs for the community.

The initiative launched in 2025 and supported two projects in its inaugural year: the Therapeutic Nature Centre at Kibbutz Ein HaShlosha, and trauma therapy for children, parents and educators in the Mateh Asher Regional Council.

JNF NSW 50 Families Project founder Andrew Whitton said the project was built around “three ideas: giving back, resilience and legacy”.

“The idea was to bring together a group of families who wanted to give back to Israel in a way that was collective, tangible and enduring. Rather than simply making a donation and moving on, I wanted families to feel that they were part of actually creating something,” he said.



Andrew Whitton speaking at the JNF 50 Families Project Entebbe event.

Photo: Supplied

“Nir Am really embodies what this project is about. It is a community very close to the Gaza border that has lived through an extraordinary period of trauma since October 7. But what struck

me was that this is not simply a community trying to survive. It is a community determined to rebuild, reconnect and create a future.”

Whitton said the initiative

would fund a new project each year.

“The 50 Families Project is not intended to be a one-off fundraising campaign. Over time, I would love to be able to look across Israel and see a series of projects that these Australian families have helped make possible, together,” he said.

“I want our children to understand that being part of the Jewish community is not simply about what we inherit from the generations before us; it is also about what we contribute and what we leave behind for the generations that follow.”

Following the event, Whitton said: “It’s a pleasure to partner with JNF to deliver impact on the ground in Israel. We welcome more NSW families to join this project and look forward to building meaningful infrastructure in Israel.”