

Shalom Chaverot and Chaverim,

Before I begin, today marks 181 days that the hostages have been held in Hamas Terrorist Captivity.

It is with profound honor and a sense of immense privilege that welcome you to WIZO Victoria's 2023 Annual General Meeting - marking our 76th AGM.

This year is especially significant as we celebrate the 90th anniversary of WIZO Victoria. I'm fortunate to be celebrating this remarkable milestone with all of you.

A Special mention to Paulette Cherny OAM- Past President WIZO Australia- Mazal Tov for receiving the title "honorary Life Member" at the world WIZO EGM 2024

Another Mazal tov to Helen Granick on her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was delightful to celebrate this milestone around the table with so many WIZO legends.

As well as

- Sylvia Green
- Helen Grenak
- Anita Bejerano
- And our guest speaker, Jemima Montag

As I pause to reflect on the events of the past year, my heart is filled with a blend of emotions. And whilst I am physically here, my heart is in Israel.

I vividly recall being in Israel with 2 of my children, Maor and Mirelle, on October 7th, a day engraved in our memories. I can tell you that everyone was in disbelief. But once the reality sank in, it turned into pain. Yet, from the depths of despair emerged a remarkable resilience within Israel and the global Jewish community, rallying together to support those in need.

In the weeks ahead, I'm looking forward to returning to Israel for our WIZO Victoria Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut Solidarity Mission, where we will witness firsthand the unwavering unity that defines us.

Despite the trials we have endured both individually and as an organization, WIZO has remained steadfast in its commitment to rebuilding Israel and supporting its citizens. From providing essential aid to the displaced, and launching emergency services for vulnerable people, WIZO has exemplified the spirit of compassion and solidarity.

Here in Melbourne, October 7th served as a significant wake-up call for the Jewish community. Since then, we launched our Emergency Appeal to raise critical funds for Israel during wartime. The Better Together Kitchen's Feast for Peace, Zoe Levin's Marathon run and dance for peace raised money for this appeal. Thus far, our appeal has raised over \$400,000 with 100% of the funds going directly to Israel.

While raising money for Israel,

1. we took the initiative to print posters of the hostages and distribute them throughout the city,
2. we actively engaged in all rallies and
3. contributed to sending essential supplies to Israel,
4. among other efforts.

The rise in anti-Jewish and anti-Israel sentiment in Melbourne has also compelled WIZO Victoria to take action in the advocacy arena, sending letters to parliamentarians and more, to ensure our community has a strong voice.

I take great pride in being an integral member of the WIZO community, dedicated to giving back to Israel. As, now, a diaspora Israeli, I can truly appreciate and understand the vital role that the Jewish state plays in my life.

Despite the challenges, let us take a moment to acknowledge our achievements over the past year. From a successful membership campaign to impactful events such as the Festival of Fashion where "Bravo" the book by Ruth Scheuer was launched, sponsor a child and the Annual Gala Dinner with Sharri Markson, each endeavour has brought us closer together as a community. Please see the complete list of our events and campaigns on the screen and in the booklet you received.

Our WIZO Opp Shop's as always is thriving, contributing to WIZO in Israel but also to our sisterhood here. One of our shops have recently changed locations from Glen Huntly rd to Carlisle st. We are very proud of the new shop called Otzar. Make sure to check it out.

This could not have been achieved without the help of the entire WIZO community. Our collective efforts have accomplished remarkable achievements.

Thank you to our Office Bearers, Executive and volunteers, for your dedication, volunteering effort, and philanthropic support, all of which are truly valued.

To our dedicated professional staff, Hadassah, Vera, Hila, Mandy I want to extend heartfelt thank you for your unwavering commitment and hard work which you demonstrate daily. Your expertise ensures our office runs smoothly.

I would like to take this opportunity to also thank Bat Hen Sharon Zeev and Gali Vardi, who worked in the WIZO team last year.

To the presidents and members of our WIZO Victoria groups, thank you for all the incredible events you ran and with such passion and diligence. We look forward to many more in the year ahead.

A special thank you to the outgoing WIZO Kids presidents, Taryn Dickman and Kate Appel for engaging younger kids with fun activities and teaching them the importance of tzedakah.

I am excited to announce that our new WIZO Kids president is the incredible Talya Rotman who you will meet later on. We look forward to all your events.

To our Donors and sponsors, thank you for believing in WIZO, the mission, vision and the work we are doing here in our community, in Israel and around the world.

A special thank you to our treasurer, Hagar, from Linden Group and our IT guy, Adi Segev, from piece of mind, for donating so much of your time. Your professionalism are invaluable assets to WIZO Victoria.

I want you all to remember that you are not only part of Israel's largest and most important educational and social welfare organisation, but you are also part of a great worldwide movement of Zionist women, standing for Israel in 38 countries on six continents: The global WIZO family.

As we navigate the currents of antisemitism and anti-Zionism, let us draw strength from our past. We, the Jewish People, have faced challenges and trials throughout our history, but we always prevail.

And what gives me hope is this.

If I was to speak to my great great grandmother who lived in both Spain and Morocco, and tell her "Abelua, it's terrible what's happened in Israel" she would say "What? There is an Israel?"

So yes, despite the difficulties, we should feel very blessed. Very blessed to live freely as Jews in the diaspora and even more blessed to have our homeland Israel.

But can I tell you how we always survive and stand strong? Because of the Jewish resilience and the Jewish unity. Together, we will continue to stand tall. We will stand tall in support of Israel and we will stand tall in support of the Jewish community.

I am guided by the timeless words of Golda Meir: "there is no Zionism except the rescue of Jews." The fundamental purpose and essence of Zionism are tied to the enhancement of Jewish lives.

On this note, I want to offer prayers for the safe return of our hostages, for the protection of our brave soldiers, and for the swift recovery of the wounded. The people of Israel live on - Am Israel Chai.