



**Executive
Council of
Australian
Jewry**

הוועד הפועל של
יהודי אוסטרליה

The Representative
Organisation of
Australian Jewry

2nd Floor
148 Darlinghurst Road
Darlinghurst NSW 2010
Australia
Tel (+61 2) 9360 1600
Fax (+61 2) 9360 5418
Web www.ecaj.org.au
Email info@ecaj.org.au

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Special Master Judah Gribetz
Deputy Special Master Shari Reig
Bingham McCutchen LLP
399 Park Avenue
24th Floor
New York, NY 10022

Fax: 0011 1 212 702 3611

Dear Special Master Gribetz and Deputy Special Master Reig

The Australian Jewish community estimates that within our population there are, conservatively, between 16,000 and 18,000 Holocaust Survivors. This figure has been determined over many years and we know from the history of our community, and also from the service providers to those who can give evidence that they are Holocaust Survivors, that this is a realistic figure.

For this reason, my community was disturbed to see the report by Professor Sergio Della Pergola, available through ICHEIC, in which he estimated that there are only 4,6000 Holocaust Survivors resident in Australia. This Council, the elected representative organisation of the Australian Jewish Community, believes that he could only arrive at this figure through a misunderstanding of the specific circumstances of the development of the Australian Jewish Community.

One of the complicating factors for any outside analyst who has not made use of all available Australian data and does not have a good working knowledge of the Australian Jewish Community is the fact that statistics being used generally come from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' censuses. The question of religion is a voluntary question on our Censuses and all internal demographic research conducted by the Jewish Community and a great deal of anecdotal evidence suggest that a very high proportion of Holocaust Survivors do not declare their religion to Government Officials - for quite understandable reasons given their historical experiences.

Prior to World War II, the working estimate for the number of Jewish residents of Australia was 27,000 (This figure was derived from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data). This number included some Jews who had escaped Europe prior to the outbreak of War.

Large-scale Jewish immigration to Australia occurred immediately after World War II. At least 28,000 Jews, overwhelmingly Holocaust Survivors, migrated to Australia after 1946, supplementing an estimated 7,500 who had arrived prior to the outbreak of War (mainly German and Austrian Jews who were able to come to Australia in 1938 and 1939 following the Evian Conference).

The immigration of Jewish Holocaust Survivors more than doubled the size of the Australian Jewish Community.

The majority of immigrants accepted to Australia both before and after the War were overwhelmingly young. Therefore, there will be a much higher proportion of Holocaust Survivors alive today than amongst the pre-existing Australian Jewish Community, which had been evenly dispersed amongst all age groups.

In addition, over the past 20 years the Australian Jewish Community has welcomed thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union, some of whom came in entire family units which include Holocaust Survivors, thereby increasing the total number of Holocaust Survivors in Australia.

In table 3 of the report of Professor Della Pergola, it is stated that the size of the Australian/New Zealand Jewish Community today is approximately 107,000 (a low estimate) of which 31,000 Australian Jews were born before 1946. He states that only 15% of this group was born in a country that was affected by the Holocaust during the relevant period and can therefore be assumed to be a Nazi victim. This flies in the face of the generally received understanding of Australian Jewish demography and also would seem to be directly contradicted by information accessible from organisations which service the need of Holocaust Survivors.

For example, 3,400 Jews in Australia received a payment for Slave or Forced Labour from the Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and the Future" as a result of their suffering as slave labourers. The processing of claims is still continuing, as far as we understand. It would be absurd to assume that over seventy-five percent of all Holocaust Survivors in Australia would have been eligible for funding from this Foundation.

The German Government makes payments under the Hardship Fund to persons who were forced to flee the oncoming Nazis. It is known that close to 3,500 payments have been made under this programme to Holocaust Survivors resident in Australia, primarily to Jews from the Former Soviet Union who have arrived in Australia over the past 20 years.

We know of, but are unable to ascertain exactly how many Australian Jewish residents who survived the Holocaust through hiding, were partisans or lived under false identity. In addition, we know of Australian residents who are Holocaust Survivors who worked in unrecognised labour battalions in Bulgaria, Hungary and other countries and are not eligible for


payments. Anecdotal evidence suggested significant numbers of individuals in these groups.

We do not have precise numbers as to the surviving immigrants from Austria and Germany who came before the Second World War. However, estimates from Jewish social service organisations suggest over 5,000 people from this group are alive today.

All the above illustrate how conservative our figures of 16,000 - 18,000 Holocaust Survivors in Australia have been in the past. I note that the paper prepared by Ucles Associates Inc in October 2003 refers to 21,500 Holocaust Survivors in Australia in 1998, the same number as estimated for Canada. Given similarities in the immigration experience of the Australian/Canadian Jewish experience it is not unreasonable to believe that the two communities have within their midst similar numbers of Holocaust Survivors.

We are most concerned that inaccurate information may play a part in forming allocations of restitution funds. We hope and trust that you will note our concern and statistics which are highly dubious will not have a negative impact on funds allocated to survivors of the Shoah residents in Australia.

Yours sincerely



Jeremy Jones
President
Executive Council of Australian Jewry