

News Release

For immediate release

Educators of Australian Aborigine youth visit Israel to learn about educational Hebrew U.-sponsored programs for children

Jerusalem, January 24 2007 – A delegation of 18 educators and public figures who are involved with education of Aborigine children in Australia have just completed an intensive, two-week, in-service training program in Israel which included visits to see and learn about programs designed to advance the educational prospects of children in populations at risk.

The visit was sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women Institute for Innovation in Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The NCJW Institute has been heavily involved for the past two years in efforts to develop new teaching methods that are most suitable for Aborigine education in Australia through a program known as the Yachad Accelerated Learning Project. This project was first developed in Israel by the institute and involves training tutors to work on an individual basis with students to improve their language and mathematics skills. The program is being sponsored in Australia by both public and private funds.

Several visits by NCJW experts led by Elite Olshtain, the Luis and Ann Wolens Professor at the Institute, have been made to the Australian communities to guide them in implementing the program there. This is the first time, however, that the Australians involved in the program have been brought to Jerusalem.

One of the highlights of their visit was a trip to the Bedouin village of Kseyfeh to “compare notes” with educators there and discuss issues that relate to shared problems between educators of Bedouin youth and aborigines in Australia. A major problem within both communities is a high rate of school absences, due in no small measure to the distances at which students live from the school.

The Australian delegation, which included both Aborigines and non-Aborigines, also travelled to other sites to visit and meet with those involved in education of Ethiopian children and to see programs involved with advancing the educational opportunities for various groups of children at risk.

Klynton Wanganeen, a senior official involved mainly in Aborigine vocational education in South Australia and one of the Aborigine educators in the group, said that he saw some excellent examples in the NCJW-sponsored programs of how youth could be inspired to further their education and how it can lead to their finding employment and improving their lives. In particular, he pointed to the Manof residential youth village for reintegrating teenagers who had neither been studying nor working. The program, he said, gives them another chance and puts them on an educational, vocational and social track towards becoming productive and useful members of society.

This is very relevant to Aboriginal society in Australia, said Wanganeen, since a basic problem in Aborigine society is that of “disengaged youth” who fall into drug and alcohol use and have no hope for normal lives. With the proper motivation and educational leadership that he saw here, he said, he feels that something along the same lines could succeed in Australia for Aborigine teenagers. Wanganeen said he saw also how the Bedouin students could also be motivated to improve their lot in life and how parental involvement there makes a difference.

The Australian educator said he was somewhat surprised to see “how multicultural Israel is” and that how cultural factors can be employed to the advantage of educational advancement. This is something, he feels, which is lacking in the Australian approach.

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With 24,000 full-time students, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is Israel's pre-eminent institute of higher education. Its faculty members pursue projects that are both essential to Israel's future and the benefit of humanity. It is a centre of international repute, with formal and informal ties extending to and from the worldwide scientific and academic community. Students come from all over Israel and across the Middle East to study in an atmosphere of academic and research excellence.

About the British Friends of the Hebrew University

Established in 1926, The British Friends of the Hebrew University is the oldest established Jewish charity in support of higher education. The charity works to promote and enhance the reputation of the Hebrew University, ensure that underprivileged students are given the opportunity to complete their studies, and help HU to maintain its standard of excellence and worldwide reputation for research.

BFHU acts as the UK's gateway to Hebrew University research, expertise and faculty, and provides financial and pastoral support for prospective and current students at HU, as well as supporting visiting and sabbatical Hebrew University lecturers during their time in the UK.