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ק"ק מקוה ישראל

# Newtown Synagogue Incorporated

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## Annual Reports

For periods: 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021  
and

1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022

To present at

## Annual General Meeting

### Sunday, 4 December 2022



ABN: 38 042 014 328

Incorporated Association No. 2544325

## Newtown Synagogue Board Members 2021 to 2022

- Wolfie Pizem OAM – President
- Toby Raphael – Vice President
- Nathan Mihalovich – Treasurer
- Diana Lazarus – Secretary
- Tanya Fox – Minute Secretary
- Benjamin Mitra-Kahn – Board Member
- Joshua Swift – Board Member



# President's Report

**The years 5781/5782 in review  
1 October 2020 to 30 September 2022**

For the first time in the history of the Shul, owing to the COVID Pandemic, we had to close for a long period of time including Sabbaths and High Holidays. There were no community activities, there were cancellations of Bar and Bat mitzvah's, weddings and other social events.

During the past two years, our Rabbi managed to conduct Shabbat sermons and a friendly newsletter to keep in contact with our members.

2021/2022

When we were finally permitted to re-open the Shul, the Rabbi and Rabbetzin, plus the Board, worked hard to prepare the Shul for the High Holidays while observing COVID restrictions and requirements.

Rabbi Eli began Jewish Law classes every Wednesday evening and then re-introduced Friday night Shabbat dinners and Saturday Kiddishim. Rebbetzin Elke introduced Israeli dancing classes Monday evenings. This was a joyful time for the community.

The membership committee commenced a membership drive. During this period of time, membership has grown 50%. This is an exciting result.

We have been in constant contact with the President of Strathfield Synagogue regarding our application for the availability of funds to complete our building project. After so many years it has been indicated to us that these funds should be available in the near future.

When the plans are finalized by the architects they will be on display for members' comments and then presented to the council. The plans include a new kitchen situated in a different location, a new toilet block, including ladies facilities, men's and disabled toilets.

The community hall will be extended, re-furbished with a capacity to hold 120 people. This will provide space to accommodate new members living in the area and surrounding suburbs who we expect will join our Shul during a major membership drive that will commence when our building is nearing completion.

I would like to join with the Board and members of our Synagogue to thank Rabbi Eli and Rebbetzin Elke Feldman, for their wonderful dedication to our Synagogue, in particular during the last two difficult years.

They have created a solid and close relationship with all our members, for this we are forever grateful.

We are looking forward to them being with us for many years to come, to fulfil our ambition of building a new community centre and the upgrading of our Synagogue.

With Rabbi Eli and Rebbetzin Elke as our religious leaders, I am sure we will achieve our goals.

I would like to give a special thank you to Toby Raphael, our Vice President in particular for giving me so much support.

Toby Raphael was responsible in dealing with councils, communicating on a weekly basis with the Strathfield Shul, managing funds received from grants, and much more.

For the first time in the history of Newtown Synagogue, a prestigious award was presented, namely a Governorship to Diana Lazarus for her contribution to Newtown Synagogue over a long period of time.

To our Treasurer Joshua Swift and Secretary, Tanya Fox, together with all of the hard working board members, I am thanking all of you.

Finally, with our strong Board and supportive members, together with the new building we can look forward to being a Shul with a strong community for many years to come.

President – Newtown Synagogue Board  
**Wolfie Pizem OAM**

## Rabbi's Report

### **1 October 2020 – 30 September 2021**

The reporting period starting in October 2020 commenced in the middle of the festive month of Tishrei, which contains the high holidays.

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, we were restricted as to how many people could attend the Synagogue and we could not serve food or put on communal meals.

We conducted the high holidays services whilst complying with the Government requirements, and Baruch Hashem we had Minyanim for all of the high holiday services.

As Rabbi & Rebbetzin we continued to support the community during this difficult time in a pastoral capacity and initiated creative ways to engage the community such as making deliveries of food packages to those in need as well as weekly pre and post Shabbat video broadcasts Live on Facebook.

As virus cases dwindled, in early 2021 we were able to resume Shabbat dinners at the Synagogue, with restricted attendance limits.

We were also able to make festival celebrations for Chanukah, Purim, Pesach, Lag B'omer and Shavuot, which were lovely events and all well attended.

Unfortunately, due to the Delta outbreak in June 2021, there was a four month lockdown which meant that we had to close the Synagogue completely and for the first time in 100 years there was no high holidays services at our Shul, or at any Shul in Sydney.

We sent by mail to all of our members and friends selected parts of the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur Machzorim, together with a comprehensive high holidays guide, to facilitate people celebrating the high holidays at home.

We were also able to coordinate with the Government to do events in the Park for blowing the Shofar for Rosh Hashanah and eating in the Sukkan for Sukkot. These initiatives were well attended and much appreciated by the community.

Despite the challenges, we have been delighted to serve as Newtown Synagogue's Rabbi & Rebbetzin for the past year and we look forward to continue working together with this wonderful community well into the future!

### **1 October 2021 – 30 September 2022**

The reporting period starting in October 2021 commenced after the festive month of Tishrei, which contains the high holidays.

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic the Synagogue was closed, however the lockdown eased towards the end of October. We were then able to reopen the Synagogue for services but not for meals.

We launched an exciting new initiative at the Shul: The JLI (Jewish Learning Institute) Courses. The JLI Courses contain fascinating insights into Jewish teachings and traditions. They have been developed overseas and taught throughout the world. They are extremely popular as they make the teachings, values and traditions of the Jewish people accessible and personally meaningful to all Jews, regardless of their background or affiliation. The JLI model combines a research-based approach with instructional design, aiming to present traditional Jewish teachings in a contemporary academic framework.

The three JLI Courses that we taught were: “Outsmarting Antisemitism”, “Meditation from Sinai”, and “Beyond Right”.

The courses were very well received by our community and we are excited to be offering them again this coming year. The upcoming courses that we will be teaching at the Shul in 2023 are:

“My G-d: Defining the Divine”

Nothing is off-limits as this refreshingly open course asks piercing questions about G-d and delivers profound, insightful answers. An enlightening study into G-d's nature, G-d's goal for creation, human experiences of G-d, the role of religion, and the function of miracles and prayer, this course promises to satisfy the questions you didn't know you had and the ones you did.

“Book Smart: Course through Judaism's most important titles and the authors who inscribed them”

A panoramic overview of 3000 years of Jewish learning, this course initiates you into the works that earned us the title, “The People of The Book.” It introduces the books that shape Jewish life, covering Tanach, Midrash, Talmud, Halachah, Philosophy, Kabbalah, Musar, Chasidism, and the influential personalities who drove thirty centuries of Jewish scholarship. Whether you're meeting these texts for the first time or are a seasoned scholar, this course adds historical background to any Jewish learning.

“Jewpernatural: Astrology, Superstition, and the Paranormal in Jewish Belief”

As we understand the natural world better, we have only grown more fascinated by mysterious topics like the meaning of dreams; the existence of angels, demons, and extra-terrestrials; and the power of the evil eye. With record interest inspiring curiosity, dread, and mockery, this course probes the Talmud, Jewish philosophy, and kabbalah to provide Jewish perspectives and guidance for those curious about these perennial questions.

In February 2022 we were finally able to resume our Shabbat dinners at the Shul. The Dinners are funded by donations to our Charity, Young Adult Chabad Benevolent Society. We are very grateful for all those who donate to ensure that the dinners can continue and go from strength to strength. We are also grateful for the numerous volunteers who come in every week to help with the cooking for the Shabbat dinners. The volunteer pool has grown and now there are more than 60 people on our Newtown Shul Cooking WhatsApp group!

There were a number of special Shabbat dinners this year including ones that were done together with the Australian Union of Jewish Students and a Shabbat dinner with the members of Parliament from the Greens Party.

Here is some of the feedback that we have received regarding the Shabbat dinners:

*“Hi Rabbi, we wanted to thank you for a beautiful shabbat evening on Friday. It was a very special evening for all of us. Please pass on our thanks to the rebetzin and the volunteers for the delicious food.”*

*“Hi Rabbi Feldman thanks for inviting me for shabbas to your wonderful community and sharing in dinner with you and your family and for making me so welcome and at home. I had a wonderful time.”*

*“Hey Rebbetzin, been meaning to get in touch all week to say how splendid shabbat dinner was for my partner and I!”*

Once the coronavirus restrictions subsided, all of the Jewish festivals at our Shul were spectacular, with very well attended Services and communal dinners and lunches following every service.

Purim was a big success, the food was excellent and the entertainment first rate. We had many families and children which is very important for the growth of the shul community. Everyone who came really enjoyed themselves.

Preparing the shul for Pesach was a big job and many people came to help make it happen. We had Communal Seders for both the first night and second night of Pesach as well as regular meals and services for the first and last days of Pesach.

On Lag Baomer we had a fantastic BBQ and bonfire with drumming circle, storytelling, music and dancing. On Shavuot we had services, meals, a special Ice-cream party for kids and a wonderful late night learning program with fascinating presentations by congregants.

A new initiative that was launched this year: Israeli Dancing for women. It ran for many months on a Monday night and was really appreciated by all of the women who attended.

The Rebbetzin and I have been engaged in ongoing pastoral care for members and friends of the Synagogue which has included phone calls as well as home and hospital visitations. We have had the privilege to put up Mezuzot at many homes.

This year saw a growing number of significant life cycle events at our Shul including Birthdays, Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrations as well as Sheva Brachot for weddings. We even flew to Toowoomba, Queensland to officiate at the Bris of the newborn son of a couple of our congregants!

On a sadder note, I have been asked to officiate at a number of funerals of members and friends of our Shul.

As part of our engagement with the wider community, we hosted a delegation of Christian educators who came to our Shul to learn more about Judaism. Their visit was featured prominently in the Australian Jewish News.

The fast of Tisha B'av was commemorated with a joint event at Chabad Double Bay where myself and Rabbi Berger ran the service and we showed an inspirational film afterwards.

The Rebbetzin completed a course on pastoral care offered by the Centre for Clinical Pastoral Education. It has provided her with additional tools to help in emotionally supporting our congregants at times of distress.

I represented our Shul at the Limmud Oz festival and gave a presentation on the Jewish spiritual approach to combatting Antisemitism.

Our Shul were co-hosts at a joint Selichot service at Dover Heights Shul, at which I was a featured guest speaker.

The last major event for this reporting period was Rosh Hashanah. Our son Chaim was a real hit amongst the congregants with his role as Chazan during the high holidays, together with his friend Ezra Gershman.

The shul hosted dinners for both the first and second nights of Rosh Hashanah and both were very well attended.

We are pleased that the membership of our Shul is growing, which is a testament to the wonderful atmosphere created by the joint efforts of the Synagogue Board, our dedicated volunteers and myself and the Rebbetzin.

We are truly blessed to be part of this beautiful community and are looking forward to many wonderful years ahead with Newtown Synagogue – *The Friendly Shul!*

# **Treasurer's Report**

## **1 October 2020 to 30 September 2022**

It is a pleasure to be able to write my first report and update on the current financial circumstances of Newtown Synagogue.

The past few years, particularly 2020 and 2021, have been difficult for all Australians. They have been particularly difficult for the Synagogue, with our net position being significantly reduced. I am delighted to report that in the 2021 – 2022 financial year for the Synagogue (October 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 – September 30<sup>th</sup> 2022), we have retained a profit of \$280,942 (\$1,582.07 with Government Grants deducted). This is especially positive when compared to a loss of \$13,740 in the 2020 – 2021 financial year and a loss of \$10,662 in the 2019 – 2020 financial year.

Our cash assets remain relatively unchanged, with \$189,000 between our accounts. Our change in asset position of \$268,615 owes to the currently in progress security upgrades, including the new security fence and CCTV system.

This last financial year saw a sizeable payment of fringe benefits to the Rabbi Eli Feldmann in lieu of a formal salary. A two- year contract between the Synagogue and the Rabbi is currently being negotiated. This contract will reduce the fringe benefit liability.

The financial year ahead for the Synagogue looks bright, with the completion of contract negotiations with the Rabbi extremely close and the realisation of funds from a sizeable bequest. These funds will form the opening balance of the Newtown Synagogue Strategic Investment Fund. This Fund will invest in assets, securities and other instruments which have a high likelihood of positive returns and which fit the Synagogue's investment risk matrix. This matrix is currently under review to ensure that the Synagogue's investment choices are as de-risked as possible. We are also expecting to receive a distribution from the funds of the now closed Strathfield Synagogue, however the exact amount remains uncertain. It is hoped that these funds will be able to be utilised for much- needed upgrades to the Synagogue.

I look forward to the year ahead and the positive changes which it will bring to the Synagogue. Please reach out if you have any questions or wish to connect – [treasurer@shul.org.au](mailto:treasurer@shul.org.au)

**Dr Joshua Swift**  
**Honorary Treasurer, Newtown Synagogue Inc.**

P.S. Please refer to the attached Financial Statements and Accountant's Compilation Report and Notes that form part of the Financial Statements