

## AGM SPEECH 2023

Since I took on the WIZO NSW Presidency this time last year much has changed. Both here and around the world and particularly in Israel.

I feel we are in a state of flux. Constant change with governments, communication, contact, with privacy, climate, how we work.. it's quite a lot!

Change can destabilize and it can also strengthen.

WIZO is an organization that needs to adapt **very** regularly. We adapt to the needs and changes of the whole spectrum of Israeli society. All the time.

In 2022 we have had to make changes.

Refugee crisis due to invasion of Ukraine? WIZO opens its doors and houses, feeds and supports the young people arriving empty – empty bags and empty hearts. Nothing but a few belongings. We offer them care and support- whatever it takes.

Nowhere to call home for Shabbat? WIZO creates a Shabbat House for those children who have no home to go to and for those who have Army leave and also have nowhere to enjoy Shabbat..

Not just somewhere to sleep. Somewhere to enjoy Kabbalat Shabbat with candles, food and a WIZO family.

The much used Basketball court at Ahuzat Yeladim is failing and falling apart.

This Multifunctional space that brings so much benefit to the students and is used for concerts and as well as sport needs to be restored. We plan and change and fundraise.

The Basketball court has been brought back to life. Thank you once again to the considerate and generous members who made this change happen.

Adapt, change, modify, adjust.....Make it work!

Late last year I visited Israel and I met with the movers and shakers at WIZO headquarters in Tel Aviv.

It was thrilling for me to see the scope and size of the headquarters and I also had very interesting discussions with everyone I met.

I visited Makom Balev in Bersheva, Ahuzat Yeladim in Haifa, The Joy Balkind Day CareCentre in Jerusalem and the Rebecca Sieff Vocational High School as well as the Women's Shelter in the same area.

That day I was lucky enough to take a visitor from Sydney with me to see the Jerusalem projects.

On my return to Sydney, the visitor called me and said that she was very touched by the projects and that she recalled the Director saying that they would like to be able to give the children who come after school a meal to make it easier for the families when the children went home that night.

She then told me that she would like to provide these children with this food for 12 months. Israel organised for a proposal to be sent to the donor and a \$100,000 donation was pledged.

I think this is a great example of what can happen when we take visitors to the projects. To see first hand, to have a conversation with those who run the projects, to be in the environment with those in care. There is nothing like it and it is something we can do a lot more of. So if you do go to Israel please contact us and we will organise a visit to any project you would like to see.

Back in Sydney WIZO NSW also saw change.

We have embraced our young observers and look forward to working with them in their new roles.

We have built and contributed to a very strong Safety Net Program which deals with the key issue of Domestic Violence.

We have moved from our beloved though slightly age delapidated Beth WIZO to our new and

professional offices where we can do our best work.

We have adopted a new Day Care Centre in Jerusalem. The Joy Balkind Day Care Centre.

I want to tell you about Joy Balkind-

Joy was a member of WIZO NSW for over 70 years. Joy was dedicated to our community through many organisations and WIZO was particularly special to her.

She had a passion for children's education, she was wise, involved and very forward thinking. It was in this spirit that she left a bequest to WIZO NSW in 2021.

Joy was one of the founders of Beth WIZO in Edgecliff Rd when a few devoted families bought the house and converted it to our WIZO offices.

Today, 50 years later I and the women she mentored while on the State Executive have the responsibility of how to manage her generous bequest.

After much professional consultation it was agreed to move offices to a new and workable space and take 53 Edgecliff Rd to its original use as a 3 bedroom 2 bathroom fully renovated house.

We are now a month away from completion and the house will bring us a very helpful and needed income.

We have the privilege of working on this project with Simon Wakerman as Honorary architect.

Once again, generosity of spirit and bigheartedness has come our way. Thank you Simon.

The bequest has also allowed us to adopt a new project in Jerusalem which in line with Joy's wishes is a Day Care Centre in a very underprivileged area.

We have been very lucky to be the beneficiaries of so much commitment and generosity.

I am very proud of our 2022 changes and achievements.

We have a huge responsibility and work to be the best guardians, protectors and sponsors we can be.

Traditionally each year at the AGM we launch our **Sponsor A Child in Israel Campaign.**

This year, the campaign is aptly titled “Invisible Children” – these are the children WIZO identifies, children who witness the abuse, verbal and physical, in their own homes and are traumatised by it.

All funds raised this year will go towards helping these children, whether it is psychological counselling, social worker intervention, extra and loving care at school – funds will go where the need is greatest.

Last year, we raised \$250,000 for the refugee children who arrived from the Ukraine – what a difference we made to women, children and families.

With your help we would like to do the same this year. A letter will land in your mailbox in the

coming days. Join me. Help an invisible child.  
Thank you

I have learnt so much in the past year about people and commitment and team work.

The team players on top of the list are you! Our members and supporters- nothing would change or be achieved without you. Thank you 100 times over.

The other team players who make it tick are the people who sit and make decisions and who I love to work with- the Executive and management team. You are special and your hearts are in the best place. Thank you.

And the other team is the machine that puts it altogether.

Lorna, Avril, Hagit and Kim (who is formally in the Federal Office )but who also gets aboard in NSW matters are a team that just works. Each one contributing her own style and skills.



From idea to implementation, it all happens with our small team who are lucky to work with Lorna Berger- our Executive Director with endless energy and drive. Lorna thank you for all you do. Your enthusiasm gives the office a real buzz as does your passion for success. Thank you.

I look forward to whatever 2023 brings. With changes or without.

Thank you