

INSIDER'S VIEW

Israel, Australia
and two wars

PETER KOHN

JEWISH scholar Elizabeth Holdsworth (pictured) has delivered rare insights into Australian intelligence gathering in the eras of the Six-Day War and Yom Kippur War, gleaned from her long career at the Australian Department of Defence.



Now retired from her post as an intelligence officer with the department, Holdsworth delivered the annual 2018 Leo Baeck Lecture on March 4 at Leo Baeck Centre (LBC) introduced by Rabbi Jonathan Keren-Black.

Holdsworth became the only woman recruited by the former Department of the Army's intelligence corps in 1966.

Among her duties in helping compile weapons intelligence was assessing the flow of supplies to Australia's military effort in the Vietnam War.

Around this time, Holdsworth was assigned to liaise in an Australian initiative to train Israelis in military equipment maintenance. "Until the 1960s, the Israelis had spent a lot of money on buying defence equip-

ment and almost nothing on maintaining it."

On the eve of the 1967 Six-Day War, US intelligence had concluded that the Jewish State was in a far stronger strategic position against its Arab enemies than Israel's government and Israeli intelligence agencies would admit, she said.

Holdsworth also recalled briefings in 1973 from the US Central Intelligence Agency to Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs on troop build-ups in Syria and Egypt on their borders with Israel on the eve of the Yom Kippur War, but Israel failed to appreciate their scale and significance.

She said the 1967 and 1973 wars showed that despite Israel's military victories, it could not win an overarching peace with its neighbours. Moreover, the Arab world had learned from the US trajectory of the Vietnam War that victory on the ground – such as America's military gains by 1968 – could be undone by the defeated parties blatantly refusing to take part in peace efforts, she argued.

Holdsworth, a psychologist, essayist, novelist and LBC congregant, is the author of *If This Is A Jew*, an essay on Progressive Judaism.

ISRAELI PAEDIATRICIAN TO VISIT

Healing hands for Syrian kids

PETER KOHN

SYRIAN children injured in the bloody civil war tearing apart Israel's northern neighbour have found healing, caring hands in northern Israel, as they undergo treatment at the Ziv Hospital in Tzfat.

Professor Anthony Luder, director of the paediatrics department at Ziv, estimates around one fifth of the Syrians arriving for treatment since 2013 have been children.

With around 25 births by pregnant mothers who were brought to the hospital, Luder reflected: "We now have around two football teams of Syrian Israeli babies."

The acclaimed paediatrician and geneticist is also deputy dean of clinical sciences at Bar Ilan University's Ilan b'Galil Faculty of Medicine, of which Ziv is an affiliate hospital.

Luder is visiting Australia as a keynote speaker for this year's fundraising campaign of the United Israel Appeal Progressive Trust.

"In the beginning there was a lot of culture shock, as the [Syrian] patients who came here were generally very seriously ill," Luder told *The AJN* from Israel. "The shock of being in Israel and in an Israeli hospital was considerable for them and no doubt at the beginning there was a lot of fear and distrust.

"However, over the years, it's become very clear to them and



Professor Anthony Luder examines an infant at Ziv hospital in Israel.

known to them in their own societies that patients here get excellent, really world-class care, and they have nothing whatever to fear from us.

"On the contrary, in the last few years, we've only had expressions of gratitude from them. In fact, we're now getting busloads of people coming here for routine medical care," he said.

Separately Luder is pursuing his genetics research, specialising in primary ciliary dyskinesia (PCD), a genetic flaw in the cilia, the tiny hairs lining the body's tubular structures, which affects the flow of fluids, causing conditions such as chronic pneumonia, heart disease, infertility and sinusitis.

Trained in Canada, Luder has headed Ziv's paediatrics depart-

ment since 1992. "Paediatrics is a very optimistic side of medicine, as your patients are growing and developing."

As a founding member of the Rosh Pinah Pluralistic Jewish Community, a Progressive congregation, Luder has been an advocate of Israeli Progressive Judaism. His message to Jewish Australians will be that "the work of Israel helping Syrian casualties, the citizens of an enemy country, and a neighbour, has been an example of the quality of this country [Israel] and the quality of its people. Being Jews, we're doing our best to heal the world."

Professor Anthony Luder will speak at the Leo Baeck Centre for Progressive Judaism, Monday, March 19, 7.30pm.

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