

JEWISH MP BOWS OUT

Thomson quitting Parliament

PETER KOHN

VICTORIAN Labor MP Marsha Thomson, who became the first female Jewish minister in Australia, has announced she is stepping down from politics.

Elected to Parliament in 1999, Thomson, who served in both the upper and lower houses, and has been a minister for seven years, announced she will resign at the November 2018 election.

Her decision was reportedly influenced by a pre-selection challenge for her Footscray seat from communications manager Katie Hall.

Paying tribute to Thomson, Premier Daniel Andrews recalled, "In her inaugural speech to Parliament, Marsha said, 'Government is responsible for providing social cohesion where everyone feels they have a place within.'"

"As a member, as a mentor, and as a minister for seven years, she put these principles into practice and spoke up every day for the people who were denied their rightful voice within our society."

Acknowledging Thomson as the first Jewish woman to become a state or federal minister, the Premier noted "Marsha's tireless work with Victoria's Jewish community has made our state a more welcoming place for so many people."

She "worked with the Indian community in the western suburbs



Marsha Thomson and David Southwick received the ZFA/ZV Jerusalem Prize last year.

against the tragedy of family violence", said Andrews.

Thomson has co-convened Victorian Parliamentary Friends of Israel with her Liberal counterpart David Southwick, who this week stated, "I am proud of what we have achieved together in supporting the Jewish community in Victoria and strengthening our state's connection with Israel."

"Although our politics may differ, we are united in our passion for Jewish causes and Israel. Marsha will be missed as a great advocate for our community in the Victorian Parliament."

Thomson's ministerial portfolios have included Small Business, Consumer Affairs, and Information and Communication Technology. She has also been Parliamentary Secretary to the

Premier, for the Arts, for Industry and Trade, and for Justice.

As MP for Footscray since 2006, she championed education equality in the western suburbs.

Before entering Parliament, Thomson was an economic forecaster, electorate officer and ministerial adviser.

She was jointly awarded the Zionist Federation of Australia and Zionism Victoria's Jerusalem Prize with Southwick last year.

"After 19 years in politics, it feels like the right time to retire. I look forward to hopefully seeing another female Labor candidate step into the role," Thomson told *The AJN* this week.

"I intend to continue to be a voice within the Jewish community. Unlike politics, being Jewish is something you don't retire from."

MAJOR COUP

Lieberman joins Joint

AJN STAFF

JOSEPH Lieberman, the first Jewish candidate for vice-president in American history, has agreed to serve as the International Patron of The Joint Australia, a post that was previously held by the revered Elie Wiesel.

Senator Lieberman missed out on the US vice-presidency by the narrowest of margins when he ran on a Democratic Party ticket with presidential candidate Al Gore in the 2000 election, and then continued his political career as a senator.

As the International Patron of The Joint Australia, he will be flanked by the organisation's National Patron David Gonski, and a newly formed Board of Governors that includes community stalwarts John Gandel, Ervin Vidor, Professor Gus Lehrer and Justice Stephen Rothman.

The new board and its International Patron represent a major coup for the The Joint Australia, which was established only four years ago.

Last month, The Joint Australia president Eva Fischl met with the now-retired senator and his wife Hadassah in New York, where he agreed to assume the role, beginning immediately.

They discussed the growing importance of Australia's con-



From left: Hadassah Lieberman, Joe Lieberman and Eva Fischl.

Photo: JDC

tribution to the ongoing global effort of the international Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) to rescue Jews in danger and care for millions of struggling Jews living in remote and forgotten corners of the globe and in Israel.

Lieberman stated: "We are pleased to encourage the Australian Jewish community – a role model in aiding fellow Jews and Israel – to elevate their involvement in JDC's global work, ensuring a strong and vibrant Jewish future through their support of this vital organisation."

He said he greatly valued the Australian Jewish community's participation in The Joint's non-sectarian work, especially when natural disasters strike, such as in Nepal, Haiti and more recently The Philippines.

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