

Introduction

- Thank you Joan and members of the JCC for inviting me to come along this evening. It's a real pleasure to be here.
- I've been humbled by the welcome I've received here in Perth.
- I guess, over the course of my life, I've developed something of a reputation for my networks of influence, and how I've used them to advance the causes I care about.
- I came across a Facebook post a few months ago from the account of a person or organisation that figures I have too much influence ...
- It's a graphic with an image of me in the centre, wearing a very grand crown on my head. And all around me are logos of organisations over which I'm seen to have some sway, ranging from the Referendum Council and the Zionist Federation of Australia, through to the Australian Tax Office.
- Far from feeling concerned or offended, I was actually tempted to share it because it reminds me how blessed I've been to be able focus my own skills, and the professional firepower of Arnold Bloch Leibler, in the direction my conscience dictates.
- So, this evening, I thought I'd try to crystallise the main lessons I've learned about successful lobbying.
- I am fully aware that you are all well-versed in this yourselves. As I said last night, the Jewish community here punches well and truly above its weight.
- But in lobbying, it can be useful to compare experiences, so I'm going to very briefly cover what I believe to be the top three lessons, and examples of how I've seen them applied.

- None of it's rocket science, but I'm regularly amazed that so many intelligent, successful people across different sectors advocate their positions so ineptly.

Lesson no. 1

- The first and most important lesson, which establishes the foundation for every lobbying effort, is to: *Choose the style and the manner of lobbying that's most appropriate to the situation.*
- The reality is that sometimes politicians make decisions that are fundamentally wrong but it's clear that there's simply no value in lobbying them to change their minds.
- That's not to say there's no value in publicly distancing yourself from that decision by putting out a statement or giving an interview. But expending precious lobbying capital to "flog a dead horse" will just come across as naïve.
- An example of this was the government's decision, last year, to reject the central proposal of the Referendum Council on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, which I co-chaired.
- I judged at the time that there was no point in picking up the phone to the Minister or the Prime Minister to try and convince them to revisit that decision.
- The strident nature of the announcement and the political strategy that sits behind it - namely to appeal to the ultra-conservatives Tony Abbott is trying to cultivate - made it impossible that the government would reverse the decision without leaving some time and space to make it politically tenable.
- So, along with many other people, I have been doing a lot behind the scenes to make it possible for the government to reverse its decision without losing too much face.
- I talked quite a bit about that this morning, and also to the students at Carmel yesterday.

- Of course, in situations where you judge there is genuine scope to change a politician's mind, there's various ways of going about it. You need to assess all the variables to maximise your chances of a win.
- I came up with an example of this going back to the mid-1980s, when we learned that the then Foreign Minister Bill Hayden had agreed to open an exhibition of art for the PLO - some of the works were deeply offensive and I felt a responsibility to call him.
- While the Minister argued the toss with me, he finally conceded, after viewing the exhibition, that it was probably inappropriate and would pull out simply on the basis that he was not available.
- But he told me that if I ever indicated to anyone that his decision was a result of my lobbying, he would deny the conversation ever happened, and never speak to me again.
- I feel that enough time has elapsed to take you into my confidence today ...
- In other situations, while you're not going to be able to change someone's mind on an issue, it might still be necessary to intervene just to ensure the situation doesn't deteriorate.
- A good example of this is the advocacy we undertook at AIJAC in relation to the recently returned ABC correspondent Sophie McNeill's coverage of the middle east.
- She should never have been given this posting by the ABC because she was ideologically attached to the Palestinian cause.
- I don't believe the ABC would have sent her if they'd known but they weren't going to create a controversy by pulling her out. That said, our representations, both public and private, undoubtedly moderated her behaviour because she knew she was being watched.

- Another example is the style of lobbying undertaken ahead of the ALP's national conference last year.
- Bob Carr and his associates were making worrying in-roads on the diplomatic recognition of a Palestinian State, particularly in western Sydney electorates with a strong Muslim influence.
- A great deal of sustained, behind-the-scenes lobbying was done - with the leader and with individual politicians whose voices carry weight - to ensure that the damage was limited. This kind of lobbying changes as circumstances change, but it's never done, never finished.
- To work effectively with the Government and the Opposition of the day, we are in the business of making friends not enemies. That has a strong bearing on the language we use, and deciding when the best approach is "softly softly" and when, on rare occasions, to go in hard.
- Apart from the US, Australia is the best friend Israel has.
- When the Australian Government said that it would not, at this time, be following the lead from the US and moving its embassy to Jerusalem, we at AIJAC publicly disagreed with the decision and expressed our hope that, one day, the decision would change. We did not, however, attack or condemn the Government.
- The only extreme over-the-top criticism came from extreme right wing elements who accused the Foreign Minister of being immoral.
- Fortunately, Julie Bishop isn't stupid. She knows which groups and which spokespeople represent mainstream Jewish community sentiment.
- Accusing the Foreign Minister of adopting an immoral approach would have been seriously counter-productive.

- Keep in mind, very shortly after this announcement, the Australian Government stuck its neck out in voting against the Human Rights Council resolution to establish a biased, predetermined inquiry into Palestinian deaths on the border with Gaza.
- In short, tone and approach is important.
- If we knit pick every word, we cease to be taken seriously and we cease to be effective.

Lesson no. 2

- Lesson no. 2 is to *Get the timing and the target right.*
- Timing is important. And leading up to an election is often a good time to lobby on issues of deep concern to the Jewish community. Sometimes the outcome will exceed expectations.
- In terms of *who* to lobby, you need to understand that it isn't always the most senior person who carries the most weight on every issue.
- And I'm going to cite another example involving Bill Hayden as Minister for Foreign Affairs. Having Hayden on-side was crucial to the success of lobbying efforts I led on behalf of the Zionist Federation to have Australia support the worldwide campaign to rescind UN Resolution 3379.
- It was one of the most complex and ultimately effective pieces of political advocacy I've ever been involved in, and it centred on the Foreign Minister of the day, rather than the Prime Minister.
- Bob Hawke was seen to be a close friend of the Australian Jewish community and, strange as it sounds, that lowered rather than heightened his influence in his own party room on this issue.
- Hayden was not closely associated with the Jewish community or Israel and, moreover, he was a creature of the Left. His support, cultivated over several months, was pivotal.

- Not only did he deliver a keynote address to the ZFA Biennial Conference of that year - 1986 - he committed to support a bi-partisan Parliamentary resolution which was passed unanimously by both Houses of Parliament just prior to President Chaim Herzog's State visit in October 1986.
- In terms of working out the hierarchy of influence, on some issues you're better off avoiding the politicians altogether, particularly Ministers, because they have notoriously short attention spans!
- Often, it's more effective to target a sensible adviser who the Minister trusts. In the case of John Howard, for example, I would often turn first to Josh Frydenberg over the period Josh served as one of the Prime Minister's senior policy advisers.

Lesson no. 3

- The third and final point I wanted to convey is that *When it comes to lobbying on issues that involve Israel, it's important not to go about it as though we are Israel's mouthpiece.*
- Where we can make a real difference, is in representing the interests of the Australian Jewish community.
- Israel has an embassy - I work closely and collaboratively with the Ambassador, often presenting a similar perspective on something, but I won't do it together with him. We have different constituencies.
- I have even, from time to time, felt the need to distance myself from a stance Israel takes that I don't want the Jewish community here to be associated with.
- For example, in February last year, I put my name to a statement issued by AIJAC expressing concern over the controversial passage of the settlements regulation bill through the Knesset.
- I have also publically criticised the Israeli Government's decision to renege on the plan for an egalitarian prayer section at the Western Wall.

- This is an issue in Australia, but it's a huge issue in the US, which has very sizeable reform and conservative communities.
- And speaking of issues in the US, maintaining bipartisan support for Israel is becoming increasingly challenging, with the Democrats' hatred of Donald Trump spilling over into the attitudes many of them express about Israel.
- For us in Australia, we've enjoyed a long period of bipartisanship in this area, really for as long as I can remember, apart from the Whitlam years.
- But there is no doubt that this is also fracturing around the edges, particularly in those western Sydney electorates I mentioned earlier.
- In my view, and my experience, we are more likely to bolster bipartisan support for Israel by emphasising the commonalities between the major parties, rather than the differences.
- If we focus too much on the differences, we run the very real risk that this emphasis can become self-fulfilling.
- The final point on the issue of how best to promote and defend Israel, and it's a point I often make to young lobbyists, is not to waste their time trying to justify settlements because they're never going to win that battle.
- I tell them to focus instead on whether or not settlements are the cause of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Because the compelling truth is that eliminating settlements wouldn't bring about peace.

Australian Jewish Community Survey

- Which brings me to the Gen 17 Australian Jewish Community Survey that I know you were keen for us to discuss this evening.

- And, really, the only point I wanted to make before we move into that discussion is this:
- Notwithstanding all that's happening in the region and around the world, Jewish Australians continue to feel a very strong connection to Israel.
- And the point I want to make is that, while our young people may be more questioning about Israel's policies and actions than previous generations - and I'm sure social media has a lot to do with that - the Jewish leadership - subject to some red lines - has to be accept this level of questioning and make space for it within the Jewish community.
- If young Jewish men and women, girls and boys, don't feel that they have a safe place within the community to express themselves and seek advice and reassurance, ultimately everything we are doing is self-defeating.