



JECO

The Jewish Ecological Coalition

JECO eNews for April 2014

Calendar

Tuesday evening April 8 - Launch of ARRCC Climate Action Kits

Jewish, Christian, Hindu and Muslim Climate Action Kits will be launched in Melbourne by Moss Cass for the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change. This is an opportunity to discuss climate change and environmental issues in the context of religion and faith. Free reservations can be made directly at:

<http://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/greenfaith-arrcc-climate-action-kit-launch-tickets-10583243767?aff=eorg>

Pesach begins Monday evening April 14 - First Seder

Continues Tuesday April 15 - Second Seder

Ends Tuesday evening April 22

Yom Hashoah begins Saturday evening April 26

Continues Sunday April 27

A message from JECO's President

Wow. Yesterday, with the release of the latest assessment by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we heard "Climate Change it's here" :(and today we find that Japanese whaling has been ruled unscientific by UN International Court of Justice :) . But as our usual eNews compiler is overseas I am taking the opportunity for an ad-hoc change of format for this one and I'm going to focus on a heart-felt reflection (as JECO's President) of what JECO is and what it might be in the future.

JECO has been operating in the Australian (primarily Melbourne) Jewish community now for over 10 years. On the one hand we seem to have achieved quite a lot in relation to our core goal of raising awareness of the need for (and Jewish requirement for) and promoting action on a more sustainable Jewish lifestyle. To take just two examples we have run or been involved in quite a few "eco-events" of various sorts, targeted specifically at the local Jewish community (including presentations at Limmud Oz) and published / distributed Shavu'a Tov, a booklet on living a more sustainable lifestyle within a Jewish context.

Yet we've never managed to get much publicity (for example, in the Australian Jewish News) and it seems that every Jew I meet, unless they already know of my involvement in JECO, says: "JECO - I've never heard of it". And while the original vision of JECO was primarily for a coalition of many Jewish organisations with a common interest in the environment (without alignment to any religious or secular section of our community) we still have only 8 organisational members (and, for technical reasons, only 6 of these pay JECO subscriptions) and we are yet to convince an orthodox organisation to join.

[I look with great admiration, dear I say envy, at overseas organisations like the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) in the USA who are a peak body of "American Jews of every denomination, from diverse organizations and differing political perspectives, (who) are united in deep concern that the quality of human life and the earth we inhabit are in danger, afflicted by rapidly increasing ecological threats". But maybe that isn't surprising, given their auspicious beginnings: "In the spring of 1992 at the invitation of Al Gore and Carl Sagan, the leadership of the major organizations in American Jewish life, eminent rabbis, denominational presidents, and Jewish U.S. senators gathered in Washington, D.C. to discuss the creation of a Jewish response to the mounting environmental crisis. Those present agreed that the Jewish community had a responsibility to address the crisis."]

We are very grateful for the individuals who have joined and financially supported JECO over the years but these numbers peaked a few years back and are now declining. I know, or know of, quite a few Jews who are concerned / committed to the environment, some in quite high profile community roles relating to their environmental beliefs, who haven't chosen to get involved in JECO. Maybe it's also worth mentioning that there have been a number of other "Jewish environmental" groups who operated in Melbourne but then "faded away". And for the last couple of years we have struggled to get enough people involved in our Committee to fill the necessary roles and do as much we'd like.

To some extent what is also "bringing things to a head" is the relatively new requirement for incorporated organisations to purchase (very expensive) Director's Liability insurance, unless their Director's are willing to risk personal liability for any legal claims. We are investigating JECO could link-up with another organisation in a way that would preserve our identity while sheltering us under the other organisation's liability cover.

What message should JECO take from all this. Have we done as much as we usefully can with this "incarnation" of local Jewish environmental concern? Would it matter that there are specifically environmental groups from many other religions if there was none representing Judaism? (There would still be Jewish representation in a number of multi-faith environment groups). Would it be too fanciful to think that the demise of JECO might even encourage the (eventual) formation of some new generation of Jewish environmental organisation (maybe more social-media based, like Get Up) that is able to do things "bigger & better" with across-the-board involvement and support from all sections of our diverse Jewish community?

Personally I'd be very reluctant to throw in the JECO towel without first some sort of attempt to bring together as many environmentally concerned Jews as possible to discuss what JECO could improve and do differently. That might set us on a new path, or if it seemed JECO had exhausted it's useful life, I'd really like to find another Jewish environmental group who we could "hand the batton" to (including our funds, our collection of Jewish / environmental books in the Lamm Jewish Library of Australia and, if possible, our entitlement as a registered environmental organisation to receive tax deductible donations).

Meanwhile, what I'd really (really) appreciate is a reply email from as many of you as possible, as brief or as long as appropriate, whatever your connection is / isn't with JECO, on your thoughts about this post and where / how you think JECO should (or should not) proceed from here!

warm regards, Tom Osborn
President, Jewish Ecological Coalition

And in "other news"

Terracycle in Aust

Terracycle is a very inspiring story. "TerraCycle is on a mission to eliminate the idea of waste. We do this by creating waste collection programs (each one is called a "Brigade") for previously non-recyclable, or difficult-to-recycle, waste. The collected waste is then converted into new products, ranging from recycled park benches to upcycled backpacks."

Australia this week became the ninth country to join the cigarette waste (butts, filters, all packaging, even ash) recycling scheme, where collected waste can be posted to the recycler free of charge. Australians are now also able to recycle Nespresso Coffee Capsules (that should make a lot of Australians sleep easier, unless they've had too many coffees of course) "Cleaner Packaging" and "Oral Care Packaging".

More: <http://www.terracycle.com.au/en-AU/>

"Bird's Head" reserve in Israel

There is a new Birdwatching Centre at Rosh Tzipor, Tel Aviv. Rosh Tzipor means "bird's head" and from a satellite image it can clearly be seen why: the reserve (in the perfect shape of a bird's head) is outlined by two rivers that flow into the Mediterranean Sea. Large-scale landscaping has begun, aiming to provide a haven for some of the millions of birds that migrate over Israel in spring and autumn. Paths will connect with the existing cycleway network, and an education and research centre will be built.

More:
<http://www.birds.org.il/en/bird-center-page.aspx?centerId=60>

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