

Australasian Union of Jewish Students (AUJS)

Jenna Bernstein, December 2015 - January 2016

The Leadership Development Programme (LDP) is an exclusive programme for AUJS's top leadership to travel to the USA, Israel and a diaspora community to explore the challenges facing the Jewish world today. This year the diaspora country was India, including Cochin and Mumbai. The aim is to expose the participants to new and interesting initiatives on topics that impact Jewish life including the social, political, cultural and religious aspects and gives them practical leadership training. This year, there were three aims to the programme. The first is to understand and develop the qualities necessary to reach the participant's full potential as a leader in the Jewish community and beyond. The main qualities identified are self-awareness, empathy, innovation, effective communication, confidence, drive, adaptability, resilience, mentorship and humanity. The second is to gain insight into the challenges that are currently facing the Jewish community (locally and abroad) in reaching our collective potential as a people. The third is to gain insight into what methods various leaders, organisations and communities are using (locally and abroad) in order to overcome these challenges and reach our collective potential.

Having never been to Israel, this trip solidified to me what it means to be Jewish. Judaism, in my eyes, is my culture and Israel is my homeland. I have never felt so connected and at home in a place. Having met so many Jewish people my age, it was easy to express and develop my Judaism by attending shule and openly standing up for Judaism. I was encouraged to explore the boundaries of Judaism and how far I want to take it, especially in regards to marrying within the Jewish community, continuing Judaism as a culture and staying connected to the community. I believe that I have developed personally by way of realising that I am very passionate about human rights and I will use my law degree to pursue this further. This trip made me stronger and the challenges that I faced improved my ability to see the bigger picture. I know have more of an understanding of the Jewish and Israeli narrative and how this translates to the rest of the world. This is clearly the premier student leadership programme in the Jewish world. It gives a very broad view of the leaders in the Jewish community and allows you to not only network and find out valuable information when you meet them, but also allows you to analyse a vast range of leadership styles and their successfulness. This programme met my expectations because I wanted to come out of it with a different perspective on life and a deeper understanding of the world, especially Israel, and I have.

I am the new AUJS Auckland President and I plan on running engaging and interesting events, as well as fun social events to join the community together. I plan, also, on instigating human rights initiatives over the year as well as Israel advocacy on campus. So far, I have had meetings with the New Zealand AUJS President on how to further my ideas throughout this year, as well as organising the Purim party and the executive retreat. At the moment (February 2016) I am planning orientation week at the University of Auckland. I am also trying to get members involved in AUJS Summer Camp and catching up with members to see what they want to get out of the year. In order to achieve this, I am going to communicate with them from day one!

I believe I will bring the skills back to my local Jewish community in the way of social events such as the Purim Party and connecting with Moishe House to grow connections and lasting relationships. I also plan on running some charity projects such as a Giving Circle as well as having speakers come in to educate people on the conflict. My passion and one of my main focuses is humanitarian aid in

places in crisis and I plan on furthering this through my place in AUJS. Furthermore, I would like to connect New Zealand more to Australia, which I am doing via developing personal relationships with people there, so as to give New Zealanders more opportunities for Israel trips and other such programmes in which we haven't had equal opportunities to Australians. I believe this is important to the continuity, livelihood and success of our community.