

SPEECH ON ADMISSION TO UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM

On behalf of Brisbane Progressive Jewish Congregation I express my grateful thanks to the UPJ for the decision made today. It is the culmination of two years' hard work by a team of dedicated people in our congregation. I want to acknowledge the presence of two key members of that team here today – Fiona and Scott Leonard.

Brisbane Progressive Jewish Congregation is Australia's fastest growing Progressive Jewish congregation, having doubled in size over the past 12 months. We have been very active during this time, with a host of religious, educational and social activities, a Shaliach and Netzer visit and the inauguration of our first Minister, Cantor David Bentley, who is currently in Israel.

We look forward to welcoming back Steve Denenberg for our second birthday celebrations next February, when we will announce our Building Fund.

I want to acknowledge a number of people and organizations whose support and encouragement have helped make our affiliation today, indeed our very existence, possible: Rabbi Uri Thernal for showing us patience and consideration; Janice Alper for her planning and resourcing advice; John Schinasi, Kate and Herb Lesser, Jan Marriott and Sara Longmuir of the friendly and welcoming sister congregation on the Gold Coast; Rabbis Richard Lampert and Paul Jacobson our helpful mentors and advisors; the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation, an Orthodox congregation, who lent us a Torah scroll for nine months; Penny Jakobovits our wise and patient mentor; Emanuel Synagogue Sydney and our World of Prayer donors who provided us with siddurim; Temple Sinai, Wellington and other congregations for your understanding and assistance; and to the Moetzah, for your endless patience and perception.

Finally, our deep gratitude to outgoing President Phyllis Dorey, whose care, concern and judgment shielded us from the elements and nurtured us as we grew from seed to seedling. Thank you, one and all.

The sage Rabbi Tarfon who said "ours is not to finish the task, but nor must we desist from its undertaking" described our situation in Brisbane. Brisbane Progressive Jewish Congregation's Vision is "A vibrant and enduring focus for Progressive Jewish life and thought in Brisbane". We have taken a few faltering steps along the path to our Vision. Today marks an important milestone for us. It is, of course, just the beginning of the beginning but, as we return to Brisbane, we travel back with the knowledge that *Yachad kol haderech*, we'll be together all the way.

Tony Leverton
President
Brisbane Progressive Jewish Congregation Inc.