

Is it time to promote Monash?

SHANE DESIATNIK

A NATIONAL campaign for the posthumous promotion of General Sir John Monash to the highest Australian military rank of Field Marshal, by Remembrance Day 2018, gathered momentum in Sydney last week.

The Saluting Monash Council (SMC) held its NSW launch at Parliament House on March 8, framing the campaign as “righting a wrong”.

It was given extra zest by an impressive guest speaker list that included Monash’s great-grandson Michael Bennett, author and journalist Peter FitzSimons and several politicians.

SMC national chairman Tim Fischer said via video link: “It’s never too late to correct a wrong,” adding that after WWI, prime minister Billy Hughes had frozen Monash’s rank “very unfairly”.

“Monash was discriminated against on several counts, being the son of Prussian migrants, being Jewish ... he was neither Duntroon nor Sandhurst [trained] and that was resented ... [war historian Charles] Bean said he was too old.

“Well, enough is enough.”

Victorian Senator Bridget McKenzie said of Monash, “The things that held that rank back from him – being ageism, being anti-Semitism, being elitism – have no place in modern Australia”.

FitzSimons, who is writing a book called *The Monash Masterpiece: The*



From left: Major Ross Aitken, federal Senator Bridget McKenzie and Michael Bennett at the NSW launch of the Saluting Monash Council.

Photo: Shane Desiatnik

Battle of Le Hamel, commended SMC for its timely campaign.

“For me, the essence of what Monash was about was that he didn’t come out of the class system, he was of the people and he treasured the lives of his men,” FitzSimons said.

“And also the fact that he totally revolutionised the way of warfare.

“In the Battle of Le Hamel, instead of doing it the way of Fromelles – which was to just send wave after wave of soldiers and have them cut to pieces – Monash planned it as an engineer, as a man with three degrees.

“He had planes come in very low, then tanks were moved forward, and the infantry was working in tandem behind.

“That model was then adopted

for the rest of the war, and it saved countless lives.”

Matt Thistlethwaite MP said Monash was “instrumental in transforming British and Allied views of the Australian soldier”.

Bennett said he feels very pleased to see the growing interest in Monash’s legacy.

“Monash was seen as a leader in the Jewish community, particularly on his return from the war,” Bennett told *The AJN*.

“And although he was quite secular, I know he was very proud of his origins.”

For more information about SMC’s campaign, visit www.monash4fieldmarshal.org.au.

Royal Commission to return next week

JOSHUA LEVI

MORE than two years after the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse examined Yeshivah Melbourne and Yeshiva Bondi’s conduct, the commission will hold hearings again next week.

The purpose of the new hearing, case 53, is to inquire about the current policies and procedures of Yeshivah Melbourne and Yeshiva Bondi in relation to child protection and child-safe standards, including responding to allegations of child sexual abuse.

It will also discuss the factors that may have contributed to the occurrence of child sexual abuse, the institutional response and, importantly, how the two organisations have responded to the previous Royal Commission case study and its reports.

Several victims have criticised how the two organisations responded to the last Royal Commission report.

One victim, who wrote to *The AJN* this week, criticised Yeshiva Bondi for its failure to provide a redress scheme to victims.

“Past actions of the Yeshiva Bondi in regard to their conduct towards survivors of child sex abuse and their dealing with the survivors perpetrators has been

highly questionable, as was heard in the public hearings in February of 2015, as well as what was written in the Commission’s report released in October 2016,” the victim said.

“As of today the Yeshiva Centre of Sydney has not adequately acknowledged their past mistakes by setting up a redress scheme to offer compensation to the survivors of child sex abuse that occurred under the institution’s roof.”

Referring to the centre’s \$3 million upgrade, reported in last week’s *AJN*, the victim wrote, “A large and beautiful building provides a healthy environment to study in, but if there are no safety measures in place the building becomes dangerous.”

Urging Yeshiva to recognise its historic errors, he added, “Without proper acknowledgement to past mistakes do you believe the Yeshiva Centre can properly provide safety to children in the beautiful building, even with policies in place?”

In regards to Yeshivah Melbourne, victims have criticised the organisation for appointing Rabbi Chaim Tzvi Groner, a former trustee, to all boards. They also claim that although policies are changing, the culture is not.

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