

MEDIA RELEASE

UNDER STRICT EMBARGO: Saturday 12 September 2026, 1pm

As some Australian Jews question whether they can stay in Australia, one community is investing in the future

New Jewish cultural centre announced as Jewish Australians confront questions of safety, belonging and their future in Australia

MELBOURNE, September 2026 — Just weeks after the conclusion of the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion's public hearings, Melbourne Jewish community Shtiebel has announced a significant investment in the future of Jewish life in Australia.

At a time when some Jewish Australians are seriously questioning whether their future, and that of their children, lies in Australia, Rabbi Gersh Lazarow, Founder and Executive Director of Shtiebel, acknowledged the community's fears while also saying it is a moment to invest in Jewish Australian life.

"Our focus on safety and security must be balanced by an equally determined focus on Jewish life," Rabbi Lazarow told the community during Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) celebrations. "We need to invest in more learning, more culture, more creativity, more community and more opportunities to live Judaism proudly, joyfully and without apology".

Shtiebel has purchased 281 Hawthorn Road, Caulfield South, which will become its permanent home and the future Shtiebel Cultural Centre, a new centre for Jewish culture, learning, creativity and community.

Rabbi Lazarow said the Jewish New Year offered an opportunity to move the conversation from the trauma of the previous few years to what the community chooses to do next.

For Shtiebel, purchasing a permanent home is one answer to that question.

"The question became whether we would continue with the status quo, waiting for the world to become calmer and the future more certain, or whether this was precisely the moment to take everything we have learned and build towards what comes next."



INVESTING IN JEWISH LIFE

The Shtiebel Cultural Centre is envisioned as more than a synagogue or community facility. It will be a multidisciplinary home for Jewish life, bringing together learning and literature, music and art, food and film, performance and conversation, festivals and celebrations, alongside prayer, Torah and lifecycle experiences.

“We are not simply buying ourselves a bigger Shtiebel and we are certainly not setting out to build another synagogue,” Rabbi Lazarow said. “What we have the opportunity to create is a genuinely different kind of Jewish home for Melbourne.”

The Centre will provide a permanent home for Shtiebel’s library and create spaces for writers, artists, musicians, educators, children and families, community organisations and cultural partners.

It is also being designed to reach beyond those already deeply connected to organised Jewish life.

“I want somebody who would never think to walk into a synagogue to walk into an exhibition, a concert, a lecture, a film, a meal or simply for coffee, and somewhere along the way discover that Jewish community might belong to them too.”

The property is currently owned by the Jewish Labour Bund and has a longstanding history as a home for Jewish communal and cultural life. Shtiebel will settle on the property on 1 February 2027, before beginning its transformation into the new Cultural Centre. The Bund will separately make an announcement about its new home in due course.

For Rabbi Lazarow, investing in a permanent Jewish home at this particular moment is itself part of the message.

“After a year in which so much of the conversation about Jewish life has been about what threatens us, I want us to talk about what inspires us,” he said. “When so much energy is being directed towards protecting Jewish life, as it absolutely must be, we also need to invest in actually living it.”

At the conclusion of the Rosh Hashanah service, everyone in attendance was given a seed ball filled with native flower seeds, an invitation for each person to play their part, large or small, in planting the seeds of a bright and vibrant future.

As Rabbi Lazarow told the community:

“We have bought the property. Now we will build the future.”

MEDIA CONTACT

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To learn more about Shtiebel and this project, visit www.shtiebel.org.au/seedingthefuture