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Dynamic Robyn Lenn flies the flag for women all over the world



One of the most impressive Jewish women leaders to have visited South Africa in recent times is Australian Robyn Lenn, who is in the country this week.

by MARGOT COHEN | Mar 30, 2016

Pictured: Robyn Lenn, president of the International Council of Jewish Women, currently on a visit to South Africa.

She was officially installed as the new president of the International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW) in Prague, Czech Republic, in May 2014.

ICJW, founded more than 100 years ago, represents Jewish women and organisations in 42 countries around the world. Lenn is the first Australian president of the ICJW since Dr Fanny Reading, who was a vice-president in 1949.

Lenn, a dynamic personality, mentioned in passing that she had visited 16 affiliates of her organisation in countries as far afield as Mexico, Sweden, Cuba, Canada, Bulgaria and Slovakia. During the course of this year she plans to visit Panama, Columbia, Poland, Russia and Spain.

She intends increasing the organisation's focus on the portrayal of women in the media and on the role of women in the environment and sustainable development. "We also intend to give a big push on work against sexual objectification of women," she explained to Jewish Report.

ICJW's longstanding commitment is to achieve gender equality, upgrading women's rights and enabling women's empowerment for all women around the world.

Lenn was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia and has appeared in Who's Who of Australian Women since 2006. She served as national president of the National Council of Jewish Women from 2003 - 2007 and has held many positions in the organisation, including that of national chairman of the Interfaith/Intercultural portfolio.

One of the issues which Lenn has prioritised is the issue of a get (divorce document), the refusal by men to grant it and helping agunot (chained wives).

"I see women as important co-contributors to every aspect of the modern world. I aim to build better relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish organisations and communities," she says.

ICJW representatives are at this moment meeting with fellow NGO members, setting up meetings on relevant issues. These gatherings are taking place in New York this week. The topics are: Women in politics - successes and failure and challenges - jointly with Albania, Israel, and World Jewish Council; and Save our Girls, sexualisation, exploitation and the media.

“I have a particular interest and wish to see action from ICJW affiliates in their communities,” says Lenn.

Lenn, who is very approachable, waxes lyrical about her passion: chamber music. She holds a Bachelor of Music degree, is a graduate of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and has two Licentiates in piano. She is currently a piano examiner for the Australian Music Examination Board

“I also love the theatre and visiting art galleries on my travels. In particular, I enjoy 19th and 20th century art,” she adds.

Lenn lives in Sydney. Her husband Phillip, an engineer, passed away two months ago. The couple have four children and seven grandchildren. Lenn is one of four musical sisters and a fourth generation Australian.