

Netanya AACI AGM 2025 – Chairman’s Report

May 19th, 2026

Good evening and welcome to everyone. Also welcome to Deana Fine and David London from National AACI and to Giad from Kleiner. I will now pass the microphone to Deana to say a few words.

As many of you are aware, I usually like to speak without notes. However, this is a detailed report therefore please bear with me as I read it to you.

At Netanya AACI we aim to be the community centre for all English speakers. We provide a welcome to newcomers and help our members cope with life in Israel and all that it entails. We strive to create a place where no matter how long our members have been in the country they will always feel at home and find activities that interest them. In addition, we reach out to the greater community and contribute where we can. Netanya AACI is the brand name for Beit Oleh America and Canada in Netanya. We are loosely affiliated to National AACI but operate as two separate organisations. Our active membership is about 1,200 members with our membership book showing upwards of 2,000 members.

Please note that the financial reports that will be presented at this meeting are for the calendar year 2025. I do not intend to give any figures in this report, as was usually done, as I do not think that it really adds value. The financial side of the organisation is the responsibility of our Treasurer, Laurence Seeff, and he will present all the relevant income and expense figures for the year. While mentioning Laurence, he has completed his first year as Treasurer of the organisation, and he has proved to be an excellent choice. He has added considerable value to the role, and in Administrative and Management meetings, he has provided clear and concise reports and provided very good

ideas for improvement in the financial processes. He has worked very well with our Financial Secretary, Michael Goldberg, and they have established a strong financial team.

2025 was another difficult year, with the continuation of the war against Hamas and Hezbollah, and Iran in June of last year, and people continued to be wary of coming out to events. As we have seen in the first part of 2026, with further operations against Iran, and the very fragile ceasefires with Hamas and Hezbollah, many of the events of the organisation, particularly the evening events, have had to be postponed, resulting in much reduced income in March and April. We have now restarted the evening events, so hopefully things will generally pick up going forward. Nevertheless, 2025 proved to be a better year financially than 2024, and I am pleased that the loss in 2024 has not been repeated. Laurence will go through the 2025 annual accounts after my report.

Despite the situation in Israel, we have again seen a rise in the number of olim – our klitah team welcomes every newcomer that we know about to our area. This demonstrates the resilience of the Jewish people and how we wish to conduct our lives. Many new olim have moved to south Netanya and Ir Yamim/Poleg which has posed many challenges for us as an organization. We spend time with many potential olim who are visiting and follow up on numerous Aliyah related emails. Following previous feedback and assessment we worked hard to make Netanya AACI more welcoming. We continue to improve the assistance we offer to newcomers. Our counsellor is Yanina Musnikow, who is a key and essential person in our organisation. I have worked with Yanina for over 18 years and she has always provided excellent advice.

Every new oleh has a free initial session with Yanina. In addition to advising new olim on how to navigate through official bureaucracy and ensure a smooth Aliyah, Yanina also helps our vatic members on the many issues they face living in Israel as well as bereavement

issues. Even after all my time in Israel, I still have occasion from time to time to ask Yanina for advice. She provides an annual Living in Israel series of information programmes covering Senior rights and benefits, Bituach Leumi, Domestic care, and the Israeli Health Care System.

We moved the production of our magazine to a bi-monthly schedule in 2025, as we felt that this would not only save money, but provide better information and potential planning for our members. The advertising department works very hard to sell as many adverts as possible despite an ongoing shortage of volunteers. Melissa Dubinsky continues to have a significant role and has together with select volunteers continued to preserve the high level of quality that we have all come to enjoy. The Newsletter more than covers its costs. This is due to income generated by advertisers and the effort of our dedicated group of volunteers who collate, and hand deliver each edition to areas in the city where we have volunteers to deliver. The remainder of the magazines are posted. I must also commend Yvette Factor, who receives copy for each edition of the Newsletter, for all her efforts, and Dalya Hazani, who spends an inordinate amount of time setting up the document in Word, and frequently having to change the pages, before it is ready for proofreading. Our eNews is sent out weekly with reminders about our programmes, activities, and topical news and I would like to thank Melissa for all her efforts in compiling the eNews. By issuing the eNews on a weekly basis, we are able to add in events which we receive at short notice. To mention just one, which stands out in my mind, we had the opportunity to have Natasha Hausdorff, a prominent international lawyer working in the UK, speak to us when she came to Israel last year. We had one week to advertise this event, also in our organisation WhatsApp group, and we had 160 people attending, which astonished our management team.

Every year we run a campaign. The success of this varies and in 2025 it was very successful and definitely helped in a major way to sustain

the organisation. I would like to thank Natalie Green for stepping into the breach to coordinate this effort when we were very short of people willing to do this task. Just to note that our campaign for this year will be commencing in a few months and, with the lack of sufficient income for two months, as I mentioned earlier, once again your contribution to this effort will once again be vital for us.

In 2025 we applied again for support from the Netanya municipality, which we receive in recognition of the support and help we provide to the English-speaking community in Netanya and the work we do in the greater community. The local council also found that their budget was stretched, as we received a reduced amount of income from the Iriya.

Our Bazaars in the year were very successful, and I need to commend Yael Rahum and her whole team of volunteers for their efforts in setting up all the stalls and then being in the Hall to sell the various items.

Our Management Committee, which is effectively our Board of Directors, meets monthly and consists of the elected officers and other appointed members. Our Administrative committee, made up of officers, meets twice a month. This group of people contributes a remarkable amount of time and energy to make sure that our organisation runs well. I will return to this team shortly.

The Scholarship Committee administers funds left in trust and awards scholarships to students from deserving AACI family members. The scholarship fund is made up of a few different endowments, which are divided into scholarships for first degrees for academic students and a fund which helps disadvantaged children.

The Gura Family Memorial Library is a major attraction for our members. We continue to offer book delivery throughout the year. The mobile library continues to be a service that caters to household members or those who are unable to access our premises. The Library is really a key and vital service provided by Netanya AACI. There are

many members who for one reason or another are unable to frequent the organisation for lectures etc, and for these members the Library is their raison d'être for their membership. I would like to thank Melissa for very successfully leading the Library.

Our English tutoring project, contributing to the Netanya community at large, is continuing to be very successful, and this has been achieved by the enormous efforts of Renee Rosenberg and Judy Shafarman.

We have a team of volunteers available to provide guidance to our members, translations and help with navigating medical results which are available weekly by appointment.

Our offices run the local community diary in conjunction with all the English-speaking organizations in Netanya, and this is now maintained by Dalya, which is a very effective approach, as Dalya maintains the Netanya AACI calendar and diary, therefore everything is in synchronisation and it helps avoid double bookings. The community calendar can be viewed on our website.

I now need to mention the website, which is very effectively maintained and updated by Melissa. This is one of the main reference points for our organisation, and links to the events and chugim in our website are provided in the eNews, which I mentioned earlier. This takes some considerable time, and I thank Melissa very much for all her efforts.

Our tiyulim offer members the opportunity to get an in-depth look at different parts of the country. When planning these programs, we stay away from the main tourist spots, aiming to introduce members to the cultures, history, geography of the lesser-known corners of our land. Some tiyulim are fully guided, others visit specific sites. Some of our tiyulim had to be postponed in 2025, due to the situation in the country, and we have not been able to offer any as yet this year either.

We had a very successful set of lectures throughout the year, arranged by our Lectures committee, led by Donna Patkin. Also, a number of food and other events, run by our Events committee, led by Diane Jesurun, who is passing the baton to Debbie Schuman and Pauline Newman for 2026. There are also the musical Café Netanya events, led by Ari Gerber and Harley Zipori, and also Harley's Folk Club events. All these three committees operate very well and put on excellent events and concerts.

We held all our traditional programs: a Rosh Hashana L'Chaim with volunteer award ceremony and the Annual Memorial Service between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – a very moving event, with our good friend Rabbi David Woolf as the leader – he always gives an excellent Dvar Torah. Towards the end of the year, we held our annual newcomers' get-together.

Our social programmes continue to shine, and we are always grateful for those volunteers that run them. Social programs range from drama (which is currently not operating due to health issues), choir (unfortunately also suspended at present), chess, writers' aerobics, poetry please, book talk, art class, fishing, to all the various exercise classes, pilates, balance exercises, Zumba and exercises for women – wow, what a lot of programmes. We also held events for Yom HaAtzmaut and the Fourth of July. A lot of our activities and chugim are run by volunteers, and in addition to providing a tremendous depth to our organization, and stimulation to our community, they also generate worthwhile income.

We continue to display photo and art exhibits throughout the year which all have been a tremendous success.

We rent out our premises to the Filipino and Indian communities for prayer meetings two or three times each month.

On an administrative level the offices at Netanya AACI run thanks to the many volunteers who come in regularly to do their day's work in

our administration, be it answering the phone on the front desk, handling membership matters, giving out library books, helping to keep tabs on the flow of monies, making receipts, putting out the coffee or taking bookings for programmes and activities. Then there are our behind-the-scenes volunteers doing tasks like working on Zoom, editing, keeping the website up to date, making calls, planning, and attending meetings. The spirit of volunteerism keeps our organisation thriving. So many of our volunteers dedicate their time and positive energy to our organization. It is really heartwarming that many of our members choose in their aliya and retirement to find ways to contribute to our community. I must mention the departments behind all these volunteers. Membership is led by Norman Kotler, Box Office by Denise Ben Zaken, Cash Desk by Natalie Green, Rivchit by Fran Golan, Front Desk by Melanie Danan, Newsletter by Yvette Factor, Library by Melissa Dubinsky. The volunteers who work daily in these departments are a credit to the organisation. I also want to mention Yael Rahum. She is our volunteer coordinator, and she also helps run the bazaar, frequently being at the door for evening events, coordinating the Drama group with Larry Hepner, and generally being a really gracious person.

Zvi Moravnik is our maintenance employee, and he is always here when needed, putting out tables and chairs and putting them away afterwards, operating our technical equipment, and various other tasks that he finds to carry out. Unfortunately, he had an accident last year which put him out of action for several months. However, he is now back in the office, and he says that he is fitter than ever.

I came in as Chairman at the last elections in May 2024. The previous co-chairs, Melissa Dubinsky and Paulette Woolf, timed out having completed a very successful four years in a challenging period, as it covered the Covid pandemic, which created many difficult times over a two-year period. They oversaw the major refurbishment of this Hall

during their leadership. They both deserve a great deal of gratitude from the entire membership. A round of applause is warranted.

I brought in a powerful Administrative team including Therese Berkowitz, Melissa Dubinsky and Natalie Green as vice chairs, Brian Bank and Michael Goldberg as our financial team, Norman Kotler as our legal eagle and Sharon Weiss as our recording Secretary. They all provided excellent advice and opinions. As mentioned already, Laurence Seef took over from Brian Bank as our Treasurer in 2025.

We are now in another election year, to elect the officers for the next two years, through to mid 2028. Natalie Green is retiring as a vice chair and we thank her for all her hard work and advice, and indeed for the last 18 years. As a previous Chairperson, she is entitled to attend Management meetings in perpetuity, and I look forward to her continuing advice and help. Natalie will also be continuing with her volunteer work. Retirement only comes slowly! I am pleased that Ari Gerber and Donna Patkin have agreed to become vice chairs, with Melissa and Therese carrying on to provide continuity. I am standing as Chairman for the next two years, and I am sure that I will receive the full support of the Admin team as well as the Management team.

Our Management team comprises all the officers and department heads, together with a number of other volunteers who do not have a specific role on the team but have been invited to sit on Management due to their experience and being able to give useful advice. Ivor Carr, who has been on the team for several years, is retiring from the committee and we thank him for all his hard work – he will, of course, be continuing with his volunteer work. We have one new member joining the Management team, Stephen Shaffer, and we wish him every success in this new role in the organisation.

At this point, I must mention our Administrative Assistant, Dalya Hazani. She has now worked in the organisation for almost four and a half years and has grown in stature during this period, especially after

we dispensed with the Director position, and she has, like the department heads whom I mentioned before, stepped up her own performance to become the key person to whom everyone in the office turns if they have any queries or problems. She is also my key liaison person in the office, and I work very closely with her regarding all sorts of items, issues and problems, and she is a pleasure to work with, and her efforts very much appreciated.

As can be seen from my presentation, it takes a lot of hard work to provide all the services and programs that we do. We have a strong base, wonderful volunteers, and an essential role to play as the leading community centre for English speakers in Netanya, and we look forward to continued success in the future.

Thank you for listening to my report.

Hilton Share

Chairman