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Gandel Survey Finds a Quarter of Australians Don't Know About the Holocaust and Even Less About Australia's Holocaust Connections – But Two Thirds Support Compulsory Holocaust Education in Schools

As countries around the world commemorate **International Holocaust Remembrance Day** on **27 January**, Australia's first **national survey of Holocaust knowledge and awareness** has found that:

- Almost a quarter (24%) of the population aged 18 years or older has little to no knowledge of the Holocaust, with that number rising to 30% among the Millennials;
- Over 70% know nothing about Australia's own connections to the Holocaust;
- However, there is overwhelming agreement among Australians (88%) that "we can learn lessons for today from what happened in the Holocaust";
- 78% of Australians believe that Holocaust museums and memorials are valuable; and
- Two-thirds (66%) believe it should be compulsory for schools to teach about the Holocaust in schools.

Commissioned by the [Gandel Foundation](#), one of Australia's largest independent family philanthropic funds, the **Gandel Holocaust Knowledge and Awareness in Australia Survey** was undertaken by a team of researchers at **Deakin University** and was broadly based on similar research in the USA, Canada, the UK, France and Austria.

The survey was conducted in September 2021 and followed by the analysis of the findings. There were more than 70 questions posed in the survey with 3,522 responses from Australian adults across all states and territories, making it the largest survey of its type ever undertaken. The sample matches key demographic parameters of the Australian population including age, gender, education, geographic location.

A key **objective of the Gandel Survey was to understand not just how much Australians know factually about the Holocaust, but also how aware they are of the catastrophe and its impact**. This was considered to be "Holocaust awareness" or acknowledging the true scale of the Holocaust and caring about Holocaust education.

While a number of findings are largely positive, there were still some critical gaps identified. **Overall, Australians of all ages showed comparatively high levels of Holocaust knowledge**, with almost 70% correctly identifying that the Holocaust refers to the genocide of Jews, while 80% knew that Holocaust happened between 1933 to 1945, and just over half (54%) correctly identifying that the number of Jews murdered was approximately 6 million. **Respondents also registered low levels of Holocaust denial and overt antisemitism.**

However, still **one quarter of Australians and nearly a third of Millennials had little or no knowledge of the Holocaust**. Only 25% of Australians have visited a Holocaust museum in Australia or overseas, and 81% have never heard an in-person talk or lecture from a Holocaust survivor.

In addition, while Australia is home to arguably the largest number of Holocaust survivors per capita outside Israel, **our own connections to the Holocaust remain largely unknown** and there are inconsistent approaches to teaching the Holocaust in schools across the nation. More than 80% of Australians had no knowledge of Holocaust-related events such as the protest by Indigenous leader and human rights activist [William Cooper](#)

against the Nazis' Kristallnacht in 1938 and Australia's stand at the [Evian Conference](#) - a pre-war meeting to decide what to do about Jews displaced by the Nazis - where Australia was one of several countries that refused to offer refuge. Similarly, just 17% of Australians knew about the internment in 1940 of so called 'enemy aliens', brought here on the British ship, [HMT Dunera](#). Many were European Jewish refugees and many went on to make vital contributions to Australian arts, science and culture.

The Gandel survey found that higher levels of knowledge about the Holocaust are associated with undertaking specific school courses or visiting museums, rather than general levels of education. There is widespread support for Holocaust education in schools and via museums, with almost 80% of Australians valuing Holocaust memorials and museums, and nearly 70% supporting compulsory Holocaust education in schools.

Notably, the survey also found that, on average, those with comparatively higher level of Holocaust awareness had warmer feelings towards minority or disadvantaged groups. Holocaust awareness is associated with warmer feelings towards Jews and other religious minorities, including Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists and is also associated with warmer feelings towards asylum seekers and Australia's First Nations peoples. The message is clear – better Holocaust knowledge and awareness can lead to a more caring and cohesive society.

The research team made eight recommendations in the report, including the call for the introduction of a consistent approach to Holocaust studies in schools across Australia with proper and accredited teacher training; the need for resources that explore Australia's Holocaust connections; the development of strategies to drive engagement with Holocaust museums; challenging antisemitic stereotypes through educational programs, enabling students to hear Holocaust survivor testimonies, ongoing research and more.

Members of the Deakin University research team Associate Professor Steven Cooke, Dr Donna-Lee Frieze, Professor Andrew Singleton and Dr Matteo Vergani believe there are important lessons to be learned from the Gandel Holocaust Survey.

"Not many people know about Australia's hard-line attitude towards Jewish refugees before the Second World War," says Dr Cooke. "How does knowing that history help us to, for instance, reflect on our attitudes towards asylum seekers today?"

Dr Frieze says, "People tend to see the Holocaust as a tragic European event that happened far away. If we can illuminate Australia's connections to the Holocaust, both good and bad, it will help enhance our knowledge and understanding of genocide more generally."

Chairman of Gandel Foundation, John Gandel AC says, "The Holocaust holds an enduring relevance for the world today. We are committed to preserving the memory of the Holocaust and to helping future generations learn about the need to protect and uphold human rights, so they can become a force for good in this world. Findings and recommendations from this kind of research can help us to achieve that goal."

Holocaust survivor and member of the GHKAS Advisory Group, Nina Bassat AM was born in Lwow, Poland in April 1939, before WWII began. Her father was taken away by Ukrainian militia on Petlura Day, twenty-five days after the Germans entered her home city in 1941 and never seen again. She and her mother were interned in the Lwow Ghetto for 18 months and then hidden for the remainder of the war by a Ukrainian family who passed her off as a niece, while her mother remained inside the house, only going out at night.

Nina Bassat says, "The fact that my father was murdered by Ukrainian people but that we were then saved by Ukrainian people has taught me not to hate. I am keenly aware of the need for Holocaust commemoration and education. The human rights lessons which can be learnt from that horrific period can be a profound source of inspiration, particularly to the younger generation. We must all work together to help Australians learn about the Holocaust in schools and museums and share the messages and lessons of hope, courage and humanity to ensure a better future for all".

CEO of the Gandel Foundation, Vedran Drakulic OAM says, "A lot has been achieved in recent times to strengthen Holocaust education, most notably the Federal government's significant funding to redevelop

existing and build new Holocaust museums and centres in all Australian capital cities, and the Victorian government's introduction of mandatory Holocaust education in Years 9 and 10, combined with the development of teacher tools and resources and proper, structured teacher training."

"But much work still remains to be done. While this survey shows that Australians on average know a fair bit about the Holocaust, there are still critical gaps in that knowledge and awareness, including among the younger generation. The Gandel family is committed to continue their decades-long support for the development of Holocaust education across Australia to help build a more compassionate, cohesive and humane society. We hope that other key decision-makers and stakeholders will take note of this research, carefully examine the recommendations and look at ways to continue building on these solid foundations."

Researchers utilised the ANU's Social Research Centre for data collection, using their Life in Australia™ online probability panel, and were also supported by the Advisory Group comprising a Holocaust survivor and representatives from Yad Vashem, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Sydney Jewish Museum, Melbourne Holocaust Museum, Executive Council of Australian Jewry, Gandel Foundation and a teacher who is an alum of the Gandel Holocaust Studies Program for Australian Educators.

The researchers would like to see the survey repeated in five and then 10 years to enable them to evaluate and compare the impact of Holocaust education on Holocaust knowledge and awareness – and on community attitudes. .../ENDS

ABOUT GANDEL FOUNDATION

Gandel Foundation is one of Australia's largest independent private family philanthropic funds. It has been the vehicle for charitable giving by the extended Gandel family since its formation as the Gandel Charitable Foundation back in 1978.

John Gandel AC and Pauline Gandel AC are actively engaged in their philanthropic initiatives and they are universally recognised for their generosity, commitment and passion in supporting both Jewish and general causes. Through Gandel Foundation, over the years they invested over \$150 million dollars in the community, supporting various charitable causes in Australia and overseas.

John and Pauline have been supporting Holocaust education in Australia for many years, most notably through the award-winning Gandel Holocaust Studies Program for Australian Educators, a year-long professional development program delivered in partnership with the International School for Holocaust Studies at the Yad Vashem World Holocaust Memorial Centre in Jerusalem, Israel. Over the years, through Gandel Foundation they also supported other Holocaust teacher training programs; Holocaust exhibitions (such as the Anne Frank Travelling exhibition); Holocaust education programs (such as the Hide & Seek program); Holocaust museums and centres (in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide); convening and knowledge-sharing initiatives (such as the Gandel Holocaust Education Conference); and awareness and recognition of Holocaust education practitioners (such as the Gandel Award for Excellence in Holocaust education).

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