

# *Impact Report*

January 2022 – December 2022





We have welcomed our miracle baby boy and we wanted to extend our sincere gratitude for the help that AJFN provided. With your help we have been blessed with the most precious gift, a new life and our dream come true - thank you, thank you, thank you.” Parents of an AJFN miracle baby boy



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## Chief Executive Officer's Message

The publication of this Impact Report marks almost 8 months since I commenced as CEO of AJFN.

Joining an incredible team of dedicated professionals, an inspired and inspiring board and an army of passionate volunteers, I feel privileged to have stepped into this role and to be contributing to the important work of ensuring that no Jewish Australian feels alone on their fertility journey. The AJFN is lucky to have such a solid foundation built by its founder and past Executive Director, Shterny Dadon, and every person who has contributed so significantly to its development and growth. We will be forever grateful to those who worked tirelessly to build such an incredible organisation.

**What does infertility mean to YOU?** At the Australian Jewish Fertility Network we know that every person who experiences infertility has a unique experience, that there is no one size fits all. What unites us all is that we are part of a community and as such we can lean on each other in order to ensure that no one walking this path feels alone.

The foundational value of AJFN is compassion. In Latin, the two words that make up the noun compassion are *com* meaning 'with' and *pati* meaning 'to suffer'. Literally, when you feel compassion you are 'suffering **with**' someone and you simply cannot experience this unless you have a relationship with another person.

The Hebrew word for compassion is *rachamim*. It is a word we most often associate with the Divine and it finds its roots in another Hebrew word ... *rechem* which means 'womb'. Why the connection between compassion and a womb? Because there is no closer bond than that between a mother and her unborn child and no greater suffering than that of a family desperate to know that bond. Recognising the importance of Jewish values in our work, we have expanded our strategic vision to ensure that it rests firmly on these foundational values.



While we dream big at AJFN, we know that none of our dreams and aspirations can be realised without the support of the community, without each of you. We have great things planned for 2023 and we are specifically excited to be supporting more people over the coming 12 months.

**Justine Saidman**  
Chief Executive Officer



## Chair's Report

We all know the African proverb “it takes a village to raise a child” ... but here at the AJFN we know it often takes a village to create that child.

You are all part of this very special AJFN village, and with 1 in 17 children born in Australia today as a result of assisted reproductive technology, we know that infertility really does touch so many of us.

AJFN is not defined by the services or programs it delivers (although we supported a record number of people through these in the past year). It is defined by its people and the collective care and journeys that have been woven together to create this remarkable community that we are all privileged to be part of.

At the AJFN, 2022 was a year of change and growth. One of my favourite sayings helped steer our course this year; “Be like a flower. Survive the rain, but use it to grow”. 2022 saw AJFN re-emerging from Covid, in a transition phase from the leadership of our Founder, Shterny Dadon, who was at the helm for 15 years, into a new chapter. It saw us facing an over 300% increase in demand for our services and support, but it also presented us with unique opportunities to reconnect in person with our village, as well as offered innovative ways to educate and advocate in the fertility space.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to AJFN over the past 16 years. Shterny for her vision and determination to create this beautiful organisation in the first place; Loren Finger for stepping up to help propel AJFN forward into its next phase of growth; Justine for her inspiring leadership as our first full time CEO through this fast growing next chapter together with a small but mighty team of professionals (Robbie Clifford, Danielle Salomon and Rebecca Abraham) and an incredible army of volunteers; our AJFN families who bravely share their stories with us; and for the support of my fellow board members with whom it has been an absolute pleasure to steward this very special organisation.



A huge thank you to all of our donors and partners for working together with us to deliver our strategic vision: a world where no Jewish Australian should ever feel alone on their fertility journey. We are so grateful for the trust you place in us.

Thank you for being part of our special AJFN village. We are only able to dream big because of you. Our next phase of growth focuses on continuing to meet the growing needs of our community, and as part of our 2025 Strategic Plan AJFN plans to expand nationally (first up, Melbourne in 2023) and continue to broaden our support, service, education and advocacy offerings.

I look forward to the magic we can create together in the year ahead.

**Kerry Gonski**

AJFN Board Chair & Director





“Experiencing fertility issues is such a difficult and isolating process but the generosity of the AJFN made it that much easier. Our dreams of having a family became a reality thanks to your ongoing support”

Parents of twin AJFN miracle babies



## ***Our Vision***

AJFN believes that no Jewish Australian should ever feel alone on their fertility journey. They deserve to have the support they need to try to build the next generation.

## ***Our Mission***

For those Jewish Australians and their families struggling to achieve their dreams of having a baby, the AJFN is a beacon of hope, offering financial and emotional support, as well as educational resources, and encouraging open and honest conversations about infertility within the community.

## Our values

As a Jewish organisation, the AJFN is guided by Jewish values and tradition, which support our brand values. At the heart of AJFN's work is the importance of Jewish continuity; a value we hold dearly in our role of being part of building the Australian Jewish Community.



AJFN Brand Value	Jewish Value - English	Jewish Value - Hebrew	
<b>Brave</b> - we will push boundaries, we will relentlessly challenge the status quo and never give up.	<b>Courage</b> - the strength of the heart. We aren't afraid of doing what needs to be done even when it is complex and challenging.	Ometz Lev	אמץ לב
<b>Genuine Care</b> - we are accessible, nurturing and dependable. Together we are all part of the AJFN family. Whether you are a supporter or receiving our support, we always have your best interests at our core.	<b>Courage</b> - we care about others in a deep way based on the idea of loving your neighbour as yourself.  <b>Loving kindness</b> - we actively seek opportunities to engage with others in a caring manner.	Rachamim	רחמים
		Chesed	חסד
<b>Knowledgeable</b> - we are experts, trustworthy and competent. Knowledge is power and we believe in sharing it.	<b>Insight</b> - we seek to understand the complexity of infertility and share knowledge. We believe that sharing wisdom and insight helps build understanding and empowerment, fostering connection between people.	Bina	בינה
<b>Community</b> - we are powered by the community for the community.	<b>Social Responsibility</b> - we have a social responsibility to ensure that no Jewish Australian feels alone on their fertility journey and to help build the next generation.  <b>Community Mindedness</b> - we believe that we are here to support our Australian Jewish community.	Achrayut	אחריות
		Areyvut	ערבות

## The Year in Review

The past year has been a pivotal one for AJFN and we were able to support more families than ever before.

With our founder and Executive Director Shterny Dadon's departure we saw a change in leadership with the appointment of Justine Saidman to Chief Executive Officer. We continued to invest in resources to help meet the increased demand for our services with the addition of two new professional staff - Robbie Clifford was appointed as our Head of Community and Support, and Rebecca Abraham as our dedicated Support Program Manager.

### 'One in Six'

#### Documentary National Broadcast

AJFN commissioned and produced **One in Six**, a 30 minute documentary that captured Janine and Shimon Davidowitz's IVF journey as they faced the challenges of COVID-19 with A/Prof Gavin Sacks of IVF Australia as their infertility specialist. We shared an 11-minute version at our November 2020 event, which took us up until their egg retrieval and left our audience with a cliffhanger, waiting to see if Janine's embryo transfer had been a success. The complete story premiered for our AJFN community at our Major Event in November 2021.

This documentary was a world-first, following an observant Jewish Orthodox couple with full access to their fertility treatment with the aim of opening the conversation around infertility and creating awareness for the struggles that it brings. We achieved this goal and went beyond what had been envisioned when ABC TV screened **One in Six** on their **Compass** program on Sunday 12 June, 2022. Over 450,000 people tuned in around Australia to watch and we were able to amplify awareness with several media outlets covering the story in print and online.



This is a particularly special thing, because we don't have many observations of being able to follow a couple through the whole journey. IVF is tough in many ways - emotionally, physically, and the cost. But the hope is just enormous."

A/Prof Gavin Sacks

We once again offer our heartfelt thanks to Janine and Shimon for bravely and generously sharing their story, and in doing so, helping so many others to feel less alone.



## Infertility Awareness Shabbat

A key pillar of our mission is spreading awareness around infertility and opening the conversation so that the topic is no longer taboo. We participated again in the global Infertility Awareness Shabbat (IAS), 1-2 April 2022 (spearheaded by Los Angeles based Yesh Tikvah). Many synagogues were supportive of this initiative and included the theme of infertility in their sermons.

Together with our community partners Laya Slavin and Our Big Kitchen, AJFN held an intimate and beautiful challah bake where stories were shared and prayers were said for those in our community longing to have a child. Challot were then distributed with information cards about the IAS and with a prayer for fertility.







## Major Event

Our 2022 Major Event brought our 'village' back together after an almost three year hiatus. The event was sold out and a crowd of over 300 people (in person, and a further 450 online for our first ever hybrid event) were spellbound and moved to tears by courageous AJFN couple Beth and Daniel's raw but ultimately uplifting fertility story. Beth fearlessly shared her painful journey through a combination of real time video diaries, written entries, and photos, culminating with her performing her poignant song 'Finally' live. Fertility specialist Assoc/Prof Gavin Sacks, embryologist Jenna Pinchuck and fertility counsellor Sarah Reid educated us on the intricacies of the IVF process and demonstrated the veritable village that it sometimes takes to create an IVF baby.

Our audience saw how many hurdles there are when undergoing fertility treatment, and how crucial it is to have the right support from family, friends, fertility professionals, the community and the AJFN.

The event led directly into our Miracle Making Day Appeal where our generous Miracle Matchers doubled every dollar donated enabling us to surpass our target of \$500k. These funds ensure that the 44 families who needed us have had all the support they need to try to create their little miracles, (with peace of mind that if it doesn't work on the first try, we'll be with them every step of the way).

## Education

AJFN continues to provide accessible educational resources to empower those dealing with infertility so that they are armed with knowledge. We also aim to educate the wider community so that they can understand the challenges of infertility, how common it is, and provide them with the tools to enable them to sensitively support loved ones who may be experiencing it.

On 13 November 2022, AJFN partnered with The Eden Center and Australian Friends of Shaare Zedek for the launch of Birkat Emunah - a mikvah resource for Jewish families facing infertility and loss. Dr Naomi Grumet and Dr Jordana Hymen, both visiting from Israel, explored the multilayered topic of ***Fertility: A Public or Private Concern?***

On 28 November 2022 we held a free **webinar** that covered the complex and fascinating topic of **Egg Donation** with an engaging panel discussion. Dr Joel Bernstein and Denyse Asher from Donor Eggs Australia explored the logistics and medical and financial considerations; Rabbi Ulman presented a halachic overview; and Rozanne Ichikowitz - a mother of two via donor eggs and AJFN Peer Support Companion volunteer - recounted her emotional journey with complete candour.



## Advocacy

AJFN aims to give a voice to those who are struggling with infertility, to ensure that their rights are recognised and championed. When the Victorian government decided to halt fertility treatments during January 2022's COVID outbreak with an erroneous classification as 'elective surgery', AJFN lent its voice to the change.org campaign. Thankfully this decision was quickly reversed and time sensitive treatment could continue.



## Support

Thanks to the generosity of our donors (both big and small), we have been able to meet the exponential growth in demand for our services. In the past year we **delivered 33 care packs, 24 Shabbat dinners,** and our trained volunteer **Peer Support Companions supported 29 families** and dedicated countless hours to counselling them with visits, phone calls and texts. The run-on effects of COVID combined with AJFN's growing profile resulted in an almost 200% increase in the number of enquiries that we received - for the period July-November 2021 we received 26 enquiries while for the same period in 2022 we received 49 enquiries. In the last financial year (2020-2021), we provided \$79,563 in financial grants towards fertility treatments and since 1 July 2022 alone we

have already granted \$52,387. We have also added a spiritual support element to our offering, including personalised 1:1 challah bakes and mikvah visits.

We know that everyone who comes to us for help dreams of announcing the birth of their miracle baby; however our mission is about supporting Jewish Australian families so that **no one feels alone on their fertility journey.**



# Miracle Matchers

## Diamond

Leor and Mendy Amzalak

## Platinum

Ilana and Martin Moshal in honour  
of the late John Hillel Moshal  
The Gonski Foundation  
The Yarranabbe Foundation

## Gold

Anonymous AJFN Angels  
Roxanne and Jeremy Dunkel  
Kerry and Michael Gonski  
Aliza and Rafi Lamm  
Eva and Paul Lederer  
Terri and Rob Lederer  
Sue and Phil Lewis  
Judy and Stephen Lowy  
Lauren and Elliott Placks  
Leyat and Jack Reuben  
Sandra and Barry Smorgon  
The Triguboff Family  
The Wolanski Foundation

## Special thanks to:

Emma and David Moss for the  
generous gifts in lieu received in  
honour of their wedding

Wolper Jewish Hospital Health  
Foundation for their ongoing  
support

The S & C Roth Family Foundation  
for their generous donation

Mendy Amzalek and Stephen  
Silver from Evolution Capital for  
their incredible support

IVF Australia, our longtime  
Corporate Partner and Diamond  
Event Sponsor

Genea, our Corporate Supporter

Millee's Deli, Our Big Kitchen,  
+The Bagel Co., Eshel Kosher  
Catering, Kraus Foods, Rivka's  
Kindness and Shweetie Box for  
their donations of nourishing food  
for Shabbat meal deliveries

## Thanks to our probono professionals

Our probono professionals who  
give so generously of their time  
and talent to help with all the  
technical needs of AJFN:

- Brett Rubin from  
The Bottom Line
- Matt Skinner from Sherpa Works
- Elise and Nicola from The  
Leadership Space
- Dr Ann-Maree Moodie from  
Governance Australia & Asia
- Norton Rose Fulbright



# Event Sponsors

## Diamond



## Platinum



## Gold



## Silver



## Bronze





# Board Members



**Kerry Gonski** - AJFN  
Board Chair & Director



**Lara Garfinkel** - AJFN  
Director & Secretary



**Rob Lederer** - AJFN  
Director & Treasurer



**Dr Lesley Andrews** -  
AJFN Director



**Nir Golan** - AJFN  
Director

## Board Observers

Moshe Engelman  
Charlotte Walker

## Professional Team

Justine Saidman - CEO  
Robbie Clifford - Head of Community and Support  
Danielle Salomon - Marketing and  
Communications Manager  
Rebecca Abraham - Support Program Manager

## Volunteers

AJFN is supported by a dedicated team of volunteers who put in countless hours of Peer Support, event planning, professional consultation, care pack deliveries and so much more. We could not achieve all we do without them.

Lauren Placks - Chair of Events Committee  
Tanya Keyser - Events Committee  
Kareen Neumann - Events Committee

Rebecca Havas - Chair of Support Committee  
Sarah Robuck - Support Committee  
Rozanne Ichikowitz - Support Committee  
Lara Volpe - Support Committee  
Terri Lederer - Support Committee  
Lori Levin - Support Committee  
Hayley Traub - Support Committee  
Jen Nathan - Support Committee

Kim Leigh - Chair of Education Committee  
Candice Stein - Education Committee  
Jenna Pinchuk - Education Committee  
Jess Krigstein - Education Committee  
Tali Feiglin - Education Committee

Kate Samowitz - Chair of Marketing Committee  
Leigh Goldberg - Marketing Committee  
Lara Segal - Marketing Committee  
Gabi Rein - Marketing Committee  
Leanne Kawalsky - Marketing Committee  
Amy Friedlander - Marketing Committee

# Key Numbers

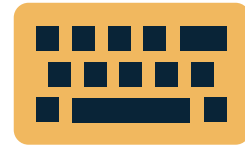
2022 Calendar Year (to end Nov)



**61** Families supported



**22** Shabbat meals delivered



**30** Care packs delivered



**26** Peer support relationships formed



**1,250** People educated at our events



**\$83,875** Fertility treatment grants



**36** Total grants given



**25K+** Social media reach

**\$508K**

Raised for our Miracle Making Day Appeal



**450,000+** Viewers tuned into *One in Six*



The AJFN provided us with financial support but their emotional support was so appreciated. I was able to speak to someone as much or as little as I needed whether it was to answer my questions about what was coming next, what I could to keep myself occupied while waiting to take a pregnancy test and when it didn't work the first time. The fertility specialist was great at explaining everything but having someone to talk to who had gone through IVF was really helpful.”

Mother of an AJFN miracle baby



If you are experiencing a challenging fertility journey you are not alone.

We are here to help.

Please reach out in complete confidence.

Text: 0481 075 554

Email: [support@ajfn.org.au](mailto:support@ajfn.org.au)

Call: 02 7906 8366

[www.ajfn.org.au](http://www.ajfn.org.au)

