



MOUNT SINAI COLLEGE

CREATING LEARNERS FOR LIFE

April 2020 ■ www.mountsinai.nsw.edu.au



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Mount Sinai College was awarded the winner of the prestigious 2019 Learning Environments Australasia (LEA) NSW Chapter for outstanding achievements in 'Renovation/Modernisation over \$5M' category.

The jury's citation reinforced Mount Sinai's successful balance between the educational transformation of learning spaces and the cultural values delivered through the architectural design and vision of the College. "The emerging pedagogical approach at Mount Sinai College is focused on the 'diversity' of individual student needs; through a curriculum enabling 'curiosity'; and the encouragement of 'creativity'. The design strategy and architecture supports this vision by creating a connected, inclusive and stimulating environment that inspires the students on their learning journey."

Mount Sinai's new classroom spaces effortlessly embody the vision of future education and are purposely designed to support learning that is self-directed, independent, interdependent, authentically personalized and differentiated. Learning that is active rather than passive and student-driven.

Smith + Tracey, who are the architects of the new campus relaunch say "we view the LEA as validation that the transformation of the learning environment at Mount Sinai College strongly reflects and embeds the culture of the College community with a connected contemporary educational setting."

Principal of Mount Sinai College Phil Roberts says, "as the famous proverb goes 'you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear'. Well, in our case, I beg to differ. The transformation of the College has been an inspiration



to all. What I have enjoyed is meeting the many ex-Collegians who have not seen the College for a number of years as they are so excited to see the new school. However, as I have always said, this is great architecture in so far as it achieves the purpose of making teaching and learning more enjoyable and meaningful to everyone."

Anthony Berman, Mount Sinai College President said, "most of you have lived through the past year of construction with us, and whilst we as a community and school are incredibly proud of our new campus, it's often rewarding when external professionals recognise the accomplishments of our hard work. Our architecture says 'come in and meet the family', and that's exactly what we want from a school and broader community."



The LEA awards, made up of both designers and educationalists, promote best practice across Australia, New Zealand and Singapore in the design, building and use of learning spaces that can improve educational outcomes for learning. Mount Sinai College is now being put forward for the LEA National and International Awards held in New Zealand May 2020.

Smith + Tracey say, the opportunity to submit for the International Awards "is a celebration of the design quality, cultural engagement and pedagogical synergy created at MSC, and the chance to share the innovative and progressive thinking within a National and International forum."

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Phil Roberts

We begun the year with an outstanding showcase of artist talent. Our inaugural Art Exhibition reminded us that we have a breadth and depth of talent in the parent community. During the week of the exhibition, our students were able to explore and create as they were guided by the parent artists. This helped us to start the year in a good frame of mind.

Next year, Mount Sinai College turns 40 – we have reached 'middle age' and have carved out a wonderful, rich history. I realised more recently that I had devoted half my life to Mount Sinai College – a realisation that gives me a great deal of satisfaction. However, I am not the only one who has been with the College and served it for a such a long period of time. We have so many staff (too many to mention here) who have been with us for 10-20 years and more. This has given us tremendous stability and the opportunity to 'grow' the staff in a culture of exceptional teaching and learning and to cultivate their talents in the Mount Sinai 'permaculture'.

When schools churn through staff or leaders, there is little continuity or momentum that can be built. The policy making becomes reactive and subject to the whims and fancies of individuals. (We only have to see how damaging it was to the country in more recent history to have a revolving door of leaders).

I have made mention on a number of occasions about the 'peloton effect' in the Mount Sinai culture. This metaphor truly appeals to me as a cyclist as many would understand. Riders form a large pack called a peloton and they group together for the primary purpose of saving energy with the reduction in wind resistance or drag being dramatic. The peloton effect is similar to what birds experience when they fly in formation – it helps them to fly farther than they could alone.

When you have a long-standing team that collectively gets behind the vision, energy, direction and leadership, you have a cohesion, unity and collective sense of purpose that is uplifting and beneficial for the school. When we 'ride' together we all benefit. In the many years I have devoted to the school I can say confidently that the culture is a healthy one and the team has a cohesion and common sense of purpose in all we do that becomes creative, self-sustaining and motivating. Ultimately, it is the kids who benefit from this 'flying in formation' effect.

As everyone knows who is in business, healthy workplace cultures elevate and energise the potential of individuals and crystallise the mission of the organisation. So, I take this opportunity to thank the people who have given the College its refulgent reputation – the teachers and administrative staff. They have always been the strength of the Mount Sinai peloton and have been the reason why I am able to arrive to work each day feeling positive.

Whilst we have so many who have given so much for so long, I'd like to mention two have collectively offered their service, experience and energy (of which they still have copious amounts!) for close to 50 years and that is Garron Forman (College Deputy Principal) and Rozanna Pleshet (Jewish Studies and Infants Coordinator). For the sake of brevity I won't list the ways in which their positive, efficient and effective leadership have benefited the school but suffice to say, these two have been at the front of the peloton forever! They are strong riders!!

Long may we continue to benefit from their leadership and long may we all continue to leverage off this peloton effect for the benefit of our school and our children.

Phil Roberts
Principal

MSC Art Show 2020 was an incredible opportunity for us to come together as a community and celebrate a week of Art! Produced by our very own talented MSC parent artists (Renée Campbell, Lani Kay, Monica Norris, Anthony Berman, Steve Durbach, Miriam Perl, Johanna Singer, Jess Sarak, Craig Blackstone, Romy Wolman and Renee Dvir), the repertoire of art included landscape, portrait, oil works, sculptures and drawings, to name a few.



Art week also offered a chance for MSC parents to enjoy a personalised night of 'Art and Wine' with artist Lani Kay who directed parents as they recreated a real-life drawing.



The man behind a thriving community - Principal Phil Roberts from Mount Sinai College celebrates 30 years!

Phil Roberts has spent half his life at Mount Sinai College – 30 years in fact! In that time, Phil has transitioned from teacher to Deputy and begins 2020 in his 18th year as Principal of Mount Sinai College. He sits on an array of boards and influential committees; **Secretary of IPSHA for 6 years, Member of ISTAA Council, Director of CIS Board and member of CIS council, Previous member of AIS Professional Development Advisory Committee** that formerly set policy framework for PD across the States and **Principal Coach** - Trained as a principal coach under the AIS/IPSHA framework and currently coaches new principals in NSW.

It is not uncommon for schools to turn over many principals but one of the key features of Mount Sinai's success has been its ability to attract and retain outstanding staff members, not the least Phil himself. "Our people within the school are so stable and so cognizant of what the culture is and understand organizational health within their culture," says Roberts.

This has given Mount Sinai great stability over time and has ensured that the College has continued to embrace change whilst honouring the important traditions that have characterised Jewish learning and the ethos of the school for close to 40 years.

After finishing off the stage 1 renovations mid-last year, the College is thriving: being acknowledged for a third designation as an Apple Distinguished School and recently winning the prestigious 2019 Learning Environments Australasian award in the NSW Chapter for renovations above \$5 million category. The award reinforces Mount Sinai's successful balance between the educational transformation of learning spaces and the cultural values delivered through the architectural design and vision of the College.

Mount Sinai's new classroom spaces effortlessly embody the vision of future education and are purposely designed to support learning that is self-directed, independent, interdependent, authentically personalized and differentiated. It promotes student driven learning that is active rather than passive.

When asked how education has changed since he first stepped into the classroom in 1985, Phil mentions two aspects: firstly, technology and the transition into the information age; and secondly



the development of cognitive neuroscience and understanding of how the brain works!

"Both these developments have impacted enormously on education in the most profound and exciting ways. We have learnt so much more about how children learn and have the interesting challenge of preparing our children for an ever-changing world," says Roberts.

Phil believes in the ethos and groundings of Jewish education. "I think the difference with a Jewish education is the level of expectation. The value that's put on education in both the home front and schooling is invaluable. You can't measure it or take it for granted." Developing the personal values and qualities in children that will prepare them for the future has always been important to the College and in this respect, Jewish education has been the guiding rudder.

A great leader is always anchored by a great team. "Our teaching staff have been able to evolve in their teaching methods. They get behind the vision and the need for change. They've been nimble-footed, receptive and embracing. And that's been the distinguishing feature of our school compared to many others," says Roberts.

When asked about his vision for the next 10 years Phil quickly says "To get a high school, number one. And to make sure that we are always evolving. We must honour the tradition, so long as I'm here, we can never forget what it means to be a Jewish school. And keep embracing the change and leading that. If I look at 10 years from now, I want to be the school that has been so responsive to those interruptions that we get in society and I want to be able to lead at that level and to lead with a really good team."

A token Jew at heart, Phil explains "You've got to think of 32 years of walking into the shule every week, just being part of 32 years of Sederim. 32 years of Purim. 32 years of all festivals, commemorative days. It has a significant shaping of who I've become and I'm more aware of that in the last 10 to 15 years. That's over half my life! And you think about the first half as a younger child, you don't have the level of self-conscious awareness. Most of my adult life has been formed in this environment. I'd better get a bloody honorary badge when I leave!"



Rabbi Yossi

At the outset of each school year, I encourage parents to be inclusive of other families. This is what makes Mount Sinai special and it is what we have become known for. In particular, I ask parents to be mindful of when and how they arrange their children's parties to ensure that they are kosher and don't fall out on a significant Jewish holiday or fast day.

Whilst I understand, of course, that the school can't control what happens after hours nor should we, and we can't dictate as to what happens in the privacy of homes, I do encourage families to consider those children who do observe the special days and keep kosher and how they might feel left out if they couldn't attend the event for 'religious reasons' or partake in the food like everyone else.

I also appreciate that in many people's minds, especially if they don't keep the customs at home, they might be put off by the extra 'hassle' and the perceived price of Kosher. Why spend more than we have to and go to the extra effort?

To this I respond by saying that unless you are supplying meat, the price differential between kosher and not-Kosher is not as much as you may think. Further, I believe the price difference is a small price to pay in exchange for the powerful education lesson that you will be providing your child.

For those unfamiliar with the Kosher laws, it actually may be a whole lot easier to cater Kosher than you may have expected, and I would be happy to educate parents over the upcoming months as to how they can do this. This way, all children can feel comfortable and included regardless of their levels of observance.

Whilst inclusion is a central value that we inculcate at school, it must also be exemplified in the home. In fact, even more so.

If there is any festival that conveys this exact message, it is the upcoming Festival of Pesach. By its very definition, Pesach is a national holiday. It commemorates our birth as a new and free nation destined to transform civilisation.

Therefore, one would expect that the holiday rituals would emphasise the "nation" motif, the idea of our collective and national identity. Perhaps the Torah would instruct us to gather the entire nation together for a mass celebration or suggest another ritual that would reflect the national dimensions of Jewish life.

Yet, surprisingly, the Torah says, that Passover is to be celebrated through individualised Seder meals, conducted in the privacy of individual homes. In the words of the Torah: "Every man must take a lamb for the family, a lamb for each household".

I believe there is a profound message here. More than three millennia ago, the Torah was teaching us that the battle for society began at the home. The family—not the Temple, not the synagogue, not the educational centres, not the marketplace, not the battlefield, not the institutions of government and power—was the nucleus of civilisation.

Many of our challenges and blessings arise out of the homes in which we develop our primal identities and relationships. Therefore, the Torah tells us, that if there is to be reformation, if there is to be a change, if there is to be redemption, it must begin in the home.

Chag Sameach,
Rabbi Yossi Friedman



(L:R) Rabbi Yossi Friedman, Rabbi Tzuri Avila, Rabbi Noam Hayman

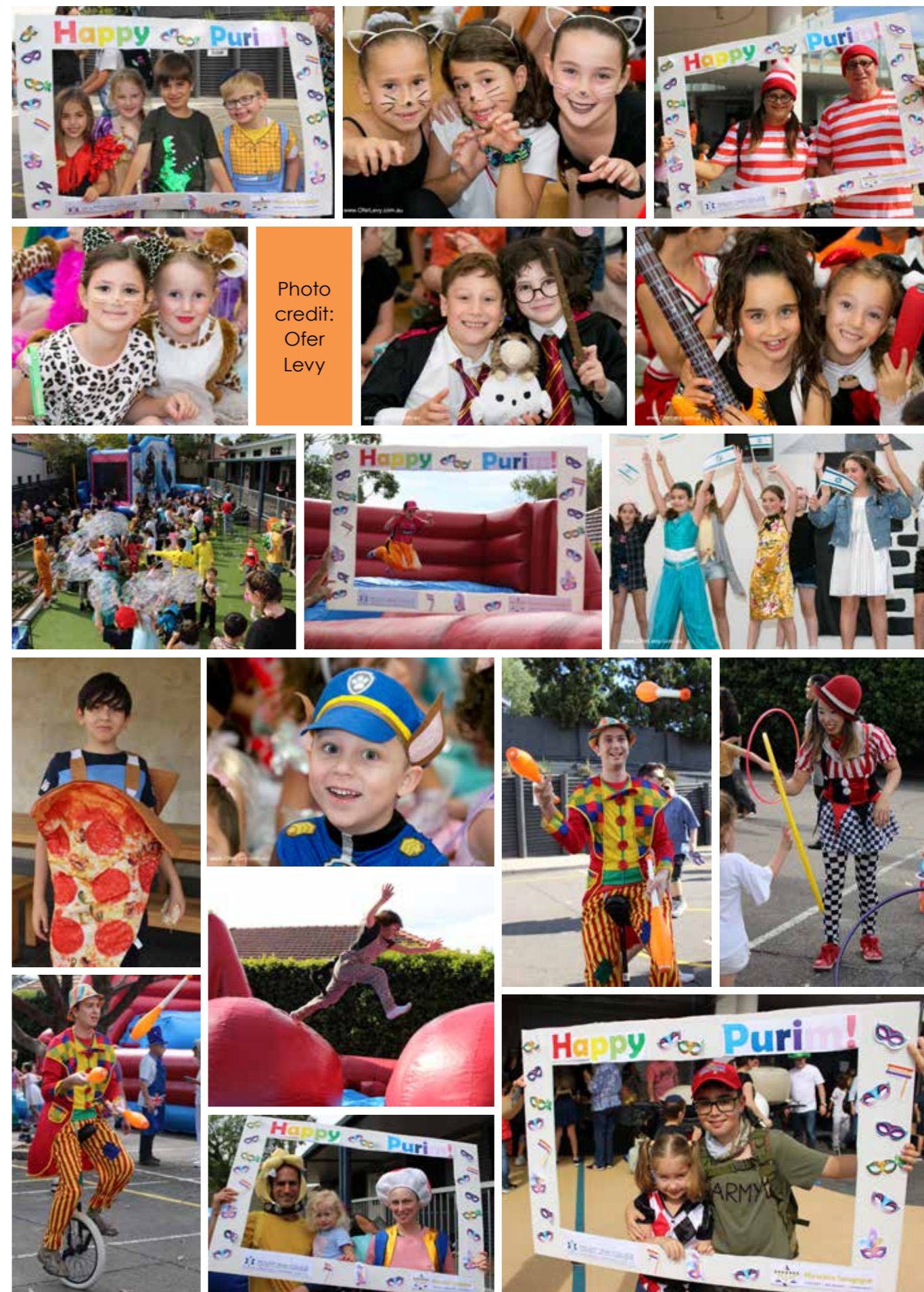


Photo credit:
 Ofer Levy



Anthony Berman

Before anything else, I'd like to pay tribute and recognise the incredible milestone that Phil Roberts has achieved with his continued dedication and commitment to us as a community and school now for over 30 years! This is an unbelievable achievement and something we as a board and parent body do not take lightly - so Mazel Tov Phil and L'chaim to many more years ahead!

I'm also incredibly proud of our recent accomplishment with the Learning Environments Australasian award body who awarded Mount Sinai College as the **winner** for our recent campus renovations. When you take a step back and look at other school developments (notably Cranbrook an estimated \$125 million and Moriah College \$80 million), what we achieved with our humble \$5 million shows how driven and effective we were in our vision and outcomes. I look forward to the next round where we will be up against international counterparts in New Zealand this coming May.

Our continued joint community events with Maroubra Synagogue go from strength to strength. I hope you as a parent (whether past or present) feel encouraged to participate and get involved. This is a great opportunity to build new relationships and deepen existing ones in the ever-growing community that starts with Mount Sinai College.

We're currently completing the stage 2 campus renovations: the Preparatory / Kindergarten classrooms and the new playground spaces. The transformed space will have the same look and feel as our current new campus areas and will provide an area for our younger years to continue to thrive in.



My final note is on chag Pesach, and how important it is to encourage your child or grandchild, niece or nephew to lead the Pesach seder and keenly partake in all the songs and rituals. As the Haggadah says, we must encourage our children to recount the story as if they personally were freed from bondage. This personal connection with Jewish stories and rituals is precisely why you choose to send your children to a school like Mount Sinai. And you'll soon find out how much they know, how confident they are to read from their haggadot, and how they'll enjoy reciting the many blessings and songs that are part of our Jewish traditions.



I wish you all a chag kasher v'same'ach.

Anthony Berman
President





The strong ruach of MSC kids was on full display last month as the Des Renford pools were once again taken over by our bustling and spirited cheers! Mazel tov to Julian Brown who broke 2 records, to the 30 swimmers who have qualified for ASISSA and house David who won the carnival!



Photo credit: Ofer Levy

Alumni News

- Sheila Philippsohn celebrates her 70th birthday with Mount Sinai College! Sheila opted to have her friends donate to the College in lieu of gifts. Mazel Tov on this special milestone.
- Mazel Tov to Marissa Ely (1989) who recently won the Randwick City Council's 2020 Australia Day Community Service Awards. The award recognises Marissa's outstanding contributions to local sporting groups, schools, community groups and her Maroubra Community Facebook page. Kol Hakavod!

Alumni Births

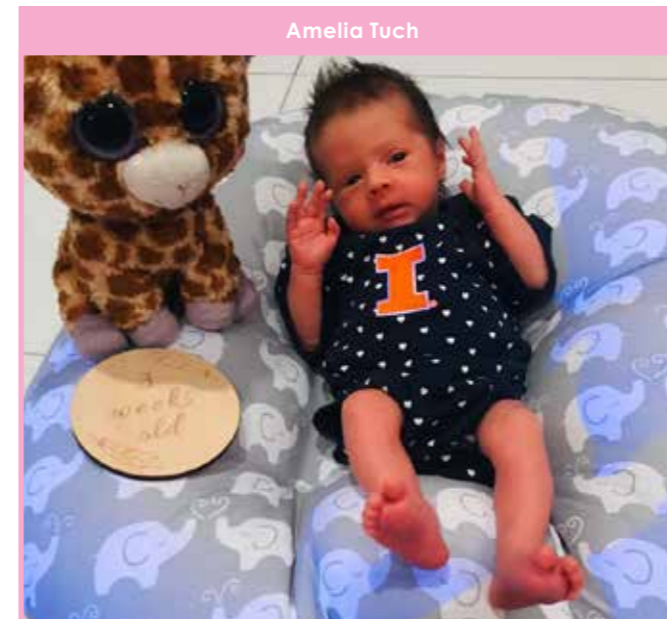
- Amelia, daughter of David Tuch (1991) and Meredith Tomkovitch.
- Gigi, daughter of Sharonne and Daniel Neumann. Gigi was born on 27.01.2020, World Holocaust Day & named after her great grandmothers, both women of true valour.



Sheila Philippsohn and family



Marissa Ely and Randwick Council Mayor Danny Said



Amelia Tuch



Gigi Neumann

SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH US!

Whether it's a wedding, engagement, birth or achievement – we'd love to know!
Email: reception@mountsinai.nsw.edu.au

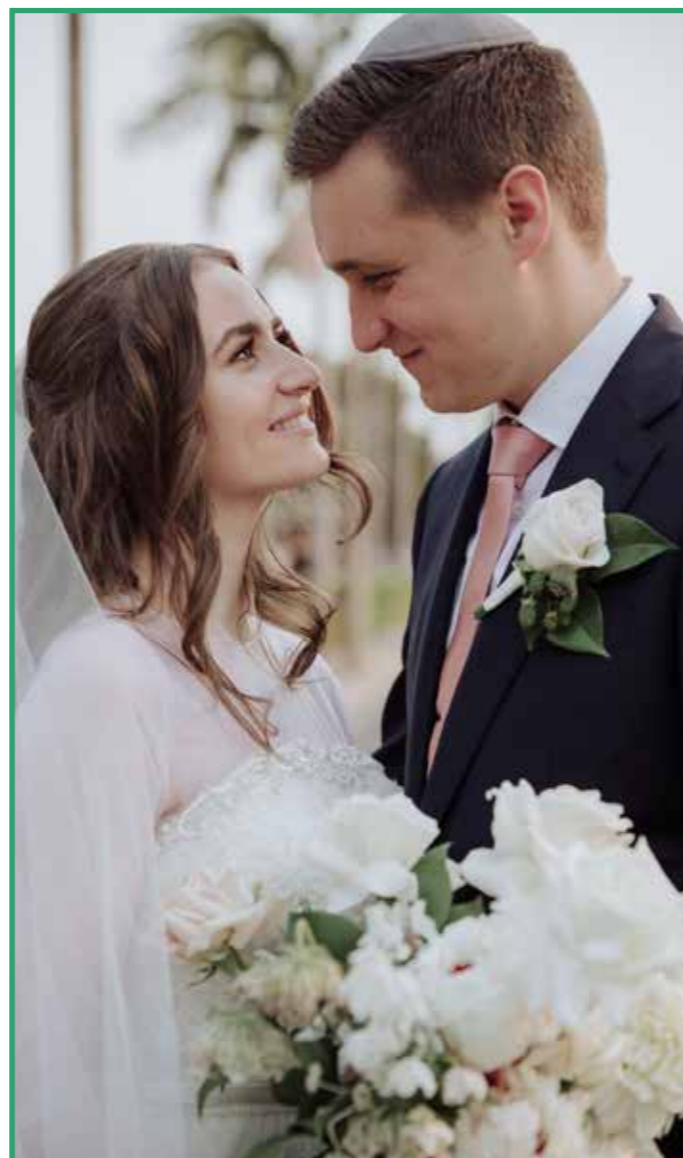
- Joshua Small (2001) and Daniela Small – daughter Gracie
- Michael Di Veroli (2001) and Rebecca Di Veroli – son Louie

Alumni Weddings

- Ben Platt (2001) and Rachelle Newman
- Ryan Snoyman (2008) and Gila Friedgut

Alumni Engagements

- Michael Dean and Talia Wahnon (1999)
- Cayli Shubitz (2004) to Brett Rosenberg
- Anthony Glick (2006) to Megan Hosiosky



Ryan Snoyman and Gila Friedgut

Ben Platt and Rachelle Newman



Michael Dean and Talia Wahnon

In honour of **Josh Levi**, Alumnus (1995) Mount Sinai College has created a permanent seating bench at the entrance of our school. The bench is green in recognition of his favourite sporting team Canberra Raiders.





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THE MOUNT SINAI FAMILY WISH YOU

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