

From Bondi Vet Nurse to Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister: Sharren Haskel's Focus on Australia

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Sharren Haskel, Israel's deputy foreign minister, has become a prominent figure in Australia's political conversation. Once a veterinary nurse in Sydney's Bondi, Haskel now engages publicly on issues including antisemitism, foreign policy, and Australia's recognition of Palestinian statehood.

Born in Canada, Haskel lived in Australia for eight years before returning to Israel to pursue a political career. She initially joined Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party before later aligning with the centrist National Unity Party. Haskel frequently references her time in Sydney when addressing Israeli and Australian audiences.

Since the Hamas attacks on Israel in October 2023, Haskel has publicly criticized the Albanese government, describing Australia's response to rising antisemitism as insufficient. She has cited incidents in Melbourne and Sydney targeting Jewish communities, while also raising concerns about pro-Palestinian demonstrations. Police assessments have clarified that some reports were exaggerated, but Haskel continues to urge decisive government action.

Observers note that her approach is supported by her senior adviser, former Victorian Liberal MP Tim Smith, who joined her office in February following his exit from Australian politics. Analysts suggest Smith's influence is reflected in Haskel's critiques of Canberra.

Haskel has also commented on Canada's recognition of Palestinian statehood, arguing that concessions could compromise Israel's security and encourage extremist activity. Earlier this year, tensions arose when Australia denied entry to Israeli Knesset member Simcha Rothman. Haskel described the decision as a "troubling message," highlighting what she sees as restrictions on democratic dialogue. The move drew mixed reactions from Australia's Jewish community.

Beyond her engagement with Australia, Haskel is leading efforts to strengthen Israel's presence in the Pacific. Foreign Minister Israel Katz has tasked her with exploring strategic partnerships with island nations, reflecting Israel's broader diplomatic priorities in the region.

Haskel's personal history and political role have made her a distinctive voice in Israel-Australia relations. Her criticism of Australian policies, combined with her efforts to engage Jewish communities, positions her as a significant figure influencing bilateral discussions and regional cooperation.