



Parent Handbook

Step Up Intensive Program

Acknowledgment of Country

We would like to show our respects and acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, the Boonwurrung people of the Kulin nation and the Bedegal people of the Eora Nation on which this handbook was written, where many of our Stand Up programs take place and where we continue to learn and grow.

We would like to acknowledge and give thanks to the Elders and Traditional custodians who have cared for this land for thousands of years.

May we walk with care on this land that sustains the spirit of these people and which has provided a home for our Jewish community.

We feel honoured to be able to learn directly from the descendants of the First People and privileged to walk together towards a more positive future for the nation we share.

What is Step Up?

Designed for Bnei Mitzvah aged students, Step Up offers students the opportunity to take a step up into their Jewish adulthood, to understand & attempt to grapple with the responsibilities & challenges that come with adulthood. The focus of the Step Up program & of Stand Up as an organisation; is social justice & addressing it from a Jewish lens.

The Step Up program is an innovative social justice experience. Students are asked to go beyond superficial conversations and are given opportunities to meet with individuals experiencing the issues we discuss, all while being asked to question their own positionality. Ultimately our aim is to empower young Jewish Australians, welcoming them to become leaders in their communities & affect positive change in the world.

We hope that students emerge from the program with a better understanding of the world & its complexities. This does mean that our programs sometimes deal with challenging topics that are confronting or uncomfortable to some. We ask students to consider their privilege, its relation to global issues & how it may be a tool for action.

This handbook complements the intensive programs by giving you insight into what your child is learning. We hope that this handbook supports you in making social justice a conversation not limited to the classroom so that your child can embark on their social justice journey with you by their side.

Jewish Values

Jewish values form the core of Stand Up's ideology and inform how we approach our programs. In Stand Up's Bnei Mitzvah program, the centrality of Judaism in Step Up is evident. Beyond the alignment of the program with a Jewish life event, Step Up consistently draws on Jewish values as the motivating factors for social justice action.

Each of our programs asks our students to engage with an aspect of social justice - be it a global issue, activism or a concept. While we deal with real-world issues, the constant reconnection to Jewish values provides a relevant lens, particularly as our students become Jewish adults. We want to take Judaism outside of its abstractness, ensuring that students can see the relevance, centrality and importance of Jewish values in everyday life.

Our aim is not just to support students in their Bar & Bat Mitzvahs but to inspire them to engage with their responsibilities to themselves, their families, their community, & the world at large.

Core Jewish Values:

Tikkun Olam	Tikun Olam has come to connote social action and the pursuit of social justice. It translates to mean 'repair the world'.
Chesed	Chesed translates to kindness, and Jewish scholars note Chesed as one of the ways we can sustain humanity.
Tzedakah	Tzedakah is translated to charity, but unlike the Western concept of charity, Tzedaka is viewed as an ethical obligation.

An Overview

The 3-day holiday intensive program aims to take students on a deep dive into the world of social justice.

Students are asked to consider the relevancy of core Jewish values while exploring some of the most complex issues facing our society.

We acknowledge that social justice and social issues are complex and cannot be discussed fully in just a few hours. We, therefore, selectively focus on the issues & concepts that we believe are relevant, more easily understandable & call our students to action. We do not suggest that the problems we focus on are more or less important than others we do not engage with.

Topics covered:

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| Day 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Introduction to social justice: what is happening around me?● What does it mean to be a change-maker? |
| Day 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Poverty and Inequality (includes excursion)● Refugees, asylum seekers and migration |
| Day 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● First Nations People in Australia (includes excursion)● Climate change● Action projects |

The intensive program covers the same material as the term program but is formatted differently. The benefit of this structure is that it better supports students to make connections between different issues, allowing them to see the interconnectedness of social justice.

While we are constantly improving our programs, we do ask that you, in some capacity, engage with your child to further their learning, understanding and questioning. This will

hopefully support them in taking social justice outside of the classroom so that they may be part of the changes they want to see on the world.

Day 1

Focuses:

- Introduction to social justice: what is happening around me?
- What does it mean to be a change-maker?

On the first day of the intensive, we focus on developing an understanding of social justice. What actually is a social justice issue? Why should I care? Is this relevant to me? (Trick question - everything is relevant to you. The question really is, *how* is this relevant to me!) How does Judaism fit into the whole social justice discussion? What can I do?

We know that sometimes conversations about all the things happening in the world can be overwhelming or even a bit scary. While it is essential to realise the severity of social justice issues, feeling paralysed and helpless is not the solution. We want students to develop a critical mindset, assess their positionality, evaluate the issue at hand, take a step back and think: 'This is a problem, but more importantly, how can I be part of the solution? What can I do?'.

The first part of the day is spent trying to define social justice issues, unpack the concept of responsibility and connect those things to Judaism. These are the concepts that underline the entire intensive, so it is imperative that students feel comfortable with them from the beginning of the program.

To familiarise students with social justice ideas, we do an exercise called the 10 Modern Plagues exercise. In the activity, we look at 10 issues that we have identified as of global significance and are easily understandable. Some of these issues will be featured during days 2 and 3 of the intensive. We challenge students to try and create a hierarchy, ordering the 10 issues from least to most tremendous importance/significance. Of course, there is no actual order - each of these issues needs to be addressed and impacts millions (in some cases billions) of people each day. Instead, the point is to start to reflect on their own positionality, begin considering the interconnectedness of these issues and begin to understand how challenging to address these issues.

We then focus our attention on a discussion of responsibility. While students are familiar with responsibility as a general idea, we challenge them to consider what responsibility looks like in different spheres and contexts. What does it mean to be responsible for yourself vs. what does it mean to be accountable for the planet vs. what does it mean to be accountable for humanity? When talking about social justice and social action, responsibility for those around us and the world is often cited as motivating factors. For students to become change agents, they must consider how they engage in each sphere and figure out IF they feel responsible and if that is enough to inspire a fight for change.

Another big part of the Step Up program is our emphasis on Jewish values as the core of our mission for social justice. As an aspect of your child's bar or bat mitzvah experience, we attempt to shift Judaism and Jewish values away from being viewed as abstract concepts and instead redefine them as relevant to our real lives. This is of particular importance as students are coming into Jewish adulthood.

Throughout the program, we focus on a range of values, including Tzedakah, Chesed, Tikkun Olam and Gemilut Chasadim.

For the final part of the day, we shift our focus away from defining social justice to questioning 'What makes a change maker?'. We recognise that sometimes a discussion about social justice and everything going wrong in our world can be overwhelming and unmotivating for students. While we think it is important not to sugarcoat what is happening, we also want students to recognise that change is possible. But more importantly, change can come from anyone. This discussion sets up students for the final day of the intensive, where they will be asked to design an action project on an issue that they are passionate about.

We ask that you start thinking about the action project with your child and consider what is possible.

Day 2

Focuses:

- Extreme Poverty
- The Refugee Crisis

The second day of the intensive zooms in on specific social justice issues that the students will have engaged with in some capacity. The program focuses on the issues of poverty and the refugee crisis. While two issues are likely social justice issues that the students will have heard of, or possibly engaged with in some capacity, they are by no means easily solvable issues. Rather they are immensely complex, influenced by several intersecting factors and have significant knock-on impacts. As poverty and the refugee crisis are so complex, we do not attempt to discuss either issue in its entirety. Rather we focus on the human element of the problem, asking students to explore some of the causes and consider how either experience may impact the individual mentally, physically, emotionally and financially. The program is designed to be an introduction to these issues, and we hope that you with your child will explore the issues further.

Our discussion of extreme poverty is framed by an excursion to The Big Issue. The Big Issue is a not-for-profit organisation that works directly with individuals experiencing homelessness, marginalisation and disadvantage. They are perhaps best known for their magazines. While we cannot suggest that poverty is the same as homelessness, we highlight the interconnectedness of the issues to students. So often, experiences of poverty are compounded by experiences of homelessness. In the same way, poverty reinforces structural disadvantage and marginalisation, and vice-versa.

At The Big Issue, students can meet an individual experiencing homelessness, disadvantage and or marginalisation and are given the opportunity to have a conversation. This is hugely beneficial as it demonstrates to refugees or asylum seekers experiencing these significant challenges. Additionally, speaking to a person experiencing such significant challenges is a unique opportunity.

Students then take a trip to a supermarket where we simulate the \$2 challenge. The \$2 challenge, better known as Live Below The Line, is a challenge designed to generate charity and facilitate awareness building regarding poverty. During the challenge, individuals must live off only \$2 a day for a week. For information on the challenge and sign up, follow the link: <https://www.oaktree.org/event/live-below-the-line-2021/home>.

By simulating the \$2 challenge, we further the conversation begun at The Big Issue, displaying to students the complex reality of living in poverty. It is not as simple as just deciding to get a job, education, and eat healthier. So often, people experiencing poverty experience a range of challenges, but more importantly, people experiencing poverty are often not to blame. Massive global structures and global wealth inequality demonstrate an ongoing history of entrenched disadvantage that impacts millions of people before they are even born.

In the second half of the day, we explore the concept of migration, looking at the social justice issue that is the asylum seeker and refugee crisis. Just as with poverty, the experience of being a refugee or asylum seeker is eternally complex and has many knock-on impacts that affect the individual in many ways.

The connection of the Jewish community to refugees is clear throughout our history. There are numerous cases where Jewish communities have been forced out of their homes by fear of persecution and have sought refuge. For many of our students, this history was actually a reality for their grandparents or great grandparents during or in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

By recontextualising an issue and connecting it to students' own communities, students can often better engage with what it means to be a refugee or asylum seeker. This is hugely important as it positions students to have a sense of empathy and feel a responsibility to support these people. We hope that students come out of the program feeling that the experiences of our community dictate a need for us to be welcoming and supportive and offer a helping hand when possible to someone in need.

Day 3

Focuses:

- First Nations Peoples in Australia
- Climate Change
- Action Projects

On the last day of the intensive, we focus on what is happening in Australia with our First Nation people and take a look at climate change. We then ask students to take everything they have learnt over the program and design an action project that they can incorporate into the Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

At Stand Up, working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is important to us and is a central focus of our organisation. We believe that there's still so much work to be done to reconcile and close the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. As future leaders, we feel that young Australians should be able to enter into a dialogue with First Nations people to try together and tackle some of the most significant issues facing our society.

We start the day with an excursion, where students get the opportunity to meet with a First Nations educator. In both NSW and VIC, students go out in Country and do a Dreamtime walk. Often students will hear of the relationship between first nations people and the land. The Dreamtime walk is an opportunity to hear stories and learn about Country's significance to a specific group. In the second part of the excursion, students have the unique opportunity to simulate a 'You can't ask that' session, modelled off the ABC series. This is a unique opportunity designed to start the conversation and get the difficult or awkward questions out of the way in a safe environment. Students come out of these conversations feeling able to continue to engage with First Nations people, which is necessary if we are ever to achieve positive change in Australia.

Step Up has a long-standing relationship with Koori Connections, an organisation run by an Aboriginal woman dedicated to education.

We have been lucky enough to secure an incursion with Koori Connections that we hope students will use as an opportunity to ask questions and start that dialogue.

We then look at climate change. Anecdotally we find that students tend to be very passionate about climate change. While students tend to know a lot about the scientific effects of climate change, we challenge them to think about what is the human cost? Whom does climate change affect? How will climate change alter the world that we know? Will climate change affect any one group more so than another? We then return to the conversation about the responsibility we had on day one and discuss what is or perhaps do we have a responsibility to the earth.

Our climate change module was co-designed with the Jewish Climate Network. For further climate education, support and guidance we recommend reaching out via their website: <https://www.jcn.org.au/>.

In the final part of the intensive, we try to bring together everything that students have learnt and ask them to design what we call 'An Action Project'. The projects ask students to consider what they care about, why they care about it, what needs to be done, and what they can do to make a change. We see this as one of the first steps in becoming the change-maker they illustrated on the first day.

We do not expect that students come out of the action projects session with a fully designed and detailed plan. Rather our expectation is that they can identify what they are passionate about and are beginning to think about how they may engage with that specific social justice issue.

Our hope is that with your child, you take their action project and can support them in taking it from an abstract plan to a real-life experience that they can integrate with their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. We would absolutely love to hear about how your action project goes and are here to support you in the process.

To support you in developing your child's action plan please use the following resources.
For further support please do not hesitate to email: stepup@standup.org.au.

My Action Project

My Chosen Social Issue

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My Projects Description

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My Projects Aims

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Notes:

What Tasks Do I Need To Do?

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Who Do I Need Help From?

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Notes:

My Project Timeline

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