

MELBOURNE JEWISH BOOK WEEK

Book fest goes virtual

SOME two months after the 2020 Melbourne Jewish Book Week (MJBW) was due to take place, the tears cried on the printed program are almost dry!

However, the weeks since cancellation have not been filled with regret and pity, rather the committee of Melbourne Jewish Book Week has been busy reinventing the organisation and its program. In short, they have been working to take the uncertainty out of uncertain times.

Moving the event to 2021 was a consideration but what is the world going to look like then? MJBW festival director Nicolas Brasch, explained, "International artists probably won't be able to fly in, social distancing restrictions will still be in place, and many of our audience would not feel comfortable attending live events."

Thought was given to creating a week-long hybrid festival, part-live, part-virtual in May next year, but it was felt that this compromise failed to totally satisfy anyone. It would also involve enormous logistics without a guarantee of revenue. While a physical festival will return in the future, no consideration is being given to when, until the world is a safer place.

Instead, the decision has been made to produce regular monthly events, all to be delivered online initially, but with the possibility of adding occasional live events down the track. They will be a mix of interviews with international and Australian writers, a seasonal book club, discussion of recently released films (and interviews with directors), and other events that meet the aims of MJBW – bringing the best of Jewish writing and ideas to the community.

The events will be free but participants will have to register. To defray costs, such as paying presenters, MJBW has set up a GiveNow page.

"We kicked off with a discussion between international human rights barrister Philippe Sands and Australian academic Mark Raphael Baker," said Brasch. "The size of our online audience, and the feedback we received, indicated a real thirst for these types of events from our audience."

For more information about events, and to subscribe to the newsletter and stay informed, visit www.melbournejewishbookweek.com.au.

To donate on the MJBW Give Now page, visit www.givenow.com.au/mjbw.



Authors Philippe Sands (left) and Mark Raphael Baker – both feature in online MJBW activities.

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