

# Australian Ambassador to Israel, Dave Sharma, visits Alexander Muss High School in Israel

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**ALEXANDER MUSS HIGH SCHOOL IN ISRAEL**

Australian Ambassador to Israel, Dave Sharma, visited the Alexander Muss High School in Israel (AMHSI) in December to speak to students from Bialik College of Melbourne who are participating in a five-week academic program.

At the campus in Hod HaSharon, the ambassador was greeted by Bialik students Jonah Wise and Elana Forbes who showed him through the campus to AMHSI's state-of-the-art radio station. Wise and Forbes interviewed the ambassador for the radio, touching on subjects such as Sharma's decision to enter the Foreign Service, his work in organising US President Barack Obama's visit to Australia in November 2011 and the recent hostage crisis in Sydney, just one day prior to the Ambassador's interview at AMHSI.

The students also asked about Sharma's widespread use of social media during the past summer's conflict with Gaza, the Operation Protective Edge. After quoting one of his tweets, Wise and Forbes asked how social media has changed the face of diplomacy.

"If you are to influence opinions or have a say, you need to be talking to the public,



as well as to the government, and social media is obviously a way to talk and filter to the public and to get your message out. I think it's important if you want to be an effective diplomat and representative for your country," Sharma said.

Following the interview, Forbes said she "was impressed by the ambassador taking time out of his busy schedule to meet with students. "It was fun to speak with him in a more intimate setting as part of the radio interview."

Following the interview, Sharma spoke to

Bialik students on a similar range of issues in addition to discussing the recent terrorist attack in Sydney. He talked about the success of the #IIRideWithYou campaign, a Twitter initiative in support of Australian residents of Muslim background. "I think we've always prided ourselves on being a tolerant nation that's respectful of differences and that we draw strength from our sort of multicultural or multiethnic fabric," he said.

Sharma ended his speech with a Q&A session, where students asked questions such as how the ambassador views life in

a Jewish-majority state and Australian policy regarding a future Palestinian state.

Sharma was accompanied by his current personal assistant, former Bialik College teacher, Esti Sherbelis, who introduced the ambassador. Sherbelis also helped arrange a visit with Australian Deputy Head of Mission to Israel, James McGarry, who spoke with AMHSI students during the previous week.

"This is the second visit by the Australian ambassador to AMHSI," said co-CEO, Orit Rome. "We are excited by the Australian groups' presence here on campus, which has expanded to include the Emanuel School and NSW Board of Jewish Education of Sydney."

AMHSI is a pluralistic, college-prep international study abroad program that enables students to experience Israel as a classroom. Students are taught by AMHSI's experienced and passionate educators who become their mentors, inspiring them to live outside their books, encounter new ideas and challenge themselves in infinite ways.

For the 23,000 alumni over the past 42 years, the impact of the Alexander Muss High School in Israel is reflected in their ongoing commitment to Israel, to Jewish life and to making our world better.

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