

Better late than never for a bar mitzvah

Menios Constantinou

JAKE Campbell never felt “completely Jewish” until a chance meeting with a Bondi rabbi changed his life forever.

Mr Campbell, 21, was celebrating Israel Independence Day with friends at Watsons Bay Hotel when Rabbi Eli Feldman approached his mate, Glen Falkenstein.

“I was introduced to Eli and it came up in conversation that I’d never worn a *tephillin* (Jewish prayer shawl) and had never had a bar mitzvah,” Mr Campbell said.

The resourceful rabbi immediately offered to conduct Mr Campbell’s belated bar mitzvah at the Yeshiva Centre in Bondi.

“Jewish boys have their bar mitzvah at age 13, but Jake never had one,” Rabbi Feldman said.

“Jake’s mother is Jewish but his father is a non-Jew, and because he didn’t want to make his father uncomfortable, his 13th birthday came and went without a bar mitzvah.”

So on Sunday, June 13, in front of friends and family, Mr Campbell put aside nervousness to mount the *bimah* at Yeshiva and perform his long overdue bar mitzvah.

“I was absolutely petrified,” he said.



Jake Campbell at his bar mitzvah at the Yeshiva Centre in Bondi.

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“It was the biggest adrenaline rush, but since then it’s made me feel really good.

“I never really felt completely Jewish but now that’s all changed and I’m proud that I can say I truly believe in my faith.”

Mr Campbell also got a new name: Yakov Israel Ben Hersh, and his mother Lilia received her Hebrew name of Leah.

Rabbi Feldman said a bar mitzvah is seen as a “coming of age” for young Jews.

“It signifies the time in life when a Jew becomes a fully fledged member of the people and begins doing good deeds,” he said. “Being involved with Jake’s bar mitzvah was one of my proudest moments as a rabbi.”



Jake Campbell (left) wears a Jewish prayer shawl for the first time.

When told of Rabbi Feldman’s sentiments, Mr Campbell responded by saying that the rabbi was “one of the most amazing people” he’d met.