

Morning tea with the Premier

GARETH NARUNSKY

PREMIER Barry O'Farrell hosted a morning tea with religious leaders at Parliament House late last month.

Leaders from the Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Buddhist and Hindu communities were present at the event.

Young Adult Chabad's Rabbi Eli Feldman represented the Jewish community, together with Yeshiva Centre spiritual leader Rabbi Pinchus Feldman, North Shore Temple Emanuel's Rabbi Gary Robuck and Great Synagogue chazan David Hilton.

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Rabbi Gary Robuck
Rabbi, North Shore
Temple Emanuel

"The Premier announced that this is the first of what he envisages to be an ongoing and dynamic conversation between the NSW Government and spiritual leaders of the major faiths," Rabbi Eli Feldman told *The AJN*.

O'Farrell also reportedly spoke about the various religious celebrations marked in Parliament annually,



From left: Rabbi Pinchus Feldman, Premier Barry O'Farrell and Rabbi Eli Feldman.

including Chanukah.

He even referred to Rabbi Pinchus Feldman as "the best shmoozer in Sydney", explaining to the puzzled crowd that shmoozing is a Yiddish term for being a proficient and talented conversationalist.

Rabbi Robuck said he was most struck by O'Farrell's anecdote of how each morning he passes the Masada College campus on his way to work.

"He told our group how dismayed he is to be reminded how Jewish groups and other religious institutions must remain so vigilant as to their security," Rabbi Robuck said.

"What he said essentially was that

his government was committed to ensuring, as much as possible, the security of religious institutions like the synagogues and schools in our Jewish community."

Rabbi Robuck said O'Farrell also conveyed his intention "to make certain that religious leaders and the communities that they represent are heard, and that their interests are part of the debate."

The event also provided an opportunity for the leaders of the various religions to engage with one another. "There was a lot of commonality with respect to the issues that we all face," Rabbi Robuck said.