



Gosford student Talia Willis with Holocaust survivor Ivan Visontai.



Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College students at the B'nai B'rith Centre in Sydney.

## Students were so moved by Courage to Care, they wanted to hear more

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A GROUP of Gosford teenagers were so touched by the Courage to Care exhibition and the story of a Holocaust survivor that they made a special trip to Sydney to find out more.

After visiting the Sydney Jewish Museum and listening to survivor Ivan Visontai, many of the Year 9 students, from Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College, were reduced to tears.

A racial tolerance education program designed by B'nai B'rith, Courage to Care travels mostly to rural and regional Australia, promoting the message that each individual can make a difference in standing up against prejudice and discrimination.

"I didn't know much about the Jewish people and how they lived before I went to the exhibition and saw *Schindler's List* at school," said Gemma Kozierowski. "Now I'm going to ask

my grandparents about our heritage."

While Gemma isn't Jewish, her father and his family fled Poland to escape Communism in 1936. "They never talked about it and I never asked."

The students plied Hungarian-born Visontai with questions, such as: "If you saw one of the SS guards in the street, how would you react? Would you want revenge? How did you get on with your life after what happened?"

Visontai survived the Auschwitz, Blechhammer and Gleiwitz camps, immigrating to Australia in 1952.

"You cannot choose your forebearers and there are things in history that people are not proud of," he told the students. "Yet we can learn from our mistakes and not let them happen again."

In a letter to Visontai, classroom teacher Neil Fara wrote: "I felt it important to express my heartfelt grat-

itude to you for your inspirational seminar at Courage to Care. I found the experience extremely confronting and vital for my professional development."

"To have students request a second visit is an indication of the importance of your words. Over the last two weeks my students have demanded more information from the period."

At the second meeting, the students presented Courage to Care with artworks which they had painted. They included depictions of train tracks with the sun on the horizon, the entrance to a concentration camp and a portrait of Anne Frank.

Asked if she understood why survivors tell their stories, Talia Willis replied: "If they don't, other people won't know what happened. We are special; once there are no survivors left, our children will only hear the stories from us."