

JCCV CALLS ON JEWISH COMMUNITY TO HELP MEMBERS IN NEED

5 October 2009

John Searle, president of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria, the peak body of Victorian Jewry, said today:

“We are in the middle of Sukkot, *Zman Simchataynu*, a time of great rejoicing for our community. Sadly, however, some cannot take part in this joy due to their personal circumstances. World Mental Health Day (10 October) and Anti-Poverty Week (which runs from 11-17 October this year) are potent reminders of the difficulties some local Jews face.

To live in poverty or with mental illness is to live with uncertainty, indignity and harassment. Such concerns know no barriers. They cut across every imaginable line: age, country of background, social and levels of religiosity. Certainly some have been affected more than others. These include migrants from the former Soviet Union, the ultra-Orthodox, single parents, our aging population, the disabled and those Jews vilified for their sexual orientation. Indeed the Gen08 survey found that disabled Jews are sixteen times more likely to have missed a meal because of poverty than other members of the Jewish community. And same-sex attracted people are up to fourteen times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers.

We are a people traditionally generous with both time and money and a community abundant in organisations willing to assist those in need. Nonetheless, those of us who are able should strive to do better, by practising *Ahavas Yisrael* and by supporting our many and varied helping organisations. In particular, we should look at our fellow Jews with a charitable eye. We must encourage research, discussion and action to address these problems, including action by individuals, communities, organisations and governments that can make a long-term and lasting difference.

At Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we read that repentance, prayer and charity can affect our fate. I ask our affiliate organisations and individual members of the Victorian Jewish community to view this new year as an auspicious time to help our fellow Jews.”

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