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In from the outer

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April 7, 2010 by J-Wire Staff

Melbourne’s Jewish Care and the Australian Jewish Psychologists’ Group have representatives on a Jewish Community Council of Victoria group to address mental health, depression and suicide within the Gay and Lesbian community.



John Searle

John Searle, president of the JCCV said: “I am delighted that both Jewish Care and The Australian Jewish Psychologists Group (whose President, Dr Nicky Jacobs will have direct input) have seen fit to have representation on this reference group; their participation is vital. Indeed there are other organisations in our community which I believe will be able to make a valuable contribution to the work of this group. Research suggests that issues of depression, mental health disease and suicide are higher amongst people in the GLBT community. There is also evidence to suggest there are still serious issues of vilification and discrimination faced by people in this community. We need to come to grips with these matters, and ascertain the extent to which these problems are experienced within the Jewish GLBT community. The critical work of the reference group will then address

these issues as they exist in our community.”

Searle added, “I am on record as saying there is no place for vilification or discrimination and it must be understood that these sentiments apply equally to members of our GLBT community.”

Searle also noted that the meeting was very productive and harmonious. “We have a plan that will allow us to properly inform ourselves as to the extent of the problems faced within the Jewish GLBT community and all members of the reference group are highly motivated, enthusiastic and confident that we will be able to achieve a positive outcome.

Commencing in early 2010 our group will explore and develop strategies to address these issues as they relate to the GLBT community with a view to bringing together appropriate partnerships with service providers in our community. In due course we will be seeking input from these service providers in the Jewish community.”

Searle concluded by saying: “I am looking forward to receiving widespread support from members of the larger Jewish community in our attempt to end vilification and discrimination and to address these mental health issues.”

In Sydney Vic Alhadeff, CEO of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, told J-Wire: “Ten years ago, the Jewish float in the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras created great controversy in the community but nowadays no issues cross my desk relating to the GLBT members. In fact, we have a member of Dayenu, the GLBT group, on our plenum.”



Mardi Gras 2010

Roy Freeman, one of the organisers of Dayenu and the member to whom Alhadeff was referring, told J-Wire: “Gays and lesbians are twelve times more likely to attempt to commit suicide than the general community and 47% of transgender people are believed to attempt suicide. Coming out is not always the answer as many are ostracised by their families.”

Dayenu has plans to become a constituent member of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies. Freeman added: “We are putting into place all the prerequisites needed for membership and hope to be putting a motion to the Board for membership within the next few months.”

Rabbi Mendel Kastel, CEO of the Jewish House, told J-Wire: “We do not discriminate against anyone who needs help on the grounds of their sexuality.”

The Emanuel Synagogue in Sydney welcomes Gay and Lesbian participants. Rabbi Jeffrey Kamins told J-Wire: “Suicide is the major cause of death in men under 44. Where there is a need, we will continue to do our best...and I believe Temple Beth Israel and Leo Beck in Melbourne have the same policy.”

Report from Geoffrey Zygiar and Henry Benjamin

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[Michael Barnett](#) says:

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[April 7, 2010 3:56 pm at 3:56 pm](#)

Until the JCCV speaks out against religious intolerance of homosexuality (and bisexuality) and acknowledges it as a normal part of human sexuality it is not addressing the underlying reasons for the

extreme suffering and self-harm that same-sex attracted Jews experience.

It should be noted that the elevated suicide rate of same-sex attracted youth includes those who do not or cannot identify their sexuality publicly for reasons of fear caused by fear, often for reasons of religious belief.

I have spoken with John Searle in person about this matter and he refuses to talk to me about it because he is unprepared to acknowledge that the problem is mainly with orthodox Judaism. I have over 13 years experience of dealing with these matters from work I have done in the gay community, in addition to my own personal experience. Where does he draw his experience from?

I welcome this initiative, however I believe it will not succeed to reach the people who most need it while the leaders of the community refuse to address the real issues of religious intolerance and bigotry.



[Michael Barnett](#) says:

[April 8, 2010 1:44 pm at 1:44 pm](#)

Additionally, I have supplied John Searle with references to current research published by Dr Lynne Hillier and Suicide Prevention Australia that have established strong correlations between suicide and religious intolerance of homosexuality. This material can be reviewed here (<http://bit.ly/aPwkGt>) and here (<http://bit.ly/aSTEZp>).



[Michael Barnett](#) says:

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[April 9, 2010 12:06 am at 12:06 am](#)

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[April 13, 2010 9:32 am at 9:32 am](#)

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Could you please email a copy of the media release that you received from the JCCV to me at michael@aleph.org.au. Thanks.



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[April 17, 2010 2:14 am at 2:14 am](#)

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