

Attention: Geoffrey Zygiel - Executive Director JCCV / John Searle - President JCCV

January 8 2010

Dear Messrs Zygiel and Searle,

Over recent months it has been brought to the attention of the JCCV numerous times that any intolerance and oppression of same-sex attracted youth, whether due to religious reasons or otherwise, has been directly linked to serious mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicide.

In October 2009 the JCCV released a statement during Mental Health Week acknowledging the critically high rate of suicide in same-sex attracted people caused by intolerance of their sexuality.

Back in April 2008 the JCCV, under the presidency of Anton Block, called for a swift response to allegations of sexual abuse in the Melbourne Jewish Community, as reported in the Australian Jewish News.

It may not have been impressed clearly enough upon the JCCV as to the gravity of the nature of the abuse that same-sex attracted youth experience directly as a result of religious intolerance of their sexuality. By forcing a person into a state of depression or contemplation of suicide because they are told homosexuality is sinful, unacceptable, abnormal and contrary to religious beliefs constitutes psychological abuse. When this occurs in a child it becomes psychological child abuse. People who perpetrate this abuse are child abusers.

The community does not tolerate sexual child abuse. The community does not tolerate physical child abuse. The community continues to tolerate psychological child abuse.

People who are aware of perpetrators of sexual or physical abusers of children are obligated to take action to prevent this harm. The community is obligated to stamp it out. People who do not take action against this harm are complicit in the ongoing perpetration of the abuse.

The situation is the same when it comes to psychological child abuse. People who are aware of the abuse are obligated to prevent the harm against the children and the community is obligated to stamp it out. Currently the community remains silent on this abuse perpetrated by intolerance of homosexuality. This is completely unacceptable.

The JCCV has a solid track record of taking swift action when it becomes aware of damaging or harmful situations in the community. It has responded to sexual abuse claims, under-age drinking, anti-semitism, fundamentalist extremism etc. To date the JCCV has remained consistently silent on the matter of psychological child abuse perpetrated by intolerance of homosexuality. There is no excuse for this.

The JCCV lists amongst it's goals:

- Facilitation of harmony and positive relationships between the various elements of the Victorian Jewish community and between our community and the larger community
- A positive perception of Jews in Victorian society
- A thriving local Jewish community
- A safer local Jewish community

The JCCV needs to achieve its goals and fails to do so by not speaking out against this terrible abuse. It fails its members and it fails its community.

The JCCV has been aware of the extreme risks of intolerance of homosexuality since at least October 2009. It has not made a single statement specifically speaking out against the abhorrent practice of intolerance of homosexuality and lack of unconditional acceptance of same-sex attracted youth since then. It is now long overdue for a statement from the JCCV speaking out strongly against this specific psychological abuse. The entire Jewish community would benefit greatly by having a statement issued before another week goes by.

The President of the JCCV John Searle and other community leaders will become complicit in this ongoing psychological child abuse if they don't acknowledge the harm and speak out immediately.

Sincerely,  
Michael Barnett.  
Aleph Melbourne.