

JCCV: swift action must be taken on sexual abuse

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THE Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV) has called for a swift response to allegations of sexual abuse by a high-profile member of the Melbourne Jewish community reported in *The AJN* last week.

JCCV president Anton Block described the recent spate of alleged misconduct, which also included reports of inappropriate behaviour by a former principal of the Adass Israel girls school, as “ugly” and “distressing”.

“As the peak body of the Victorian Jewish community, our primary concern is for any victims of such behaviour and that appropriate action be taken to redress their concerns, be they health-related, social or legal,” Block said.

Block went on to express concern about the “secrecy” surrounding the incidents.

“No community is immune to

inappropriate behaviour. What is crucial, however, is that consequent wounds not be allowed to fester and become malignant. Decisive and prompt action and frankness will help to prevent this from happening.”

According to the president of the Rabbinical Council of Victoria, Rabbi Meir Shlomo Klwngant, the appropriate steps are being taken.

Rabbi Klwngant told *The AJN* that several high-level healthcare and legal professionals had agreed to assist with the process, as well as four social workers and psychologists.

“I can confirm we have consulted with Professor Leon Pittman [deputy dean of Monash University and the head of its school of primary health care] and other eminent professionals with regard to the process we have undertaken,” Rabbi Klwngant said.

“Mary Mass [social worker] has agreed to run the initial interviews [with victims] and we have asked

Professor Louis Waller [law professor] and another senior and respected members of the community to assist with legal advice to victims.”

Meanwhile, a national organisation, established and supported by leading Melbourne Jewish family foundations, has developed a program to help safeguard children from abuse. The Australian Council for Children and Youth Organisations, (ACCYO) this week offered the program to Jewish schools and the wider Jewish community.

“ACCYO’s Safeguarding Children Program provides a comprehensive set of standards and a transparent accreditation process,” CEO Katherine Sylvan said.

Established in 2001 as an initiative of the Jack and Robert Smorgon Families Foundation, ACCYO has also received philanthropic support from the Pratt, Besen, Gandel and Liberman family foundations.