

Attacks on gays

WE are writing to express the growing concern of the Victorian Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) community over increasing levels of vilifying and hateful material on local community websites and in letters.

We are concerned that any part of the Jewish community (itself a community that has faced and continues to face discrimination) can stand idly by and watch other communities face discrimination.

While it is neither the role nor purpose of any community organisation to police the views of all its members, it is the role of community leaders to set an example. To allow these views to continue, to not denounce them, is to be complicit in the effect they have.

Recent studies within the LGBTQ community have found that it is the ongoing and systematic discrimination of LGBTQ people that has the most devastating and long-lasting effects. To simply say that if we ignore it, it will go away is not enough.

It is essential that LGBTQ members of the Jewish community are not subjected to persecution by an ignorant and vocal minority, while the leadership (who may well be sympathetic) remain silent in the hope that it will go away more quickly.

HAYLEY CONWAY, SALLY GOLDNER
Victorian Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby, Melbourne

Support tolerance

THE Australian Jewish community needs to fully support policies of tolerance for homosexuals in conjunction with policies on anti-Semitism and any other forms of intolerance.

Some comments by extreme Orthodox Jewry impinge on the rights of homosexuals to live in the Jewish community with the tolerance that is the right of all Australians.

There is a perception by some in the Jewish community that Orthodox Judaism has a manifested intolerance toward homosexuals and publicly relays this intolerance via the letters pages of The AJN through some rabbis and other extremist individuals, with the full support and knowledge of its editorial management.

This is a public act and is capable of breaching the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act and its anti-vilification provisions, which state that it is unlawful for a person, by a public act, to incite hatred towards, serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of a person or group of persons on the grounds of their homosexuality.

The difficulty with freedom of expression is it must not incite ridicule, contempt or hatred against homosexuals. Racial provisions of the act are similar. Orthodox extremism may be inciting hate against homosexuals by way of its words and oral expression.

If we are ever going to dismantle hate and intolerance, we must firstly show some tolerance toward our own community members of difference. As an anti-discrimination campaigner, it is very important for me to ensure the war on intolerance and prejudice is overcome.

We must not let people hurt and suffer pain because some choose to echo God's word in reasoning that shuns homosexuals as perverted and sick community outcasts.

I ask the Jewish community to please consider this message and show tolerance to homosexual members in your community.

GARY BURNS
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