

To: John Searle (President, Jewish Community Council of Victoria)
Cc: Robert Goot (President, Executive Council of Australian Jewry)
Vic Alhadeff (CEO, NSW Jewish Board of Deputies)
Bob Stensholt (State MP for Burwood - Victoria)
Rob Hulls (Attorney General - Victoria)
Michael Danby (Federal MP for Melbourne Ports)
Scott Davis (Victoria Police Gay & Lesbian Advisory Unit)

Michael Barnett
2 / 24 Winbirra Parade
Ashwood VIC 3147

25 August 2009

Mr John Searle
President
Jewish Community Council of Victoria

Dear John,

Thank you for your considered response to my letter. You might be mistaking me for someone who is more interested in talk than action. Ignominious platitudes aren't going to bring back the young boy who decides the only way out of the shame of his filthy homosexual orientation, a shame brought upon him by fervent Jewish religious attitudes that teach that homosexuality is a crime far worse than bestiality or incest, is by taking his own life. Hollow rhetoric isn't going to stop the psychopath who goes on a shooting spree at a gay youth event and kills the children and grandchildren of the people your organisation aims to protect simply because he believes that homosexuals are perverted and depraved dreck (shit).

This extreme language is not mine, but that being spoken by the people in your community who you tell me will go away if we just ignore them. Imagine if we just ignored the Nazis and let them finish their work.

The peak body of the Australian Jewish community, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), does not have a single statement on homophobia. I actually question its priorities and wonder if it is simply a self-serving bag of hot air or if it really gives a damn. First on its list of priorities is Israel. I would have thought that an organisation that spoke on behalf of the Australian Jewish community would actually put Australia first and place some importance on the welfare of Australians. Go figure.

Somewhere later on the list of priorities is antisemitism, hate crimes, Aboriginal Reconciliation, Climate Change, the Internet and Jewish divorce. Interestingly Young Adult Representation and Jewish Burial Rights are side by side, although with the degree of importance currently afforded to preventing homophobic attitudes and hate within the community, space could be saved by simply merging them into Jewish Young Adult Burial.

The Jewish Community Council of Victoria and NSW Jewish Board of Deputies policy platforms are devoid of any mention of homophobia as well. Are there any homosexuals in these states of Australia that need protection?

I've heard enough lip-service from the community leaders and demand action. The policy statements of every Jewish peak body in the country must include an unambiguous statement on homophobic hate and intolerance and the same zero-

tolerance afforded to antisemitism must be bestowed on these anti-homophobia policies. The community must then uphold these policies accordingly and speak out and act fast when homophobic intolerance arises.

The Prime Minister of Israel Binyamin Netanyahu has the fortitude to speak out against intolerance of gays and lesbians and tell the world that everyone deserves respect. When is the Jewish community leadership going to grow some leadership skills and take a stance that shows the community it is actually doing something tangible to look after the welfare of the people it is charged to protect. The white elephant in the room is that the leadership are scared to offend the Orthodox community by "getting into bed with the homosexuals". However you will actually be doing something useful if you take this stance, rather than pandering to their precious religious sensitivities.

If you are after an apology, then the only apology forthcoming is that I am sorry I didn't take this stance sooner. To date no one else has had the courage to stand up to the egos and self-importance of the community leadership. You may be unaware but this matter has a wide and respected audience at the moment and it is getting wider. There needs to be fast change before it's too late and more people are hurt in the community.

In closing, I would like you to ponder the delicious irony of this statement.

"The Victorian Jewish community believes that the real clash in today's world is not between civilisations as some contend, but within each civilisation or religion, a clash between the forces of extremism and those of moderation and acceptance of diversity. We must give the moderates the tools to fight the former." - John Searle, JCCV President, 2009

Sincerely,
Michael Barnett.
Aleph Melbourne