

MEDIA RELEASE

GAY & LESBIAN JEWS ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE WITH THE JEWISH
COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF VICTORIA

December 7 2009

In an historic meeting on Thursday December 4 2009 at the Beth Weizmann Community Centre between the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV) and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) members of the Jewish community, discussions were had forging the way for increased inclusion, acceptance and visibility of GLBT Jews in the Jewish Community in Victoria.

In a letter to Aleph Melbourne, a social and support group for GLBT Jews, JCCV Executive Director Geoffrey Zygier wrote "The JCCV wants to get a better understanding of Gay Jews' concerns" and added that "John [Searle] has made clear, under his presidency the JCCV has reaffirmed its opposition to vilification and affirmed its wish to [be] as inclusive as possible". Zygier went on to add that "However the details of what form this might take have to be worked out; we're still at the information-gathering stage."

Aleph Melbourne co-ordinator Michael Barnett welcomed this opportunity for dialogue with the JCCV, particularly in light of recent incidents involving homophobic intolerance and hatred directed at GLBT Jews in Melbourne and in Israel.

Attending the meeting were gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Jews from a diverse range of religious and cultural backgrounds. A variety of issues were raised and discussed in a healthy and at times robust manner with the JCCV representatives. A seven-point list of suggestions (see attachment) of how the JCCV could increase the inclusion, acceptance and visibility of GLBT people in the Jewish community was presented at the meeting. In a positive step, JCCV President John Searle advised he would discuss the issues raised at the next Executive meeting of the JCCV in 2010 and report back as to how the organisation plans to approach the issue.

Whilst raising the issue of membership of the JCCV as a way for GLBT Jewish organisations to gain greater inclusion and visibility within the Jewish community, Barnett stated that this was not currently on the agenda and had not been since the JCCV rejected Aleph Melbourne's initial membership application in 1999 due to the uncertain process by which the JCCV determines suitability of applicants.

Aleph Melbourne looks forward to further dialogue between the JCCV and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender members of the Jewish community in 2010 and waits for homophobic intolerance in the community and barriers to equality, inclusion, acceptance and visibility to be identified and eliminated.

For further comment contact Michael Barnett on 0417 595 541 or via contact@aleph.org.au.