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Victorian Jewry to connect with Gay and Lesbian Members

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January 4, 2010 by J-Wire Staff

The Jewish Community Council of Victoria has established a reference group to address vilification and mental issues experienced by Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender [GLBT] members.



John Searle

JCCV president John Searle and the organisation's immediate past president Anton Block met with Jewish members of the GLBT in mid-December to map a way forward through the new reference group. Searle said: "Anton and I will be members of the reference group as will all those present at the meeting and others may be added as agreed over time."

Searle added: "The vilification of any member of the Jewish community in Victoria is intolerable. So are mental health issues occasioned by exclusion. The JCCV recognises that its role extends beyond the so-called mainstream and intends to work with all members in ways that are acceptable to the entire community."

The first meetings are scheduled to take place early this year.

The JCCV has issued a statement stating that they wish "to bring disconnected Jews back to our community". The Gen08 survey showed that 94% of Australian Jews feel some connection, no matter how slight, with the Jewish community.

Michael Barnett, a member of Melbourne's Jewish gay community, told J-Wire: "At least it's a step in the right direction...and we have been more aware of the need for action following the incident in August when a gunman burst into a community centre in Tel Aviv being used by gays and shot 17 people, two of whom died. My concerns are for those who live within a family structure where they have not been able to reveal their sexual orientation. Statistics show there is a suicide rate within this group 14 times higher than the general community. Any work being done to ease their burden will be most welcome."

The group will develop strategies with a view to bring together partnerships with service providers in the Jewish community.

Rsbbi Ya'akov Glasman is president of the Rabbinical Council of Victoria. He told J-Wire: "This issue is on our agenda for a meeting coming up this week and I cannot say anything until it has been discussed by the Council."

Tags: [gay](#), [lesbian](#)

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2 Responses to "Victorian Jewry to connect with Gay and Lesbian Members"



1. [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[January 7, 2010 11:46 am at 11:46 am](#)

Whilst any effort to reduce discrimination against gay and lesbian Jews is commendable, the JCCV's exclusive reference group is going to fall short of addressing the most critical issues.

In a (previous) confrontational meeting on December 3 2009 between the JCCV's John Searle & Anton Block (Immediate Past President) and ten GLBT Jews, Searle declared that "The Jewish religion has a particular stance on homosexuality", inferring the orthodox intolerance of homosexuality was the only valid Jewish perspective. In making this highly inflammatory supremacist statement Searle not only demonstrates his refusal to condemn intolerance of homosexuality but he also shows a blatant disregard for other legitimate Jewish perspectives on homosexuality, such as the Progressive community's overwhelmingly accepting view on the matter.

With current Australian research showing same-sex attracted people experience a suicide rate of up to 14 times higher than the norm, particularly in religious communities, Searle has to stop pandering to the harmful orthodox view on homosexuality in order to be taken seriously. He is after all supposed to be representing the entire Victorian community.

Michael Barnett.
Co-ordinator,
Aleph Melbourne.



2. [watcher](#) says:
[January 15, 2010 2:09 pm at 2:09 pm](#)

Comment on
<http://ajnwatch.blogspot.com/2010/01/jccv-looking-for-problems.html>

Hasn't the JCCV learned from the past that pandering to the noisy – and miniscule – gay lobby is a recipe for another debacle?

Have they already forgotten the warnings of the late and lamented Rabbi Chaim Gutnick z"l about this matter?

Do they really again wish to alienate the rabbis, the orthodox Shuls and the traditional and even irreligious members of the Victoria Jewish community who are either totally opposed to giving this group of individuals a voice on the community's official forum or are bored and disinterested with the bleating of a few troublemakers?

Reading the AJN article, the question that comes to mind is, how soon can we expect the JCCV to "establish a reference group to better understand" Jewish chazzir-fressers, Jewish Shabbos-violators, Jewish thieves and Jewish Hindus?

And isn't this an opening for "Jews for Jesus", who in the eyes of many, are no less worthy than practicing 'proud' homosexuals. (And then how far will we be before the JCCV looks into "Gay Jews for Jesus"...?)

John Searle should be VERY wary of trying to act "politically-correct" by engaging with such persons in the name of the JCCV.

We understand that they may need help with health and mental issues, suicide prevention, discrimination or any other matter.

Let them go to any of the dozens of organizations that have been established for homosexuals specifically for this purpose. After all, Jewish and non-Jewish homosexuals generally have the same problems and issues. And should a specific "Jewish" matter arise, they can visit a rabbi in private and advice will surely be forthcoming.

We sincerely hope that Searle will come to his senses. Otherwise the other members of the executive should take steps to remove him from the presidency. It simply is not worth destroying the community's main representative group for the sake of a few troubled people.

Searle should understand that the orthodox communities – together with those who do not believe that homosexuality is a specific Jewish problem – are by far the largest proportion of the Jewish population. It makes no sense to upset them needlessly.

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