

Orthodox-Liberal progress on 'gett'

PRACTICES now being adopted by the Progressive Jewish movement in Australia in relation to granting of a *gett* (religious bill of divorce) could pave the way towards an Orthodox - Liberal understanding on the issue, ECAJ president Isi Leibler said this week.

He said whilst no halachically acceptable Orthodox formula had been established, progress in practical terms had been highly encouraging.

Mr Leibler and former president of the Victorian Union for Progress-

sive Judaism Walter Jona jointly chair the Orthodox-Liberal Dialogue Group in Melbourne.

The group, set up some three years ago, continues to explore areas of agreement on some of the most delicate issues facing the Jewish community.

Both Mr Leibler and Mr Jona were reluctant to discuss the details of the dialogue group's initiatives on a number of sensitive issues.

But both expressed delight at the harmonious manner in which the

members of the group have been co-operating.

Besides Mr Leibler and Mr Jona members of the group are Jack Bock, Peter Cohen, Barry Fradkin, Caryn Granek, Rabbi Professor Bertram Mond and Professor Louis Waller.

"Although achievement at this stage has been modest, the existence and objectives of the dialogue group is relatively unique in the Jewish world and has significance well beyond the Melbourne Jewish community," Mr Leibler said.

Stress on fun for Yom Ha'atzmaut

Victor Kleerekoper

YOM HA'ATZMAUT celebrations in Melbourne this year will be "more participatory" than in previous years, State Zionist Council president Tom Borsky said this week.

Besides the main Yom Ha'atzmaut concert in the Melbourne Concert Hall there will be two other communal events where people will be able to let their hair down, he said.

Because festivities are proscribed during the Omer period, the State Zionist Council will hold two major functions on Rosh Chodesh Iyar, Sunday April 30 where members of the community will be able to be actively involved.

The first is a family oriented Israeli Carnival at Luna Park from 10am to 1.30pm where there will be all the fun of the fair. This will include activities by the Zionist youth movements, games, rides, food, Israeli music, bands, an



opportunity to learn Israeli dancing, face painting, puzzle making, jugglers and clowns. Cost of this function is \$25 per family or \$8 per person.

From 5pm that day the SZC has organised an Israeli dance party at Ormond Hall. Cost of this event is \$10 per person and will include an Israeli buffet.

On Yom Ha'atzmaut itself,

Wednesday May 3, there will be the traditional Yom Ha'atzmaut Concert at the Melbourne Concert Hall.

Special guest artists this year will be duo Orly Terri and Ben Ami Halaf with music director Yair Stavi. Local guests artists will include Evelyn Krape, Tomi Kalinski, Raoul Salter, Shalom Australia Folkloric Group, Brett Kaye, Susie Davies and Phillip Splitter, Jonathan Feder, Combined Jewish School and Communal Choirs, ZYC Flag Parade and Dance Group.

There will also be the annual Yom Ha'atzmaut cocktail party for the general community at the Melbourne Town Hall.

"We want the community to join in the celebrations and not just sit and watch," Mr Borsky said.

"Within the constraints of the Jewish calendar we want to make this period as joyous and happy as we can".

Jewish lesbians 'encouraged' by community response to stall

Margaret Safran

THE JEWISH Lesbian Group came out publicly for the first time at a Jewish function last Sunday when they ran a stall at Concert in the Park.

The group's stall attracted plenty of attention but "no negative response", according to Julie ("I'd rather not tell you my surname as I don't want to upset my parents who are very well known in the community") who was staffing the stall.

Numerous passers-by stopped to look at the books about Judaism, women and lesbianism on display. Some passed on without comment; others were curious to find out more about the group.

Julie said the Jewish Lesbian Group formed three years ago when a few Jewish women met at the Lesbian Fair. They decided to put an advertisement in a lesbian newsletter asking if there were other Jewish women interested in forming a group. The group now has about 30 members of all ages including singles and couples, a few married women and mothers, Julie said.

The group placed an advertisement in the *Australian Jewish News* a few years ago and received a number of very negative phone calls. But Julie said she was "very encouraged" by the positive attention the group had received at Concert in the Park.

"We are a member of a minority group within a minority group. I think people realise what it is to be hated for what you are," she said.

Nonetheless many of the group members, some of whom worked at Jewish communal organisations or

were going for jobs in the community, felt they could not afford publicly at the stall. Even Julie, a forthright woman who publicly wears a chain with both a Star of David and the double-woman lesbian symbol, said her heart "kept on going double-time".

The group also displayed a sign giving a Caulfield post office box as a contact point for the Jewish Gay Men's Support Group.

"I don't know whether it is that we are more political or just more ready to come out publicly than the men. But you've got to start somewhere. It's very much a case of one step forward, one step back," Julie said.

Concert in the Park organiser Doodle Ringelblum said there was some discussion on the committee about permitting the lesbian group's stall.

"But basically the feeling was that as a festival we were trying to represent the entire community. And if a group within the community wanted to run a stall, we should let them," he said.

Dr Ringelblum said the committee did not discuss which groups were holding stalls with other groups in the community. But he said there had been no unfavourable comments from anyone about any of the groups. Most people were very impressed by how well the diverse groups cooperated with one another and shared resources.

▲ For further information about the Jewish Lesbian Group, contact Sara 489-9669.

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