

JEWISH COMMUNITY **SPLIT** ON PARADE COVERAGE

The editor of Australian Jewish News has been called before the Jewish Court of Australia, the Beth Din, to explain his newspaper's coverage of the first motorised Jewish Float in the Mardi Gras Parade.

The Beth Din, or house of judgement, possesses no legal powers in this country but its five senior Orthodox rabbis have taken issue with the paper's decision to run both pictures and editorial regarding the Jewish gay and lesbian presence at Mardi Gras.

"The Stars of David Come Out" float consisted of 160 gay and lesbian Jews and their supporters sporting pink Stars of David and were led by American lesbian Rabbi Ariel Friedlander.

Rabbi Moshe Gutnick, president of the New South Wales Rabbinical Council, confirmed that his organisation had requested the summons of the paper's editor. Rabbi Gutnick added: "The council felt that coverage of the Mardi Gras did not fit with traditional Jewish values and

our expectations of a Jewish family newspaper."

In this week's Australian Jewish News twenty-eight prominent members of the Jewish community (including eight professors, three judges, two authors and three former presidents of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry) have reacted to such orthodox views by making a "position statement".

This stated: "It is time we adopted a more realistic, enlightened and inclusive attitude instead of burying our collective heads in the sand, and pursuing prejudiced and intolerant views which have prevailed for so long. Homophobia is destructive to the entire community. It fosters hypocrisy, engenders deceit and destroys lives."

The latest edition also contains over two pages of letters of support and congratulation from both the local community and around the world for the exposure given to the Jewish gay and lesbian participation in Mardi Gras.