

FREEDOM OF PRESS UPHELD IN JEWISH FLOAT DEBATE



Michael Kraus of Stars of David Come Out as featured on the March cover of the Australian Jewish News.

Photo: Dvir Bar-Gal

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Editor of *Australian Jewish News*, Vic Alhadeff, has decided not to attend a meeting called by the Beth Din, the Jewish high ecclesiastical body, about his newspaper's decision to report on the Jewish float. The Stars of David Come Out, in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade (SSO 500).

"I informed them that after careful consideration we do not think it is appropriate to attend such a meeting," Alhadeff told *Sydney Star Observer*. He cited independence of the paper and perceptions of credibility as the reason for this decision.

He said in the last three weeks the paper had received over 100 letters from around the world supporting either gay and lesbian Jews or the newspaper's stance, or both. An advertisement signed by a number of prominent Sydney Jews appeared in the *Jewish News* on Thursday 23 March, supporting gay and lesbian Jews and calling for "a more realistic, enlightened and inclusive attitude"

In another move a hetero-

sexual supporter of the Jewish group who marched is putting on a benefit concert for the Dayenu Association, the Sydney lesbian and gay Jewish group which organised the float.

Writer and performer, Geoff Sirmai, has invited New Zealand Jewish lesbian comic Deb Filler to perform on the night, which he has called *The Stars of David Come Out To Play*. Sydney performers Shelley Silberman and Jackie Loeb will also feature. The benefit will be held on Sunday 16 April at the Hakoah Club at Bondi from 8pm. Also speaking will be author Diane Armstrong, Vic Alhadeff and Dawn Cohen from Dayenu.

"There's been an outpouring of support from the mainstream Jewish community," Sirmai told *Sydney Star Observer*. "It's a way of saying, 'I'm with you I'm appalled ignore them, ignore them'" he said. Tickets for the benefit cost \$30 and bookings can be made on 9130 3344.