

# Beth Din: The issue is Jewish journalistic ethics

THE Sydney Beth Din (Jewish Ecclesiastical Court) has issued a statement in response to the *Australian Jewish News'* coverage of the Mardi Gras. The full statement reads as follows:

"The issue is not whether homosexuality is approved or disapproved by Judaism. On this the answer is that it is prohibited by the Torah, and no *Halachic* authority has ever said otherwise. The issue is not whether there are some Jews who follow a homosexual lifestyle. The fact is that there are, and no-one has the right to persecute them, despite the fact that Judaism cannot condone homosexual acts.

"The issue is not whether the

Mardi Gras is part of the Sydney scene. The answer is that it seems to have become so, despite its immodesty and vulgarity.

"The issue is how a Jewish newspaper should handle some Jewish people's participation in the Mardi Gras. It is thus a question of Jewish journalistic ethics.

"The fact is that Jewish newspapers are often called upon to exercise responsibility and restraint, and there have been many occasions when the *Jewish News* has decided it was better not to publish something or to publish it in a limited way.

"From that viewpoint, synagogues, schools, communal and



**Beth Din Registrar Rabbi Raymond Apple**

Zionist organisations, welfare agencies and cultural facilities all have an obvious place in a Jewish paper. All, in their own way, promote Jewish ideology and destiny. But that cannot be said for an activity which contradicts an explicit teaching of Torah; a Jewish activity cannot be founded on the rejection of a Jewish principle. Further instead of assisting Jewish continuity, it makes it more difficult, since by definition it cannot create a future generation. It has no inherently Jewish ethos, ethic or ideology.

"A responsible Jewish newspaper cannot and must not give the impression that everything that some Jews do is automatically a

legitimate Jewish activity. It is not likely to want to appear to favour, for example a Bondi Road parade of Jews who (if they exist) make a point of committing adultery.

"A Jewish newspaper has to have standards, and one of them has to be receptivity and sensitivity to the voice of Torah."

The statement was signed by Beth Din *dayanim* (judges) Rabbis Raymond Apple, Selwyn Franklin, Moshe Gutnick, David Rogut and Yoram Ulman, as well as by Rabbi Gutnick in his capacity as president of the NSW Rabbinical Council and Rabbi Selwyn Franklin as president of the Organisation of Rabbis of Australasia.