

# Progressives give green light to gay union ceremonies

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THE Union for Progressive Judaism's (UPJ)'s rabbinical council has voted to allow rabbis to officiate at same-sex commitment ceremonies.

In a landmark decision, the Council of Progressive Rabbis of Australia, New Zealand and Asia (Moetzah) voted at its May 28-30 meeting in Adelaide to adopt an American Reform resolution reached in 2000.

A statement this week from the 17-member rabbinical Moetzah said it "resolves to permit but not require its rabbis to officiate at same-gender commitment ceremonies between two Jews. We commit ourselves to ongoing discussion of the nature of such ceremonies."

Moetzah chair Rabbi Jeffrey Kamins, who is head rabbi at Sydney's Temple Emanuel Woollahra, said the decision to permit but not require member rabbis to officiate at gay-union ceremonies was made "because



**Temple Emanuel Woollahra's Rabbi Jeffrey Kamins ... rabbis will now look at various US models for commitment ceremonies.**

some are not ready to officiate personally and others are not sure if their communities are ready for them to officiate".

He said rabbis will now look at various US models for commitment ceremonies and will make decisions on the detail of the ceremonies at the next Moetzah meeting in Hobart in October.

Jewish gay and lesbian group Dayenu welcomed the decision, at the same time calling for tolerance from the wider community.

"The decision to allow a choice fills us with hope and pride in the work of the Moetzah and the Progressive con-

gregations which were consulted in this decision," the group said in a statement this week.

"We applaud the Moetzah's recognition of this, and pray that those opposed to it will eventually see it as a complementary institution to that of marriage."

The Australasian decision is based on a seven-year-old Central Conference of American Rabbis resolution, which stated: "The relationship of a Jewish same-gender couple is worthy of affirmation through appropriate Jewish ritual."

The local vote came after a series of forums at UPJ congregations last month to discuss the issue of same-gender commitment ceremonies.

Rabbi Kamins said that while no gay commitment ceremonies are scheduled as yet, some couples in Sydney "fit the criteria and have expressed interest for a Jewish commitment ceremony".

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