

# JCCV group focuses on mental health

PETER KOHN

JEWISH Care and the Australian Jewish Psychologists Group have become partners with the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV) in promoting the wellbeing of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) members of the community.

In addition, Jewish GLBT advocates in Sydney are now calling for a similar subcommittee to be established across the border.

The JCCV GLBT reference group, which was formed late last year in response to community concerns about discrimination, met last week to forge strategies and plan partnerships with medical and social service providers.

JCCV president John Searle said Dr Nicky Jacobs, president of the psychologists' group, will have direct input to the reference group.

"Research suggests that issues of depression, mental health disease and suicide are higher among people in the GLBT community," he said.

"There is also evidence to suggest there are still serious issues of vilification and discrimination faced by people in this community."

"We need to come to grips with these matters, and ascertain the extent to which these problems are experienced within the Jewish GLBT community. The critical work of the reference group will then

address these issues as they exist in our community."

The JCCV president also highlighted the importance of getting Jewish schools involved.

"Young people at school who are facing issues concerning their sexual orientation may be faced with issues of bullying or discrimination. We need to better understand that and better educate our community, so that doesn't occur."

"We're able to put both the GLBT perspective and the Jewish perspective together and work out the best solution."

**Sally Goldner**  
Spokesperson,  
TransGender Victoria

Sally Goldner, a member of the JCCV reference group and a spokesperson for TransGender Victoria, told *The AJN* the initiative "can reach across to people who, on the surface, might not understand these issues".

"We're able to put both the GLBT perspective and the Jewish perspective together and work out the best solution," she said.

Roy Freeman of Sydney-

based Jewish GLBT group Dayenu hailed the reference group's work and said he hoped a similar group could be established within the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies (JBD).

"It's good to see that finally the JCCV is acknowledging that there are issues," he said. "There's been a lot of animosity between the JCCV and the [GLBT] community.

"It would be good to see [the JCCV] working with some other GLBT organisations as well, such as LGBT Health, which is an Australia-wide organisation," he said.

Dayenu is currently in the process of applying for JBD membership and Freeman is urging the NSW roof body to formulate a policy on Sydney's Jewish GLBT community.

He quoted statistics on suicide prevention that show that GLBT Australians are 12-14 times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual counterparts.

"Unfortunately, there hasn't been any similar research within the Jewish community specifically, but there's no reason to believe those statistics would be any better. I believe those mental health issues are connected to the attitude towards homosexuality from certain parts of the Jewish community," Freeman said.