

Respect the key

THROUGHOUT history, Jewish people have rallied for political causes on a diverse range of matters. In just the past few centuries, Jewish political thinkers have been among the world's most influential – think Karl Marx, Theodor Herzl and Henry Kissinger. They have also been among the most controversial. Dreaming up Communism, politicising Zionism and resuming American diplomatic connections with “red” China were among the groundbreaking actions of these men.

This week's cover story, detailing the Rabbinic Council of Progressive Rabbis' decision to lobby the Government for marriage equality in Australia, is no different. The cause is most controversial, and at the moment, does not have the support of the Government or the Opposition.

But just as Marx, Herzl and Kissinger believed in what they were doing and ignored the naysayers, so too is the Progressive movement.

After agreeing to perform same-sex commitment ceremonies more than a year ago, Progressive rabbis have decided to go public and speak out on an issue they feel passionate about; an issue they believe is supported by the thousands of Progressive Jews Australia-wide.

That is not to say those who affiliate with other branches of Judaism are going to support or even accept the new policy. But it is necessary that the rest of the community responds to the new policy with respect.

The AJN is calling for a calm discussion on marriage equality – or the right for men to marry men and women to marry women if they so choose.

This newspaper understands that if one is to take a literal reading of the Torah and its explanations, same-sex marriage is not accepted under Jewish law. The Progressive community believes it has found a way to promote halacha, while also advocating for legal same-sex marriage, by appealing to the passage in Bereshit where we learn that God created all human beings in his image.

Regardless of your views, respect and treating your fellow human being as you wish to be treated are principles we should all live by. These principles need to be applied to all, regardless of Jewish affiliation or sexual orientation, and need to be applied to this debate.