

Dayenu marches with pride

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A sea of Jews clad in red and white joined the Dayenu float last weekend to celebrate the 36th Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

It is the 14th year that Dayenu, the Jewish Community's LGBTI group, has participated in the parade.

Dayenu's president Jo Cohen said participants ranged from teenagers to people over the age of 60 and included profoundly religious as well as secular Jewish people.

"Gay and lesbian Jews danced and lit up Oxford Street to Whitney Houston's *I Will Always Love You*, [it was] an incredible night," she said.

"The huge Magen David with a heart inside led the way depicting our theme of 'Love/Ahava', love each other. The atmosphere and reception from the crowd was electrifying.

"We need to love each other and love together and I wanted to create something that had the symbol of love inside our actual Jewish symbol ... It's a metaphor to say we can love from within whoever we are."

The previous evening, participants enjoyed a special Shabbat service and dinner at Emanuel Synagogue.

Dayenu also received a letter of support from the Union for Progressive Judaism (UPJ) prior to the Mardi Gras.

The letter addressed the continu-



100 paraders march alongside the Dayenu float.

Photo: Tomer Hasson

ous struggles for gay and lesbian rights.

"The parade celebrates the 36th anniversary of the continuing struggle for human rights and equality waged by, and for, LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex) citizens in Australia, including those in the Jewish and broader community," the letter said.

"It should also provide a strong reminder to us all that there are still many places in the world where people are not only denied these basic rights but are being persecuted because of their sexual orientation. The Jewish people's adoption of the

mantra 'Never again' following the Shoah was to remind society of the devastating destruction caused by the evil forces of the Nazi regime against not only the Jewish people but against many other sections of society, including homosexual men who were forced to wear a pink triangle.

"As we celebrate the many achievements of the gay and lesbian movement in Australia in making our society more fair and open, the Union for Progressive Judaism calls on our community to use the freedom that we enjoy to condemn all who perpetuate discrimination and persecution based on ignorance."