

Beth Din asks editor to meet

THE editor of the *Australian Jewish News*, Vic Alhadeff, has been requested to attend a meeting with Sydney's rabbinic leadership to discuss the newspaper's coverage of the Sydney Mardi Gras.

NSW Rabbinical Council president Rabbi Moshe Gutnick informed the *AJN* that the Council had called on the Sydney Beth Din to



Professor Ron Penny

facilitate a meeting between the two organisations and the *AJN*. "The Council felt that coverage of the Mardi Gras did not fit with traditional Jewish values and our expectations of a Jewish family newspaper," Rabbi Gutnick said.

The *AJN* this week received more than 60

letters in support of its coverage — and none opposing — from places as diverse as Nepal, Singapore, San Francisco, London and the Blue Mountains. There were also letters from immunologist Professor Ron Penny, NSW Australian Medical Association president Dr Kerryn Phelps — who recently converted to Judaism at Temple Emanuel — and B'nai B'rith NSW chairman Ernie Friedlander, the latter two writing in their private capacities.

And 28 prominent members of the community — including eight professors, three judges, two authors and three former presidents of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry — have placed an advertisement in this week's *AJN* endorsing its coverage of the issue. The signatories include Justice Mahla Pearlman, Judges Peter Rose and Ron Solomon, Professors Ron Penny, Peter Baume, David Cooper, Colin Tatz, Sol Encel, Graham de Vahl Davis, John Brodaty and John Ziegler, authors Diane Armstrong and Alan Gold, and former ECAJ presidents Leslie Caplan, Dr Joachim Schneelweiss and Diane Shteinman.

Stating that "homosexuality is part of the human condition and exists within our community", the signatories say "the conspiracy of silence and denial which has surrounded this issue has caused anguish to many ... Our community newspaper is the logical forum for the discussion of important social matters, and the editor is to be applauded for taking the lead in airing this important issue, open discussion of which is long overdue."

Meanwhile, NSW Jewish Board of Deputies president Peter Wertheim and Shalom Institute chief executive officer Dr Hilton Immerman have been requested to appear before the Beth Din for a *Din Torah* (Torah judgment). The latter request is believed to be in connection with the fact that The Shalom Institute hired out its premises for a Shabbat service and dinner on the eve of the Mardi Gras.

■ **Shalom Institute attacks "bigotry", page 8**
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