

Emphasis on social justice

It was with great pleasure that I renewed my subscription to the *Australian Jewish News* last week.

I reflected on how the newspaper has improved over the last few months, presenting news and articles of interest to the Jewish community in all its diversity.

The newspaper's emphasis on social justice, creating awareness of injustice, whether it be towards the Aboriginal community, Kosovar refugees or the Jewish gay community. I am proud to subscribe to the *Australian Jewish News*.

Congratulations on your coverage of the Jewish participation in the Sydney Mardi Gras. There are those who would prefer that the subject was never aired openly, but Jewish gays do exist, and many wish to participate as part of the Jewish community.

This is a controversial issue, and the *Australian Jewish News* has maintained journalistic integrity by printing the differing points of view. My most important concern is that we all accept that there is diversity in the community, and that everyone should be allowed to express their point of view, and most importantly, respect each other's different attitudes.

The NSW Jewish Board of Deputies is doing an excellent job in trying to do just that.

Vicki Israel
Chatswood, NSW

Indebted

"THE Stars of David Come Out ... To Play", which featured performances by Deb Filler, Jackie Loeb and Shelly Silberman, was impressive. However, they were just the icing on the cake.

The really impressive stuff was the 250-plus paying audience who represented a good cross-section of the Sydney community, including some not-so-Orthodox rabbis. Most touching were the deeply personal and apt addresses by Dawn Cohen (Dayenu Association) and Diane Armstrong (author, parent and supporter).

Professor Graham de Vahl Davis (a former president of the NSW Jewish

Board of Deputies) spoke movingly and pragmatically. He used language that appropriately paralleled that of the Sydney Beth Din. He demonstrated that the Beth Din probably does not really reflect the silent majority presumed by the likes of the absent Isi Leibler, who now lives in Israel.

The pluralistic members of the Jewish community are indebted to those who organised, facilitated and participated in this event.

There are too many to list them all specifically. Other than those mentioned above, however, I'd be remiss if I did not mention Geoff Sirmal for his energy and commonsense, and that unhappy, misguided lady for creating the environment for change. Thank-you, all. Maybe this community of ours is getting just a little more tolerant after all.

Paul Reti
Sydney, NSW

I agree

I FULLY agree with your comments re the Kosovar refugees (*AJN* 14/4/00). We should have let them stay. I am glad you mentioned Germany, Canada and the United States accepting these desperate people. I'm sure many of them would have loved to have settled in the country areas of Australia, which would have welcomed them with open arms. Shame, Mr Ruddock, shame.

L J Levi
Rose Bay, NSW

Press responsibility

I WISH to comment on the excerpt of a statement made by Rabbi Raymond Apple on his OzTorah email (*AJN* 21/4/00).

I completely agree with the rabbi that the issue is one of "press responsibility". No-one suggests that any activity outside a religious one involving Jews is a "Jewish activity". The *Jewish News* merely reports on activities in which Jews participate, and it has a responsi-

bility to its readers to do so — whatever the personal view of the editor. The reporting should be just that — a report, not a critique. The place for the editor's personal view is the editorial — and that's just where his comments were made.

Jenny Rose
Woollahra NSW

We exist

AS a proud Jewish lesbian, I have been following with interest your coverage of Mardi Gras. I would like to congratulate the *Australian Jewish News* for its courage in reporting extensively on lesbian and gay issues. It is all too obvious that a small element in the Jewish community prefers to believe that Jewish gays and lesbians do not exist. I am seriously considering taking out a subscription to the Sydney *AJN*.

Sara Elkas
Melbourne, Vic

Have you forgotten?

THIS is not another letter concerning the recent controversy about Jewish gay people, the Beth Din or freedom of the press.

No, this is a letter to all those in the Jewish community, rabbis and congregations, leaders and followers.

Many of you survived discrimination, oppression, persecution and worse. I ask you in the name of your parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters and children to re-live now how you yourselves felt when all this was happening. I ask you to consider how it must feel for your Jewish brethren who happen to be gay, and who are oppressed, criticised, ostracised and even vilified by many in the community of which they are a part.

If you can't feel, and even more importantly, show compassion for, these young people both young and old, then you are no better than those who oppressed you yourselves so many years ago. Have you forgotten?

Michael Armstrong
Bondi Junction, NSW