

Rabbis claim *AJN* poll flawed on same-sex ceremonies

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A SPOKESMAN for Sydney's only Jewish gay and lesbian organisation, Dayenu, says Sydney's Orthodox rabbis have lost touch with the community following an *AJN* poll that revealed 97 per cent of respondents supported same-sex commitment ceremonies.

The online poll, which asked, "Should Progressive rabbis perform same-sex commitment ceremonies for gay and lesbian Jews?", received more than 1700 responses, well above the usual number of responses received each week.

Malcolm Davidowitz from Dayenu said he had known for a number of years that the community supported his cause and that, after the poll results, the rabbis should listen.

"The rabbis have lost touch with the community. They keep saying that the community does not have its head around the idea of gay and lesbians, but really it is the rabbis who have the problem," 45-year-old Davidowitz said.

"The rabbis have to realise that things change and people's lifestyles have changed. If religion does not evolve, then people simply move further away from it."

Rabbi Eli Cohen, who contacted The *AJN* on behalf of the Rabbinical Council of NSW (RCNSW) – an organisation that represents most of the Orthodox rabbis in NSW – said the Torah simply does not allow homosexual relations.

"We, the RCNSW, feel a responsibility to clarify to the community and re-affirm that which is written in the Torah: that homosexual union is an abomination to God and clearly forbidden," Cohen said.

He said that many people would have been indifferent to the poll and not voted.

"The RCNSW is not there to rep-



resent the community. It represents the voice of the Torah and, from that, we have not lost touch."

Fellow RCNSW executive member Rabbi Chaim Ingram said the problem was in the actual question because it "presupposes the right of Progressive rabbis to perform marriage ceremonies at all".

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RABBI CHAIM INGRAM
RCNSW executive member

From an Orthodox perspective, any marriage performed by Progressive rabbis is not recognised as legitimate. And because the premise of the survey question was flawed, he claimed many of those in the Orthodox community would not have voted.

"Thus, those voting in the poll will have been either Progressive or left-leaning Jews sympathetic to progressivism. The results of the poll prove nothing," said Rabbi Ingram.