



Preparing decorations for this year's Mardi Gras float, from left, Roy Freeman, Dave Puterman and Kim Gotlieb.

All set in pink for Mardi Gras Parade

LEXI LANDSMAN

DAYENU'S float for the 2009 Mardi Gras Parade on March 7 might not look like anything yet, but thanks to the help of members and the support of Emanuel Synagogue, the float is well on its way.

Earlier this month, Dayenu – Sydney's Jewish gay and lesbian group – held a workshop to prepare the float at Emanuel Synagogue, with some members of the congregation giving a helping hand. They also had a stall over the weekend at Fair Day in Victoria Park.

"It's very exciting to see that there is still energy and enthusiasm for the float with lots of support both from the gay and lesbian community, but also from Emanuel Synagogue," said Kim Gotlieb, who is organising the float together with Roy Freeman.

This year's Jewish float will have the theme: "Love, commitment ceremonies and gay marriage".

It will celebrate the decision made by the Union of Progressive Rabbis in Australia that

allowed gay and lesbian commitment ceremonies to be performed.

The first of these took place on September 21 between Scott Whitmont and Christopher Whitmont-Stein.

In honour of the first gay and lesbian couples to be united in a Jewish religious ceremony in Australia, two couples – Scott and Christopher, and Nicky and Michelle – will lead the Dayenu float in a decorated convertible. The Dayenu float will follow behind them, as well as a marching and dancing group of some 70 Dayenu members and supporters.

"The main float looks to our dream for the future when Progressive and Conservative rabbis would be able to conduct traditional wedding ceremonies for lesbian and gay couples, which would also be recognised by the federal Government – and when their Orthodox colleagues would also agree to officiate," Gotlieb said.

He added that having the presence of Dayenu at the Mardi Gras Parade is extremely important, so that gay and lesbian Jewish youth know that they are not alone and also to urge for continued accept-

ance from the Jewish community.

"While many have come to a place of quiet acceptance, there is still much work to be done to develop a community in which the diversity that gays and lesbians bring to the Jewish community is truly celebrated," Gotlieb said.

Aleph Melbourne and Young Aleph will be represented by Dayenu this year, with both Victorian gay and lesbian groups' flags flying high.

Aleph Melbourne entered the "Jewish Princesses" float in the 1999 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade. It was formed by 14 Jewish men from Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Israel.

The Jewish Princesses helped pave the way for the formation of the Dayenu the following year.

Since the first Dayenu float in 2000, the Jewish gay and lesbian community has been an important feature of the Mardi Gras Parade.

Dayenu will hold a Shabbat dinner and service on March 6 at Emanuel Synagogue. To participate in the Mardi Gras Parade, contact Kim on 0408 652 394 or visit www.dayenu.org.au.