

Controversy over same-sex comments

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JEWISH Labor candidate for Wentworth Steven Lewis has broken ranks with his party and expressed support for legalising same-sex marriages.

But his stance has drawn criticism from the Orthodox community.

Rather than an issue of religion, Lewis said the issue was one of human rights. "The current Government has made 80 changes to legislation to remove discrimination against gay people and that's been a fantastic move forward," he said.

"There's one major issue outstanding, of course, and that's the issue of gay marriage."

At the moment, Prime Minister

Julia Gillard has rejected moves to legalise same-sex marriage, but has expressed support for equal treatment for same-sex couples.

Rabbi Yanky Berger from Chabad Double Bay said he could not support the Labor candidate's stance.

"You only need to open up the Bible to see what Judaism says about same-sex marriages – there's nothing more left to say," he said.

Lewis found an ally, however, in Emanuel Synagogue's Rabbi Jacqueline Ninio. "I believe that they should have the same rights under law as heterosexual couples, including the right to be married," she said.

Lewis' opponent in Wentworth, Malcolm Turnbull, said he supported same-sex civil unions, but believed marriage should only be between a man and a woman.

The Torah forbids men from engaging in homosexual relations, but does not specifically refer to women in same-sex relationships. While the Orthodox community does not support same-sex relationships, the Progressives welcome Jewish members of the GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender) community.

