



Executive Council
of Australian Jewry Inc.

Statement on Safe Schools Program Victoria

The ECAJ reiterates its and the Australian Jewish community's strong opposition to bullying at school on any grounds including sexual orientation, and welcomes any government program designed to counter-act bullying that has the support of victims and educators.

Rabbi Dr Cowen is highly respected in our community but that does not mean that his views on any subject are representative. We note also that in his recent article, Rabbi Cowen fully condemns bullying of any child *inter alia* on the grounds of homosexual behaviour.

Whilst opinions differ both in the Jewish community and in the wider community about whether sexual orientation is predetermined in any sense, it is essential that any public discussion of the issue must not vilify individuals or groups on the ground of sexual orientation or gender identity, to which we are totally opposed. The view that homosexuality is an illness does not represent a general view of the Jewish community.

The ECAJ reiterates its call for mutual respect for the human dignity of all members of the community, despite any strongly held differences of opinion; recognition that disagreement is possible in ways that do not vilify other persons or their views; and avoidance of any public or private conduct that incites hatred, ridicule or contempt of another person or class of persons on the ground of their sexual orientation or gender identity (or for that matter on the grounds of ethnic or ethno-religious background or religious belief).

We also acknowledge that there is still much work to be done to remove intolerance of and unlawful discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons in the Jewish community and in the wider Australian community, and to provide adequate services and support for them and their families.

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