



EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN JEWRY Inc.

Protesting Too Proudly ("The Age", 08-03-07)

The Australian Jewish community's elected representative bodies are open and democratic, which is why the claims of the so-called "Independent Australian Jewish Voices" should not be treated at face value.

This group calls for "a just peace that recognises the legitimate national aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians with a solution that protects the human rights of all" — as if that is not what the Jewish community's representative bodies have been advocating for many years.

The leadership of the Australian Jewish community is a respected and credible voice in public forums precisely because we use reasoned argument and sound research to pursue sensible policies that reflect majority views. The IAJV also calls for "reasoned argument rather than vilification and intimidation". Given that the Executive Council of Australian Jewry has been at the forefront of fighting vilification and intimidation, not only of Jews but also of all who face unlawful vilification, it is hard to understand why else they would have included this statement.

The IAJV then says that they seek "debate to further the prospects of peace, security and human rights in the Middle East". Anyone who is engaged in any meaningful way with the Jewish community knows that discussion and airing of diverse views is the norm.

The IAJV could take advantage of the democratic processes that elect the leadership of Australia's Jewish community and nominate for election to these bodies. That it chooses not to speak volumes regarding its concern for democratic ideals.

Grahame Leonard, President, Executive Council of Australian Jewry
Anton Block, President, Jewish Community Council of Victoria



EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN JEWRY Inc.

Independent Voices Exist, But Some May Not Be Listening (SMH 08 March 2007)

The Australian Jewish community is one of robust debate and open democracy. Consequently, one reads the announcement of the launch of Independent Australian Jewish Voices with a sense of intrigue and apprehension ("Jewish coalition calls for open debate on Palestine" and Letters, March 6).

Antony Loewenstein and his group call for "a just peace that recognises the legitimate national aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians with a solution that protects the human rights of all". That is, of course, entirely consistent with the reasoned and sensible policy positions articulated by the elected leadership of the Australian Jewish community.

Next, they call for "reasoned argument rather than vilification and intimidation". The Executive Council of Australian Jewry has been at the forefront of fighting vilification and intimidation, not only of Jews but of all who face unlawful vilification.

The leadership of the Australian Jewish community is a credible voice in public forums precisely because we use reasoned argument to pursue sensible policies and we base our positions on sound research. We are more than prepared to expose the factually flawed, poorly reasoned material that Loewenstein applauds, such as John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt's attempt to smear the organised American Jewish community.

The group then says that it seeks "debate to further the prospects of peace, security and human rights in the Middle East". Anyone who has witnessed debate at established open forums such as the monthly public meetings of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies will tell you that debate and airing of diverse views is the norm within the Jewish community.

Members of Independent Australian Jewish Voices could take advantage of the democratic processes which elect the leadership of our Jewish community and nominate for election to these bodies. That they choose not to, but instead imply the Jewish community leadership acts in ways it does not, speaks volumes as to their concern for democratic ideals.

**Grahame Leonard, Executive Council of Australian Jewry
David D. Knoll NSW Jewish Board of Deputies**