

## **Archive No. 115**

### **Jewish Lesbian Group of Victoria**

In the beginning...

The Jewish Lesbian Group of Victoria began in 1992, when three Jewish lesbian friends got together to organise a workshop for Jewish lesbians as part of the Lesbian Festival held in Melbourne in October / November 1992. The turn out to that workshop was phenomenal. All the women there wanted to keep meeting. And so our group was born. Since then we have been meeting monthly. We have mostly met in each other homes, but have also had social meetings at restaurants, cafes, theatre etc. In October 1997 we celebrated our fifth birthday.

Who we are ...(or what is a Jewish lesbian?)

We are your daughters, your mothers, even your grandmothers. We are makers in the Jewish communities. We are activists in the lesbian communities. Some of us are Ashkenaz, some are Sephardi, some are Sabras. Some of us are Orthodox, some are Liberal and others are secular. Some of us speak Yiddish, some of us Hebrew, most of us speak English. Some of us are in our early twenties, some of us in our sixties and some of us in between. Some of us live in Melbourne, others live in the country. Some of us grew up in exclusively Jewish environments, others only discovered we were Jewish later in life. Our group is very diverse. We are all colours of the rainbow.

Discussions at meetings have centred round anti-Semitism and lesbophobia. Since 1995 we have had an information table at the In One Voice Concert in the Park. We organised a very successful and highly publicised forum on the topic 'Are Jewish Lesbians Kosher?' in 1996. We have marched with our multi-coloured, trilingual banner at the Lesbian and Gay Pride March in Melbourne since 1997, at the Mardi Gras parade in Sydney in 1998, the first Jewish organisational presence to take part in the 20 years since Mardi Gras began, and at Anti-nazi rallies.

Other activities include: speaking at conferences such as Sappho Was a Wog Grrl, Health In Difference and Stand Strong Against Racism; interviews on radio with the Hebrew program (SBS), Dykes on Mics (3CR) 3ZZZ and Joy Melbourne; facilitating a very successful Shabes ceremony and forum at the National Lesbian Conference and Cultural Celebration in Daylesford in 1998; writing articles and being interviewed for Lesbiana, Lesbian Network, the Australian Jewish

News, Generation, the Journal of Homosexuality (USA) and BrotherSister; and participated in the Victorian AIDS Council (VAC) Cross Cultural Group and VAC Women's Committee.

Any woman who identifies as Jewish and as lesbian is welcome to become a member of the group. Our monthly meetings are confidential. Child-care costs can be subsidized by the group to enable mothers to attend meetings. We hold regular meetings and functions which are open to non-Jewish partners and friends. We also organise some functions where non-lesbians are welcome. These include functions organised with the Jewish Gay men's group, Aleph Melbourne.

We produce a bi-monthly newsletter which lists our forthcoming functions, articles, reports on past activities, includes interesting media cuttings and letters from contacts from Sydney to Buenos Aires.