

Supporting marriage equality

MARIE Heilberg asked in the letters page last week: "What on earth possessed Jeremy Stowe-Lindner, the principal?" to throw Bialik's support behind marriage equality? Allow me to enlighten Ms Heilberg.

Just as Monash and Swinburne Universities, the AFL, Westpac, Foxtel, Qantas and countless other organisations have done, Bialik College has shown leadership by putting its name to inclusion. As an educational institution, what is more appropriate than stimulating debate, and staking our values, about a matter of basic ethics? And what better signal to the many members of our community who identify as LGBTI that there is a place for them within our gates?

Given our relationship with the University of Harvard in the development of the Culture of Thinking, now embraced by hundreds of schools worldwide, Bialik College is a national and global thought leader – this stance falls perfectly within that remit. As I wrote to our pluralistic cross-communal community last year, "The idea of inclusion of those whose lifestyles are different to what some may see as mainstream and who contribute positively to the community without impinging on the freedom of others, is a

fundamental tenet of modern liberal Jewish values."

I hope that this clarifies matters for Ms Heilberg.

JEREMY STOWE-LINDNER

Principal, Bialik College

A benefit for students

MARIE Heilberg thinks Jeremy Stowe-Lindner, principal of Bialik College, is pushing a "political agenda" by throwing the college's support behind marriage equality.

The word agenda carries negative undertones – as if the will to achieve equality were something we should all be wary of.

This is a tiresome tactic, used often by politicians and influencers to dress up harmful homophobic sentiment as just part of the debate. I think the principal is to be commended for using the influential platform of a school to agitate for social change, instead of indulging a tiresome status quo by remaining silent. In my opinion, the students will be all the better for it.

JUSTIN OLSTEIN

St Kilda East, Vic

It's okay to be different

WHAT better place to teach our children, Marie Heilberg (*AJN* 04/03), about equality, acceptance and inclusion, irrespective of race, religion or

sexual orientation than our schools? Discussing same sex marriage and educating children about sexual diversity, as the Safe Schools program does, is not some sort of Marxist strategy to brainwash children and groom them for paedophiles, as some right-wing politicians would have you believe. It's about tackling the destructive scourge of bigotry and bullying by letting our kids know it's okay to be different.

HENRY HERZOG

St Kilda East, Vic