

A Current Affair program - aired on 9 September 2020

10 September 2020

Jewish Care is committed to respond appropriately to an inaccurate and misleading media report based on malicious attacks on Jewish Care, its CEO and staff.

Mr Sztrochlic was portrayed as the victim, yet in fact, he is the perpetrator of abuse. He is currently the subject of stalking charges and an intervention order in relation to this matter and we have made a further report to the police as a result of the story on A Current Affair.

We stand united in support of our CEO, Bill Appleby and our 850+ staff who work tirelessly to provide care, supports and services to the most vulnerable in the Jewish Community.

Bill Appleby has led Jewish Care for over 11 years and is responsible for its continued success and legacy through and beyond its proud 171 year-old history. The attacks made on Bill Appleby's personal and professional reputation are reckless and shameless.

The attacks on our organisation by a handful of disgruntled individuals are led by Mr Raphael Sztrochlic, a person with a long history of threatening and offensive conduct toward our staff, management and leadership. People must always feel free to raise issues but abusing and threatening our staff is never acceptable.

The attacks by Mr Sztrochlic began after his wife was made redundant from her role at Jewish Care Victoria in June 2019. They escalated after we acted to provide a safe

working environment for our staff as Mr Sztrochlic harassed, intimidated and vilified our staff who worked to care for his father and other elders at Gary Smorgon House. It is worthy of note that these attacks began some 12 months after his father arrived at Gary Smorgon House yet only days after the redundancy process was announced.

In order to address Mr Sztrochlic's escalating concerns several meetings were held and arrangements were agreed to facilitate ongoing visitation to his father. We were forced to implement supervised access protocols as a proportionate response however Mr Sztrochlic's behaviour continued to escalate, intimidate and harass. As a result, we were finally compelled to take the unfortunate and rare step of limiting his access to the home entirely because of the impact of his abusive behaviour on our staff, others in the home and their families as they were often very publicly displayed.

Despite being prevented from entering our home, Mr Sztrochlic was always able to have contact with his father and we facilitated off-site visits, of which Mr Sztrochlic regularly availed himself taking his father out for coffees and many Shabbat dinners.

Jewish Care is proud of its enduring reputation as a provider of quality aged care and is known as an exemplar in the industry. All of our homes are fully compliant with Commonwealth Government's aged care standards and we have never had an unmet standard at Gary Smorgon House.

We do not seek to minimise or disregard legitimate concerns. We investigate and where necessary make improvements in response to concerns that are raised. We encourage all elders and families to raise any concerns via **Your Say** (<http://www.jewishcare.org.au/page/contact/your-say>) or directly to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission if preferred.

The matters raised by Mr Sztrochlic with the Commission have been investigated with our full support and cooperation.

The A Current Affair piece awkwardly attempted to link our organisation to profiteering, yet Jewish Care is and has always been a not for profit organisation that invests in the wellbeing of the entire Jewish Community of Victoria through services and infrastructure, including non-governmental social housing. Jewish Care has members but no shareholders. Jewish Care has significant debt and proceeds from the sale of the Mark and Dina Munzer Community Residences were reinvested.

This enabled the construction of the Hannah & Daryl Cohen Family Building in Windsor to replace the Montefiore Homes, designed some 50 years ago; the Anne & Eric Smorgon Active Living Centre in Caulfield and the Smorgon Family Building in Carnegie to replace the current nursing home now some 40 years old.

It is also important to note that a text message from a long-standing donor and strong supporter of Jewish Care was inappropriately referenced to support Mr Sztrochlic's narrative. The Smorgon Family Foundation and its CEO, Mr Andrew Blode has assured us of his unconditional support for his organisation's partnership with Jewish Care.

We are incredibly heartened by the support we have received from members of the community and organisations including the Assembly of Rabbis and Cantors, Community Security Group, the Jewish Community Council of Victoria, Progressive Judaism Victoria, Temple Beth Israel, Zionism Victoria, David Southwick MP and Josh Burns MP.

These statements of support mean so much to our hard working and dedicated staff who continue to suffer immense stress and anxiety as a result of this malicious campaign of denigration.

If you have any questions or concerns we invite you to contact us by return email to communications@jewishcare.org.au or by submitting feedback to **Your Say** (<http://www.jewishcare.org.au/page/contact/your-say>). We will be more than happy to answer any questions you have about this matter.

Jewish Care will continue to liaise with Victoria Police with respect to the ongoing harassment of the organisation, its CEO and staff which includes alleged breaches of an intervention order placed upon Mr Sztrochlic. We will take every reasonable step to defend our staff who work tirelessly, the integrity of our CEO and management and our reputation as a provider of quality aged care and services to the Jewish community.

We may also take advice about whether it is necessary to initiate any legal proceedings against any person(s) or organization in the event that hurtful, malicious and false utterances are or have been published to the general public. It is one thing to have a misguided individual promulgating lies, it is another when many people are subjected to false and injurious utterances which cause damage and hurt

to those unfamiliar with the true facts.

Thank you for your support of the Jewish values we uphold in our organisation. This is deeply appreciated by our board, executive and staff.

Susie Ivany OAM, President

Simone Szalmuk-Singer, Co-Vice President

Lisa Kennett, Co-Vice President

SERVICES

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 Jewish Care is a **Rainbow Tick accredited organisation** - proudly celebrating and warmly welcoming the rich diversity of our community as we strive to be inclusive for all.

