

## Rabbi Yosef Feldman steps aside



RABBI Yosef Feldman stepped aside as president of the Rabbinical Council of NSW (RCNSW) this week following last week's article in *The AJN* detailing comments he had made in an email exchange regarding the reporting of child abuse allegations to the police.

According to a statement from the RCNSW, the rabbi was stepping aside

“at this time ... to clear his name”.

The RCNSW said that sensitive matters were “distorted and presented out of context with damaging effect” and that “the RCNSW unreservedly and emphatically condemns all forms of child abuse and protection of perpetrators. We encourage all victims to report directly to the police (or relevant authorities). This statement has the full support and endorsement of Rabbi Yosef Feldman.”

Last week's article stated that Rabbi Feldman believed, where legally possible, rabbis should decide whether allegations of child abuse should be reported to the police.

Rabbi Feldman this week claimed *The AJN* “misquoted, misconstrued and misrepresented” him.

However, *The AJN* can reveal that the first concerns about Rabbi Feldman's reported comments were made well before the newspaper saw the emails last week, and they came from his peers.

During the email exchange, one senior Sydney rabbi wrote to Rabbi Feldman: “You are wrong! Your attitude has been that of many rabbonim and the church, and the result has been countless innocent victims. Anything other than going to the police does not protect the victims ... you are wrong and you are in way over your head.

“When someone is running around with a loaded gun you do not call rabbonim, you call the police ... Someone who has abused children is a loaded gun and is no different than a rapist.”

In another email, Rabbi Feldman was warned: “Your views reflect neither charedi nor mainstream Orthodoxy and should be rejected by everyone on this forum.”

NSW Board of Deputies president Yair Miller told *The AJN* that in his opinion Rabbi Feldman had effectively resigned.

“Rabbi Feldman is no longer involved in the running of the RCNSW,” Miller said.

“My understanding is that Rabbi Feldman has stepped aside until the AGM of the RCNSW at which time he will not renominate. That has the same effect as a resignation and is most appropriate in light of his reported actions.”

Rabbi Feldman’s congregation, the Southern Sydney Synagogue, distanced itself from his comments, as reported in *The AJN*.

“The board of Southern Sydney Synagogue unreservedly endorses the position recently articulated by the Organisation of Rabbis of Australia and its affiliates as to the positive obligation, according to both halachic and secular law, to report any such offences to the secular authorities,” Southern Sydney Synagogue’s vice-presidents Eric Cohen and Margaret Foster said in a statement.

A statement from the Council of Orthodox Synagogues of Australia said it “unequivocally disassociates itself from the views expressed by Rabbi Yossi Feldman concerning the reporting of sexual offenders to the police, as reported in *The AJN*.”

*AJN* national editor Zeddy Lawrence insisted the newspaper stood by its original story.

## **JOSHUA LEVI**

*Rabbi Yosef Feldman*

---

### **Share this story:**

 (<http://www.jewishnews.net.au/rabbi-yosef-feldman-steps-aside/22255?share=facebook&nb=1>)

 (<http://www.jewishnews.net.au/rabbi-yosef-feldman-steps-aside/22255?share=twitter&nb=1>)

 (<http://www.jewishnews.net.au/rabbi-yosef-feldman-steps-aside/22255?share=google-plus-1&nb=1>)

© 2011 **[The Australian Jewish News \(http://www.jewishnews.net.au\)](http://www.jewishnews.net.au)**