

From centuries past to Aussie pastime

By **GEOFF STRONG**

EIGHT bamboo garden lanterns in a suburban backyard, several Eskies filled with drinks, people in thongs standing around clutching wine in plastic cups and plenty of good food — this is how the ancient Jewish festival of Hanukkah is celebrated, Australian style.

Yesterday was also the 60th birthday party for Eli Macmull, who hosted a Hanukkah party for friends and members of the Hamerkaz Shelanu community in Caulfield. The lanterns were

there to represent the traditional menorah (candle holder) and at sunset Rabbi Motty Liberow had the task of lighting all eight because today was the last of the eight-day festival and Jews measure a day from the previous sunset.

Hillary Herson, Mr Macmull's partner, believes it is appropriate to celebrate Hanukkah as an Aussie barbecue. "A barbecue is a celebration of life and so is this," she said.

Although there are more important religious days in the Jewish calendar, Mr Macmull

says the cheerful nature of Hanukkah means it is the festival that is most important to his family.

Rabbi Liberow said the festival had been kept alive during the many centuries when Jews were persecuted in Europe. "It was a demonstration that while you might be able to kill a person, you could not kill a spirit."

Hanukkah, or Chanukka as Hebrew speakers may pronounce it, is one of the most widely practised Jewish celebrations.

It is an eight-day event



Rabbi Motty Liberow (centre) with Eli Macmull (left). PICTURE: PENNY STEPHENS

known as the "Festival of Lights". The dates vary on the Western calendar from late November to late December.

Rabbi Liberow says the symbolism of the festival is that darkness can be pushed away one candle at a time.