

LESBIANS ON THE LOOSE

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FREE

Train trip to terror

by Frances Rand

A train trip home to Newcastle after the Mardi Gras Parade turned a night of celebration into a morning of misery. A group of lesbians and gay men, threatened and harassed by homophobic youths during the journey, have lodged a vilification complaint with the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board.

The 1.47am train from Central to Newcastle, on the morning of March 6, was delayed. Belinda, 20, and her friends, a group of five lesbians and two gay men, were forced to wait an hour in a packed train "due to daylight saving".

"This delay, coupled with the fact that our group was seen to be having fun, led to a particularly volatile situation," said Belinda, who now afraid for her safety does not want to use her last name.

Between Strathfield and Hornsby the threats from the group of seven youths intensified. "Filthy queers, we should just bash ya now," and "Watch your back, we're gonna stab ya" were shouted at Belinda and her friends.

One of the group, Theresa, 27, said, "I felt like a prisoner — I've never felt such terror in all my life." She approached some State Rail employees who came to the carriage and told the youths to "keep it civilised."

When the threats didn't stop, Cherie, 20, also complained. She

says she was told "If you can't cope with the situation get off the train."

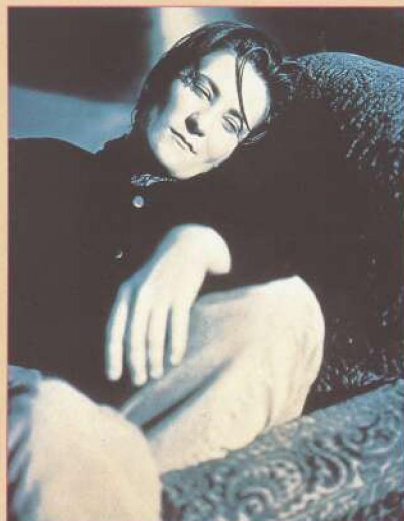
Belinda alleges that despite their attempts to ignore the abuse the State Rail employees told them they were "provoking" the youths.

Beth, 27, contacted State Rail the following day to lodge a complaint. She says her call was not followed up.

City Rail Media spokesman Simon Brown said he hasn't received an official complaint. He also couldn't supply an official reason as to why the train was delayed. While being unable to make an official comment until he receives and investigates a written complaint he did say, "By law we can't discriminate against any member of the community and we won't condone any such behaviour from our staff. If our staff receive complaints they are expected to offer whatever assistance they can."

While unable to comment specifically on the incident, NSW Anti-Discrimination Board president, Steve Marks said, "The present ground of homosexual discrimination can apply to a provider of services like State Rail. An individual may also be covered by the part of the Act that includes aiding an abetting an act of discrimination."

Belinda and her friends would like an apology from State Rail.



languishing...k.d. lounges while local lesbians long for a longer look at the dyke herself.

k.d. drops in...

The Craving Remains

Rumours spread like wildfire as news of a visit by lesbian heart-throb and dyke icon k.d. lang reached Sydney and Melbourne lesbians last month. "Where's she staying?", "Is she touring?", "Where can we see her?" were the questions on everyone's lips.

Sadly, lang was only dropping by to appear at the ARIA awards, and promote her album, *Ingenue* and the soundtrack to *Even Cowgirls Get The Blues*.

Interviews were hard to get. Although lang was kind to the electronic media, print media got one press conference only. Even the Sydney Morning Herald was miffed.

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