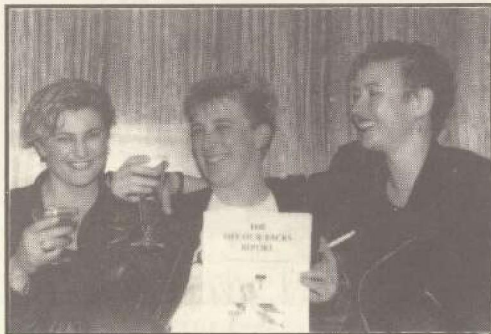


## ANTI-VIOLENCE REPORT LAUNCHED

*Off Our Backs*, a report initiated by The Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby (GLRL), was launched at the Soho Bar, Potts Point on 6 September. The Report, the first of its kind published in Australia dealing entirely with the nature of violence against lesbians, is a response by GLRL to address the continuing silence surrounding such violence. The data collected includes information on the nature of the attacks, the time and location of incidents, the characteristics of assailants, the reasons for the assaults, post-assault action and the response by the police.

In her Foreword to the Report, Clover Moore says: 'Violence against gay men and racial violence are examples of hate crime within our society. However, the issue of violence against lesbians has not been specifically addressed even though it is another example of hate related crime. This Report fills a serious gap in the knowledge we require to rid our society of such crimes. The Report will serve as a valuable tool in eradicating the invisibility of anti-lesbian violence.'

Kerrie Cheers, the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project co-ordinator, opened the evening by welcoming the large crowd and introducing the guest speakers. Heather-Grace Jones read her gutsy poem *Looking for Trouble*, illustrating succinctly the violence lesbians encounter, followed by Lindie Matthews reading her witty piece *Classified*. Carole Ruthchild, former co-convenor of GLRL, stressed the importance of acknowledging that violence against lesbians is specific, and should not be categorised with violence against gay men or heterosexual women. Highlighting gains made in improving community awareness of violence towards lesbians, Carole stressed the continuing need to speak



Kerrie Cheers, AVP, Carole Ruthchild, ex GLRL and Gigi Legenhausen, *The Other Side*, at the launch

out if the issue is to be taken seriously. Urging lesbians to report all bashings to the Project, she concluded by saying 'alone our voices can only be a whisper—together they become a roar'.

Analysing the link between violence and fear, Kimberly O'Sullivan, longtime gay and lesbian rights activist, declared that 'lesbians must continue to refuse to adopt a victim mentality'. The Project provides information on self-defence classes for lesbians and gay men to enable those who are physically attacked to fight back. Making her first public appearance as the newly-appointed co-convenor of

### ARMED FORCES ON THE TURN

The ban on lesbians and gays in the defence forces is likely to be lifted by Cabinet early this month. A Caucus committee voted four to two against the ban on September 18. Despite objections to change from the Armed Forces and from Defence Minister Senator Ray, Attorney-General Michael Duffy is expected to urge Cabinet to endorse the Caucus committee decision. A two-year transition period is likely, with an education program for armed service personnel being set-up to counter homophobia.

LESBIANS ON THE LOOSE

GLRL, Deborah Taylor warned that while there have been significant achievements in combatting violence against lesbians, more strategies will need to be adopted before the situation improves.

The Report's recommendations include that the Anti-Discrimination Board Act of 1977 be amended to create a new ground of criminal offence of serious vilification based on perceived or actual lesbianism/homosexuality; that the Dept. of School Education develop an anti-homophobia policy; and that the NSW Health Dept recognise the special needs of survivors of anti-lesbian violence and provide adequate resources to meet those needs.

The Report concludes that lesbians are attacked as a result of their perceived lesbianism and not solely because of their gender, its findings exposing the severity of the issue. The evening continued with a fund raising event in *The Other Side* at the Site generously organised by Gigi Legenhausen.

Julia Hancock

The *Off Our Backs* Report was also launched by Police Minister Ted Pickering, on September 21.



At *The Other Side* after the launch

### CHALLENGING VIOLENCE AGAINST LESBIANS

Following on from the *Off Our Backs Report*, the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project is organising a forum to be held at the Anti-Violence Project's offices at Darlinghurst on October 24. We are keen to share and discuss ideas and suggestions for effective anti-lesbian violence prevention strategies as well as evaluating current violence prevention strategies and their relevance to lesbians.

#### SELF DEFENCE COURSE

Enrolments are now being taken for the two day self defence course for lesbians to be held on November 14 and 15. Easy to learn physical movements that are designed to work in real situations, verbal assertive skills to repel harassers and environmental awareness to make you more alert so as to avoid an attack will be covered in the course. Instructors are from the Australian Women's Self Defence Academy. The course costs \$35/\$20 concession.

Registration forms for the forum and self defence course and further information can be obtained by phoning the Anti-Violence Project on (02) 360 6650 or writing to PO Box 9, Darlinghurst NSW 2010.



Gay & Lesbian Rights Lobby Inc.

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Defending and expanding our rights

Buy your copy of *Off Our Backs* from the Lobby at 74-78 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst for only \$5 individuals or \$3 if you're a Lobby member. Please add \$2 for postage if you want a copy by mail to the above address.