



Cyril Stokes — Melbourne GBA President presides over a right royal occasion

## GBAs Map Their Future

**Gay Business Associations in both Melbourne and Sydney held extraordinary meetings this month. For Melbourne, it was with the cheery optimism of a new organization planning its future. For Sydney, it was to ponder the question "Where have we gone wrong?"**

MELBOURNE — Forty six people attended the first general meeting of the Victorian Gay Business Association (GBA) to be held since the inaugural meeting elected its office bearers in April.

Chaired by new President Cyril Stokes, proprietor of Melbourne's Steamworks sauna, the meeting was addressed by guest speaker David Scott, from the Small Business Development Corporation, on the problems of small business.

The meeting was notable for the sense of camaraderie and good will displayed by those present, with warm applause greeting most speakers during the conduct of general business. The single exception to the harmony of the evening was a short but spirited debate regarding the choice of venue.

More than one speaker questioned the appropriateness of holding the function at the RACV club, which, it was said, was "notorious for the homophobic attitudes of its management". Chris Carter of the *Melbourne Voice* expressed his dismay

that the executive had not taken exception at the refusal by RACV management to allow the function to be listed in the downstairs foyer as a gay business meeting. "The homophobic response of the RACV at senior management level should have precluded us from being here" he said.

Speakers who followed, however, clearly demonstrated this to be a minority viewpoint, with some suggesting that the dinner actually represented a show of good faith by the RACV. Said Max Poyser of the Anglers Club, "I don't believe in ghetto mentality. If the word gay had been on display on the door, I for one would not have come."

Despite the disquiet that this exchange created, and due to the skilful mediation of the chair, the meeting moved on to less contentious grounds. Speakers addressed the need for the Association to establish long term goals which reflected the potential of such a federation, arguing that the AIDS crisis alone was insufficient reason for its continued existence.

By the evening's end, no major decisions had been made, but much had been achieved. As one participant pointed out, the meeting had succeeded in establishing a sense of solidarity within what had previously been a fragile alliance of disparate interests.

President Stokes wound up the night with the observation "we have come a long way, but we have a long way to go". However, as one speaker said of the evening's agenda, "I feel better just for the fact of having been with you all tonight".

SYDNEY — Good will was in short supply at the special meeting of the Sydney Gay Business Association held on 22 April. An at times rowdy meeting considered the Association's achievements of the last four years, and posed serious questions about its past and future effectiveness. Chaired by Peter Trebilco of the Gays Counselling Service, the meeting was initially addressed by previous President Ray Israel before being opened for a period of general discussion.

The meeting had been brought about by a resolution passed at the previous monthly function calling for urgent evaluation of its objectives, and it soon became clear that a common sense of purpose did not exist.

Some speakers voiced criticism of the GBA's fundraising functions, and warned that it was in danger of degenerating into a social club. Donnie Smith of Village Cinemas called for the establishment of a licensed club. "Bricks and mortar should be our first objective", he said. Others suggested that it needed to establish a clear response to important social issues. "We nearly didn't have a Mardi Gras this year because of a certain 'public health' problem" the meeting was told by Mardi Gras Director Damien Furlong. He called for the GBA to play a more significant role in effecting social attitudes, particularly with reference to the AIDS crisis.

It was noticeable, however, that the question of a response to AIDS received scant support. Unlike its Melbourne counterpart, which was established expressly to counter any potential problems, Sydney's GBA, having been established before the disease became of public concern, has not formed a position on the issue. General impressions suggested that most members feel that any response to the crisis could best be handled by other existing AIDS organizations.

The general frustration of the GBA membership became more pronounced as the evening progressed, with speakers increasingly seeking to lay the blame for its lack of direction at someone's feet. Incumbent President Phillip Chown defended his executive against charges that it lacked leadership by suggesting that the membership had been unable to reach consensus as to the organizations purpose in life. However it became obvious that only the pending annual general meeting to be held on 22 July, dissuaded some members from moving a vote of no confidence in the executive.

The meeting finally resolved to establish sub-committees to consider membership drives, a constitutional review, and a change in the Association's corporate image. Despite murmurs of "shifting the deck chairs on the *Titanic*", no-one present seriously questioned the desirability of the GBA's continued

existence, a clear sign that the establishment of common goals might rekindle a sense of optimism.

Meanwhile, GBA members in Melbourne pencilled in "Aims and Objectives" at the top of their forthcoming agendas.

• Danny Vadas

## MCC Melbourne's New Pastor

**"I've never felt so at home since I got here"**

After a 12-month battle with the Australian immigration Department, Sam Kader, the new Melbourne pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), finally arrived in late April.

Kader has arrived in Melbourne at a significant time, since all three major Christian denominations (the Anglican, Catholic and Uniting Churches) are at present looking into the issue of homosexuality. "If they're open to dialogue, it could be very productive. I'd certainly be keen to talk to the churches about a whole range of issues. We can all learn something from each other. In the States MCC applied for membership of the National Council of Churches, and although our application hasn't been accepted, dialogue is progressing well".

Before becoming a Minister, Kader was a registered nurse. This training has come in useful in recent times with MCC's strong involvement in AIDS work. He was Chairperson of the MCC Task Force on AIDS, which will be producing a final paper next month. He sees AIDS as a major area of work. "I envisage doing a lot of public relations, public speaking, media work, as a representative of the gay community from a Christian perspective, to combat the views of the religious Right. I must say that I've been very impressed with what I've seen so far of the Victorian response to AIDS".

• Marcus O'Donnell

## Sydney Gay Entertainer Murdered

**Who killed Wendy Wayne?**

A popular Sydney gay entertainer, Wayne Brennan ("Wendy Wayne"), was found murdered at his home on 30 April. Nearly a month later, Sydney police still have no leads on his murder.

Brennan, 35, worked for a number of years at Les Girls and at Peat's Beat in Oxford St. He was well-known in the Darlinghurst and King's Cross areas for his charity work, which included organizing an annual Christmas party for destitute children.

His body was found by a friend at 12.30am on 30 April, a Tuesday, in his Darlinghurst Rd flat. He had been shot in the back. A man living in the flat above told police that he had been awakened by a loud noise from Brennan's flat at 10pm on the previous Sunday. According to police, there were signs of a struggle.

On 13 May Det Sgt Smith of the Darlinghurst police appealed to anybody with information in connection with the murder to contact him on (02) 331 1929.



"Sydney Gay Entertainer Murdered." *Outrage: A Magazine for Lesbians and Gay Men*, no. 25, June 1985, p. 6. Archives of Sexuality and Gender, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/WFVVK859689381/AHSI?u=slnsw\\_public&sid=bookmark-AHSI&xid=4f781910](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/WFVVK859689381/AHSI?u=slnsw_public&sid=bookmark-AHSI&xid=4f781910). Accessed 26 Sept. 2022.