

NEWS IN BRIEF

Church nuts tear down posters

Posters advertising Melbourne's Easter Sunday Resurrection 2 dance party have been pulled down within 24 hours of being put up. Darren Ray, General Manager of the ALSO Foundation, which runs the party, said the attack on the posters was the work of "extreme religious hit-teams." The poster contained an image of "Guadalupe", the Mexican patron saint of the unborn. Ray said of the attackers, "these people will never allow gays and lesbians to share the same spiritual icons as they do. As far as they are concerned, we are unworthy in all regards and that is the end of the debate."

NorthAIDS new centre

A second location opened for activities run by NorthAIDS this week. The new Crows Nest centre, known as "Myrtle Place", provides a range of support services and information for people affected by HIV/AIDS. NorthAIDS estimates that 1,700 people are eligible to benefit from the new centre's services which include counselling, support groups from parents and partners and massage.

Kimberly's sex tips

Lesbian activist Kimberly O'Sullivan has contributed to the campaign for Australia's sex industry with a self-described list of 15 "things you can do to make the world safe for sex". The list, compiled for sex industry lobby group the Eros Foundation, includes anti-censorship arguments that "more sex does not equal more violence" and that "homophobia is anti-sexual freedom of choice". O'Sullivan also recommends that people write to state and federal MPs demanding a right to adult sexual material.

Mayor denies 'poofter' comment

The Lord Mayor of Sydney, Cr Frank Sartor, has told *Capital Q* that comments attributed to him in a *Sydney Morning Herald* article were untrue. Sartor said that the article, which appeared on the front page of last Monday's edition of the *Herald*, contained a number of inaccuracies. Writer Paul McGeogh alleged that Sartor had once referred to Leo Schofield as "that poofter". Sartor said that he found this to be "most offensive." He added that he stood by his message in this year's Mardi Gras Festival Guide and was "a supporter and a sincere friend of this city's gay and lesbian community". Neither McGeogh nor Schofield were available for comment.

Court and Holmes à Court in court

A case brought by Perth businesswoman Janet Holmes à Court against Rod Kelly, a Perth antique dealer and owner of local gay venues the Court Hotel and DC's nightclub, is expected to wind up today. Holmes à Court's company Heytesbury is suing Kelly for \$1 million. It claims the money was spent to recover a \$3 million diamond and sapphire necklace which had been handed to con-men claiming to be acting for the Emir of Qatar. The Blue Princess necklace was allegedly exchanged for \$9.8 million in dud cheques. She claims Kelly was acting as her agent. Kelly denies the charge, insisting he was only "keeping an eye on things". —*WSO*

ALP denies immigration 'betrayal'

by Gavin McGuren

The Federal Opposition has defended its support for amendments to the Commonwealth Immigration Act in the wake of condemnation from Australia's peak gay and lesbian rights body.

The Australian Council for Lesbian and Gay Rights (ACLGR) slammed the Government and accused the ALP of "betrayal" this week over the passage of amendments to the act which it claims have eroded hard won gains in the area of human rights. It claims the law changes will make it harder for gays and lesbians to fulfil the residency criteria required for immigration purposes.

Amendments passed last week in Federal Parliament will exempt the Immigration Act from the Federal Sex Discrimination Act and require people applying for residency under the Interdependency Visa category to have been living together for at least 12 months.

The minister will have the power to waive the cohabitation requirement in special circumstances.

The Australian Democrats' attempt to amend the Government's Bill and ensure that the Sex Discrimination Act prevailed was rejected.

ACLGR spokesperson Brian Greig said changes to the Act meant that unmarried couples must demonstrate a mandatory cohabitation period of one year in order to qualify for consideration for residency. The previous policy required a non-mandatory cohabitation period of six months.

"The difficulty many same sex couples have is that living together or trying to demonstrate a relationship is impossi-

ble in many countries. It can be an invitation to harassment, violence and even death," he said. "It's often hard enough to prove cohabitation for six months, let alone a year."

Shadow Immigration spokesperson Duncan Kerr defended the Opposition's support for the amendments, claiming that the ALP had won concessions with the Minister, Philip Ruddock, which resulted in the Government backing down on the proposed changes.

Kerr said the Minister's original proposal was for a mandatory cohabitation period of two years with no exceptions, which would have effectively ended the usefulness of the Interdependency Visa.

"Labor negotiated with the Government to reduce the period to 12 months and won the concession that the Minister will have the power to waive that requirement in special circumstances when living together would result in persecution or harassment in

the applicant's country," Kerr said.

"The power will be delegated to officers in the Department of Immigration."

But according to Greig, the policy is only as good as the minister.

"What happens if the minister is a homophobe?" he asked.

Greig warned that the amendments to the Act may be part of the minister's wider anti-gay agenda.

"In December 1992, Mr Ruddock, as Shadow Minister for Immigration under John Hewson, said a federal coalition government would amend the Sex Discrimination Act to exclude the Immigration Act and its regulations," he said.

"According to Ruddock, the Sex Discrimination Act has enabled homosexual relationships to be treated in the same way as marriages."

A spokesperson for the Democrats said that the Government had effectively set up a hierarchy which placed

heterosexual married couples first and ignored the issue of human rights.

Kerr said that prior to signing off on the amendments, he had discussions with the Gay and Lesbian Immigration Task Force (GLITF) who indicated they "could live with this compromise".

"The fact is that the Labor Party has knocked over these proposals and ensured that the Interdependency Visa class will continue to be available to gays and lesbians who establish a committed, loving relationship," he said.

Greig said that while it may be true that GLITF could "live with" the amendments, it was a case of agreeing to accept the lesser of two evils.

"In the end it all boils down to the fact that there should have been no change to the Act. This is yet another example of the government's determination to turn back the clock on gay and lesbian rights," he said. □

\$100,000 reward over gay murder

by Martin de Courtenay

Police Minister Paul Whelan this week released details of a \$100,000 reward for information leading to a conviction of the murderer of Kenneth Brennan.

Brennan was found dead in the bedroom of his Onslow Ave, Elizabeth Bay home by his male partner. The June 1995 attack was described by police as "frenzied". Brennan was stabbed 15 times and was beaten. Police said there was evidence in the apartment of a struggle.

Police requested the reward following the findings of an inquest into the case last

September. Senior Deputy State Coroner, John Abernathy, was unable to record a finding at the inquest as to who committed the murder and recommended the police apply for posting of a reward.

Extensive investigations, which included numerous interviews, have eliminated any suspects in the case. The police even took the further step of setting up a mobile police station at Taylor Square staffed by the Homicide Unit, Kings Cross detectives and members of the gay and lesbian liaison unit. This and public appeals for information failed to provide any compelling information.

Spokesperson for the Minister, Lisa Williams, said

that it was hoped that with the reward offer, someone within the gay community could come forward with information, or know of Brennan's movements prior to his death.

Police have established that Brennan left his partner with friends in Woollahra, saying that he was going home. However, the last confirmed sighting of Brennan was at around 6pm on 11 June at Kingsteam sauna, in Oxford St. His body was found the following evening.


There is no evidence that Brennan met his killer at the sauna or through classified ads Brennan and his partner had placed *Capital Q* in May 1995. □

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